



*KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE*  
*2016-2017*  
*ANNUAL REPORT*

Idaho's Citizen Review Panel

Statewide Annual Report & Recommendations

## Idaho's "Keeping Children's Safe" Panels

Recognizing the importance of public participation and community engagement, beginning in 1995 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) 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 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 elected to call themselves "Keeping Children Safe" (KCS) 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. In the fall of 2017, the statewide group elected to change their name to the "Idaho Citizen Review Panel" (ICRP) in an effort to promote community awareness, context, and alignment with their mission.

There are approximately sixty Keeping Children Safe Panel members in Idaho. Once a year, they meet 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 14, 2016, 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 2016 Statewide Annual Report and Recommendations*.

## Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2016 Recommendations

### *Funding Request for Relatives as Parents*

#### **Recommendation:**

**Child and Family Services to seek a funding source to provide Independent Living resources to Relatives as Parents (RAP) families.**

#### **Reason:**

Funding help for this group of caregivers is limited. This funding resource could reach out to community groups that work with RAP families to be knowledgeable about what resources are available to these families. This funding would also provide opportunities for RAP providers to access skilled Independent Living workers to provide assistance to youth to gain life skill experiences. Adolescents being raised by kinship providers (typically grandparents) are not receiving the benefit of Independent Living skills like youth in foster care.

#### **Department Response:**

Idaho's definition of foster care and eligibility requirements were developed to ensure Idaho provides services to support youth in care and during the transition to adulthood, as well as comply with federal requirements. The federal requirements regarding the use of this funding are very clear that funding and services can only be directed to youth who have been in foster care and are at risk to remain in care through adulthood. The intent is to recognize that both statewide and nationally, outcomes for these youth are significantly dismal compared to their counterparts in the general population. A major component to the disparity in outcomes is lack of connection with supportive adults who can teach, model, and support youth throughout their lives in developing the skills necessary to become successful adults. Below are the federal and subsequent state regulations and definitions surrounding the services and supports that can be provided using federal Chafee Foster Care Independence Program funds.

The Idaho Independent Living Program operated by the Department of Health and Welfare, Division of Family and Community Services, Child and Family Services Program is fully federally funded through the John H. Chafee Foster Care Independence Program by Sec 477 of the Social Security Act. As such, states, including Idaho, must adhere to the requirements provided by the Social Security Act.

#### *Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Standard for Working with Older Youth*

To be eligible for Independent Living Services in Idaho, youth must meet all the following criteria:

- A youth must be, or have been, the responsibility of the State or Indian Tribe through a court order.
- Only youth between the ages of 14 to 21 years are eligible for services and use of funds through the independent living program.

- A youth must have resided in an eligible placement setting which includes foster care, group care, an Indian boarding school, or similar foster care placement and excludes extended home visits including extended stays with a non-custodial parent (parental care in iCARE), protective supervision, in-patient hospital stays, detention facilities, forestry camps, or other settings primarily designed for services to delinquent youth.
- A youth must have resided in an eligible foster care setting for ninety (90) cumulative days after their 14<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- Room and board services are available only to IL eligible youth who have aged out of foster care settings upon reaching the age of 18, but have not yet reached the age of 21.
- If a youth is found eligible for independent living services and subsequently reaches legal permanency status of adoption or guardianship, the youth remains eligible for independent living services until age 21.
- Independent Living eligible youth with legal permanency status of adoption or guardianship on/or after the 16<sup>th</sup> birthday or who age out of foster care are eligible for the Education and Training Vouchers (ETV).

**Funding Request for Temporary Assistance Families in Idaho (TAFI) Funding Concerns**

**Recommendation:**

**Child and Family Services should request the Self-Reliance Program review how the funding is calculated regarding relative caregivers. This review should include the eligibility requirements and request for an increase in the amount of the grant.**

**Reason:**

Many of the Relatives as Parents families are living off their limited Social Security Income, and do not have the financial means to care for these children on an ongoing basis, let alone any additional needs the youth/children will need. Eligibility requirements that need to be addressed include:

- \$309 per month no matter how many children the relative is raising.
- Terminally ill parents cannot be in the home if the RAP family is caring for a child, even though the parent may need that assistance from family as well.
- If the youth gains employment, the funding will be reduced or eliminated based on the assumption the youth will provide income to the overall family.
- Barriers RAP/caregivers face when applying for the grant.

**Department Response:**

Temporary Assistance for Families in Idaho (TAFI) is available to eligible children who reside with a caretaker relative. A caretaker relative is an adult relative other than a parent who has an eligible related child residing with them and who is responsible for the child's care. Caretaker relatives may choose whether to be included in the grant. For child-only cases, only the child's income is counted and TAFI time limits do not apply to relative caretakers. A caretaker relative not included in the grant does not have TAFI work activity requirements, since he is not a family member; however, all caretaker relatives included in the TAFI grant must meet participation requirements for work activities. Caretaker relatives not included in the grant are encouraged to

complete all the Child Support Services (CSS) referral forms, but are not required to cooperate with CSS. A caretaker relative who is included in the grant must cooperate with Child Support Services to identify and locate the non-custodial parent, establish paternity, and establish, modify and enforce the child support order, unless good cause exists.

### **Funding Request for Resource Peer Mentors**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Increase funding for Resource Peer Mentors (RPMs) to have more hours available per month.**

#### **Reason:**

Resource Peer Mentors are invaluable and the work they do through recruitment and retention is a big help. More of their services are needed.

#### **Department Response:**

Resource Peer Mentors are instrumental to Child and Family Services' recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive parents. Since we have enhanced the mentoring program statewide to provide mentoring at initial placement, at times of crisis, and/or during grief and loss, we have seen improved satisfaction from our foster and adoptive parents in the support and navigation of our system. The RPM program is contracted through Eastern Washington University, and any enhancements to the program would require additional funding, as these would accrue additional contractual costs.

The Department has increased funding to support this effort for the last few years. The Department is not currently in a position to increase funding, but continues to look at expanding funding when possible. Each region has a local retention and recruitment plan to support the ongoing work.

### **Improve Case Worker Skills**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Change the Academy trainers from external contractors to Child and Family Services (CFS) employees and use seasoned workers as the trainers. This would require seven new full-time employees (FTEs) for a trainer available in each region. The staff needed must be that rare combination of highly skilled professionals and gifted teacher/motivator.**

#### **Reason:**

Reduce the amount of time workers must wait to have full training available and completed. Increase the practical skills as well as academic skills of new case workers.

#### **Department Response:**

The current Child Welfare Academy schedule allows new staff to be fully trained within six months of employment; prior to or at the time of an employee's completion of probationary

employment status. The training schedule is done in collaboration between the CFS program and the Idaho State University contractors. The Department is incorporating a new model to ensure the timely training of child welfare staff, which embodies adult learning theory and the need for a strong onboarding process and ongoing support. It is advantageous for the Department to utilize our partnership with the university given their expertise in training and curriculum development. In addition, partnering with the university provides the program with a federal funding match; meaning the program does not have to request additional state resources. Additional full-time employees would need to be approved and authorized by the Legislature. Currently, the external contract provides five embedded trainers who work out of all seven regions. The qualifications per the contract include hiring state of Idaho Licensed Master Social Workers with qualifications including, but not limited to: child welfare expertise, understanding the responsibilities associated with child welfare systems, knowledge of Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) guidelines, knowledge of clinical treatment, and working with foster care children.

**Recommendation:**

**Improve on the current Academy to better prepare new social workers for the court process; also, provide this training to all staff as in-service.**

**Reason:**

With the increase of court appearances likely, the importance of efficient presentation is important to the courts. The accurate arrangement and presentation of data and events is important for the best decisions to be made for the benefit of the child.

**Department Response:**

The Workforce Training and Development Program Specialist is currently working with the Idaho State University contract to revise the session of Child Welfare Academy, which addresses the Legal Child Welfare process. This revision will incorporate a level of skills based training that will take place in the mock court hearing format.

**Foster Parent Support**

**Recommendation:**

**Explore additional ways to develop a support system for foster families going through transition.**

**Reason:**

Foster families may need help overcoming grief experienced when a foster child is moved from their home.

**Department Response:**

The Child and Family Services program recognizes many of our foster parents may experience grief and loss due to the transition of a child from their home. We also recognize there are continual improvements we can make to ensure foster parents are respected and supported through this process, ensuring they have the time and resources needed to heal. Our statewide

contract through the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center at Eastern Washington University provides training and support groups that specifically address grief and loss. During the 2016 Annual Resource Parent Conference, breakout sessions were provided which addressed grief and loss. In addition, the Department can assign a Resource Peer Mentor to provide mentoring to a family who may be struggling with grief and loss as a result of a child transitioning from their home. The Department is also able to provide brief therapy support services for families who are interested in accessing this to address grief and loss.

**Recommendation:**

**An E-bulletin to provide a consistent channel for the disbursement of important information to foster parents. Research technology for phone text/email alerts.**

**Reason:**

Licensed foster parents need reminders and updates regarding events, support meetings, training opportunities, legislative updates, and other appropriate information.

**Department Response:**

Continuous communication with foster parents is essential, and we continue to explore opportunities to enhance communication with them regarding support meetings, legislative updates, and practice improvements. Our statewide resource parent recruitment and retention contract through the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center at Eastern Washington University provides statewide and local newsletters and publicizes trainings and updates via local Facebook pages. Foster parents who have email are provided with bi-monthly and quarterly regional/hub and statewide newsletters, respectively, which include information regarding training and support groups, legislative updates, and other information. In some of the rural areas, newsletters are sent out via mail. In addition, if there are legislative updates, letters are mailed out to all licensed foster parents from the Department.

**Recommendation:**

**All foster parents be required to attend at least one foster parent support meeting per year. Foster parents would get credit hours toward their continuing education requirements.**

**Reason:**

Foster parents are very busy and their time is valuable. Many of them may not understand how valuable networking and connecting with fellow foster parents could be through attending a support group. This would not require the foster parent be a permanent member of the group, but it would require that they get a taste of what the group is about and would then leave them better informed as to whether that is the right venue for them to meet other foster parents and receive support.

**Department Response:**

As a result of our Child and Family Services Review Statewide Assessment and a strategy identified in our Performance Improvement Plan, CFS will form a workgroup, including leadership, licensing staff, and foster/adoptive parents across the state, to review and revise ongoing foster/adoptive parent training expectations, including standardizing expectations, and develop a monitoring and tracking mechanism to ensure that hours are completed. This will

include developing written guidance outlining ongoing training expectations for foster/adoptive families, standardizing ongoing training expectations and implementing targeted measurements/evaluation process that assesses the effectiveness of all approved ongoing training curriculum for foster/adoptive parents. Through this process we will look at the importance of ensuring our foster parents are connected with other foster parents, which will include some requirements around attending the foster/adoptive parent training and support groups.

### **Post-adoption Support**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Explore and develop a structure of support for families who have adopted children through the Child and Family Services program.**

#### **Reason:**

Current supports for families who have adopted children through the Child and Family Services program are limited and inconsistent.

#### **Department Response:**

The Child and Family Services program recognizes the need to provide post-permanency services for children and families. In order to identify the needs of children and families after adoption, a post-permanency workgroup was convened and a survey conducted of adoptive parents who receive Idaho adoption assistance benefits. The results of the survey were shared with adoptive families in June 2017. Survey results were compared with feedback from the workgroup to prioritize identified needs and services. Awareness of post-permanency services, on-line information, service coordination/case management, and treatment team coordination services were prioritized, but not able to be provided within Department resources. Child and Family Services is in the process of developing a contract to provide services to meet these needs statewide. Potential funding has been identified.

### **Foster Care/Adopted Children Reform**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Child and Family Services to approach the Idaho Legislature to include children of private adoption and private foster-care in the current reform of the adoption/ foster-care system within the Child and Family Services program. Specifically, new placement decisions and re-homing.**

#### **Reason:**

The desire and efforts to seek the best placement for a child should be uniform for all Idaho children. Each child in Idaho deserves equal rights, as do their foster/adoptive parents.

#### **Department Response:**

Idaho law allows for children to be adopted through public/state agencies (such as Child and Family Services), licensed adoption agencies, or independently through private attorneys.

Families adopting through public/state agencies and licensed adoption agencies are held to the same requirement of prioritizing the needs of a child in making all placement decisions. Independent adoptions do not have the same requirements, as they are not covered under Idaho Administrative Code.

Child and Family Services has created several mechanisms in attempt to identify “re-homing” situations. These include shared communications with our Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children Administrator, Certified Adoption Professionals who conduct home studies for adoptive families, and private adoption agencies. Training and/or training opportunities regarding the topic have been provided to Child and Family Services’ permanency and foster care licensing social workers, private adoption agencies, and Certified Adoption Professionals. Failed adoptions, including “re-homing” situations, are often linked to the preparation families receive prior to adopting, as well as the support they receive afterwards. Therefore, the Post-Permanency Workgroup is exploring opportunities to incorporate all adoptive families in post-adoption supports. This includes families who have adopted through other states’ foster care programs, private agencies, independently, and/or internationally.

### **Parent Resources for Information, Development, and Education (PRIDE) Training**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Investigate how to make PRIDE available to individuals in rural areas, including online, video conference, and in person options.**

#### **Reason:**

Panel members in rural areas feel the need for foster families has hit an extreme crisis.

#### **Department Response:**

Foster parents are exiting our system at or near the same rate they are entering our system. Idaho is struggling with the recruitment and retention of foster families statewide. Since recruitment and retention are interconnected, this is a very complex issue. Recruitment within rural areas of the state is even more challenging and has been an ongoing issue for Child and Family Services. Smaller communities are tightly knit, which makes it very challenging for outsiders to come in, initiate, and build relationships and provide education to communities in need of foster families. Through identifying key leaders, utilizing communities of faith, and much patience, we have begun to see successes in some of our rural areas such as Grangeville and Emmett.

Currently, we can provide PRIDE pre-service training to rural areas when we have sufficient interest. Over the past few years, Child and Family Services, in partnership with the Idaho Child Welfare Research and Training Center at Eastern Washington University, has been exploring the use of hybrid PRIDE pre-service training models. We have spent considerable time preparing to roll out a specific hybrid model, which was piloted in the West Hub for some prospective families from the McCall area. The overall experience and feedback regarding this specific online version were consistently negative, mainly due to the problems accessing the online classes. We determined this specific version did not enhance the convenience for Child and Family Service’s prospective foster and adoptive families and was discontinued. We have been

exploring options through other online versions and anticipate an implementation of the hybrid model by early 2018.

### **Education**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Child and Family Services to work with Behavioral Health and cross-collaborate with the State Department of Education to provide training and consultation to school counselors, therapists, psychologists, teachers, administrators, and other school personnel regarding trauma-informed care.**

#### **Reason:**

On December 31, 2015, Idaho's Behavioral Health Standards Electronic Manual was revised to incorporate trauma-informed care standards, which includes cross-collaborating with other systems of care. Traumatizing experiences can affect children's brain development and behavior. Seclusion and restraint practices re-traumatize children and increase rather than decrease challenging behaviors. School personnel must know how to replace these practices with effective, non-traumatizing practices.

#### **Department Response:**

New federal requirements became effective in December 2016 around the educational stability for children/youth in foster care. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was implemented to further promote educational stability and enhanced well-being for children in care, and identifies how child welfare agencies, local schools, and the Department of Education will collaborate in this endeavor.

The Every Student Succeeds Act outlines how child welfare agencies, local schools, and the Department of Education should collaborate to ensure school staff are sensitive to the complex needs of foster youth, are informed about the impact that trauma has on a child's ability to learn, and that the appropriate interventions and strategies are in place to support them to succeed in school. Child and Family Services has provided collaborative training to some Department of Education staff, federal school program directors, and local school staff members on the impacts of trauma on children and youth in foster care. Child and Family Services will continue to coordinate with the Department of Education on how ongoing training can be provided to school personnel on trauma-informed care.

### **Independent Living Youth**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Include physical health as a major point of emphasis in Independent Living (IL) plans and in work with youth who are preparing to age out of foster care.**

**Reason:**

Learning how to maintain physical health is central to youth being able to live independently. Physical health affects all aspects of one's life, from employment to relationships, education, etc. Youth who do not know how to maintain their health, through adequate exercise and sleep, understanding how and when to seek medical attention, etc. are more likely to struggle in all other aspects of their nascent adult lives.

**Department Response:**

As the Child and Family Services program has increased its understanding of trauma and lifelong impacts of trauma, all aspects of intervention have begun to shift towards ongoing holistic approaches to assisting young people in foster care with understanding the correlation between trauma, mental health, and physical health. Now, the Independent Living program throughout the state recognize the importance of including physical health needs in all aspects of preparing youth for transition to adulthood. The Independent Living program includes the seven Integrated Transition Practice Framework (ITPF) domains which include the following: cultural and personal identify formation, supportive relationships and community connection, physical and mental health, life skills, education, employment, and housing. All seven of these domains are covered through the assessment process (Casey Life Skills Assessment), and are incorporated into each individual youth's Independent Living Plan.

Furthermore, all seven domains are covered in depth in transition planning as well as during progress meetings regarding an individual youth's IL plan. Child and Family Services recognizes this is especially challenging for youth who do not age out but are IL eligible. Case workers and IL coordinators work together with the youth's supportive adults/team to help youth access resources available in the community when this is assessed as an area of need. Examples of assistance includes making referrals to community centers/agency supports, helping with understanding/navigating Medicaid transport, assisting with completing sliding fee scale forms, scholarship forms, and accessing local clinics for regular physical and mental health care support. Additionally, health topics – including physical, sexual, emotional, and mental health – are often discussed during Independent Living Life Skills groups throughout the state.

**Panel Committee Reviews****Recommendation:**

**Management shall invite a Keeping Children Safe panel member to attend all death reviews; sibling separation decisions; staffing of termination of parental rights; adoption selection meetings. If a panel member is not available to attend, they will proceed.**

**Reason:**

Panel members feel they learn from being involved in this process and that they have a different point of view to provide to decision-making process.

**Department Response:**

Child and Family Services has an administrative policy in place regarding child fatality and near fatality reviews which includes language to include individuals who represent the following

professions, disciplines, departments, agencies, and organizations during the reviews: prosecuting attorneys, law enforcement, prosecutors, pediatrician, Keeping Children Safe panel members, and individuals with specific expertise to participate for certain reviews.

Panel members are also welcome and encouraged to attend permanency selection meetings. Practice standards require the participation of a community member (which may include a panel member) for permanency placement meetings when more than one placement being considered, one placement is being considered with the presence of significant social worker concerns, or when the child's relatives or current foster parents may be ruled out.

### **Keeping Children Safe Panel Website/Communication**

#### **Recommendation:**

**The Child and Family Services program to develop a mechanism for members of the community to be able to contact the panel chair directly via a "blind" email address.**

#### **Reason:**

It would allow the community access to the panel. During this past year, members of the community expressed the desire for the development of a way to contact panels, linked from the panel web page.

#### **Department Response:**

Child and Family Services, in conjunction with the Department's Information Technology Services Division (ITSD), can create a central email that the public can access to contact panel members. Child and Family Services will work with the panel members to determine who responds to the emails and when, and how the workflow is managed.

### **Tracking Medication Prescribed for Children in Care**

#### **Recommendation:**

**All long-term medication for children in care should be supplied by a single mail order pharmacy of the Department's choice.**

#### **Reason:**

The Department and the child's physician would easily be able to track the medication history of the child, benefiting in the care of the child. The Department's database system should be configured to contain the diagnosed condition, the doctor who made the diagnosis, the medication by name and amount, and the behavioral effect the medication has on the child.

#### **Department Response:**

Child and Family Services reached out to our partners at Medicaid and Magellan to begin exploring the possibility of utilizing a single mail order pharmacy. There are shown benefits to having one pharmacy; including monitoring and identifying concerns with medication overlap or interaction. The feedback provided by our partners was that the consideration of utilizing a

single mail order pharmacy for children and youth in care should be taken with caution. The stability of the patient can significantly impact the effectiveness of this process. If patients move frequently, then there can be disruptions with the continuity of medication due to changes in addresses and locations. Addresses can frequently be incorrect within internal databases, and will create substantial issues if they are not updated as needed regarding medication delivery. If a mail order pharmacy was in place and the patient's address did not get updated after a move, the patient could easily run out of medications.

Additionally, if a patient has an infection and needs an antibiotic, a mail order would delay the patient from getting their medication in an expedited manner. Additional feedback we received was on the benefits which come with having the ability to have face-to-face communication with a pharmacist; particularly with children and youth in foster care. People are more likely to ask questions if they have direct interaction with a pharmacist rather than through an automated or electronic process.

### **Educational Neglect**

#### **Recommendation:**

**Establish a standard or rubric of what constitutes educational neglect and how case workers can know when they should investigate.**

#### **Reason:**

Educational Neglect is defined in Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1602(31)(d) and is further described in Idaho Code, Title 33, Chapter 2, Section 202. In accordance with IDAPA 16.06.01, Child and Family Services must assign reports of alleged child abuse, neglect, or abandonment for assessment. These reports must meet the definitions of abuse, neglect, or abandonment in Idaho Statute. The Department's *Standard for Intake/Screening* sets forth clear requirements for when a report containing concerns for a child's education meets the definition of "educational neglect" and can be assigned for assessment by a worker. The Department's *Standard for Priority Guidelines* outlines the priority response assigned to reports of educational neglect. Child and Family Services established standardized *Guidelines for the Assessment of Claims of Educational Neglect* for caseworkers who are assigned a report of an allegation of educational neglect.

Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1602

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/Title16/T16CH16/SECT16-1602/>

Idaho Code, Title 33, Chapter 2, Section 202

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/statutesrules/idstat/Title33/T33CH2/SECT33-202/>

IDAPA 16.06.01

<https://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/16/0601.pdf>

Standard for Intake/Screening

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Children/AbuseNeglect/IntakeScreening.pdf>

Standard for Priority Guidelines

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Children/AdoptionFoster/PriorityGuidelines.pdf>

Guidelines for Assessment of Claims of Educational Neglect

<http://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Portals/0/Children/AdoptionFoster/GuidelinesAssessmtClaimsEducationalNeglect.pdf>

**Recommendation:**

**Collaborate with the Department of Education to create a pamphlet to help parents be aware if their child is making adequate progress at the skill levels a child should have during different grade levels in the different subject areas.**

**Department Response:**

Each school district within the state provides resources for the parents and families they serve in the corresponding community. This information details guidance on the knowledge and skills that a child is to attain at each grade level. These guidelines are more specific and tailored to meet the needs of each child within an individual school building. Parents are given expectations of what they should anticipate their child to attain in the classroom. Additionally, parents are encouraged to be engaged with their child at each stage of learning development and continue to practice these skills with their child in the home environment.

**Recommendation:**

**Create a list of successful programs and resources that have curriculum and techniques from the Home School Associations in Idaho for distribution to parents doing home schooling in case they have questions or need expert advice on resources.**

**Department Response:**

As written in the Department's Standards for Intake/Screening; Priority Guidelines; and Guidelines for Assessment of Claims of Educational Neglect, it is not the role of the CFS social worker to evaluate the quality of the instructional materials selected by the child's parent or guardian above what is minimally required, but rather to encourage parents to enroll or provide comparable school instruction. Parents in need of information on homeschool instruction are provided contact information for state and national home education organizations that can provide direction on quality and effective home school curriculum.

**Improve Mental Health Care for Children**

**Recommendation:**

**Increase the number of approved institutions in Idaho that can provide psychiatric residential care with Medicaid reimbursement.**

**Reason:**

By increasing services available within Idaho for children who have mental illness, the stress to Idaho families who are raising a child with mental illness would decrease and could potentially decrease the number of child protection referrals.

Additionally, by having approved Medicaid programs, it will likely encourage the wider range of private treatment care for troubled youth and support of their families.

Idaho Medicaid will not pay for residential treatment in state. This results in most clients in Idaho residential psychiatric care units are from out of state. And Idaho parents must travel to other states to obtain care for their children. Then they must travel back and forth to see their child and participate in the treatment.

**Department Response:**

As part of Child and Family Services' partnership with the Division of Behavioral Health, we are looking at how we can collaborate on the development, implementation, and sustainability of a family-driven, coordinated, and comprehensive children's mental health service delivery system. These efforts are captured under the Youth Empowerment Services project (YES). For more information on the YES project, visit [YES.Idaho.gov](http://YES.Idaho.gov).

**Criminal Background Checks**

**Recommendation:**

**Human trafficking, at any level or form, be considered cause for permanent exclusion or a lifetime disqualifying crime for services involving the youth of Idaho.**

**Reason:**

Human trafficking shows a level of contempt for the welfare of others that is too likely to be repeated in trafficking or other forms of abuse.

**Department Response:**

There is much value in this recommendation, and any individual whose criminal history included a charge related to human trafficking would be of concern in proceeding with licensure as a foster parent. The addition of the disqualifying criminal offense would require collaboration with the Criminal History Unit to propose rule changes, which would require legislative approval to take effect.

## 2016 Regional “Keeping Children Safe” Panel Members

### Region 1

Co-Chair: Verna Gabel, Sandpoint  
Co-Chair: Leah Stern, Coeur d’Alene  
Jason Ball, Hayden  
Madeline Settle, Hayden  
Susan Waddell, St. Maries  
Marilyn Sabella, Sandpoint  
Gary Telebar  
Richard Griffin  
IDHW Liaison: Stacy White

### Region 2

Co-Chair: Doris Ferguson, Lewiston  
Co-Chair: Douglas Giddings, White Bird  
Lura Abbott, Grangeville  
Greg Billups, Weippe  
Carol Parker, Lewiston  
Kim Hemmert, Lewiston  
Linda Scharnhorst, Lewiston  
Mary Edwards, Kendrick  
IDHW Liaison: Chrissy Edmonson

### Region 3

Chair: Alec Pechota  
Linda Dripps, Caldwell  
Christy Thomas, Caldwell  
Shannon Jones, Caldwell  
Todd Christensen, Boise  
Peggy Miller, Nampa  
Edwin Dilone, Caldwell  
Jennifer Collins, Meridian  
Sheena Strickler, Nampa  
Barb Kasel, Nampa  
Andrea Beck, Nampa  
IDHW Liaison: Carol Lenz

### Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco, Boise  
Mary Stackle, Boise  
Andrea Gillman, Boise  
Melissa Ruth, Boise  
IDHW Liaison: Jessica Leekley

### Region 5

Chair: Midge Fisher, Twin Falls  
Lorie Stewart, Twin Falls  
Donna Bohrn, Twin Falls  
Kim Martin, Twin Falls  
Susan Baisch, Twin Falls  
Sharon Johnson, Jerome  
Mariana Fieraru, Twin Falls  
IDHW Liaison: Jamie Stoker

### Region 6

Co-Chair: Peggy Haskin, American Falls  
Co-Chair: Oliver Samora, Pocatello  
James Elbrader, Pocatello  
Irene Samora, Pocatello  
Donna Boe, Pocatello  
Robert Stites, Pocatello  
Evelyn Robinson, Pocatello  
Sharon Bennett, Pocatello  
Harley Bennett, Pocatello  
Amanda Hadley, Support, Pocatello  
IDHW Liaison: Shawna Miller

### Region 7

Co-Chair: Gene Lund, Idaho Falls  
Co-Chair: Jerry Johnson, Idaho Falls  
Renee Hill, Idaho Falls  
Melinda Drowns, Rigby  
Shane Boyle, St. Anthony  
Sally Hildebrandt, Idaho Falls  
Nancy Lopez, Idaho Falls  
Diane McLeod, Support, Idaho Falls  
IDHW Liaison: Caprice Miller

## 2016 "Keeping Children Safe" Regional Panel Activities

### Region 1

#### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- The panel visited with the One Church One Child representative to learn more about this program.
- The panel took a tour of our local adolescent acute hospital setting to learn more about mental health care and assessment in our community.
- The panel took a tour of Union Gospel Mission; a women's treatment facility in Kootenai County that offers mental health and substance abuse treatment.
- The panel met with the local liaison for the Relatives as Parents for the North Hub.
- Several panel members participated in Track B selections, as well a fatality reviews.
- The panel participated in a file review for which they had questions surrounding the outcome of the case.

#### **Goals:**

- Continue to build community relationships and become aware of areas in which the panel can assist.
- Case staffing as needed.
- Continued involvement on Track B's and fatality reviews.
- Attend the ICWA (Indian Child Welfare Act) Conference.

### Region 2

#### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- Resource parent/foster child Christmas party
- Signing and providing Christmas cards to foster parents throughout the region
- Presentation and information from the One Church One child program.
- Review of the IDHW standard regarding the use of psychotropic medications when children are in foster care.
- Tour of the Idaho Youth Challenge Academy in Pierce, Idaho.
- Review of statewide legislative updates.
- Presentation from a parent and Children's Mental Health regarding the Jeff D. lawsuit.
- Interviews with foster parents in the region.
- Case review.

#### **Goals:**

- None provided

### **Region 3**

#### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- Presentation by Susan Dwello regarding safety decisions through the life of the case.
- Presentation by Dr. Terry Morris, NASA Engineer; inspirational presentation on his experience as a survivor of child abuse; event sponsored by Nampa School District.
- Presentation regarding House Bill 522 and House Bill 556.
- Presentation by INsideOut, a non-profit organization, regarding human trafficking in Idaho.
- Panel representation at chart record reviews, fatality reviews, permanent placement selection committee, sibling matrix, proposed legislation video conference call, community resource workers program presentation, title IV-E Waiver update, training video citizen review panel: building expertise through experience series, and resource parents and social worker appreciation picnic.

#### **Goals:**

- Strategic Planning for KCS Panel, Overview of Citizen Review Panel Topics, Integration of Child and Family Service Review process for Case Record Reviews, retention of members

### **Region 4**

#### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- During this year, we have added no new members to the Panel.
- During this year on two occasions we had presentations by Brian and Val McCauley to hear their concerns about the system and their suggestions for changes. Members attended the Idaho House hearing and testified in favor of the bill related to the foster care program.
- The activities during the meeting included adoption placement, fatality reviews, and Child Welfare Trauma Training.

#### **Goals:**

- Elect a new chairperson 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 Case Record Reviews as our availability allows.
- The panel will seek opportunities to participate in training events.

## **Region 5**

### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- In 2016 the Region 5 panel spent a lot of time reviewing cases. We had three separate cases that were reviewed and discussed with the workers assigned.
- We also had foster parents come and speak to the group about some concerns they had with their cases and with the Department.
- The panel invited the IDHW contractor involved with recruitment, retention, and Independent Living to come and speak about all the aspects of training and maintaining quality foster parents and how we could help to prevent some of the turnover that is so frequently seen.
- The panel also held its annual Christmas party where they signed and mailed Christmas cards to all the Region 5 foster parents, thanking them for all their hard work and sacrifice.

### **Goals:**

- To watch the reports coming from the Office of Performance Evaluations and the Foster Care Legislative Interim Committee, to see what happens in the legislature and to continue to learn more about the system to be able to make recommendations that are valuable and current to the needs of the Child Welfare Program.

## **Region 6**

### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- The Region 6 panel has been working on educating themselves on all the legislative changes, such as Independent Living lowering to the age of 14, the financial ramifications of this, the additional benefits to 14-year-old youth, the needs of 14-year-olds that are not being met now, and the process of how this may occur through legislation.
- We are also learning about the Interim Committee and Office of Performance Evaluation committee, both resulting from concerns of foster youth being moved for reasons other than foster parent request, a planned move to return home, or a move to a relative for permanency, and the legal requirements of Child Welfare to seek relative alternatives to foster homes. This new process seems to have overwhelmed the caseworkers, more than the stress they already experience.
- We have seen the new Prudent Parenting Standard and can see great benefit for this change of allowing simple decisions on daily care to be made by the foster parents.
- We continue to review Child Protection case history and have had a birth parent, a few foster parents, and a few foster youth present to our panel.
- We are still trying to gain a clear understanding of the options for foster parents to seek PRIDE classes online, as more foster parents are needed.

### **Goals:**

- For the next year, the Region 6 panel has the goal recruiting more panel members, as we have a few retiring in the next few months.

- We also have the goal of trying to look for changes that may need to be considered for the system.
- We continue to review any changes that will have a positive outcome, while ensuring the changes would not cause more harm than good to the large complicated Child Welfare system.
- We continue to seek education and understanding about the complex feelings and emotions of the youth, the birth parents, and the foster parents, while still confirming the system ensures children are safe throughout the Child Protection case. We often start to review an issue and think we have some ideas or solutions, and then hear the other side of the issue.
- We feel honored to be asked to participate in death reviews or sibling separation committees, and we hope to have the Department continue to request panel members in those meetings.
- We also plan to seek input on an idea generated from the National KCS meeting of having a mentor program for parents with a newly opened Child Protection case. We want to hear from other birth parents that have had an open case as to what they think about this idea and if they would be willing to mentor another family. We also want to hear what staff may think about this idea. We then want to plan a potential process of how this would work and then make the recommendation the Department pilot this program and learn how this could be a great help to the families with an open case.

## **Region 7**

### **Activities/Speakers/Participation:**

- Completed eight case reviews with the original case workers and involved staff; five of the cases were continuations from previous reviews.
- Worked on gathering statistical information about the incidence of children referred for service who were home schooled. This data will be helpful to better understand if some children are “home schooled” to avoid detection of child abuse.
- Investigated the importance of immunization for children in care (and those who are not in care), and the effect of not being immunized on a child’s development.
- Researched the process of background checks and the impact of the perception that earning a background check is certification by the State of Idaho that the individual is trustworthy. We found that the current criminal background check is a well-organized and reliable process that is both efficient and well managed. Our report is attached.
- Participated in three tele-conference trainings. Including one about the organization of work that the Panel undertakes.
- Contributed books about the effects of prescribed medication on children, to the professional libraries of both offices in Region 7.
- Developed an operations statement for consideration by the Panel for adoption.
- Toured the Crisis Center and interviewed the staff about their program and on how CPS could successfully interface with them for the benefit of children.
- Visited, toured the Idaho Falls Behavioral Health Center, interviewed Shawn LaPray, Behavioral Health Services Manager.

- Interviewed a parent whose child has mental health issues. She chronicled the difficulty of getting help for her daughter and struggles the family has faced because of the lack of psychiatric inpatient care in Idaho.
- Attended the Annual Foster Parent Conference at Fort Hall.
- Participated in a teleconference concerning reform of the foster care system, sponsored by the IDHW Central Office.
- Attended one of the statewide hearings concerning revision of the criteria used by the Criminal Background Check Department.

**Goals:**

- Investigate depression and suicide of children in care verses children in the general population.
- Develop more information to clearly differentiate situations when there is educational neglect. From this information, formulate recommendations to the Department.
- Continue in-depth and longitudinal case studies.
- Review the use and effect of the new stress measurement instrument (CANS) the Department has developed.
- Formulate recommendations of how the IDHW can retain skilled and highly qualified staff.
- Investigate abuse by “trusted authority figures” and what can be done to stop this.
- Increase knowledge of pre-natal drug exposure.
- Train panel members about basic mental health conditions, their effects on the children, and the effects on the family.