

The State of Idaho
“Keeping Children Safe”
Citizen Review Panel
Statewide Annual Report 2008



Idaho's "Keeping Children Safe Panels"

Recognizing the importance of public participation and community engagement, beginning in 1995, the Department of Health and Welfare organized citizen review panels in each of its seven regions to examine how Idaho's Child Protection System works and to make recommendations for improving the system. The panels have focused on providing an independent analysis of how the child protection system responds to abuse and neglect and the overall community supports for children and families in crisis.

In 1996, Congress amended the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA). In its amendments to CAPTA, Congress required that states must establish Citizen Review Panels by July of 1999 in order to receive funding for the Child Abuse and Neglect State Grants Program. While this was the impetus for many states and their Citizen Review Panels, Idaho developed its Citizen Review Panels several years prior to the requirement.

Idaho's Citizen Review Panels have elected to call themselves Keeping Children Safe Panels. Throughout Idaho, most of the panels meet monthly, review cases of child abuse and neglect, attend child fatality reviews, go to court, and observe the implementation of Department policies and procedures as they interact with families and other agencies. Once a year the panels submit a report of their collective experiences, findings and recommendations to the Director of the Department of Health and Welfare.

There are approximately sixty (60) Keeping Children Safe Panel members in Idaho. Once a year, they meet together to review their activities, share ideas, and receive additional training. Each panel member serves up to eight hours a month. These citizen volunteers have repeatedly demonstrated their commitment to Idaho's children and a willingness to involve themselves in the work of making our communities safer for children.

On October 23, 2008, during their annual statewide meeting, the Keeping Children Safe Panel members discussed their regional issues and concerns. Their findings are summarized in the following *Keeping Children Safe Statewide Panel Recommendations 2008 Report*.

These recommendations are listed by category and are not delineated by priority.

I. Data Management

A. Child/Worker Visitation

The Children and Family Services Program of the Department of Health Welfare should continue in their efforts to enhance the FOCUS data management system and also to assure that workers are entering data in the way that best reflects the visitation and contact for a client family in a given month. Currently workers are required to enter data on mandated visitations which include the following: worker and child, children and their siblings who are also in foster care, biological parents and the worker, and visits between biological parents and their children. Despite reports from workers that they are making the mandated visitations the reports being pulled from the data system continue to show significant discrepancies between the data in FOCUS and the printed report. Child Welfare supervisors and managers need the ability to pull a report from the data system that reflects the actual social worker activities. Furthermore, the current system does not allow supervisors and managers to pull a report that only includes the target populations for which these visitations are mandated.

Recommendation:

- **Develop accurate reports for the open cases that require worker/family contact**
- **Deliver training for workers responsible for data entry**

B. Ansell-Casey/ Independent Living Plan

In order to foster children to recognize their potential, to become productive citizens of Idaho, and help them become good parents themselves, we must help them make the transition into adulthood. Presently the reports do not appear to accurately reflect the work being done by staff. Currently workers responsible for a youth eligible for independent living funds are required to have a current Ansell-Casey assessment and independent living plans.

Recommendation:

We recommend that work be done to enable supervisors to pull a report that will reflect which youth have a current Ansell-Casey assessment and an independent living plan.

II. Legal Representation

DHW Child Protection Workers are very well trained professionals whose recommendations relative to child protective court action are absolutely essential. Also when court dispositions occur, most of the time it is the Social Worker who carries out the court order. At this time due to the lack of legal representation the Social Worker has no means of effective representation in these matters, thus our recommendation:

Recommendation:

- 1. Provide legal representation for Social Workers and ensure that they are a party to the case under the Child Protection issue.**

2. The State Deputy Attorney General should be given the responsibility to represent the child welfare worker in the court proceedings.

III. Resources

In order to implement an effective substance abuse awareness effort a comprehensive collection of data is essential. With this information an effective advocacy program can be implemented. By providing critical and essential information to parents we can enlist their aid to attack some of the underline elements that cause child abuse.

Recommendations:

- 1. Continue gathering data on the impact that substance abuse by parents/care givers has on our children and our communities. Collect data on the number of removals directly related to substance abuse; number of Termination of Parental Rights; and the total financial cost related to these cases. Provide the data for an awareness campaign to educate the public on the direct effect of substance abuse for children and communities.**
- 2. Investigate how other rural areas in other states deal with children's mental health issues and other alternatives to treatment facilities. We also recommend follow-up with the therapeutic foster care committee. We would eventually like to have treatment facilities reasonably accessible in all regions throughout the state**
- 3. Provide additional child abuse and neglect prevention funding.**
- 4. Develop and provide child abuse prevention pamphlets.**
- 5. Develop neutral settings for visitation: a house that is off site from DHW.**
- 6. Seek closer adult treatment facilities, so visitation is not impossible.**

IV. Retaining Professional Quality Staff

The following recommendation is made by the citizen volunteers to the Keeping Children Safe Panel, and is placed into the recommendation without editing by the Department of H&W staff. This has been unanimously endorsed and supported by the entire State Keeping Children Safe Panel.

Important skills and training are being lost from the Department of Health & Welfare. Within every region, Keeping Children Safe Panel members can recall the skills and training of important professionals and staff being lost. These losses were usually to pursue employment opportunities elsewhere. Often these lost staff members leave the Department because of a lack of professional challenge and recognition, and/or to improve their financial position.

The Keeping Children Safe Panel recognizes that the dangers of this continued drain of talented, trained, and experienced staff reduces the safety net for the Idaho's most vulnerable children. Continued staff losses affect the efficiency of the Department and

result in either increased cost or decreased production. Idaho needs highly skilled, professionals in the Department of Health & Welfare.

Compounding the Problem

1. Health and Welfare staff have had long “dry” periods with little or no increase in their salaries.
2. Professionals within the Department are not allowed to practice their profession outside the Department on a part-time basis.
3. The Department does not have a clear, well-established career ladder which staff can advance without going into management.
4. Several staff and professional members perceive few, if any, opportunities for personal advancement.
5. Good job performance needs to produce a more tangible recognition than a pat on the back, if we are to have a positive impact on moral and increase self worth in the staff.

A Positive Start

Recently both the Idaho State Legislature and the Department have taken positive steps by a recent pay raise and investigating a career ladder. We of the Keeping Children Safe Panel applaud these efforts and the individuals who have brought them about.

Recommendations:

A. Social Workers

- 1. Continue to develop and implement a career ladder for employees that combines:**
 - a. Advancement for additional training from in-services and university trainings.**
 - b. Placement on a longevity scale, so each employee will have an increased income each year**
 - c. Additional pay based on the difficulty of assignments within the employee’s field of specialization**
- 2. The Department find a way so professionals may be employed or practice their profession, outside of the Department without threat of a conflict of interest.**
- 3. The employee evaluation will be made, in part, by the employee’s progress on a career development plan that they assisted in developing for themselves. The Department should make an effort to combine and summarize these plans and assist by offering trainings, classes and in-services to assist the employees in making progress toward their goals.**
- 4. From additional training and work experience, more advanced employees should be assigned more difficult cases. There should be a rank system which provides peer and community recognition for the employee, and impacts their pay as well.**

5. **That professional appearance, conduct and performance be recognized with immediate, discretionary, one time funds awarded to the individual by the region supervisor.**
6. **The Department should have a goal to encourage each staff member to grow professionally. Each Region's supervisor should organize training opportunities and in-service to support the general themes determined by the individual needs.**

B. Client Service Technicians.

The addition of Children & Family Client Services Technician positions throughout the state has been helpful. These positions will continue to help in the rural areas with transportation of clients and family members to family visits, doctor's appointments, assist in supervision of visits, and court hearings. These services provide an effective "force multiplier" to increase the efficiency of the professional staff. The use of a Client Services Technician releases the professional's time at a cost of less than 75% of the professional's cost.

Recommendations:

The establishment of a training program for Client Services Technicians.

1. **Create the position of Volunteer Client Services Technician, which will offer community members the opportunity to provide part time service.**
2. **Increase the number of part-time and full-time paid Client Services Technicians in the state.**
3. **Within one year, perform a supervision evaluation of the effectiveness of the Client Services Technician program, to answer the question of what is the optimal ratio of professional staff to Client Services Technician time, in order to achieve the highest level of efficiency.**

V. Day Care Centers

Given that foster children are placed in child care centers, we recommend the following:

Recommendations:

1. **The Department introduce legislation modifying Idaho Code related to Child Care Facilities. Such legislation would provide for enhanced child safety and disclosure documents. These activities would be in concert with other groups and agencies interested in child safety such as the Idaho Association Education Young Children and STARS.**
2. **Collaborate with the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) to obtain information for resource parents on selecting a child care facility for their children.**
3. **The Department should seek to provide additional funding for resource parents who place their children in child care such that the total cost is covered. This may be in coordination with the ICCP program if the resource parent qualifies**

for ICCP.

4. **The Department should seek to coordinate a statewide survey of non traditional child care facilities through the local health districts and/or the ICCP program.**

VI. Foster Care

The panel recognizes and respects the contributions foster parents and families provide to the community. In order to better assist the families in their efforts, we recommend the following:

Recommendations:

1. **The Department will continue to seek additional funding for resource parents.**
2. **The Department will incorporate CPR/First aid into the Pride training.**
3. **The Department will develop a program to provide for recertification of resource parents in CPR/First Aid at no cost to the resource parent.**

4. **Shelter Care Homes**

The Department of Health and Welfare needs to consider the use of shelter care foster homes as initial placement for children entering foster care if an emergency relative placement is not an option. This would allow the Department to gather additional information regarding a child's special needs and/or behaviors. Children would benefit from the Department having time to consider the best potential match given the pool of available longer term foster homes. Foster parents and children would have the ability to meet prior to placement change.

5. **Foster care study / Evaluation**

Partner with regional college or university to develop and implement a standard statewide survey. This data would be helpful in presenting to the legislature and related funding requests for recruitment, training in addition to PRIDE, additional support, foster care reimbursement, and additional funds to support foster children. The study could focus on issues such as:

- **Number of trained foster homes**
- **Reason for becoming foster parents**
- **Why do people leave?**
- **Level of support received**
- **Why do people stay?**
- **How many were limited to one placement**

VII. Substance Abuse

Recommendations:

1. **Rural Substance Abuse Services**

The panel recommends continued support for Substance Abuse Services by

providing transportation costs, treatment resources, and other out of the pocket expenses for accessing recovery services in rural areas. We also recommend the need for more funding to help the growing needs of treatment for families. The Department needs to be involved with the “Meth Project” to help educate our children and families about the effects of Methamphetamines.

2. **Hospital Collaboration**

Infants testing positive for drugs by hospitals are inconsistently reported to child welfare in the state. Children and Family Services, in collaboration with the Idaho Hospital Association should develop guidelines for the consistency in testing and reporting drug exposed infants. This collaboration would encourage hospitals to work with child protection offices for formulating a cohesive, consistent, and equitable child welfare response.

VIII. Older Youth

The Keeping Children Safe Panel is concerned about the older youth or the youth aging out of the system. We are concerned the older youth do not have the tools and are not being properly prepared to meet the challenges they face as they leave the system. We believe the recommendations provided would enhance the chance for successful reintegration of the older youth into the community and society.

Recommendations:

1. **Department needs to help young adults who are aging out of the system obtain driver’s license. They need help with training, education, and insurance to assure they can operate a vehicle safely within the laws for the State of Idaho.**
2. **We recommend that legislation be enacted that makes all children who have been in the care of the Department of Health and Welfare for the last six months before they turn 18 years of age, or if the parents rights have been terminated, be automatically eligible for the services of the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR). The IDVR is well suited to help children make the transition to world of work or college depending on their skills and aptitudes.**
3. **We recommend that the Department of Juvenile Correction and County Juvenile Services provide 30 day prior notice to the Department of Health and Welfare when foster care placement is necessary of a minor’s up coming release from a DJC facility or County facility. This will allow the Department of Health and Welfare a reasonable period of time to review the case (conduct a Child Adolescent Level of Care Utilization System assessment) and find a suitable placement. Perhaps this could be accomplished by the Director of Department of Health and Welfare communicating directly with the Director DJC.**
4. **We recommend that the Department conduct an analysis of the cost of extending Medicaid services to all eligible aged out youth until they are 21. We believe providing such extended service is necessary to support the aged out youth especially with prescribed medicines. Secondly, although there is national data,**

there is a lack of specific Idaho data as to what happens to youth that age out of the system. By providing a Medicaid card we would at least know if they are accessing medical services and where they are at the time.

IX. Public Awareness

Recommendations:

1. Drug Awareness Campaign

Data gathered under substance abuse recommendations will be used to educate the public on awareness of cost of abuse.

2. Child Abuse Awareness:/Prevention

The Committee recommends the Department allocate funding for a State wide Child Abuse Neglect Campaign. Specific to prevention efforts, recommendations include : educational awareness and materials to parents to address and prevent Neurological damage to young children from shaken baby incidents; children's exposure to domestic violence; impacts of substance abuse in families. Educational resource campaign to assist parents with parenting techniques, stress management and call for help. Support to assist with financing the campaigns could include collaborating with health insurance companies, hospitals, physician organizations, parent organizations, television stations, and professional organizations.

3. Educational Neglect

Continue to focus on educational neglect of the unschooled children. Previous studies show that one in fifteen school age children are not receiving adequate education as a result of the current laws.

X. Community Resource Workers

Recommendation:

KCS panel recommends that DHW continue efforts to obtain dedicated funding to be used under the oversight of the Community Resources for Families Program in order to restore Community Resource Worker in all elementary schools in the state. We believe this is an essential way to provide early intervention services to families in the community setting, to help them help themselves. These services have been proven to be very effective in increasing child well-being, school readiness and family self-reliance.

XI. Intake

The following recommendation was made by Region 1 KCS Panel members, specifically for that area. Since some regions in the state have already developed a centralized approach for regional calls, this recommendation is not included in the statewide recommendations. However, Region 1 Panel members felt it was so essential to Region I, they wanted it to be included in the statewide report:

Recommendation:

The “front-end” (intake) of the child protection services process involves receiving reports of abuse and neglect from reporters in the community, screening the reports and assessing those reports where there is a concern for a child’s safety or other key risk factors are present. In 2008 a community in the region raised concerns about CFS procedures relating to front-end of the child protection services process, including responding to telephone reports and notifying law enforcement. The panel would make the following recommendations to improve the intake process by:

Centralized intake in each region to consistency and quality

- **Intake calls to be recorded for quality assurance**
- **Community education for reporting purpose to contact DHW or law enforcement**

KCS Statewide Panel Activities during 2008

- Invitations letters were sent to regional state legislators to attend a panel meeting to discuss educational neglect on June 29. No legislators attended.
- A second letter dated November 2, 2007 was sent to Mr. Tom Luna, Idaho's State Superintendent of Public Instruction to determine his interest in conducting a survey to determine the number of children that were being home schooled. Again, there was no response. The first letter was sent to Mr. Luna on April 2, 2007.
- An email was sent to regional KCS panel to establish support for legal representation for child welfare workers by making the DHW a "party to the case" in the CPA.
- Claudia Burtelow resigned from the KCS panel in 2007. Fred Cruzan joined the KCS panel in 2008.
- Child Care Provider Survey – The Panel developed a questionnaire that was sent to approximately 150 child care providers in Region II to seek their input into a resolution to the urgent need for child care during non-traditional hours. Non-traditional hours are considered to be from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m., Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays. A summary of the results of the questionnaire are as follows:
- "Love a Kid" Pillowcase Project – The purpose of this project is "To let a Kid in a tough situation know that others care by presenting him/her with a pillowcase containing small things to call his/her own." The Panel was able to ensure that every child in foster care received a pillowcase. They only have a few pillowcases left so they would like to have more made so they can have some available to new foster children and also donate to others such as the domestic violence shelter at the YWCA.
- Attended foster families support groups.
- CQI file review
- Attended "Pay it forward" conference for non-profit groups
- Compiled a cookbook with AARO. The proceeds from bake sales and cookbook sales, help to fund Operation Backpack
- Carol Fowler represented our region at the national conference
- One member attended a Fatality review within Region IV.
- Members participated in the CQI process of quarterly file reviews with Department workers, which include interviews with biological parents, foster parents, social workers, and foster children if appropriate. This type of participation provides both education and continued monitoring of agency practices and procedures. One of our recommendations is based upon our observations while participating in CQI's.
- Several panel members shadowed social workers for observation and education.
- Members attended a variety of in-house staffing sessions.
- We brought in various staff and agencies to help us better understand the issues around youth who are aging out of the system.
- Panel members participated in the Federal review of the program. One panel member went to Jerome as part of the CFSR.
- Panel members are participating in the development of the Program Improvement Plan response to the Federal review.
- Reviewed child-in-care files
- Visited a local drug and alcohol treatment center.

- Two panel members are trained CQI reviewers. One volunteered her time to assist with the CFSR in Boise.
- One panel member participated in the statewide self assessment.
- One panel member participated in the statewide self assessment.
- The panel continues working with community partners to provide personal care items and back packs for children entering foster care. The Department recently received 18 back packs.
- Another panel member agreed to participate on the PIP development work group.
- Panel members have continued to be involved in reviewing child welfare cases. This has involved reviewing case records, CFS Standards, IDAPA Rules, State Statutes and interviews with CFS staff and foster families.
- We were privileged to send a member from Region VII, Renee Hill, to the 2008 **Citizen Review Panel National Conference** in St. Paul Minnesota in May. She reported a valuable conference with good training and motivation. She made many personal connections with other states. She was particularly delighted to participate in the training and brainstorming to select and develop a new National logo and slogan for our organization.
- We reviewed the **Navigation Services Referral process**.
- Julie Hill provided the panel with copies of a training presented by Idaho Attorney General, Lawrence Wasden and Idaho Secretary of State, Ben Ysursa, titled **“ProtecTeens.”** In alerts parents of the dangers teens may encounter on the internet.
- Renee Hill participated in **Idaho’s Child Welfare Self Assessment Committee** in April 7, 2008. This was a telephone conference call with a federal review team.
- Renee Hill attended and participated in **Idaho Program Improvement Plan (PIP)** in June. This was a day long community review and input team.
- Our panel reviewed the **State Assessment of Strengths and Needs**.
- We reviewed the **CQI results** of Jan 2008.
- We reviewed the **Pride training program** which trains foster parents.
- We were pleased to be invited to attend a panel meeting with Region VI in Pocatello and toured the Discovery House with them.
- At the September meeting **Gene Lund was appointed lead co-chair** for Region VII. **Jerry Johnson was appointed co-chair**. Our intention is to rotate the lead co-chair and co-chair leadership positions among the interested panel members.
- **A typical meeting** is once a month for 6 hours. After our initial business and community reports, we typically invite a guest speaker for training, and then review two cases. The case workers are invited to present the case so we can ask questions. We occasionally have field trips to visit facilities or attend courts.

Training and Conferences in 2008

- Child welfare supervisors who are the primary source of knowledge about the needs of the child welfare agency presented to the panel.
- Ruth Wilfred, RNC, Perinatal Clinical Coordinator from Kootenai Medical Center shared the hospital protocol on infants born that are affected by illegal substances.
- Cheri Bush, Deputy Attorney General discussed legal representation for child welfare workers by making the DHW a “party to the case” in the Child Protection Act.
- Case review - Senator Joyce Broadsword participated in the case review. This review involved presentations by DHW staff. After the review, the panel made recommendations to the FACS Administrator for improvements to customer service.
- Rebecca Casey, Foster Parent shared with the panel about the loss of a foster child. She is recommending the CPR/First Aid certification required in the rules to be a foster parent.
- Denise Metzger, Clinical Supervisor discussed cost of day care for foster parents beyond government reimbursement.
- Scott Slater, IV-E Partner, Northwest Nazarene University
- Various staff and agencies to help us better understand the issues around youth who are aging out of the system.
- Michelle Osmond, Regional Director
- Kathy McDermott, LSW, Supervisor, Idaho Office Presenting PRIDE
- Mary Kern, Navigator Program
- Alisha Passey, Bonneville County Youth Council
- Jon Burnham, St. Anthony DJC

Thank you to the following **Keeping Children Safe Panel** members:

Region 1

Wilfred Ross – KCS Co-Chair
Verna Gabel – KCS Co-Chair
Jim McCuaig
Beverly McCuaig
Mary Vail
Leah Stern
Darleen Castillo
Fred Cruzan
Ralph Kennedy – DHW Liaison

Region 2

Doris Ferguson – KCS Chair
Jean Roberts
Judy Hanby
Lura Abbott
Douglas Giddings
Kitty Geidl
Jeannette Bennett
Brad Forth – DHW Liaison

Region 3

Dyann Aspiazu – KCS Co-Chair
Arleen Volgamore
Travis Cronin – DHW Liaison

Region 4

Tom Turco – Co-Chair
Bob Specht – Co-Chair
Donna Parks
Charlotte Larson
Mary Stackle
Carol Fowler – DHW Liaison
Jessica Ehinger – Administrative Support

Region 5

Wes Fields – Chair
Midge Fisher – Co-Chair
Lori Nebeker
Hillari Walker
Jaime Nava – DHW Liaison

Region 6

Jim Elbrader – Chair
Adam Hadley – Co-Chair
Carol Taylor
Oliver Samora
Irene Samora
Shawna Miller – DHW Liaison

Region 7

Gene Lund – Co-Chair
Jerry Johnson, Co-Chair
Renee Hill – Retiring Co-Chair
Janice McNee
Julie Hill
Marlene Bubar – DHW Liaison
Cheryl Taylor – Administrative Support