

IDAHO COURT OF APPEALS

State v. Carter

Carter · No. 50666 · Decided February 12, 2026

SUMMARY

The Idaho Court of Appeals affirmed Samuel Christopher Carter’s convictions for four counts of lewd conduct with a child under sixteen and one count of sexual abuse of a child under sixteen. The court held that admitting a recorded CARES interview without the child’s trial testimony did not violate Carter’s constitutional rights because the interview’s primary purpose was to assess the child’s health and safety rather than establish evidence for prosecution. The court distinguished State v. Parsons based on the interview’s close integration with a subsequent medical examination and the unresolved safety and medical circumstances.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Idaho Court of Appeals
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Chief Judge Tribe; Judge Huskey; Judge Lorello
JURISDICTION	Idaho Court of Appeals
DECIDED	February 12, 2026
DOCKET	50666
DISPOSITION	affirmed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Carter appealed his judgment of conviction after the district court admitted a video recording of a child’s CARES interview despite the child’s not testifying at trial.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	For a discretionary ruling, the appellate court asks whether the trial court correctly perceived the issue as discretionary, acted within the boundaries of its discretion, applied the applicable legal standards, and reached its decision through an exercise of reason. The appellate court defers to factual findings supported by substantial evidence but freely reviews the application of constitutional principles to those facts.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published Idaho Court of Appeals opinion
PARTIES	Samuel Christopher Carter v. State of Idaho

TOPICS

sixth amendment

due process

evidence

criminal procedure

appellate procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

criminal procedure

constitutional law

evidence

appellate procedure

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the CARES interview was testimonial because its primary purpose was to establish or prove past events for a later criminal prosecution rather than to address an ongoing medical or protective need.
2. Whether admitting the recorded CARES interview without the child's testimony violated Carter's constitutional rights to confrontation and due process.

HOLDINGS

1. The CARES interview was not testimonial because, considering the totality of the circumstances, its primary purpose was to assess the child's immediate health and safety and to guide a contemporaneous medical examination, not to establish or prove past events for prosecution.
2. Admission of the CARES interview did not violate Carter's constitutional rights, and Carter failed to show that the district court erred in admitting it.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"Considering the totality of these circumstances, we agree with the district court's conclusion that the primary purpose of the CARES interview was medical, i.e., to assess the child's immediate health and safety, not to establish or prove past events for prosecution, and its admission did not violate Carter's due process rights." (5)

"The CARES interview in this case was not testimonial because the primary purpose of the interview was to assess the child's health and safety." (5)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

A five-year-old child disclosed to her mother that Carter, her father, had engaged her in sexual acts. Eleven days later, before any medical assessment, the child was interviewed at the St. Luke's CARES clinic by a licensed master social worker while a nurse practitioner and law-enforcement officers observed. Immediately afterward, the nurse practitioner performed a physical and genital examination, using information from the interview to assess the child's health and document possible trauma. The child did not testify at trial, and the district court admitted the recorded interview over Carter's constitutional objection.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The State charged Carter with four counts of lewd conduct with a child under sixteen and one count of sexual abuse of a child under sixteen. Before or during trial, the district court overruled Carter's constitutional objection to admission of the CARES interview recording. A jury convicted Carter on all counts, and the Idaho Court of Appeals affirmed.

DISPOSITION

affirmed

CASES CITED

- State v. Herrera, 164 Idaho 261, 270, 429 P.3d 149, 158 (2018)
- State v. Smith, 135 Idaho 712, 720, 23 P.3d 786, 794 (Ct. App. 2001)
- Crawford v. Washington, 541 U.S. 36 (2004)
- Michigan v. Bryant, 562 U.S. 344, 356 (2011)
- Davis v. Washington, 547 U.S. 813, 822 (2006)
- Ohio v. Clark, 576 U.S. 237, 246-48 (2015)
- State v. Parsons, 173 Idaho 435, 446-49, 543 P.3d 465, 476-79 (2024)