

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

**Statewide Annual Report and
2010 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 20, 2010, 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 2010."

Idaho Keeping Children Safe Panel 2010 Recommendations

I. SUPPORT TO CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A. Our aging out youth must often choose between working 20 hours a week to meet necessary needs (food and insurance), or attend college or advanced training programs designed to help them attain a better standard of living. In order to encourage youth in quest for a better life, the mandatory work hours should be eliminated.

RECOMMENDATION: Explore waiver of the 20 hour work requirement for foster youth eligible for food stamps.

RECOMMENDATION: Allow foster youth alumni to maintain Medicaid eligibility to age 21.

B. Children placed in foster care are often placed in another school or school district. The result may impact the youth in negative ways (emotionally and/or grade wise). This may cause them to lose credits at the secondary level.

RECOMMENDATION: Join with the Department of Education and keep foster care children in the same school, if possible.

RECOMMENDATION: Join with the Department of Education to preserve their secondary credits, when children move from one school to another.

C. Children within foster care frequently do not have a family support system in place. To minimize this problem we need to determine how well we are preparing them for life outside the foster care system.

RECOMMENDATION: Gather more data about older youth's transition to adult life to further understand the strengths and weaknesses of our transition system.

D. The Community Resource Worker program is an essential system to provide early intervention services to families in a community setting. This program helps families learn to help themselves and avoid becoming part of the system. These services have been proven to be effective in increasing child well-being, school performance, and family self-reliance.

RECOMMENDATION: Restore the Community Resource Worker Program to all schools through DHW dedicated funding.

II. SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

An annual funding base is needed for helping homeless families who, due to homelessness, have lost their children. Funding is needed to help reunify these families and provide them with housing. Services could include provision for housing for homeless families, intensive in-home services, and appropriate preventive services.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide support services to at-risk families and facilitate the children staying in the home.

III. ENSURING QUALITY SERVICES

It is important for the Department of Health and Welfare to be fairly represented in judicial proceedings to help determine their rights within the child Protective Act.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Continue seeking legal representation for DHW in the courtroom.

IV. MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

A. All counties should have MDT meetings. The department needs to set structure and function for these meetings to ensure that MDT teams are meeting regularly and are following the same guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION: Standardize the composition, function and purpose of the MDT's across all counties.

B. Numerous children are unnecessarily removed from their caregivers. To prevent unnecessary removal of children training and collaboration needs to take place between social workers and law enforcement so that children remain in their family and culture.

RECOMMENDATION: Provide more training and foster collaboration between social workers and law enforcement at the local level.

V. PUBLIC AWARENESS

A. Children continue to be at risk for exploitation and direct harm from the effects of either drugs or pornography

RECOMMENDATION: Increase awareness of the dangers and damage that illegal drug use and pornography pose for the youth of Idaho.

B. To ensure that children are fully protected in day care situations we suggest that guidelines be available.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase awareness of what a parent should look for in a safe child care setting and that this information be available to the public.

C. Health and Welfare needs a way to collect information from the community so that they can receive Kudos for the time and hard work they do and in addition identify areas needing improvement so they are able to provide better services to clients through community resources.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a community survey to be given to those receiving assistance from or providing services for H&W, to identify areas for improvement.

VI. FOSTER CARE

A. Whenever possible, children should be placed with relatives, kin, or with siblings. Better matching early would lead to stability in foster care, improved timeliness to permanency, and improved child well-being. When making placement decisions in crisis it may be difficult to weigh all factors. A matrix based on evidenced based practice should be developed to assist workers in determining what would be the most appropriate placement.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop a matrix for decision making regarding the placement of foster children that would assist social workers in knowing which factors are the most important in selecting a foster home.

B. Contact between social worker, birth family, and foster family need to be increased to provide for more stability in foster care placements. To increase retention of foster families there is need for greater reimbursement.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the contact between the social worker, birth family, and foster family to provide stability in foster care placements and a higher satisfaction rate of foster parents.

RECOMMENDATION: Increase the reimbursement rate to foster parents.

C. Research indicates that placing a child with a relative is more likely to provide a stable environment, keep children connected with siblings, keep children connected to their extended family and culture and cost less in providing the maximum success for the child as they transition to adulthood. The current structure of PRIDE training can be can be cumbersome for relatives living in rural communities

RECOMMENDATION: Structure PRIDE training so that some of the classes can be taken online or through video conferencing.

RECOMMENDATION: Evaluate whether the relative version of PRIDE should be adopted and whether PRIDE training should be adapted or shortened.

VII. REGIONAL RECOMMENDATION

A. Recommendation Region 1: We recommend Health and Welfare collaborate with the licensing unit and Deputy Attorney General to develop a drug protocol for Region 1. Kootenai Medical Center (KMC) has a dramatic increase in drug tests performed after a family complaint was received to Health and Welfare. KMC was mandated to change their drug screen policy. Among the general population, Priority 2 referrals for Region 1 regarding drug use has greatly increased.

Purpose: Six months prior to changing the protocol, from February 1, 2009 to July 31, 2009, there were 774 drug screens ordered for mothers and babies. Out of those 774, the positive results concluded: 1 for cocaine, 18 for amphetamines, 2 for methadone, 24 for opiates and 25 for THC. Six months after the protocol change was implemented, 173 drug screens were ordered for mothers and babies. From those 173 drug screens, the positive results concluded: 2 for benzodiazepines, 1 for cocaine, 2 for amphetamines, 5 for methadone, 9 for opiates and 8 for THC. There is a seventy-eight percent decrease in the number of screens performed and a sixty-one percent decrease in the number of positive results. Babies are going home unprotected

B. Recommendation Region 3: IDHW should develop an agreement with bordering states to expedite out of state placements for children whose family supports are just across state lines.

**Idaho “Keeping Children Safe”
Regional Panel Activities During 2010**

**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
Richard Griffin
DHW Liaison: Stacy White

Region 2

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

Region 3

Chair: Nancy Ball
Arleen Volgamore
Christy Thomas
Tina Freckleton
Linda Dripps
Liza Dix Warner
Briana Katzenberger
Chris Boston
DHW Co-Liaison: Travis Cronin
DHW Co-Liaison: Allison Ball

Region 4

Chair: Tom Turco
Mary Stackle
Donna Parks
Sally Hartuck
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: James Elbrader
Co-Chair: Oliver Samora
Irene Samora
Dan McDougall
DHW Liaison: Shawna Miller

Region 7

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

Region 1

Speakers/Participation:

Caseworker Todd Neel presented to the panel members on Critical Incident Debriefing.

KCS Panel Members took a tour of the local Children's Village to learn about their programs, and funding loss the center recently experienced with the closure of Residential treatment.

Denise Rosen Deputy Attorney General met with panel members to discuss recent Idaho Code changes.

Selection Committee – (Wilfred Ross) participated in the selection process for a legally free child.

Ruth Wilford, Neonatal nurse presented to the panel on need for hospitals to screen and report drug exposed infants.

Region 2

Panel members had a monthly meeting in each field office of Region II over this past year. It provided an opportunity to meet with field office staff to gain their prospective of Child Welfare services in Region II and to learn first hand what it means to work in the field of Child Welfare. The meetings with staff were very informative and engaging for the panel members.

Panel members spent one monthly meeting filling pillowcases for the "Luv a Kid" pillowcase project and distributed them after the meeting.

The majority of panel members attended the State-wide meeting in October 2009.

The panel members focused their efforts on improving the Child Welfare System to accommodate children being placed with relatives more easily.

Region 3

Goals

This year the Region III KCS panel was focused on the following goals.

1. Learn how children are brought into foster care.
2. Learn about process of selecting fostering families for children.
3. Learn about the foster parent licensing requirements.

Guest Speakers

To this end our panel invited the following guest speakers to meet with our panel and to discuss possible recommendations based on the learning we were doing as a panel.

Kristi Moore	Risk Assessor Supervisor IDHW
Allison Ball	Family Group Decision Making Facilitator
Tina Freckleton	Court Appointed Special Advocate program
Chrystle Fuentes	Self Reliance Generalist
Ken Perry	Navigation Program Specialist
Diane Helton	KCS state coordinator
Linda Burch	Child Welfare Chief over foster care licensing

Our panel had two members attend the Idaho Children's Trust Fund conference on scholarships from the conference and IDHW. Our panel sent several members to become trained in the CQI process.

Region 4

This year we returned to meeting monthly. The activities during the meeting included:

- A case review
- A presentation by Tim Sanders of licensing
- A presentation on Focus
- A presentation by Scott Crandall on the various activities his organization provides.
- Attendance at the Statewide Web meeting

Members did not participate in the CQI process of quarterly file reviews with Department workers, which include interviews with biological parents, foster parents, social workers, and foster children if appropriate due to unavailability of members.

Attendance at two fatality reviews.

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.

The panel is interested in improving services to youth. It hopes to be included in gathering regional data for the National Youth and Transition database.

Region 6

1. The Region VI Keeping Children Safe Panel of 2009 is a group of relatively new panel members that focused on learning about the Child Protection Act, Standards

and Priority guidelines as well as community services available in the surrounding communities.

2. Panel Members:

- a. Reviewed children-in-care files.
- b. Visited local facilities to include Bannock House, the Blackfoot facility, Bright Tomorrows, and the Region VI Judicial Center.
- c. Attended monthly meetings and also tried to recruit new members for the panel.

Region 7

Our Panel investigated a number of areas. We focused our attention on a few areas that continue to need attention and areas that are included in our two recommendations.

Over the course of the year the Region VII Keeping Children Safe Panel met nine times, reviewed eighteen cases and discussed issues with eight department employees.

A primary focus of the team was following cases for the complete course of the investigation and the care of the children through either reunification or termination of parental rights.

Our Liaison to the Panel is Caprice Miller, partnering with Cheryl Taylor, and they provide outstanding support to the Region VII panel. Both have a great depth of experience and knowledge, and serve as an excellent resource to what must seem to them to be an unending stream of questions.

It has been an interesting year for Region VII Keeping Children Safe Panel, and we are already looking forward to next year.