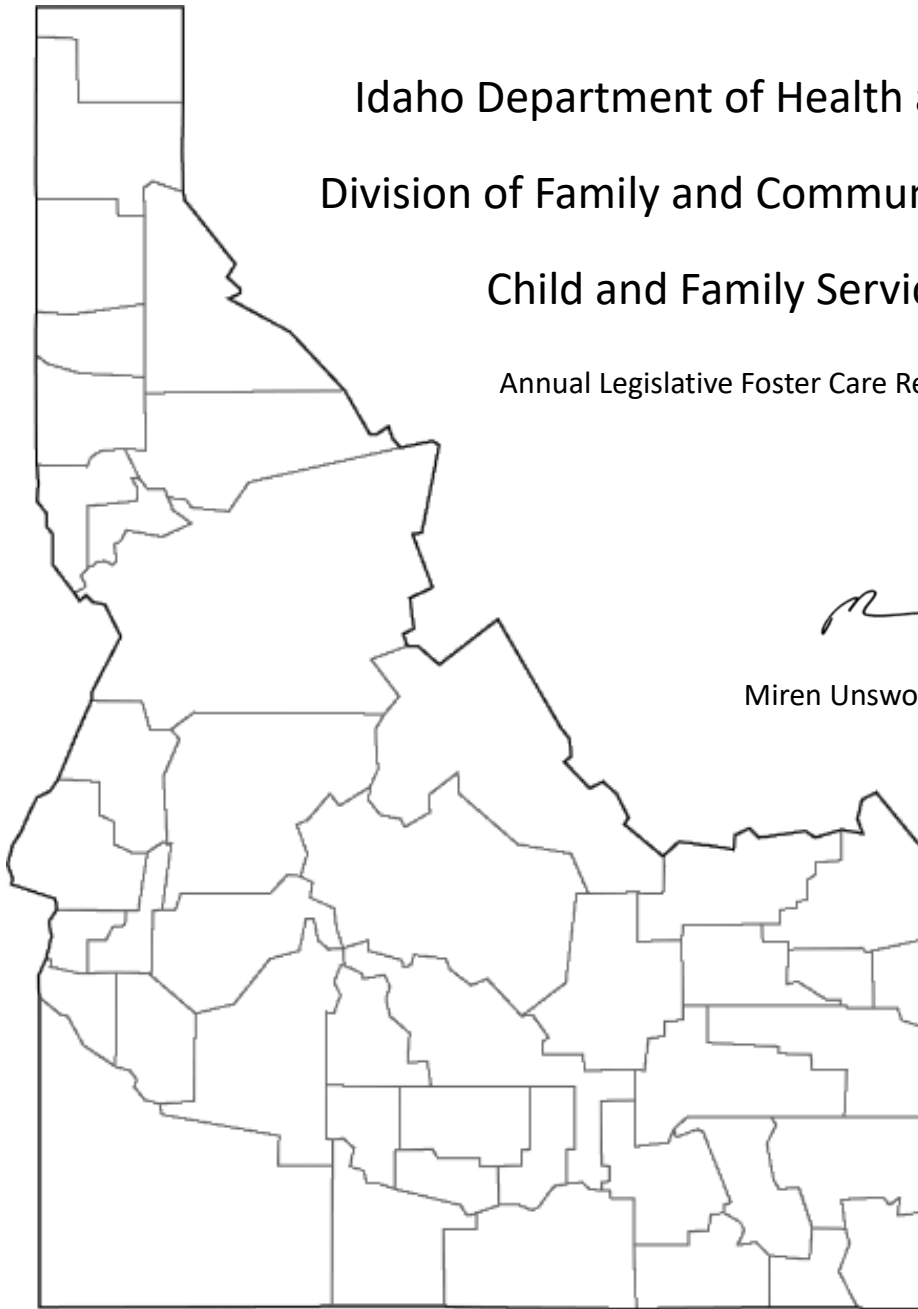


Idaho Department of Health and Welfare
Division of Family and Community Services
Child and Family Services Program

Annual Legislative Foster Care Report for SFY 2018



Miren Unsworth, Administrator
January 17, 2019



This report can be viewed on the Department of Health and Welfare's website at this URL:

<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/Children/AbuseNeglect/tabid/74/Default.aspx>

Contents

Background	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Overview of the Child and Family Services Program	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Receiving Reports of Abuse or Neglect	3
Graph 1: Referrals, Assessments, and Children Placed in Foster Care by SFY.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 1: Referrals by Maltreatment Types	4
Table 2: Sources of Maltreatment Referrals	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Assessing Child Safety	5
Removal from the Home	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Graph 2: Children in Foster Care by SFY	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Graph 3: Children Served in Foster Care by SFY	6
Table 3: Removal Reasons by SFY.....	7
Graph 4: Children Exiting Foster Care in SFY 2018	7
Placements in Foster Care	7
Table 4: Child Placements on June 30, 2018	8
Placement Changes in Foster Care.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 5: Children Experiencing Zero or More Placement Changes in SFY 2018.....	9
Table 6: SFY 2018 Placement Change Reasons.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Table 7: SFY 2018 Placement Changes Due to Foster Parent Request...	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Provision of Ongoing Case Management Services	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Periodic Court Hearings.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Permanency Decision Making	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Plan for Improvement	Error! Bookmark not defined.2
Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative Background.....	12
Graph 5: CWT Three-year Plan and Action Goals.....	13

Background

The Annual Foster Care Report published by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Child and Family Services (CFS) program is intended to provide the Idaho Legislature with information and relevant data regarding Idaho's foster care system. This report is provided pursuant to Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1646, which states:

The state department of health and welfare shall submit an annual report regarding the foster care program to the germane standing committees of the legislature no later than ten (10) days following the start of each regular session. On or before February 15 of each year, the state department of health and welfare shall appear before the germane standing committees to present the report. Such report shall include, but need not be limited to, the number of children that are in the department's legal custody pursuant to this chapter, the number of such children who have been placed in foster care, how many times such children have been moved to different foster care homes and the reasons for such moves, best practices in foster care, goals to improve the foster care system in Idaho to ensure best practices are adhered to, a description of progress made with regard to the previous year's goals to improve the foster care system and any other information relating to foster care that the legislature requests. If a member of the legislature requests additional information between the time the report is received by the legislature and the time the department appears to present the report, then the department shall supplement its report to include such additional information.

In accordance with the above cited Idaho code, this report provides available child welfare data as collected in the Department's existing automated system (iCare) and necessary data analysis. It then provides a summary of the Department's Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative, which was created to make significant improvements through improved business processes; greater automated work and decision supports; new tools; and increased workforce capacity in Idaho's Foster Care Program.

Overview of the Child and Family Services Program

Child and Family Services' primary commitment and responsibility is the safety, well-being, and permanency of children who are victims of child abuse, neglect, or abandonment. As an agency, we believe that the best approach to support and protect children is to strengthen families, so they can safely parent their children and meet the child's needs for permanency and well-being.

This family-centered approach is reflected in our daily work with families and is supported by federal law, state law, and public policies that place a high priority on family unity, involvement, and privacy.

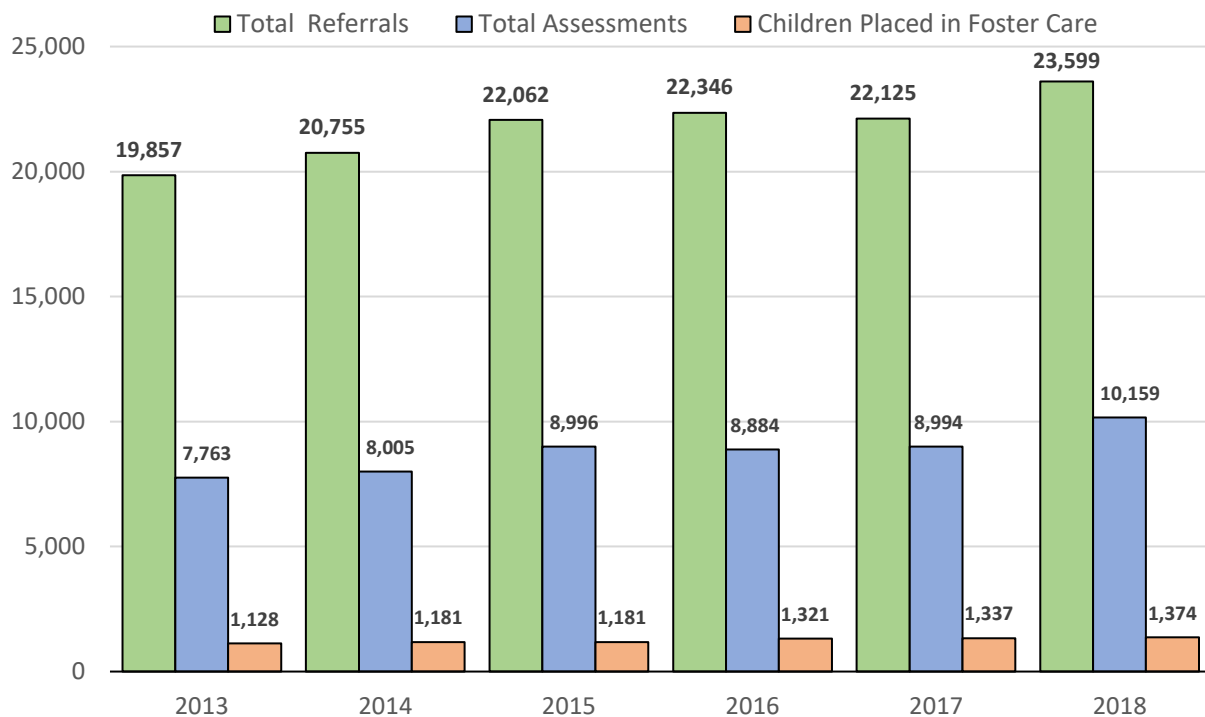
CFS program responsibilities fall into four broad areas:

- Receiving reports of abuse or neglect
- Assessing allegations of abuse and neglect
- Providing ongoing case management services to children (in either in home or out of home placements)
- Ensuring children have safety and permanency in their own homes or other permanent homes

Receiving Reports of Abuse or Neglect

The Child and Family Services program has a Centralized Intake Unit in Boise to which all reports of child abuse or neglect throughout the state are directed. Each report is assessed to determine whether the allegations fall under the statutory definitions of abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Once that determination is made, the report is prioritized for a response. Referrals involving a life-threatening and/or emergency situation require an immediate response. Other reports receive a priority which requires a response within either 24 or 72 hours. On all reports requiring an immediate response, CFS coordinates the response with local law enforcement. CFS staff take and respond to child abuse and neglect reports 24/7 across the state.

During state fiscal year 2018, CFS received a total of 23,599 referrals regarding concerns of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Of these, 10,159 were assigned for a safety assessment. From those assessments, 1,374 children were placed in foster care. The number of referrals, assessments, and foster care placements varies by year with a generally upward trend. Graph 1 illustrates referrals received, assessments assigned, and the number of children placed in foster care by state fiscal year over the past five years. The number of assessments, referrals, and children placed in Foster Care all increased in SFY 2018 over SFY 2017.



Graph 1: Referrals, Assessments, and Children Placed in Foster Care by State Fiscal Year

Most of the referrals received by CFS are due to neglect; neglect is also the primary reason children are removed from their homes. Cases of neglect may include inadequate supervision, or situations in which the physical environment poses health or safety hazards that directly affect the health and safety of a child, and often involve a parent's unmet mental health or substance use issues.

The number of referrals by maltreatment type over the past five years is shown in Table 1. The majority of referrals, about 57% in SFY 2018 (13,440/23,599) are deemed “Information and Referral” a designation for those referrals made related to a child’s safety but that are not acted upon because they do not meet the statutory guidelines for abuse, neglect, or abandonment. In these situations, a referral may be made to other entities or agencies based on the unique circumstances of each situation.

Table 1: Referrals by Maltreatment Types					
Referral Type	Number of Referrals by Referral Type by State Fiscal Year				
	SFY 2014	SFY 2015	SFY 2016	SFY 2017	SFY 2018
Information & Referral	12,750	13,066	13,462	13,131	13,440
Neglect	5,393	6,335	6,256	6,452	7,265
Physical Abuse	2,084	2,209	2,080	2,001	2,231
Sexual Abuse	518	431	545	539	660
Other	10	21	3	2	3
Total	20,755	22,062	22,346	22,125	23,599

CFS tracks the source of all maltreatment reports. The source of maltreatment reports over the past five years is shown in Table 2. School personnel and parents are the primary sources reporting maltreatment.

Idaho Code, Title 16, Chapter 16, Section 1605(1) provides direction regarding mandatory reporting in the state of Idaho for physicians, hospital staff, coroners, schools, daycares, and any other persons having reason to believe a child has been subjected to maltreatment must report to law enforcement or the Department. An exception is made for "duly ordained minister of religion." Failure to report as required in this section of Idaho Code is a misdemeanor.

Table 2: Sources of Maltreatment Referrals										
Referral Source	Number and Percent of Referrals from each Referral Source by State Fiscal Year									
	SFY 2014		SFY 2015		SFY 2016		SFY 2017		SFY 2018	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
School Personnel	3,205	15.4%	3,484	15.8%	3,726	16.7%	3,709	16.8%	4,411	18.7%
Parent/Substitute	2,921	14.1%	3,182	14.4%	2,839	12.7%	2,839	12.8%	2,829	12.0%
Private Agency	2,429	11.7%	2,506	11.4%	2,337	10.5%	2,367	10.7%	2,522	10.7%
Law Enforcement	2,114	10.2%	2,321	10.5%	2,294	10.3%	2,447	11.1%	2,444	10.4%
Relative	2,157	10.4%	2,180	9.9%	2,477	11.1%	2,105	9.5%	2,171	9.2%
Friend/Neighbor	1,789	8.6%	1,669	7.6%	1,670	7.5%	1,702	7.7%	1,838	7.8%
Hospital	1,126	5.4%	1,155	5.2%	1,322	5.9%	1,280	5.8%	1,598	6.8%
Child Protection	927	4.5%	981	4.4%	946	4.2%	1,037	4.7%	1,054	4.5%
Anonymous	979	4.7%	1,108	5.0%	859	3.8%	1,009	4.6%	1,048	4.4%
Medical	695	3.3%	695	3.2%	860	3.8%	934	4.2%	781	3.3%
Other	2,413	11.6%	2,781	12.6%	3,016	13.5%	2,696	12.2%	2,903	12.3%
Total	20,755		22,062		22,346		22,125		23,599	

Assessing Child Safety

A Comprehensive Safety Assessment is completed for all child protection referrals that meet Child and Family Services Priority Response Guidelines for assessment. The primary purpose of the assessment is to ensure the child's safety and determine whether the child and family are in need of services to address identified safety threats. The Comprehensive Safety Assessment includes a robust information collection process and includes a face to face contact and interview with the child. Information is also collected by the social worker through interviews with the parents/caregivers and relevant collateral contacts such as extended family members, law enforcement, school staff, medical professionals, and service providers. The assessment includes application of standardized criteria, along with social worker's critical analysis of the information and conclusion regarding the child's safety.

Upon completion of a Comprehensive Safety Assessment, the agency must determine whether maltreatment has occurred and whether the child is safe or unsafe. Whenever a child is determined to be unsafe the case remains open for services. If the child is determined to be safe the case is closed with no additional intervention.

Whenever possible, efforts are made to safely maintain children in their homes. However, when a safety threat exists, a safety plan must be put into place to manage the child's safety. Actions in a safety plan must address the safety threat to the child and are specific to the family's circumstances. Safety actions might include respite care, supervision and monitoring, resource acquisition, and homemaker services. If the child is assessed to be in immediate danger, law enforcement is charged with the decision for removal. When a child is removed, CFS makes placement arrangements for the child.

Removal from the Home

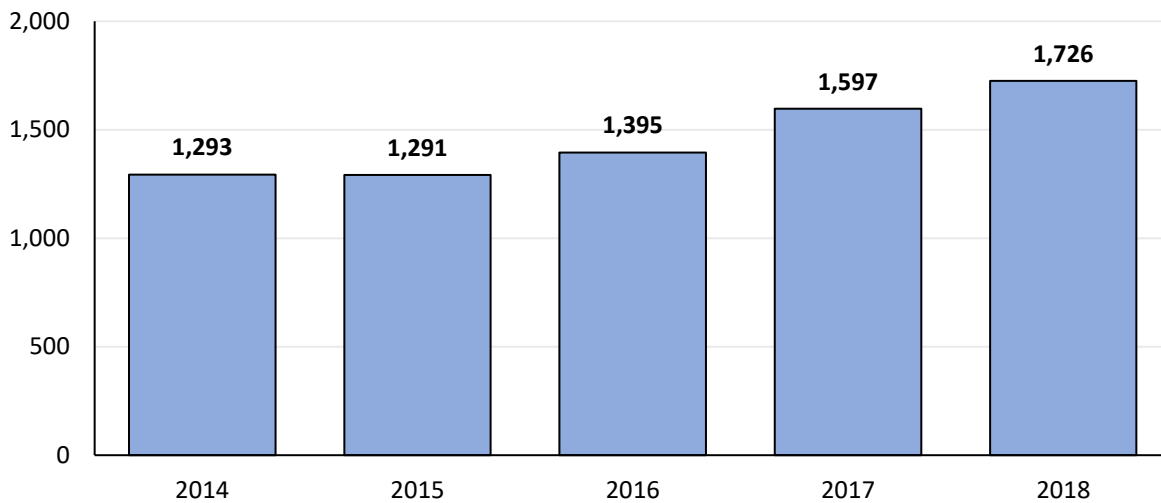
Efforts are made to minimize the trauma of removing a child from the home by an immediate search for any relatives who could serve as a placement resource for the child or children. The Idaho Child Protective Act requires that the Department first considers, consistent with the best interests and special needs of the child, placement with a fit and willing relative. If a suitable relative cannot be found, the child can be placed with individuals with a significant relationship with the child, referred to as Fictive Kin (Fictive Kin is a term used to refer to individuals that are unrelated by either birth or marriage, but have an emotionally significant relationship with the child that would take on the characteristics of a family relationship) or a non-relative foster care placement. There are only three methods by which a child can be removed from his/her home in Idaho:

- 1) Law enforcement makes the determination a child is in a dangerous situation and therefore they declare the child to be in imminent danger
- 2) A petition is filed with the court by the Department indicating it is unsafe for the child to remain in their home; a judge then determines whether to enter an Order of Removal
- 3) A Rule 16 Expansion Order (Rule 16 of the Idaho Juvenile Rules allows for the court to expand a Juvenile Corrections Act proceeding into a Child Protective Act proceeding when the court has reasonable cause to believe that the juvenile living within the state comes within the jurisdiction of the Child Protective Act)

When a child is removed from their home that case enters the court system. When a child is in the court system, or moving through the court system, the Idaho Child Protective Act gives the court responsibility for determining whether the removal of the child is warranted and for making other key decisions regarding the child.

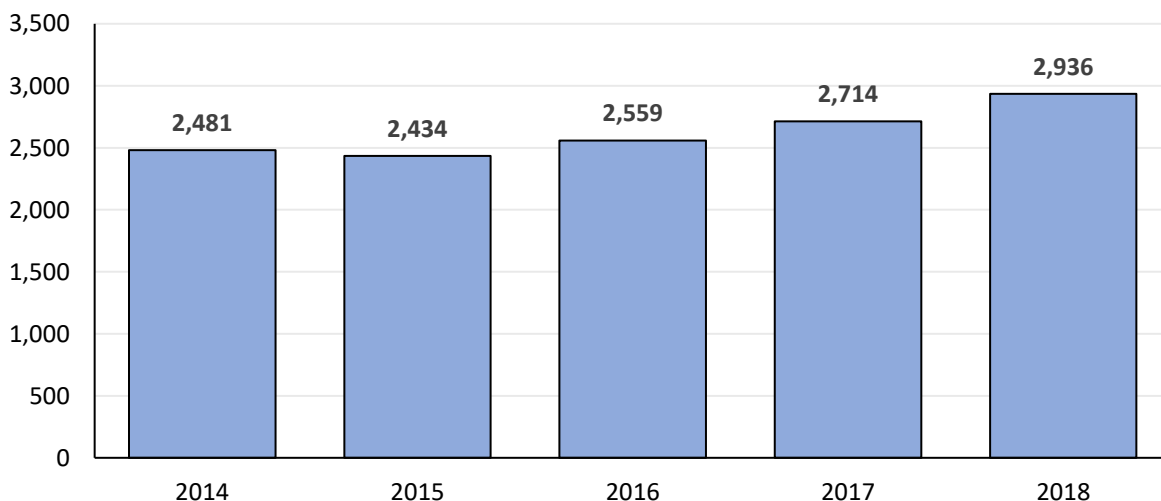
If a child is under twelve years of age, the court will appoint a guardian ad litem for the child. For children twelve years of age and older, the court appoints counsel to represent the child, and in certain circumstances, may also appoint a guardian ad litem for the child.

A total of 1,374 children entered foster care in SFY 2018 (see Graph 1 on page 3) because of maltreatment or an unstable home environment. The number of children in foster care, counted on June 30 of each year, is shown in Graph 2 for the past five years. Since 2014, the point-in-time number of children in foster care has increased by about 33% (1,293 in SFY 2014 to 1,726 in SFY 2018).



Graph 2: Point in Time (June 30) count of Children in Foster Care for State Fiscal Years

Over the course of an entire state fiscal year the total number of children in foster care is greater than the single point-in-time count shown in Graph 2. That is because some children who are in foster care are not counted on June 30 of each year but were in foster care for some part of the state fiscal year. The total number of children in foster care at any time, over the course of an entire state fiscal year, is shown in Graph 3 over the past five years. Since 2014 the number of children served in foster care has increased by 18% (2,481 in SFY 2014 to 2,936 in SFY 2018).

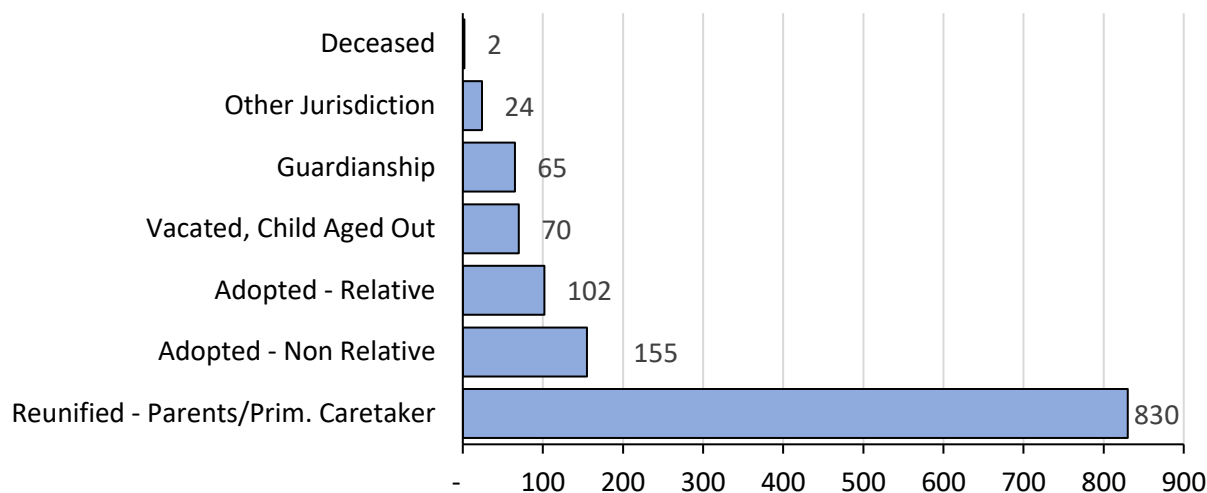


Graph 3: Children Served in Foster Care for State Fiscal Years

The reasons for removal of a child from their home, and moving the child to foster care, over the past five years is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Child Removal Reasons										
Number of and Reason for Child Removal by State Fiscal Year										
Removal Reasons	2014		2015		2016		2017		2018	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Neglect	960	81.3%	947	80.2%	1,084	82.1%	1,126	84.2%	1,129	82.2%
Physical Abuse	102	8.6%	163	13.8%	146	11.1%	127	9.5%	139	10.1%
Sexual Abuse	48	4.1%	19	1.6%	37	2.8%	43	3.2%	60	4.4%
Homeless	26	2.2%	19	1.6%	22	1.7%	28	2.1%	30	2.2%
Abandonment	43	3.6%	31	2.6%	28	2.1%	13	1.0%	16	1.2%
Voluntary Placement	2	0.2%	2	0.2%	4	0.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Total	1,181		1,181		1,321		1,337		1,374	

During state fiscal year 2018, 1,248 children exited foster care. Of these children, 830 (66%) were reunified with their parents/caregiver. The “Other Jurisdiction” reported in Graph 4 could include children placed in the custody of the Department of Juvenile Corrections or another agency/jurisdiction, or the transfer of custody to a child’s tribe.



Graph 4: Children Exiting Foster Care in SFY 2018

Placements in Foster Care

The child’s best interests are the primary consideration in all placements. CFS defines “best interest” as eight factors which identify the current and potential individual needs of a child. The factors are the child’s:

- 1) Emotional/behavioral needs
- 2) Medical/physical needs
- 3) Educational/developmental needs
- 4) Cultural/religious needs
- 5) Trauma history and past experiences
- 6) Relationships with parents, relatives, siblings, and current caretakers
- 7) Interests and community connections
- 8) Family placement preferences

CFS workers are mindful of the importance of maintaining relative and sibling connections, and the impact of placement changes on a child’s attachment and overall development when making placement recommendations and policy decisions. Therefore, no single best interest factor is considered more or less important than the others. The weight placed on any one factor is highly dependent on the identified needs of a particular child or sibling group.

Using the SFY 2018 point in time count of children in foster care (see previous Graph 2 showing 1,726 children in foster care as of June 30, 2018), Table 4 shows the placement types made for those children. Non-relative foster care placement was the largest placement type (660 or 38% of all children).

Table 4: Child Placements in Foster Care		
Number and Percent of Child Placements as of June 30, 2018		
Placement Type	Number	Percent
Non-Relative	660	38%
Relative	462	27%
Home Visit	206	12%
Fictive Kin	144	8%
Congregate	108	6%
Pre-Adoptive	64	4%
Pre-Adoptive Relative	34	2%
Treatment Home	31	2%
Other	17	1%
Total	1,726	100%

Placement Changes in Foster Care

CFS practices emphasize placement stability and limiting the number of moves for children in foster care. When children experience placement changes, they can develop distress, loss, and an absence of belonging, all of which can result in feelings of distrust and a fear of forming healthy relationships and attachments with others. A planned placement change is the foreseen placement of a child with a relative, fictive kin, non-relative foster parent, or group home or residential care. The social worker and provider(s) have made advanced arrangements for the placement of a child. Reasons for planned placement changes include:

- Placement with siblings
- Placement with a relative/fictive kin
- Placement with a non-relative foster family
- Child’s treatment needs
- Permanency placement (includes pre-adoptive placement and guardianship)

Planned moves include a transition plan to assist the child with the move. The child’s current relationship with the new caregiver, the child’s emotional and developmental needs, the proximity of the new placement, and the willingness and ability of the two families to engage in the transition can impact the transition plan.

An unplanned placement change is an unexpected disruption in the child’s placement. The following are examples of unplanned placement changes:

- Foster family’s request
- A safety issue in the foster home (allegations of abuse or neglect)
- Child’s treatment needs requiring a higher level of care
- Hospitalizations
- Detention

To reduce foster parent requests for placement changes, CFS makes efforts to provide supportive services or other resources to assist foster families to care for children and avoid placement disruptions. Examples of supportive services include: increased respite, foster parent personal counseling, mentoring from an experienced foster parent, and education/training regarding how to meet a child’s specialized need. In some instances, foster families may be unable to meet a child’s needs due to significant behavioral issues and request that the child be moved.

During the 2016 legislative session changes were made to the Child Protective Act regarding notification of placement changes. In SFY 2017, CFS began sending written notification to foster parents regarding placement changes. CFS is committed to preventing unannounced moves, unless there are safety concerns, and to ensuring clear communications and expectations with foster parents regarding placement changes.

Moving children in foster care can be very disruptive. In SFY 2018 2,936 children were in foster care at some time during the year. Table 5 shows the number of placement changes made for those children. A full 89% of the children served had no change or only one change. Of these children, 66% had no placement change while in foster care. Two or more changes were experienced by 11% or 311 children. In total, 1,011 children (700 + 210 + 101) experienced some placement change while in foster care.

Table 5: Foster Care Placement Changes		
Number and Percent of Children experiencing foster care changes in SFY 2018		
Placement Changes	Number	Percent
No change	1,925	66%
One change	700	24%
Children with less than 2 changes	2,625	89%
Two changes	210	7%
More than 2 changes	101	3%
Children with 2 or more changes	311	11%
Total children served	2,936	100%

To provide additional insight into placement changes, Table 6 provides a breakdown of the reasons for a change. The total number of reasons, 1,481 does not match the number of changes because some children experienced more than one change during SFY 2018. The largest category of change was due to requests by the Foster Parent (609 or 41%). Of the 43 placement changes for “Alleged Abuse or Neglect,” 29 were immediate moves to ensure a child’s safety.

Table 6: Foster Care Placement Change Reasons		
Number and Percent of Foster Placement changes by reason in SFY 2018		
Change Reason	Number	Percent
Foster Parent Request	609	41.1%
Placed with Relative	197	13.3%
Less-restrictive Placement	137	9.3%
Higher Level of Care	116	7.8%
Fictive Kin Placement	90	6.1%
Placed with Sibling	81	5.5%
Non-Safety License Concern	66	4.5%
Pre-Adoptive Placement	51	3.4%
Hospital	51	3.4%
Alleged Abuse or Neglect	43	2.9%
DJC Custody	35	2.4%
Runaway	5	0.3%
Total	1,481	100.0%

To provide additional insight into placement changes requested by foster parents (609 requests in SFY 2018 as shown in Table 6), Table 7 provides a further breakdown of why the request for a change was made.

Table 7: Foster Parent Requests for Change		
Number and Percent of Foster Parent “Requested Change” by reason in SFY 2018		
Foster Parent Request Change Reasons	Number	Percent
Personal Reasons	248	41%
Difficulty in Managing Child’s Behaviors	215	35%
Temporary Placement Only *	146	24%
Total	609	100%

* Temporary Placements are those where foster parents were willing to shelter a child for a brief period, such as a single night or a weekend

Provision of Ongoing Case Management Services

Once a child has been placed in foster care, social workers monitor the family’s progress in achieving the objectives spelled out in the service plan, and regularly assess the safety, permanency, and well-being of the child. Case management responsibilities include:

- Making monthly contact with children, parents, and foster families
- Communicating with service providers to ensure family members are receiving services
- Transporting or making transportation arrangements for children and their families
- Arranging and supervising visits between children and parents, and between children and their siblings
- Working on the alternative plan, which may include ongoing contacts with relatives, and home studies of relatives residing in-state and out-of-state
- Conducting specialized recruitment to locate an adoptive family for children unable to remain with the foster parents
- Preparing required court reports and testifying in court hearings

- Documenting casework activities into CFS's child welfare information system (iCare)

Periodic Court Hearings

Federal and state law require a court hearing to review the case progress must be held no later than six months from the date of removal. Hearings may be held more frequently at the discretion of the court.

At 12 months from the date of removal, a permanency hearing must be held. At that time, CFS presents its recommendation for permanency. The permanency options include:

- Reunification
- Legal guardianship with a relative or non-relative
- Adoption by a relative or non-relative
- Another planned permanent living arrangement (this is only a permanency option for youth age sixteen (16) years and older)

For every child who has been in out-of-home care for at least 15 of the last 22 months, the state is obligated by state and federal law to file a petition to terminate parental rights. If compelling reasons exist for not terminating the parents' rights, those reasons must be approved by the court; otherwise the court will order the filing of a petition for termination of parental rights. Parents may choose to voluntarily terminate their parental rights, or their rights may be removed through an involuntary court process.

Permanency Decision Making

Child and Family Services is responsible for placing a child in foster care in a safe environment until such time permanency is established. As shown in Graph 4 on page 7, most children in foster care are reunified with their families.

Between the six and twelve-month mark of a child being in care, if the permanency recommendation is something other than reunify with parent, CFS implements the Placement Selection process. The goal of the permanency decision making process is to place the child(ren) in a stable environment as quickly as possible to minimize negative impacts. The process considers relatives, fictive kin, and current foster parents who have expressed interest in being a permanent placement option and have an approved home study. Pursuant to CFS' Standard, placement selections are made by committees who review the home studies and the child's best interest factors previously noted. When multiple families are being considered for permanency, selection committee participants include: case worker, adoption worker, supervisor, child welfare chief; Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)/guardian ad litem; tribal representation (if child is identified as a member of a specific tribe). Also present is a third-party Department representative who understands practice but is not familiar with specific case circumstances or a community representative, such as a member of the Citizen Review Panel.

Field Program Managers are responsible for making initial permanent placement recommendations, considering the input of the Permanent Placement Committee. A relative, current foster parent, or fictive kin who was considered, but not selected for a child's permanent placement by the Permanent Placement Committee may request a Permanent Placement Review. This process consists of a thorough review of the initial placement recommendation by a team of individuals from outside of the region where the case is managed, and the initial selection occurred. After this review, the Division Administrator makes the final placement recommendation.

Ultimately, determinations relating to where and with whom children are placed are subject to judicial review by the court, and when contested by any party, judicial approval. The court also finalizes all adoptions and guardianships.

Plan for Improvement

Child Welfare Transformation (CWT) Initiative Background

In May 2018 Idaho first published the details of the Child Welfare Transformation Initiative (CWT) to improve the CFS program. This initiative will make systemic changes by shifting away from outdated policy-driven strategies and move instead to solutions that make the most sense for customers and staff.

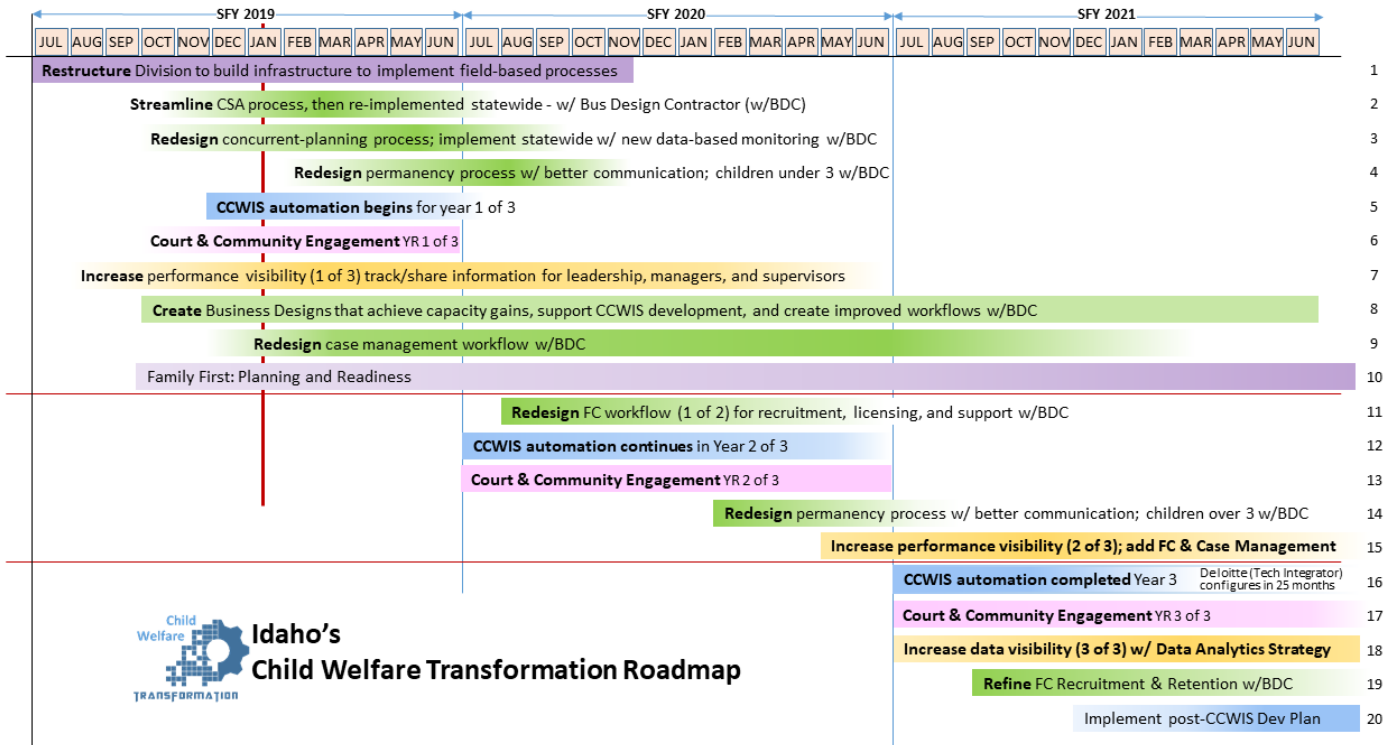
Idaho is working on both short and long-term improvements. The CWT has a three-year roadmap and will include the two-year effort to create the automated case management system (referred to as the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System or CCWIS) and a post CCWIS deployment and business stabilization period. Information and updates will be shared with our federal funding oversight agency (the Children’s Bureau), state oversight groups (Legislature and Governor), and all CFS stakeholders (e.g. tribes, courts, education, law enforcement, etc.).

Experience in the early 2000’s taught many in the Department the value of agile planning, which we are using in the CWT Initiative. That means not all details of CWT have been identified and documented today, because we don’t know all the factors or challenges or actions we will face and take in the coming three years. But we know where to start and we often describe our plan with the “next actionable step.” CWT is organized into **Five Action Goals**; together these action goals, over three years, contain 20 different activity sets that are being planned, coordinated, and executed.

The **Five Action Goals**, with the identified 20 activity sets, over the next three years are:

1. **Organizational Redesign** in the CFS organization to be operations driven and provide staff with new clearly defined operational-support responsibilities as well as necessary skills and tools; this includes a focus on process engineering, training, and implementation.
2. **Streamline and Design field-based processes** using the process engineering and implementation discipline to maximize timely, efficient, and effectively executed work activities and communication with stakeholders and families.
3. **Create automation** to meet field operational needs including mobility and enhanced communication with stakeholders and families in full compliance with CCWIS requirements.
4. **Improve Court and Community Engagement** to ensure effective information transfer for the purpose of keeping children safe and ensuring new business processes, tools, and automation is used effectively.
5. **Make performance and workflow visible** on demand to all staff, according to role and responsibility.

These five goals and 20 activity sets with their relative time periods have been repeatedly presented and published and is provided here in Graph 5 for context to the objectives and accomplishments listed below.



Graph 5: CWT Three-year Plan and Action Goals

CWT Objectives Related to Foster Care Improvements

- **Improve business process** effectiveness and timeliness (streamline and automate)
- **Create staffing capacity** to fill the workforce gap – give social workers more time with families
- **Improve decision making** – give staff ready and immediate access to decision support tools
- **Create and use real-time performance management tools** – improve performance and accountability
- **Improve data exchanges** and in-process information sharing with stakeholders and partners
- **Improve operational support** for field social workers with better process designs and deployments
- **Improve workplace** and culture with information sharing and design and support
- **Improve internal and external communication** using new automated tools and revised business designs
- **Improve Foster Care** recruitment and retention
- **Operate a secure, functional, and affordable automated system** for ongoing capacity/functional gains

Accomplishments (and Activities In-process) to Reach Foster Care Improvement Objectives

1. **Improve business process** effectiveness and timeliness (streamline and automate).
 Business process improvements have focused on Improving Idaho’s Comprehensive Safety Assessment (CSA) process. The work with CSA has been driven primarily by our business design contractor, Change and Innovation Agency, with some help from the division’s newly created Bureau of Operational Design. Other division activities have included the roll out of our mobile technology and electronic document management tool, eCabinet. Both mobile technology and eCabinet were successfully delivered on schedule in the first half of SFY 2019. By July 2019, our redesigned CSA will be implemented.

2. **Create staffing capacity** to fill the workforce gap – give social workers more time with families. The ability to make meaningful change that improves outcomes occurs through a coordinated process between business design and technology. We scheduled the work the business design contractor and technical integrator will complete to maximize efficiency and minimize cost and risk. CWT will fully fill the workforce gap defined by Idaho’s Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) 2017 Child Welfare report. That report identified a 55-77 caseload carrying personnel gap between the work that needs to be done and the 2017 staffing level. CWT plans to fill that gap with improved capacity with improved business processes and technology. We estimate 85% of that gap will be filled with business design efforts and 15% with technology improvements. These gains are dependent on having both business design and technology solutions, working together...both must be present. To date the division has increased workforce capacity by an estimated 5 FTE and has used that capacity increase to document completed child visits sooner and spend more time with families.
3. **Improve decision making** – give staff ready and immediate access to decision support tools. This effort is only at the beginning, fueled primarily by the design of business processes that view work from the perspective of the end user, the case carrying social worker meeting and with families and children. Early examples of creating early decision making include the CSA business process where the clear decisions are made early and complex circumstances are reviewed consistently.
4. **Create and use real-time performance management tools** – improve performance and accountability. This effort is also just beginning. Using an existing Department enterprise license for business intelligence software, this places previously buried information on a statewide portal accessible to staff at any time. Accompanying this technology tool will be performance management orientations for all managers and supervisors to make good business use of the available performance data to help supervisors monitor and manage performance outcomes. In December 2018, two performance metrics, focused on immediately reporting the status of children seen in the safety assessment process, were successfully introduced.
5. **Improve data exchanges** and in-process information sharing with stakeholders and partners. Early work is underway to document and detail all existing internal and external data exchanges. Early conversations with the courts have started the process of identifying key information to exchange.
6. **Improve operational support** for field social workers with better process designs and deployments. All changes that are made within the program are now being created, implemented, and subsequently supported with an operations-driven mindset that strives to identify and give the field worker what they need to do their job.
7. **Improve workplace** and culture with information sharing and design and support. All aspects of CWT are focused on improved information sharing including schedules, plans, budgets, cultural related changes, process changes, training, and post implementation support. Early work has focused on creating clear roles for staff in new positions in the Bureau of Operational Design and protocols for gathering work requirements, vetting critical decisions, and making functionality clear with managers and supervisors early.

8. **Improve internal and external communication** using new automated tools and revised business designs.

The new case management system will have new automated notification processes and workflow tracking. Reviewed features of the new system include “only enter information once” and make “entered information available for many outputs” (i.e. different reports). These enhancements will minimize manual reports and will rely on improved and modern technology informed by the processes that support the case worker in completing their job.

9. **Improve Foster Care** recruitment and retention.

Foster care processes will be redesigned to gain capacity. While these redesigns will create capacity, technology improvements will focus on workflow improvements (task prioritization and alerts) to quickly and effectively identify and follow-up with foster families to ensure they are fully supported through children’s placements. By providing a better and more supported foster care experience we expect a higher retention rate for foster families.

10. **Operate a secure, functional, and affordable automated system** for ongoing capacity/functional gains.

Many of the components of a modern, low cost automated system have been incorporated in our procurement requests, contract design, funding strategies, contract selection, platform choices, hardware, software, and business and technology interoperability. It is our intent for Idaho to operate one of the lowest cost and highest functioning case management systems when this project is completed.