KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE PANELS' 2005 STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

I. PREVENTION

As a Citizens Review Panel for Idaho, we are committed to the reinstatement of the Community Resource for Families Program (CRFF) in local schools as an effective preventative program for Idaho families. Emphasis should be made to develop preventative programs which will address the issue of teen suicide. Idaho's rate of teen suicide is among the highest in the nation.

- **Recommendation**

Community Resource for Families Program (CRFF): DHW should continue efforts to obtain dedicated funding under the direction of the Department for the CRFF program in order to restore community resource workers in all local elementary schools.

- **Recommendation**

Idaho is in the top five in the nation for teen suicides. The KCS Panels recommend DHW continue to pursue community partnerships with educators, law enforcement and parents to recognize the warning signs of at-risk youth.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels recommend that DHW offer a prevention program to teens in grades 7-12 throughout Idaho schools. This could be implemented through provision of assemblies or classroom instruction, as well as providing fact sheets to be included in school registration packets.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels recommend DHW pursue partnerships with Idaho universities to encourage the incorporation of suicide prevention training in college level classes.

II. EDUCATIONAL NEGLECT

In 2002, in response to KCS Panel Recommendations, the Governor's Children at Risk Task Force began to address the issue of educational neglect. The KCS Panels continue to endorse the evaluation process by the task force and makes the following recommendations.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels endorse the evaluation process by the Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk and recommend that DHW continue collaboration with the Task Force to address the educational needs of children in Idaho.

- **Recommendation**

Assure that all children in Idaho meet educational achievement standards no matter where they are educated or by whom.

III. FOSTER CARE/ADOPTON

The KCS Panels continue to recognize the significant value of the CASEY/TAP Program to foster children and their foster families. The KCS Panels continue to encourage an increase in foster care maintenance payments to meet and match community and cost of living standards. The Panels recognize the positive changes that the PRIDE philosophy has brought to both Department Staff and new foster parents.

- **Recommendation**

Encourage all Regions to continue current training and support for all workers so they understand the valuable resource of the CASEY Technical Assistance Program (TAP).

- **Recommendation**

DHW should continue to build on its success in increasing foster parent reimbursement to mirror the national average at a minimum.

- **Recommendation**

KCS Panels recommend continued support and enhancement of the PRIDE training along with other supportive training; i.e., grief/loss, behavioral issues, etc.

IV. RESOURCES

The KCS Panels desire continued efforts to enhance the communication and level of understanding between the Citizen Review Panels and the Governor's Office. There should be an emphasis on identifying and developing needed resources to assist Idaho families in caring appropriately for their own children within their homes and communities.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should continue to invite the Governor's Office to send a liaison to the stateside KCS Meeting annually.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should continue efforts to revise and enforce rules pertaining to the safety and well being of children receiving Psychosocial Rehabilitation services or partial care.

- **Recommendation**

Encourage collaboration with the Department of Juvenile Corrections and other agencies to provide timely, age appropriate, diverse parenting classes.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should continue efforts to get approval to hire additional children's mental health (CMH) staff to promote awareness of mental health and increase services to children and families with CMH issues.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels recommend development of regionalized resources to provide in-patient evaluation and skilled treatment options for children within their communities, especially those under eleven (11) years of age, and for girls.

V. WELL BEING OF CHILDREN

The KCS Panels would like to acknowledge the effort on the part of DHW to research the recommendation last year from the panel that DHW explore the barriers for families and children who are eligible for Medicaid services as they try to access medical, vision, and dental services within their communities. Having looked at the results from the CQI in the first and second quarters, the results seem promising.

The KCS Panels understand that the number of medical providers who accept Medicaid or are willing to take on new Medicaid clients continue to be a barrier. The panel now recommends, according to the standards set forth by DHW, that DHW seek specific solutions to increase local access to medical/vision/dental care for Idaho's children.

Once way to do this would be to work directly with medical/dental/vision professionals to encourage acceptance of Medicaid reimbursement and to increase provider donation of free services. Another solution could be to enter into contracts with providers to meet the needs of the children within the foster care system. Some Regions have done this and that solution seems to be working. In the Regions in which a solution has not yet been discovered, DHW should continue to collaborate with the Division of Health's Early Care and Learning Task Force to prioritize finding or recruiting health care providers to meet the needs of the under-served children in a timely fashion.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should seek specific solutions to increase the access to medical care for Idaho's children. Work directly with medical/dental/vision professionals to encourage acceptance of Medicaid reimbursement and to increase provider donation of services.

VI. SAFETY FOR CHILDREN

The State should continue to advocate for the establishment and enforcement of minimum health and safety standards and adequate child/adult ratios for all day care homes and facilities to improve the quality and safety of child care in Idaho.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should support strengthening state day care licensing standards.

VII. COURTS

Idaho is a large geographical area with forty-four counties. In Courts there is often a lack of expertise in child protection issues as well as conflicting priorities. There continues to be delays in filing petitions, scheduling court reviews, delays in achieving termination of parental rights and as a result, delays in achieving permanency as found in the State's Child and Family Services Federal Review.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should work with the Attorney General's office to encourage the appointment of a Deputy Attorney General, or contract with an attorney, to represent each region in child protection cases. This person would assure there will be effective legal representation to move children to permanency in a timely manner.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels support the use of family and drug courts at the adult and juvenile levels.

VIII. SUBSTANCE ABUSE

Substance abuse is a primary issue affecting the safety and well being of Idaho's children. Methamphetamine use is causing a domino effect that is taxing our health and welfare systems. There is an urgent need to raise public awareness about the devastating effects drugs have on prenatal infants who are exposed as well as on children who are neglected by drug addicted parents. There is an urgent need for local treatment throughout the entire state of Idaho.

- **Recommendation**

The KCS Panels support DHW's efforts to access grants to increase substance abuse treatment and prevention within each region and recommend this continue.

- **Recommendation**

Change the wording to the definition of "neglect" under the Child Protection Act (CPA) to include children who are prenatally exposed to drugs.

- **Recommendation**

DHW should collaborate with other agencies to research and support programs to prevent prenatal drug exposure and to educate communities on the prevalence and risk to children and families of methamphetamines and other drugs in Idaho.