

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

**Statewide Annual Report
2014 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 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 17, 2014, 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 2014."

Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2014 Recommendations

I. FOSTER PARENTS

RECOMMENDATION: Increase reimbursement rate for foster care providers, and money for training and support services.

Reason: Panel members learned that foster care providers did receive a rate increase this past year. However the current rate is still far below the national average. Consequently, we believe another increase for foster care providers is necessary.

Department Response:

The Department has not requested an increase for the Foster Care reimbursement rate since 2013. The Department has reviewed and updated our policy in regards to our annual Foster Care Maintenance Rates review process. Our hope is to utilize a more structured formula that will provide additional, essential information to Idaho's legislature for further advocacy to increase the reimbursement rates in the near future.

Nationally Idaho continues to remain the 48th state for the lowest foster care maintenance rates. Idaho's current foster care maintenance rates continue to range between 40% and 50% below the estimated cost of caring for a child.

RECOMMENDATION: Foster parents will become more trauma-informed to best serve the needs of foster children in their care.

Reason: To support the ability of foster parents in this learning, provide them with a stipend to help them arrange appropriate care for their foster children so they may attend ongoing Department approved training on trauma-informed care.

Department Response:

In August 2014, the Department collaborated with the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center, Eastern Washington to roll out the *Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma: A Workshop for Resource Parents* training across the state, this training is offered in each Hub. The curriculum was developed through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. The curriculum included how to:

- Respond more effectively to the behavioral and emotional challenges of traumatized children;
- Assist traumatized children in developing healthy attachments;
- Assist traumatized children in recognizing and developing their strengths;
- Assist traumatized children in developing the coping strategies necessary to develop into healthy and functional adults; and

- Take care of yourself and seek support from others.

In addition, Eastern Washington University was fortunate in securing a trauma-informed keynote speaker, Helene Timpone, LCSW, for our 2015 Annual Resource Family and Social Worker Conferences for each Hub. Helene is a recognized therapist trainer, coach and consultant who specializes in areas of attachment, grief and trauma. Her expertise is in empowering parents with information and techniques focused on understanding and identifying the trauma that lies beneath the child's severe behaviors, creating long-term healing and enhancing close healthy relationships. All Idaho's licensed foster/adoptive parents were personally invited to attend these trainings and conferences.

Idaho continues to understand the ongoing need to ensure our resource parents are provided with a variety of opportunities to further their knowledge and skills related to a trauma informed system of care. Idaho provides resource parents opportunities to access trauma-informed trainings/education, which may occur in a variety of venues including a Training and Support group, annual trainings, annual Resource Family and Social Worker conferences or through mentoring/coaching with Recruitment Peer Mentors.

RECOMMENDATION: Ensure each Region has a formalized plan to provide respite care for their foster parents. This will include availability of respite providers, payment issues, etc. Present each new/current foster parent with this plan, in writing, and encourage them to use respite when needed.

Department Response:

The Department has identified the need to expand and create opportunities for our foster parents to access respite. The Department in collaboration with Eastern Washington University is currently reviewing various respite practices and concepts to further incorporate this into our practice. Recruitment coordinators are diligently working on ensuring foster parents are connected with other supports and foster parents as they complete PRIDE. The hope is to connect newly licensed foster parents with each other to utilize resources, such as respite.

II. POST ADOPTION SERVICES

RECOMMENDATION: The panel recommends that the Department fund statewide post adoption and permanency programs for children and families that had received services through the Department for adoption and guardianship planning. This would be financially funded and structurally supported by the Department.

Reason: Adoptive children and adoptive parents are returning to the Department after "failed" adoptions and guardianships needing services again.

Department Response:

The Department recognizes the need to provide post-permanency services for children and families. Portions of federal funding received by the Department including PSSF-Adoption Funds and Adoption and Guardianship Incentive Payments as well as a percentage of cost savings realized from the implementation of Fostering Connections IV-E adoption assistance eligibility processes have been identified as possible funding sources. Work is being done with Financial Support Services and iCARE to develop avenues to clarify the amount of funds available. In the fall of 2015, a post-permanency support workgroup is expected to meet to begin the process of defining services statewide.

In the spring of 2015, permanency teams were informed of the upcoming workgroup. Workgroup participants are in the process of being identified and will include representatives from each region. Plans are to include individuals from a variety of positions within the child welfare program such as social workers, supervisors, chiefs, and program specialists. Community participation will be sought from adoptive parents, adoptees, and treatment providers. The Children's Mental Health program will also be invited to participate.

III. VISTA WORKERS

RECOMMENDATION: During the time that the Vista workers have been in our region we have seen increased collaboration with the community to recruit and retain foster parents and increased donations from the community to support foster families. A Vista worker can ask the community for donations of goods and services which is something that the Health and Welfare Employees cannot do.

The downside of the Vista workers was the low pay and the turnover. The turnover resulted in lost momentum within the community and the need to re-establish relationships. We would recommend that the concept of a community worker similar to the tasks of the Vista workers be permanently established within the Department of Health and Welfare. We would suggest the following as possible options to accomplish the recommendation.

- 1. Seek a Decision Unit from the Idaho Legislature for a Social Worker for each region plus a supervisor. Estimated cost would be about \$300,000.**
- 2. Consider a fund shift from within the department to pay for the social workers to implement the program. In this case the staff would be similar to the Recruitment Peer Mentors (\$15/hour).**
- 3. Modify the project to an AmeriCorp project which requires a minimum number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE's) so this program would require 11 FTE to include a manager for an additional \$65,000. The staff would be distributed with 2 in Boise and 1.5 in each region. Total anticipated cost \$125,000 to start.**

4. **Continue the Vista project with a new cost of \$77,000. However, there is hidden management cost of an estimated \$100,000 because someone has to oversee the Vista workers.**
5. **Contract out the collaborative services by taking the current \$77,000 that is in the Vista program and provide additional monies.**

Department Response:

The Department recognizes the strengths, successes, barriers and challenges with the AmeriCorps VISTA program. The Department also recognizes the need to create sustainability and the importance of having a stable consistent individual in the VISTA position, especially since the program primarily functions off the relationships built with our community members. At this time, due to budget limitations and information based off our programmatic development assessment the Department has continued the current AmeriCorps grant for a fourth year. Our hope in the fourth year is to strengthen the foundation of our program and focus on some rebranding. At this time the Department would like to see the development of a contract to continue the program, a contract would assist in mitigating the constant turnover, strengthening our community relationships and the program as a whole.

One Church One Child has been contracted out to Eastern Washington University (EWU) upon the completion of our AmeriCorps project and/or VISTA service terms. These services are included in a statewide recruitment and retention contract that includes the Recruitment Peer Mentor program and training Idaho's resource parents. The Department is currently working closely with EWU on transitioning the program to ensure a smooth transition.

IV. RECRUITMENT PEER MENTORS

RECOMMENDATION: The Recruitment Peer Mentors were a valuable asset to the stability of the Resource parent program. The Recruitment Peer Mentors were there to help with new, often struggling, resource parents through those difficult first months. This program helped provide stability and prevented turnover of resource parents. Reimplementation of this program will help with resource parent recruitment and retention. It would also help create stable placements and therefore reduce disruption and additional placements for the children. This stability would be to the benefit of the Case Workers by allowing them to focus on working with the children in a stable placement rather than working with a child that has been disrupted.

Department Response:

In the fall of 2013, a statewide assessment was completed regarding Idaho's resource parent recruitment and retention. The assessment focused on strengths, barriers, and areas to improve our practice. Retention and support of our current licensed foster parents was identified as an area that needs attention.

Currently, the Department in collaboration with our contract through Eastern Washington University is piloting a shift in the North Hub from our current RPM program; shifting the focus from recruitment to providing support and mentoring for our newly licensed foster parents at the time of placement. The pilot also allows for mentoring to occur with foster parents who may be facing challenges or difficulties with a placement. With this pilot shift we are relying solely on the One Church One Child program to focus on recruitment of foster/adoptive parents. We are gathering data and assessing the pilot to help determine the strengths, barriers and any pit falls prior to moving forward with a statewide shift.

V. ONE CHURCH ONE CHILD

RECOMMENDATION: Encourage OCOC to work with churches to formalize a plan to provide for responsible adults willing to supervise children when they attend a church of their choice. (When they want to attend their own church, and it is different from the one the foster parents attend)

Department Response:

This naturally falls within our objectives of OCOC. The Department will continue to work with social workers and VISTA's to encourage communication and further assist children in foster care in maintaining their connections to their home church.

VI. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

RECOMMENDATION: Re-examine confidentiality laws to possibly broaden the scope of who can receive CPS information/what can be disclosed, to allow for better communication with service providers and the community.

Department Response:

Confidentiality of child protection records is addressed in federal and state law as well as further clarified in Idaho Administrative Rule and CFS practice Standard. For purposes of considering what information can/should be released and to whom the most useful sources are

IDAPA 16.05.01 Use and Disclosure of Department Records
<http://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/16/0501.pdf>

and the CFS Standard: Confidentiality
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/CWStandard-Confidentiality.pdf>

A review of these sources indicates case and child specific information is to be held in high confidentiality however information which is in the child's best interest to be disclosed as "minimally as necessary," can/should be disclosed to both internal and external individuals who have a "need to know".

In 2013 a review of child protection confidentiality policies was conducted and IDAPA 16.05.01 was amended to include section 16.05.01.210 Child Protection, to clarify and specify information which can be released regarding child fatalities and near fatalities. This section while in accordance with federal and state law, allows for public disclosure of certain information in specific cases.

Additionally there is a FACS Policy being drafted regarding Safeguards on the Use and Disclosure of Information. The purpose of this proposed policy is to further clarify the use and disclosure of information to both ensure the safety and well-being of children, parents, and families, and also maintain compliance with federal IV-E, IV-B, and Social Security Act requirements. The Department has finalized this policy.

VII. EDUCATION/SCHOOLS

RECOMMENDATION: The Department of Health and Welfare will provide ongoing training and resources to foster parents regarding educational concerns of children and youth in foster care and the rights and responsibilities of foster parents in general and special education systems including: school enrollment, IEP and 504 education plans, requesting administrative absences for court hearings, counselor and educator awareness of children and youth in foster care enrolled in their school, and foster care support using Recruiter Peer Mentors (RPM's).

Reason: Resource parents have a tremendous responsibility of overseeing the education of children and youth placed in their homes, we would like to see ongoing training and information about resources and support them in this role.

Department Response:

IDHW provides resource parents with a "school letter" when a child is placed in their home, this letter indicates the role the resource parent plays in the child's education. The letter is a resource that is given to both the resource parent and the school. The school letter allows the school to know who to reach out to and include in school needs and activities. In addition to the letter when a child is placed in foster care an "Alternate Care Plan" is created that lists educational records and needs of each child. Resource parents are given a copy of this for their records in an effort to best address the educational needs of the children in their homes. IDHW encourages foster parents to play an active role in the educational needs of the children placed in their home. It is also very important that the social worker assigned to the child play an equally participatory role with children in school. The team of resource parent, social worker, school, and biological parent is crucial for children to be successful in school. A refresher training is going out to the Regions.

RECOMMENDATION: Schools will follow all written and verbal recommendations of mental health professionals, rather than the use of restraints, seclusion and/or aversive behavior techniques currently used by some educational systems.

Reason: In an effort to provide consistent mental health services for children and youth in their school settings and to avoid further traumatization, we would like to see the professional recommendations followed.

Department Response:

The State Department of Education (SDE) is the entity responsible for all policies regarding practices within schools. DHW participates in the Special Education Advisory Panel as an advisory member. DHW is available to provide trainings or consultation to the SDE as requested, but has no authority to establish policy or enforce policies within the school district. DHW supports the KCS panel in engaging the SDE in providing recommendations regarding the mental health of school age children.

The position of the department is always to support the efforts of appropriate mental health care of foster children and relies on the cooperative effort of the case worker and the local school representative.

RECOMMENDATION: The Department will contact and collaborate with the State Department of Education and State mental health professional associations to develop and recommend trauma informed protocols and practices for children and youth in foster care within the public school system.

Reason: Because there are several agencies that may impact protocols and practices for foster children and youth, within the public school system; we would like to see collaborative efforts to provide for meeting their needs in creating and maintaining a safe learning environment.

Department Response:

DHW participates in collaborations with SDE and other mental health professionals on an on-going basis. Children's Mental Health (CMH) is in the process of bringing together community partners including the SDE, to implement a trauma 'screening tool' based on the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) that schools and parents could use. The screening tool would indicate if the child should be referred for a mental health assessment. The tool has not been developed at this time as this collaboration is in its early stages. CFS will continue to work with CMH to communicate best practices regarding trauma informed systems of care.

VIII. BACKGROUND CHECKS

Background checks for foster parents and service providers

RECOMMENDATION: Submit a recommendation to the Department of Health and Welfare regarding background checks for those applying for positions of special trust (both DHW employees and agencies that provide contract services).

❖ **Steps:**

- **Form a committee, including KCS Panel members, to review the criteria to qualify for these positions of special trust.**
- **Because of the distances involved and the necessity to involve representation from each of the hubs, that telecommunication would be a useful tool for the committee meetings.**
- **The committee will report their findings and suggestions back to the KCS Panel, for consideration of a recommendation to the Department of Health and Welfare by the whole KCS Panel.**

Reason: Concern that individuals who would represent a risk to the children of Idaho are passing our current background check decision rubric. Additionally, the current rubric does not meet the expectations of the citizens of Idaho.

Department Response:

The Department fully supports KCS in creating a committee to gain knowledge regarding the state and federal laws, internal structure, and due process requirements of DHW background checks.

A Video Conference meeting took place between Region 7 and Fernando Castro of the Criminal History Unit.

1. The Background checks are Criminal History Checks
2. The division that performs these is very efficient and well manned.
3. The Criminal History Check does not get updated as long as the person is employed at the same agency.

This topic will continue to be researched, study and further clarification will be added next year.

Establish Background Certification System

RECOMMENDATION: Establish a system of Background Certification that would be self-funding.

- **Step 1. Require fees. Background Certification would be funded by an initial fee (approximately \$35 or greater) and renewal (approximately \$15) every five years.**
- **Step 2. Develop a four tier system, which would be based on both the depth of the background check and the level of trust required. Employment positions could specify the Background Certification Level necessary for the applicant to hold.**
- **Step 3. Provide additional endorsements, such as “Transportation” for those applicants seeking a position where transporting children would**

happen. For endorsements additional standards would be required, for example a clean driving record and no substance abuse.

Reason: A background check has little meaning if it was conducted many years ago or if does not include checking in states of previous residences or visitation. Additionally, the subject may clear a narrow range of checks, while other significant danger signals are present, but not investigated.

- It is important to develop the four tier system because some associated public and private agencies use their own rubric of what a background check standard should be, or they go by “gut feeling”.

Benefits:

- By having a clearly defined system of certification, public trust in the Department of Health and Welfare, and their contracted agencies, will increase.
- The certification system would place the majority of cost for the background check on individuals, much the same as other certification and license costs.
- Other agencies, companies or school districts might choose to require this certification, further lowering the overall cost to the Department.
- Provide a contact point for law enforcement, the courts and other concerns to report potential issues about individuals holding positions of trust.
- Renewals every five years would insure that certificate holders would continue to have clean records.
- This system will provide a process where certification could be withdrawn, when evidence that the certificate holder no longer meets the standards of her/his certificate level.

Department Response:

Background checks are stringently regulated by both state and federal law as well as human resource policies and protections for positions requiring background checks. Any changes to current policies which regulate background check processes or requirements would require a legislative act and would impact multiple agencies’ policies. The Department encourages the KCS panel to research a cost benefits analysis of a multi-tiered background check system and certification process and determine if the outcomes for children are positively correlated with increased structure to background check clearances. Extensive research on outcomes, human resource policies, due process, and fiscal impact which includes estimates of increased personnel must be part of any proposed legislation.

**Idaho “Keeping Children Safe”
Regional Panel Activities During 2014**

**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
Susan Waddell, St. Maries
DHW Liaison: Stacy White

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

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

Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco, Boise
Mary Stackle, Boise
Andrea Gillman, Boise
Dorothy Douglas, Boise
Lisa Stavers, Boise
Melissa Ruth, Boise
DHW Liaison: JoLyn Sellin

Region 5

Chair: Midge Fisher, Twin Falls
Lorie Stewart, Twin Falls
Donna Bohrn, Twin Falls
Kim Martin, Twin Falls
Terry Waitley, Twin Falls
Susan Baisch, Twin Falls
Sharon Johnson, Jerome
Mariana Fieraru, Twin Falls
Lindee Hendrix, 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
Bobbie Branch, Pocatello
Evelyn Robinson, 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
Sally Hildebrandt, Idaho Falls
Diane McLeod, Support
DHW Liaison: Caprice Miller

Region 1

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

- Visit to the new Child Advocacy Center
- Caseworker visits throughout the year to discuss aspects of safety and case management
- Visit to Sequel of Hayden a residential treatment facility
- Visit to Day Break Canyon a residential treatment facility
- Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (violence)
- Several panel members became CRR trained

Goals:

- Explore the hiring wage for social workers coming in to the department.

Region 2

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

- Discussed community resource workers – remain supportive of them.
- Heard Independent Living speaker.
- Focused on trauma therapy and safety – determined to study related issues.
- Discussed trauma based care. Some members attended trauma based care training sessions.
- KCS member participated in child fatality reviews.
- Field trip to North Idaho Children’s Home – Interacted with facilitator, toured facility, learned about education and activities for residents.

Goals:

- Determine stake holders and build relationships between panel and stake holders.
- Recruit new panel members from stakeholder community.
- Support trauma informed care for families.

Region 3

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

Members were active on a Sibling Placement. Participated at the Fall and Spring Conferences, Strategic Planning for deliberate engagement in the community and support positive change while assisting the State partnerships and authentic collaboration to form recommendations. Invited members from Region 4 to present at the meeting on Independent Living, Family Advocates programs which include Baby Steps and Home Visiting, and preparing and formulating recommendations.

Goals:

- Goals for the coming year to establish a community partnership with the School Districts and providing ways for the Department of Health and Welfare and School Districts to obtain Trauma Informed Care to all social workers within the Idaho School Systems through Community Workshops

Region 4

Activities:

- During this year we have added three new members to the Panel.
- Lisa Stavers is a licensed social worker, working as an interpreter for Spanish speaking families. She has a passion for cultural diversity.
- Melissa Ruth is a licensed counselor and works with the Idaho Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence.
- Dorothy Douglas retired in 2006 from Alaska's Division of Family and Youth Services, and worked primarily with youth transitioning through IL program

The activities during the meeting included:

- Adoption Placement
- Fatality Reviews
- Field Shadowing with staff
- Attending Academy
- Child Welfare Trauma Training
- One Church One Child

Goals:

- Identify and install a new chair for the panel.
- Continue recruitment for additional panel members.
- 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/Speakers/Participation:

In 2014, our panel had a goal of recruiting more members, which paid off with the addition of 4 new members, giving us 8 active members at this time. In 2014 as a panel we conducted a staff poll, asking about the work and getting their concerns and suggestions. We attended field trips to the JCC center in St. Anthony and to the Academy Ranch residential facility in Weston. We met with the Navigators to explain more about their program and we held a Christmas party, where we signed Christmas cards for all of the regional foster parents. Our liaison also

represented Idaho and Region 5 at the National Conference in Atlanta, which was a wonderful experience.

Goals:

We want to learn more about staff concerns, more about local resources available to the child welfare program and also more about the CRR/CF SR program for quality improvement that Idaho has.

Region 6

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

Goals:

Region 7

Activities/Speakers/Participation:

- Conducted eleven case reviews.
- Conducted a fact-finding review of the Juvenile Corrections Center at St. Anthony. This included a tour of the facility, meeting with the director, interviews with staff and resident children.
- Established a standard for expected KCS member attendance.
- Field-tested a more defined schedule of meetings and agendas for each meeting.
- Developed a new high interest agenda system with specific goals to maintain member interest and involvement.
- Following Caprice Miller's leadership, the panel embraced an improved case review practice.

Goals:

- To continue to develop membership.
- Continue developing a strong agenda to maintain member interest and participation.
- Investigate further the background check system.
- Continue development and refinement of the improved case file review system.