

**The State of Idaho
“Keeping Children Safe”
Citizen Review Panel**

**Statewide Annual Report
2013 Recommendations**



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 fifty (50) 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 November 6, 2013, 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 Annual Report and Recommendations 2013."

Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2013 Recommendations

I. EDUCATION

RECOMMENDATION: Partner with the Department of Education to allow foster youth to have excused administrative absences for court appearances, biological family visits, or medical appointments.

Reason: Foster youth are being penalized for school absences due to biological family visits, medical appointments, and court appearances.

Reason: Foster children have no current system in place to allow them to satisfy court requirements for court appearances or family visits, and simultaneously get credit for school attendance. Also, Foster children have no current system in place to help them stay abreast of their studies when these situations arise.

Department Response: School attendance policies are created at the school district level and enforced by the local school. Largely, Idaho schools allow excused absences for medical appointments when a note from the doctor's office is obtained and allow excused absences for court hearings when a note provided by the court and/or social worker is obtained. Information regarding forms designed to be signed by the judge and sent to the schools to excuse court hearing absences will be shared with staff. Visitation between families and children should not be scheduled during school hours.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide Trauma Informed Care training within the educational system.

Reason: The use of restraints, seclusion and/or aversive behavior techniques are being used by schools. This contradicts mental health professional's treatment recommendations.

Department Response: The Department continues to participate in the Special Educational Advisory Panel (SEAP). SEAP is currently looking at the use of seclusion and/or restraint in the classroom. SEAP has not concluded what type of actions or response it will be recommending regarding seclusion and restraint practices in schools. The panel is in the process of making recommendations to the State Board of Education (SDE) regarding possible policy changes and or training for special education educators. SEAP will be educated regarding trauma informed services and will consider a formal statement in support of trauma informed services and training to the SDE. Mike Scholl from Casey Family Programs provided introductory trauma training to the SEAP members on April 28, 2014. The Idaho Department of Education is the entity responsible for training and

educating school personnel. The Department is available to assist with in-service education as requested.

RECOMMENDATION: Request the legislature work with Board of Education and Idaho Coalition of Home Educators to implement accredited educational requirements into home school programs throughout Idaho. Washington, Oregon and Colorado could serve as a model for reporting and testing requirements.

Reason: An alarming percentage of Idaho children “enrolled” in home schooling programs currently do not receive adequate education due to the non-regulated nature of home schooling in our state. Although ICHE has traditionally received very few complaints regarding inadequate or neglectful home schooling environments, KCS panel members have witnessed from personal relationships that 50% of home school programs are being taught by parents that are undereducated and lack the skills to adequately prepare children for GED requirements and subsequent college enrollment. We want to prevent children from problems later in life when seeking gainful employment.

Department Response: The Department worked with the ICHE in the development of the Guidelines for the Assessment of Claims of Educational Neglect. This standard of practice provides the program with direction in responding to and assessing educational neglect as defined in Idaho Code. The Department lacks the authority to request outside agencies collaborate or seek policy changes in the form of legislation regarding educational issues. The State Department of Education is the authority regarding all educational attendance and curriculum matters.

The Department of Education is the authority on all educational matters. The Department of Education maintains all education records and communication regarding a child’s education as required by law. The Department of Health and Welfare can only respond to an allegation of educational neglect as defined in law. A disagreement between a school and a parent does not meet the definition of educational neglect. Idaho law supports parents’ rights to make educational decisions for their children including placement in a home school setting. The Department of Education’s Dispute Resolution program monitors complaints made by parents to the program.

RECOMMENDATION: Invite the Superintendent for the School system or members of the State Board of Education in the state of Idaho to our annual KCS meeting to address foster care issues in the state. Credits transferring, sports participation, attendance issues related to court hearings and visits, etc.

Reason: The KCS panel wants the Superintendent and/or State Board of Education Members to know what their work is and give the Superintendent and/or State Board of Education Members a chance to respond to their concerns.

Department Response: The Department supports the sharing of information between the State Department of Education and KCS. The Department would support KCS in extending an invitation to State Department of Education members to attend a KCS panel meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: Offer school districts additional educational materials that support anti-bully trainings.

Reason: To support the school districts in developing positive safe educational environment.

Department Response: The Department supports the use of anti-bullying trainings in the school. The State Department of Education is the entity responsible for training and educating school personnel. The Department is available to assist with in-service education as requested.

II. OLDER YOUTH

RECOMMENDATION: Provide information on housing programs to serve youth aging out of care. Research the methods of funding and successful models. Create regional KCS workgroups interested in creation of transition housing for youth aging out of care.

Reason: Foster Children aging out of the program are vulnerable to homelessness, substance abuse, joblessness, etc. Many feel abandoned, overwhelmed and unprepared as they enter adulthood, with all the responsibilities and pressures inherently encountered therein.

Department Response: Housing for older youth aging out of foster care is a huge need throughout the state of Idaho. There are a few active resources for youth in specific areas of the state; these resources include transition homes that serve only foster youth aging out of foster care and others that serve foster youth and other young adults that need housing support. If the Keeping Children Safe Panel would like to focus an effort on this need, the Independent Living Program specialist will serve as a liaison to this organized effort by providing information on current programs and national efforts to meet this need.

RECOMMENDATION: Review policy guidelines about youth being able to attend camps, obtain a driver's license and other teen age activities.

Reason: Issue noted at the Foster Care Youth Speak Panel.

Department Response: A current policy exists to guide social workers on what activities youth of foster can participate in and what the department deems high risk and youth are not able to participate in. This policy was drafted with oversight by the deputy attorney general who considered liability of these activities by the Department. Currently, the Idaho Foster Youth Advisory Board is making active efforts to revise this policy and help create more normalized experiences for youth in foster care.

III. TRAFFICKING

RECOMMENDATION: KCS panels have the option to partner with DHW or other community partners in coordinating classes being presented in the community around suicide, human trafficking, sexual/child abuse, positive parenting.

Reason: Using community resources to perform training sets a positive tone for those in the community wishing to attend trainings/classes.

Department Response: The Department supports KCS in seeking opportunities to collaborate with the community in providing and participating in training around the prevention of suicide, human trafficking, sexual/child abuse and promoting positive parenting. The Department is available to assist with in-service education as requested.

RECOMMENDATION: KCS Panels recommend that staff receive specific education and training regarding human trafficking in Idaho

- a) All staff allowed have access to trainings on how Idaho experiences human trafficking, to allow workers recognize human trafficking, what to look for, and what to do about it, if it is reported or seen.
- b) All group home/shelter staff and counseling staff that may care for Human Trafficking victims, be trained in identifying "brain washing", trauma treatment, and how to be helpful rather than causing re-victimization to youth.

Department Response: The Department recognizes Human Trafficking exists in Idaho and is an egregious crime. The Department also recognizes the difficulties in identifying, tracking, and prosecuting Human Trafficking violations in our criminal justice system. Additionally, there is a lack of services to respond to victims of human trafficking in Idaho and the Department supports increases in community awareness and services for victims of the sex trade. The Department will continue to partner with local advocacy organizations and law enforcement to identify instances of human trafficking and coordinate a response when necessary. The Department will encourage our workers to attend trainings offered in the community regarding the issue of human trafficking. The Department will review its training for social workers around safety assessment and

determine if additional information specific to human trafficking should be incorporated into the existing training. The Department will continue to collaborate with group homes and shelter homes where youth are placed regarding the specific needs of this population on a case by case basis. The individual agencies providing services to youth in these settings are responsible for the training of their personnel. The Department is available to assist with in-service trainings as requested.

IV. COMMUNITY RESOURCE WORKERS

RECOMMENDATION: Legislature designate funding to the school districts to be used for Community Resource Workers in every school district based on need. Establish a venue for collaboration between Health and Welfare and the school districts to determine the need for a Community Resource Worker.

Reason: Panel members continue to support the recommendation for Department Health and Welfare (DHW) and Department of Education to continue efforts to seek dedicated funding for establishing Community Resource Workers in school districts based on need. Community resource workers know what services are available in their communities and how to engage the public in helping to meet those needs. They work with the families and develop plans to meet the needs, including but not limited to: food, clothing, housing, utilities, medical care, and/or child care. Community resource workers often “go the extra mile” to help students and families in need.

Department Response: The Department continues to recognize the excellent services Community Resource Workers offer to families and communities in Idaho. There are currently 22 Community Resource Worker positions throughout the state. These workers continue to have access to \$300,000 in Emergency Assistance funds they can utilize for qualified families in their schools. Unfortunately due to budget constraints, the Department is unable to dedicate funding to allow CRW positions in all schools throughout Idaho or to expand the CRW program. However, Department Navigators do support schools in regions without CRW positions. Navigators also support schools in all regions during the summer months when schools are not open. Navigators are located in all 7 Regions and operate year-round.

V. MEDICAL/HEALTH

RECOMMENDATION: KCS Panel recommends all staff, foster parents and youth be immunized for Pertussis (TDAP booster) within the first month of DHW involvement in the Child Welfare system. Increase access and funding assistance to obtain the booster.

Reason: To protect vulnerable children in foster care from being exposed to Whooping Cough/Pertussis by foster parents, care givers, and social workers.

Department Response: All youth receive a medical exam within 30 days of entering care. The youth's immunization record is reviewed by the physician who determines if immunizations are needed. The Department is taking an educational approach to adult immunization rather than a mandatory immunization approach. The Department provided education on the importance of adult immunizations in general and particularly for foster parents, other care providers and family members spending time with infants. This occurred during the well-being trainings in January 2014. Information has been posted on the IDHW Foster Care Web Site and will include links helping individuals find sources for immunizations. Implementation of the Affordable Care Act is designed to include a focus on prevention including no co-payment or cost-sharing for immunizations for children and adults. District health departments throughout the state offer immunizations for free or on a sliding fee scale.

VI. SYSTEMIC ISSUES

RECOMMENDATION: Assure that HUB wide data analysis of Case Record Review (CRR) is sensitive to the needs of the smaller communities.

Reason: A statistically valid sample will assure that all communities are properly evaluated.

Department Response: The 210 cases reviewed each year are divided up so that we review 98 in-home cases and 112 out of home cases. The 98 cases are distributed amongst field offices and the 112 out of home cases are distributed by the number of children served in foster care in each of the field offices for the previous SFY.

This is a statistically significant, but not a very robust sample. Data from the Case Record Review is currently not reliable below the state and hub. Smaller communities typically have fewer children in care and thus contribute less to the overall picture of how we are doing. Generally smaller communities may contribute only a few cases. It is possible to look at the individual findings of the individual cases, but it may be telling you about an issue related to a specific worker, a specific judge, a specific foster parent, rather than more pervasive issues which you might see if you reviewed all the small community's cases.

Outcome data, on the other hand, is based on every child in the state in foster care. That data can be broken down to the county level so that individual county data can be evaluated. It is also possible to drill down on the county data to case level data when needed.

In summary – CRR data is best used at the state level and can be interpreted at the hub level, but not at the field office or community level. Outcome data is not a sample, but rather measures every child and is the most robust and reliable of the measures that we have.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow regional management the authority to correct data entry errors within thirty days.

Reason: To create a more efficient and accurate data entry.

Department Response: Accurate and timely documentation is paramount to the work completed by social workers. As required by federal law, Idaho maintains a Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS) called iCARE for data collection and electronic filing. The data obtained through iCARE for federal reporting purposes and for continuous quality improvement is dependent on the knowledge and capacity of the individual entering the information. Additionally, the iCARE system contains highly confidential case files which should only be accessed by individuals with case authority or those with a “need to know.” Because the information in iCARE is part of the official case record, information entered into the system should not be altered unless absolutely necessary as doing so otherwise can be considered fraudulent. iCARE users are placed in an access category equal to their level of case accountability to limit potential misuse. With that said, iCARE has identified several areas whereas limitations have been relaxed to allow information to be changed within a limited timeframe by those in the local office with specific user access. Many of these changes have already been implemented.

VII. FOSTER CARE REIMBURSEMENT

RECOMMENDATION: Yearly increase to Foster Care reimbursement rates.

Reason: Idaho is still among the lowest reimbursement for foster care.

Department Response: In 2012, the Joint Finance and Appropriations Committee appropriated \$650,000 to increase the foster care reimbursement rates. The increase in the foster care stipends was a welcome surprise for child welfare. During the 2013 legislative season, Rob Luce, FACS Division Administrator, requested an additional increase from JFAC, and this increase was approved. The increased rates went into effect July 1, 2013, and the increase was made permanent during the 2014 legislative session. There was not a Foster Care reimbursement rate increase requested for the 2014 legislative session.

VIII. COLLABORATION

RECOMMENDATION: Promote KCS Panels from different regions meet together to collaborate, network, and share information during the year and not just at the statewide meeting.

Reason: To share ideas, problem-solve, recruitment ideas and learn more about the entire state rather than just one area. Neighboring regions can benefit from getting together to support a statewide unity.

Department Response: Keeping Children Safe Panels will be given contact information of each panel across the state so that they are able to connect. Keeping Children Safe Department Liaisons will make efforts to reach out to one another so the KCS panels that they represent will have access to one another and the efforts that each panel is working toward. The Keeping Children Safe specialist will make efforts to check in on the progress of this recommendation and offer any support needed to make this recommendation happen. The Keeping Children Safe budget will provide financial assistance for two (2) yearly Hub meetings.

IX. PERMANENCY (ADOPTION)

RECOMMENDATION: Provide information about the number of private adoptions and disrupted adoptions in Idaho.

Reason: The lack of public oversight is a concern; some adopted children may not be placed appropriately.

Department Response: Idaho law identifies the Department of Health and Welfare as the permanent keeper of adoption records. The Department only becomes aware of a private adoption when records related to that adoption are received. It is incumbent upon private adoption agencies and attorneys to provide private adoption records to the Department for storage. Although the majority of private adoption records appear to be delivered for storage, the Department is aware there are many private adoptions which occur where records are not received. There is no mechanism to be able to track such adoptions through the court system. Due to the absence of such a mechanism, it is not possible to identify a definite number of private adoptions which occur in Idaho.

Disrupted adoptions are pre-adoptive placements which end prior to adoption finalization. Dissolved adoptions are situations where adoptive parents return to court to terminate their parental rights following the finalization of an adoption. Requests for computer system changes have been made to the iCARE team which will enable us to collect data on disrupted and dissolved adoptions which have contact with Idaho child welfare. These changes will also provide more detailed information regarding failed adoptive placements such as the type of initial adoption (i.e. private, foster care, international).

**Idaho “Keeping Children Safe”
Regional Panel Activities During 2013**

**Thank you to the following regional
Keeping Children Safe Panel members!**

Region 1

Co-Chair: Verna Gabel, Sandpoint
Co-Chair: Leah Stern, Coeur d’Alene
Will Ross, Coeur d’Alene
Richard Griffin, Cataldo
Mary Vail, Sandpoint
Jason Ball, Hayden
Madeline Settle, Hayden
DHW Liaison: Robin Happeny

Region 2

Co-Chair: Doris Ferguson, Lewiston
Co-Chair: Douglas Giddings, White Bird
Lura Abbott, Grangeville
Emilie McLarnan, Moscow
DHW Liaison: Tasha Whitcomb

Region 3

Co-Chair: Tricia Combs, Caldwell
Co-Chair: Carol Lenz, Nampa
Linda Dripps, Caldwell
Christy Thomas, Caldwell
Shannon Jones, Caldwell
Dina Brewer, Boise
Todd Christensen, Boise
Barb Kasel, Nampa
DHW Liaison: Chris Fairchild

Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco, Boise
Sally Hurtuck, Boise
Mary Stackle, Boise
Colleen Braga, Boise
Andrea Gillman, Boise
DHW Liaison: JoLyn Knight

Region 5

Chair: Midge Fisher, Twin Falls
Lorie Stewart, Twin Falls
Donna Bohrn, Twin Falls
Kim Martin, Twin Falls
Terry Waitley, Twin Falls
DHW Liaison: Jamie Stoker

Region 6

Chair: Oliver Samora, Pocatello
James Elbrader, Pocatello
Irene Samora, Pocatello
Donna Boe, Pocatello
Peggy Haskins, Pocatello
Robert Stites, Pocatello
Amanda Hadley, Support, Pocatello
DHW Liaison: Shawna Miller

Region 7

Co-Chair: Gene Lund, Idaho Falls
Co-Chair: Jerry Johnson, Idaho Falls
Julie Hill, Rexburg
Renee Hill, Idaho Falls
Melinda Drowns, Rigby
Shane Boyle, St. Anthony
Eileen Hancy, Rexburg
Diane McLeod, Support
DHW Liaison: Caprice Miller

Region 1

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

- Andi Hall, Supervisor of the Coeur d'Alene "In-Home" team gave a presentation to the Panel about how "In-Home" child welfare cases are different from traditional Child Welfare cases, to include the strengths and limitations of this classification.
- Leah Stern (Co-Chair) participated in a Selection Committee for a legally free child.
- Safety Assessment and Case Management teams from Coeur d'Alene presented, in detail, a high-profile case from the beginning to about 6 months in.
- Permanency Team Supervisor, Maggie Morrison, presented on the DHW process for adoption.
- The newly appointed DHW Regional Director for North Idaho, Joyce Broadsword, attended a meeting.
- Shawn Walsh, attorney for North Idaho CASA, visited with the Panel about CASA-Department rule changes that went into effect on 7/1/13.
- Alice Grannis, Idaho Home School Association, met with the Panel to answer questions about the assurances of a home-school education.

Goals:

- Broaden knowledge and advocate for more resources available to youth aging out of care.
- Continue learning about efforts and practice that engages pregnant women whom have a history and/or currently are abusing substances during pregnancy.
- Add a member to the Panel from the Benewah/St. Maries area.

Region 2

Speakers/Participation:

Region II panel has been in transition, due to retirement of liaison and departmental changes. Major emphasis had been on recruiting panel members. Although Region II encompasses five North Central Idaho Counties (Latah, Nez Perce, Idaho, Clearwater, Lewis), panel members are only from Nez Perce, Idaho, and Latah Counties. Most panel members reside in either Nez Perce or Latah Counties. To adequately reflect the region, additional panel members are needed from Clearwater and Lewis Counties.

During this year, panel members listened to several speakers sharing various topics. Among the speakers were community resource workers, representative from one child one church, adoption specialists and independent living counselor. Panel members followed a case from foster care to adoption.

Goals:

- Working on recruitment and rebuilding with the new liaison.
- At the next meeting will jump start some ideas and create a focus for the group

Region 3

Speakers/Participation/Goals:

- The panel is still working on fine tuning what they want to accomplish in their region. They have been going over what the department does with new members and learning about standards and getting the panel ready for the Case Review progress.
- The panel wants to focus on recruitment, re-establishing goals, giving assignments, and independent living youth. They are looking at policies and looking at more in depth recommendations.

Region 4

Activities:

This year we returned to meeting monthly. However, we did not meet for several months during the summer.

The activities during the meeting included:

- Adoption Placement
- Fatality Reviews
- Field Shadowing with staff

During this past year the panel has invested considerable time determining how the Region IV panel will function in the Hub environment. We were concerned that there were negative impacts to the program delivery resulting from:

- Region IV staff moving to Central Intake
- Staff being reassigned to the Caldwell office from Boise office
- Change in the upper management of the Region
- Implementation of the new web based program that did not provide management feedback initially

To that end the panel attempted to look at the historic CQI reports to determine a baseline for programmatic delivery by looking at key elements of the reports. The plan was to develop a statistical rolling average over several years for the purpose of conducting a trending analysis. Our hypothesis was that by looking back several years we would be able to identify trends in program delivery either positive or negative. The assumption was that the impacts to program delivery noted above may not be manifested immediately but may take time to show up. The more we worked on developing the assessment tool the more it became clear that the movement toward “Hubbing” was effectively removing the “bright line” between the Regions III and IV. The ultimate goal, as we understand it, is that the program delivery in the Western Hub will be a unified delivery system and one would not be able to tease out of the data specifics for Region IV. After going through this

process it became evident for programmatic issues it is imperative that the two panels must be combined. This does not in any way indicate that the identity of the panels needs to be erased. It means that our programmatic oversight functions needed to be combined. There are still unique needs within each office of the Western Hub that are best served by a local group of citizens.

Goals:

We will seek to combine our efforts for programmatic oversight with those of the panel based in the Caldwell office of the Western Hub. Our goal would be to meet face to face once or twice per year and to meet via teleconference as frequently as needed to provide appropriate mandated programmatic oversight. The issue will be to establish a time when this can happen.

The panel has identified that there is a growing need to participate in permanency groups, fatality reviews and a variety of groups in support of the Boise office of the Western Hub.

The panel will participate in the CQI as our availability allows.

The panel will seek opportunities to participate in training events

Region 5

Activities/Participation:

In 2013 the Region 5 panel participated in the following activities:

1. Trip to Pocatello to tour the PWCC with Region 6 Panel
2. Trip to Twin Falls County Safe House to tour their facility
3. Trip to family reunification Drug Court to learn about that process
4. Meeting with Region 5 Navigators to learn about how they serve the community
5. Review of Drug court case; studying assessments and documentation process
6. Signed and mailed Christmas cards to all Region 5 Foster parents thanking them for their work.

Goals:

1. Recruiting new members, build panel to 10-12 members.
2. Building relationships with regional staff, better learn what staff do, pressures they are up against

3. Taking advantage of new learning opportunities related to the Child Welfare system for KCS panel members.

Region 6

2013 Accomplishments/Activities/Goals

- The Region VI Keeping Children Safe Panel of 2013 focused on learning more about human trafficking, legal representation for social workers, and child abuse.
1. Shawna Miller presented a video about the process of reporting child abuse. What to look for and who to contact.
 2. Matt English gave a presentation regarding Family Treatment Court. He gave an overview of the different types of drug courts in our surrounding area. He stated that 82% of participants in drug court stay drug –free.
 3. Panel members visited Bannock House to talk with the children there.
 4. Three foster parents presented to the panel how they feel about being a foster parent. We documented what they would like to see changed: the foster parents stated they would like the Department to make the parents prove they want their children back. They would like to see the child have rights prenatally, and changes made to the stipulation of the 15-month termination rule by taking into consideration the child's best interest.
 5. The panel was informed about foster children taking mood altering medications. Foster children are more likely to be on these types of medication due to trauma they have experienced. The administration of these medications needs to be closely monitored.
 6. A presentation was give on human trafficking by Kimberly Wacaster from ISU It included information about victims of labor and sexual trafficking, both forced and bonded. Goals included identifying who may be a trafficker and who may be being trafficked.
 7. INTRODUCTIONS: The Region V panel attended the meeting in order to go with Region VI to the women's prison for a tour of the facility. Introductions were made. Shawna Miller asked Region VI's panel if they would like to receive Black Jones' emails.

Goals:

- The panel is looking into helping parents with permanent birth control, making sure it is affordable and making the community aware of it.
- Panel members are continually learning polices and getting to know kids through FYI group.
- Recruiting

Region 7

Speakers/Participation/Goals:

- The panel met early in the year to do strategic planning to identify times, activities, which are beneficial to the panel members, speakers, events, recruitment.
- The panel created a road map of what they wanted to accomplish this year.