

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

**Statewide Annual Report and
2009 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 22, 2009, 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 2009."

Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2009 Recommendations

I. COMMUNICATION

Idaho Code specifies that an officer of the court (law enforcement) has the authority to determine if a child is in imminent danger and to place a child in shelter care. DHW child welfare social workers focus on safety and well being of children and service needs of families. Law Enforcement and Child Welfare programs have a different philosophical base and mandates.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend POST (Peace Officers Standards and Training) add to its curriculum a two hour presentation on emergency removals per the Child Protective Act. This should focus on a coordinated decision making process about roles of officers and social workers to ensure decisions are consistent with the law and to ensure safety and well being of children.

II. EDUCATION

A. Community Resources for Families Program. Young people in foster care deserve the same quality of education as every other child; therefore, the Keeping Children Safe Panels of Idaho recommend that every elementary school in the state implement the Community Resource for Families Program.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that every elementary school in the state implement the Community Resource for Families Program.

B. Tutoring for Foster Children. Due to the stress foster children face we recommend a system be established through collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Health.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend a system be established through collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Welfare to provide tutoring for any foster child who begins to struggle academically.

III. FOSTER CARE

A. Targeted Recruitment. Our child welfare system continually faces a shortage of available foster homes and a lack of stability in foster care placements.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that Idaho engage in targeted recruitment of foster parents.

B. First Aid and CPR Certification. We recognize that the safety of foster children is of the utmost importance.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. We recommend adopting an IDAPA rule requiring foster parents have current first aid and CPR certification.

2. We recommend foster parents who care for children under the age of 8 be required to have specialized pediatric rescue breathing and pediatric first aid certification.

C. Access to State Parks. Foster parents do a great service for the state of Idaho.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend foster families gain state parks access at reduced or no cost.

IV. OLDER YOUTH

A. Services for Older Youth.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend that youth who age out of care be provided with a more comprehensive plan to include all services for which the youth should qualify for while in foster care, including driver's license and post-secondary information.

B. Medicaid Eligibility for Youth until Age 21. We continue to recommend that the Department consider extending Medicaid services to all eligible youth who aged out of care until they are 21. We believe providing such extended services are necessary to support youth who have aged out of care especially with prescribed medicines. Secondly, although there is national data, there is a lack of specific Idaho data as to what happens to youth who age out of the system. By providing a Medicaid card we would know if they are accessing medical services and where they are accessing them.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend the Department consider extending Medicaid services to all eligible youth who aged out of care until they are 21.

C. Measuring the Efficacy of IL Services. A significant number of IL eligible youth return home, are adopted or age out of the foster care system. The number of youth who return to the Department seeking IL services seems to be a small

faction of said eligible youth. Many youth do not take full advantage of these services. Many do not successfully complete the IL Plans developed for them. The Department lacks current data to measure the efficacy of IL services. The Department needs to do all it can to improve these services and develop a way to track youth leaving foster care.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend conducting a statewide comprehensive assessment of the current Independent Living Programs.

V. LEGAL

A. Legal Representation for Social Workers. With no legal representation the worker is left to determine the laws and rights within the Child Protective Act. In a court setting, it is important for the Department of Health and Welfare be fairly represented in judicial proceedings.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend Department employees receive appropriate legal representation for child welfare cases within the court systems.

B. Grandparent Rights and Services. Currently, national statistics show that more than 2.5 million children are being raised by grandparents and other relatives because their parents are unable to care for them.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend grandparents have more legal rights and available services to help raise their grandchildren.

C. Infant Drug Testing/Collaboration between Hospitals and CFS. Even though the Idaho Child Protective Act mandates hospital personnel to report drug exposed infants, reporting of infants testing positive for drugs by hospitals is inconsistent in the state. This collaboration would encourage hospitals to work with child protection offices for formulating a cohesive, consistent, and equitable child welfare response.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend Children and Family Services collaborate with the Idaho Hospital Association to develop guidelines in a Memorandum of Agreement for testing and reporting drug exposed infants.

VI. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

There are barriers to accessing services for clients. Clients are expected to initiate and access substance abuse services but many are not able to do so.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend the Department conduct research to identify barriers to substance abuse services.

VII. PSYCHOSOCIAL REHABILITATION (PSR) AND PARTIAL CARE

Separate PSR Assessments. An oversight agency needs to ensure the services are truly needed and appropriate. This would provide a cost savings to Medicaid funds, and ensure the services go to the children who need the services.

RECOMMENDATION: We recommend providing independent initial and ongoing assessments from individuals not providing the services.

VIII. REGIONAL RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION; We recommend regions pursue efforts to cross-train educators and Children and Family Services social workers, obtain more media coverage on what DHW can and cannot do, and educate the public on the purpose and uses of MDT (Multi-Disciplinary Teams) as mandated in the Child Protective Act.

Idaho “Keeping Children Safe” Regional Panel Activities During 2009

Region 1

- Denise Rosen, Deputy Attorney General discussed legal representation for child welfare workers following adjudication in Kootenai County.
- Fatality Review - Two members (Leah Stern and Wilfred Ross) of the KCS panel participated in the review.
- Ray Robertson, Workforce Consultant with Idaho Department of Labor presented information on the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth program in Benewah County.
- Mapping Centralized Intake for Region 1 – Two KCS panel members (Wilfred Ross and Jim McCuaig) participated in the mapping of child protection referral process.
- Rebecca Reynolds, Foster Parent presented to the panel on the need to follow the ASFA clock in permanency and having better case plans with defined consequences for parents not completing tasks.
- Robin Hetzler, Foster Parent presented to the panel on need for hospitals to screen and report drug exposed infants.
- The KCS panel members had a tour of the Hutton Settlement Children’s Home located in the Spokane Valley. The orphanage was founded in 1919 by Levi & May Hutton that struck it rich at the Hercules Mine near Wallace, Idaho. This residential home cares for children ages 5-18. Hutton Settlement is listed on the Register of National Historical Places.

Region 2

- “Luv A Kid” Pillowcase Project
- Participated in a Nez Perce Historical Park presentation by Diane on March 11, 2009. The Nez Perce Tribe also provided a conference room for our panel meeting.
- Guided toured of the Lewiston Juvenile Correction Center.

Region 3

- Continued partnership with AARP for Operation Backpack
- Aided partnership with CCOA by donating funds from Casino Night

Region 4

- Panel members are participating in the development of the Program Improvement Plan response to the Federal review.
- The chair met with Miren Unsworth and Steve Sparks to determine a scope of activities during the next 5 years. The purpose was to develop a 5 year strategic plan. The strategic plan would coincide with the Regional RIP and would be used to do targeted recruitment for the committee.

Region 5

- The panel continues to review child welfare cases. This involves reviewing case records, CFS Standards, IDAPA Rules, State Statutes and interviews with CFS staff.

- Two panel members are trained CQI reviewers.
- The panel continues working with community partners to provide personal care items and back packs for children entering foster care.
- Panel is working on recruiting individuals willing to support foster children and their families by volunteering their time to assist with transporting children for visitation.

Region 6

- Region 6 Liaison, Shawna Miller, reviewed in detail many of the topics discussed at the Statewide KCS Meeting in Boise which was held October 2008. Shawna answered panel member's questions and explained some structural elements regarding the Department of Health and Welfare specifically in regards to Family and Children Services.
- The panel reviewed several child protection cases which were presented by the caseworker responsible for the case. Panel members interviewed each caseworker to determine why certain actions were taken or not taken. The presentations gave the panel "real world" examples of the process that a child may go through when he/she enters the child protection system. The presentation of the cases also generated ideas for the panel of way in which the system could be improved for the benefit of the children
- Shawna Miller presented a video documenting the process of reporting child abuse.
- The federal audit process, referred to as CQI, was described to the panel. Three panel members were able to attend the statewide training of the CQI in which they became eligible to assist in a CQI audit. One of the panel members did participate in an audit this year.
- Four kids from The Foster/Youth Alumni attended a KCS meeting. Each youth took time to tell the panel his or her story. Panel member then asked the youth questions. Each youth had a unique story and perspective. One of the youth had aged out of the system which provided another perspective which was valuable to the KCS Panel.
- The panel drove to Blackfoot to tour the RTC Bingham House. The tour of the RTC Bingham House included a description of an average day for a youth at RTC Bingham House. During the tour the panel members learned about the philosophy of RTC Bingham House and about the rules they have in place to guide that philosophy.
- The panel also visited Bannock House group home in Pocatello. The tour allowed the panel to see the difference between the two different shelter/group homes.
- Heidi Williams, a foster parent, presented to the panel the nature of being a foster parent. She described the challenges and rewards involved when one takes on the responsibility of being a foster parent.
- Shawna Miller reviewed the Regional Improvement Plan and the Project Improvement Plan for the panel. She explained what the RIP and PIP were, and how they applied to the Children and Family services. She also explained how the plans are designed to improve the quality of service that the clients of the department receive.
- Two members of the panel were able to attend the National Citizen Review Panel Conference in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. The attending panel members met with

other panels across the nation. The conference was an excellent source of information about increasing the size, productivity, and exposure of the Citizen Review Panel. The conference was also inspirational and motivational for those that attended.

Region 7

- We had the opportunity to send two of our most experienced and involved members (Janice McNee and Cheryl Taylor) to the national conference held in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Their report to the panel was almost as good as being there.
- Our Panel investigated a number of areas. We focused our attention on a few areas that continue to need attention and two new areas that are included in our recommendations.
- Over the course of the year the Region VII Keeping Children Safe Panel met nine times, reviewed twenty-four cases and discussed issues with twelve department employees.
- We also received a briefing by school personnel about the impact of child abuse, foster care and early childhood trauma on children and their academic growth.
- The Panel also interviewed two serving police officers about the practices and their experience of working with the Department.
- A primary focus of the team was a case concerning the physical abuse of a child in a public situation. The Panel was able to follow the entire case, from having a member interviewing the witnesses, reviewing their statements to the police, interviewing the police officer that took the initial report, review of the report of the police officer that caught the suspect and interviewed the child; to discussions with the Chief of Police and the Captain in charge about what happened and what should have happened.

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

Region 1

Co-Chair: Verna Gabel, Sandpoint
Co-Chair: Jim McCuaig, St Maries
Wilfred Ross, Coeur d'Alene
Mary Vail, Sandpoint
Beverly McCuaig St Maries
Leah Stern, Coeur d'Alene
Darleen Castillo, Post Falls
Fred Cruzan, St. Maries
Madeline Settle
DHW Liaison: Stacy White

Region 2

Chair: Doris Ferguson
Co-Chair: Douglas Giddings
Lura Abbott
Kitty Geidl
Gaylene Strandbakke
Jeanette Bennett: Nez Perce
Tribal Social Services
Laurie Stewart
Candice Borgelt
DHW Liaison: Brad Forth

Region 3

Chair: Dyann Aspiazu
Arleen Volgamore
DHW Liaison: Travis Cronin

Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco
Mary Stackle
Donna Parks
DHW Liaison: Miren Unsworth

Region 5

Chair: Wes Fields
Co-Chair: Midge Fisher
Lorie Stewart
Hillari Walker
Donna Bohrn
DHW Liaison: Jaime Nava

Region 6

Chair: Adam Hadley
Co-Chair: James Elbrader
Irene Samora
Oliver Samora
Carol Taylor
DHW Liaison: Shawna Miller

Region 7

Co-Chair: Gene Lund
Co-Chair: Jerry Johnson
Renee Hill
Cheryl Taylor
Janice McNee
Julie Hill
Melinda Drowns
Joanne Webster
DHW Liaison: Caprice Miller