

Idaho's Children at Risk Task Force Annual Report on Recommendations and Strategic Plan: 2021

Idaho's Governor's Children at Risk Task Force (CARTF) has comprehensively reviewed and evaluated Idaho's investigative, administrative, and both civil and criminal judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions. The following annual report documents Idaho's progress in relationship to the Children at Risk Task Force's recommendations and strategic planning previously submitted for the period of 2018-2020. This report covers performance from May 1, 2020 through May 1, 2021 and includes information in the form of CARTF's recommendations, tasks, findings, and outcomes, and an accountability of Children's Justice Act (CJA) funds used in each project. Additionally, this annual report summarizes the Task Force's activities during this reporting period. This annual report reflects the on-going mission of the Children at Risk Task Force which is *to make the system more sensitive and responsive to child victims*.

CARTF Recommendation/Objective

Goal One

Continue to support the development and enhancement of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) in each Idaho county in accordance with Idaho Code Section 16-1609. Support development of training in core competencies for professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect.

Strategies

- A. Provide annual area multidisciplinary team training to promote the continued formation of MDTs and enhance existing MDTs.
- B. Encourage multidisciplinary team formation and functioning at the prosecutors' seminars which meet semi-annually. Prepare handouts for the prosecutors' meetings with information to promote initiating multidisciplinary teams or enhancing their current function.
- C. During the next three years, invite child protection stakeholders to share training strategies and concerns involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect.
- D. Using federal Children's Justice Act funds continue to provide funding resources that are available for training MDTs.
- E. Develop a process to request annual information from multidisciplinary teams that includes:
 - 1) activities,
 - 2) strengths, and
 - 3) needs.

Implementation of Recommendation/Objective and Strategies

Projects, Activities, Individuals Involved, Outcomes, and Expenditure of CJA funds for 2020-2021

The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force continues to distribute the multidisciplinary team funds, sponsor trainings, and work with the Idaho Network of Child Advocacy Center State

Chapter Coordinator to promote multidisciplinary teams and provide multidisciplinary team training.

The multidisciplinary team grants assist counties in printing, distributing, and implementing signed multidisciplinary team protocols. Grant monies are also provided to purchase video/audio taping equipment and facilitate MDTs in hosting and attending specialized training.

Grant monies were distributed to MDTs between May 2020 and April 2021. During the previous year the Governor’s Children at Risk Task Force updated the local multidisciplinary team grant process. An online application form was created, timeframes were established for submission cycles, and a streamlined process for review and approval of applications was completed. Unfortunately, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many trainings were canceled and eventually those who would typically request grant funds from CARTF to hold conferences did not apply for funds.

During this grant cycle the Task Force made multidisciplinary team grants available to the following centers:

Date	MDT Agency Name	Purpose	Amount Provided
08/11/2020	Upper Valley Child Advocacy Center	To provide a virtual and limited in-person regional training to strengthen MDT and community stakeholder partnerships and services in order to better serve child victims of abuse. This training will provide resources, education, and opportunities for collaboration.	\$8,672.87
Total			\$8,672.87

Additionally, to encourage prosecutors to assume their responsibility in the formation and functioning of multidisciplinary teams throughout Idaho, a brochure highlighting the role of MDTs is distributed at the semi-annual prosecutors’ seminars. However, these conferences were canceled for the year due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Idaho’s child advocacy centers also promote and strengthen multidisciplinary teams. Currently Idaho has five child advocacy centers accredited by the National Children’s Alliance. They include:

- Cares, St. Luke’s – Boise
- Cares, St. Luke’s – Magic Valley
- Nampa Family Justice Center
- Bright Tomorrows Child Advocacy Center – Pocatello

- Upper Valley Children’s Advocacy Center – Rexburg (newest accredited CAC as of 2020)

There are also two centers that are at various stages of development. They include:

- LillyBrooke Family Justice Center – Sandpoint
- Safe Passage Children’s Advocacy Center – Coeur d’Alene

To promote the continued formation of multidisciplinary teams and enhance existing multidisciplinary teams, the Governor's Children at Risk Task Force typically sponsors and hosts an annual conference each October. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to hold our annual conference. However, in March 2021, in partnership with the Idaho Children’s Trust Fund, CARTF sponsored a three-day virtual webinar focused on creating a 21st Century system of care focused on the well-being of children in Idaho.

Over the three days, 345 people attended the conference. CARTF sponsored three different break-out sessions specific to our priorities on identification and prosecution of child abuse and neglect and had 98 attendees.

Below is an accounting of the expenses for the virtual conference:

Speaker Honorariums	\$2,000.00
Technology hosting	\$5,452.00
Registration Scholarships	\$2,080.00
Total Conference Expenses	\$9,532.00

To promote multidisciplinary teams and make counties aware of multidisciplinary team projects and grants, CARTF representatives typically provide a display of brochures and DVDs that are featured at vendor booths in trainings and conferences, when requested. These conferences usually include the summer and winter Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association Training, the Idaho State Bar Protection Conference, the Idaho School Counselor’s Association Conference, and our MDT training conference. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all of these conferences were canceled. However, in an effort to continue making these resources readily available, our publications and website subcommittee updated our publications, added new publications to our resources, and made it easier to order the resources on our website through an easy to submit form.

To keep multidisciplinary teams informed, the Governor’s Children at Risk Task Force website, www.IDCARTF.org, shares up-to-date information in the area of child maltreatment, training opportunities, and other resources to assist in multidisciplinary team development and support. Additionally, the website supports on-line registration for the annual “Keeping Children Safe Conference,” the Annual Award of Excellence, and ordering the *Care Enough to Call* DVD, brochures, and other free community resources. It also contains information on how to apply for multidisciplinary team grants. In June 2019, the website had a major overhaul and update to be more visually appealing and user-friendly.

CARTF’s publication and website subcommittee continues to oversee the update of our community resources, focused on content, relevance, visual appeal, access, and age-

appropriateness. The subcommittee is also exploring avenues for streaming our mandated reporter DVD as well as updating our *What to Expect in Court* video for foster youth. Furthermore, the committee is looking at updating and combing our children's activity guides, *What's My Job in Court* and *What to Expect in Court*, as well as creating a guide more suitable for tweens and teens.

During 2020-2021 meetings, representatives from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Child Fatality Review Team, Keeping Children Safe Citizens Review Panel, Idaho's Youth Empowerment Services program, Idaho Council on Suicide Prevention, Upper Valley Children's Advocacy Center, and the Idaho Network of Children's Advocacy Centers attended CARTF meetings to share their strategies and concerns related to Idaho's child protection system. Typically, CARTF would also meet with the Office of Performance Evaluations and the Idaho Foster Youth Panel. However, due to COVID-19, neither of these groups are available to meet.

How the Activities Support Implementation of the Task Force's Recommendation

The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force continues to support the formation and enhancement of multidisciplinary teams by offering start-up funding for multidisciplinary teams and support needed equipment and training opportunities for MDT members. The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force organizes and produces an annual multidisciplinary team conference as well as sponsors other relevant conferences. Additionally, CARTF provides awareness of Idaho's statute regarding multidisciplinary teams by distributing a multidisciplinary team brochure and maintaining the CARTF website. The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force will support and coordinate multidisciplinary team training with the Idaho Network of Child Advocacy Centers. The Children at Risk Task Force will continue to monitor the progress and encourage multidisciplinary teams throughout Idaho. These activities improve the investigative and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.

CARTF Recommendation/Objective

Goal Two

Review and make recommendations to improve current and proposed legislation and rules pertaining to the child protection process.

Strategies

- A. Review proposed legislation relating to child abuse and neglect, communicate conclusions to the Governor, and make recommendations to legislators or other appropriate entities.
- B. Review the Child Protective Act and if appropriate, make recommendations for revision.
- C. Invite Office of Performance Evaluation to update CARTF on current legislative issues regarding child protection system.

Implementation of Recommendation/Objective and Strategies

Projects, Activities, Individuals Involved, Outcomes, and Expenditure of CJA funds for 2020-2021

During the 2021 legislative session, the Governor's Children at Risk Task Force received updates on proposed child protection legislation. Specific legislation reviewed pertaining to Idaho's child welfare system included:

HB 52 is targeted on prohibiting conversion therapy to children and state funding of such. This bill has been referred to Ways and Means committee.

HB 77 proposed changes to the definition of child neglect. This proposed legislation would have had a significant impact on the state's definition of neglect. This bill has been referred to Judiciary, Rules and Administration committee.

HB 191 this bill authorizes temporary caregiver programs. It addresses a parent's ability to designate a temporary caregiver for their child and can be revocable at any time. It also addresses requirements for temporary caregiver organizations. This bill has been signed into law.

HB 233 is targeted to address the unnecessary removal of children from their homes due to serious behavioral health conditions. This bill has been signed into law.

HB 246 is in regard to inference with parental rights during an emergency order or disaster declaration. This bill does not impact the state's ability to intervene for the purpose of child protection matters. This bill has been signed into law.

How the Activities Support Implementation of the Task Force's Recommendation

The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force activities included review of the statutory amendments and proposed legislation involving children for this reporting period. The Task Force's representative from Child Protective Services reviewed the proposed legislation in relation to changes to the Child Protective Act and Idaho Code. These activities are undertaken to reform Idaho's State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, or procedures to protect children from abuse and/or neglect.

CARTF Recommendation/ Objective

Goal Three

Evaluate and improve the investigation and prosecution process for civil and criminal cases involving child abuse and neglect.

Strategies

- A. Recognize the stakeholders in the child protection system for the work done in handling cases of child abuse and neglect.
- B. Evaluate, develop, update, and distribute materials via a variety of modalities to educate the public and those involved in the legal processes related to child abuse and neglect.
- C. Annually, receive a report from the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee to identify and monitor practices within the legal process.
- D. Explore how the sharing of information between agencies and within IDHW can be improved and streamlined to protect children.
- E. Reduce court-related trauma to children by helping them understand their role in court.
- F. Review Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's Centralized Intake Unit's processes for receiving and dispatching reports of child abuse and neglect to protect children.
- G. Continue to monitor deaths and injuries related to the religious medical exemption in Idaho Child Protective Act.
- H. Identify and review how societal issues affect child welfare in Idaho.
- I. Review the foster care system in the state of Idaho.

Implementation of Recommendation/Objective and Strategies

Projects, Activities, Individuals Involved, Outcomes, and Expenditure of CJA funds for 2020-2021

To assist in promoting the profession of child protection as being a valued position with Idaho's legal system, CARTF sponsors an annual award to be presented to an individual who has gone above and beyond in advancing the cause of protecting children from neglect and abuse. This award is open to any professionals who are involved in investigation and judicial handling of cases of abuse and neglect of children. Each year CARTF selects someone from the following professions deserving of this recognition: judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, social workers, guardian ad litem, and law enforcement officers. Nomination forms are sent to prosecutors, law enforcement, and child protection social workers in all forty-four counties. Typically, this award is promoted and awarded during our annual MDT conference, which was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to a continual lack of interest and nominations, CARTF is updating this goal for 2021-2024 to develop a better process in recognizing the work being done by professionals in child protective services.

To assist children in understanding their role in court and thereby reducing court-related trauma, in June 2009, CARTF adapted the coloring book, *What's My Job in Court*, for Idaho. The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force continues to order and distribute this coloring book and crayons to court rooms, child protection social workers, prosecuting attorneys, CASA/GAL, and victim witness coordinators throughout the state. Since the last report, 308 copies of "What's My Job in Court" have been distributed.

Although the coloring book, *What's My Job in Court*, assists in preparing children for criminal proceedings, it does not address the features of civil court. Therefore, CARTF developed an additional activity coloring book for children involved in child protection civil court. This book, *What Happens in Court*, includes an explanation of CASA/GAL, public defender, child protection, permanency, and adoption. We have received a great deal of positive response from those involved in the court system about the beneficial impact this activity book has had. Additionally, it has been useful for attorneys and judges as they talk to the community about court and the role of the judiciary in our state. Two hundred thirty-three copies of the coloring book have been distributed since May 1, 2019 to the time of this report.

The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force continues to distribute the brochure, *Care Enough to Call*. The brochure outlines the responsibility of educators, medical personnel, social workers, and community partners who do not work directly with child protection teams, regarding their roles as mandatory reporters. The brochure is available in English and Spanish. During this report cycle, 275 English brochures and 100 Spanish brochures have been distributed throughout Idaho. CARTF is currently reviewing this brochure to determine what updates are needed. To encourage mandatory reporting, through a contract with University of Idaho Cooperative Extension System, the Children at Risk Task Force sponsored the development of an educational video on Idaho's child abuse reporting laws. The ten-minute DVD/video explains the definitions of child abuse and neglect, instructs citizens on their duty to report, and gives them information on who to call and what information they should include in their report. The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force distributes the DVDs upon request through online orders as well as at events and conferences. During this report cycle, 33 DVDs were distributed out of existing inventory. Typically, many of our brochures and DVDs are distributed during workshops and conferences that we host or participate in as vendors. We have found our distribution numbers are lower this reporting cycle due to the cancelation of several conferences and workshops as a result of COVID-19.

The Task Force has continued to review and discuss the state's faith healing exemptions from prosecution for child deaths or medical neglect. The Governors' Children at Risk Task Force remains interested in the topic and is committed to ensure review of cases in the event of a fatality as part of the Child Fatality Review Team's scope of work. This strategy is now under the purview of Goal 4.

How the Activities Support Implementation of the Task Force's Recommendation

Through a best practice award, the profession of child protection is recognized as being a valued position in Idaho's system focusing on the protection of children who experience abuse and neglect abuse. The Task Force also actively supports the activities of the Supreme Court Improvement Project. To prepare children for court and reduce the trauma they may otherwise experience in participating in the judicial system, color activity books and *Quick Start Guides* have been provided to victim witness coordinators, child welfare social workers, prosecuting attorneys, CASAs, and children/youth in foster care. Additionally, CJA funds were used to print and distribute a brochure and DVD that explains the process of making a report of child maltreatment. These tools assist all Idaho citizens in recognizing their obligation to report child abuse and neglect and instruct them on how to make the report. All of these activities were

undertaken to improve the skills of those individuals who are involved in the investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect.

CARTF Recommendation/ Objective

Goal Four

Oversee the Statewide Child Fatality Review Team to examine child deaths.

Strategies

- A. Continue to seek technical assistance as needed from the National Resource Center on Child Fatalities to assist in reestablishing and implementing a statewide Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT).
- B. Provide financial support of Child Fatality Review Team.
- C. Support legislation to meet the needs of the Statewide Child Fatality Review Team. Continue to support the ongoing development of Child Fatality Review Team bylaws and procedures for the gathering of child fatality data.
- D. Support the continued development of a robust Child Fatality Review Team membership.
- E. Support the dissemination of the Child Fatality Review Team Report.

Implementation of Recommendation/Objective and Strategies

Projects, Activities, Individuals Involved, Outcomes, and Expenditure of CJA funds for 2020-2021

The Child Fatality Review Team issued their first report in April 2014. The report was sent to all state legislators and many multidisciplinary team members across the state. It was also posted on the Task Force's website for public access. The Child Fatality Review Team issued their latest annual report in May 2021 as well as their annual quick facts sheet. The report continues to be distributed to a broad array of stakeholders. All Child Fatality Review Team publications are written for a general audience and presented to CARTF, with an overview presented at the CARTF conference each year.

The Child Fatality Review Team communicates regularly with the National Center for Child Fatality Review and Prevention related to the database and Data Use Agreement updates, secondary research on preventive specific causes of death, inquiries from potential local teams, and Idaho updates for their website. They also direct partner agencies to the national website to help explain the Idaho review process and how shared information is used for Child Fatality Review Team study.

The chairwoman and principal research analyst for the Idaho CFRT typically attend the three-day conference and training for western state child fatality review programs sponsored and organized by the National Center for Child Fatality Review and Prevention. However, the 2020 conference was canceled and/or unable to be attended due to the pandemic. They plan to attend as soon as the training is available.

During this reporting period, CARTF utilized approximately \$25,000 of CJA funds for the child fatality review team.

How the Activities Support Implementation of the Task Force's Recommendation

The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force will continue to support the Child Fatality Review Team. The Task Force will also continue to advocate for a process which provides protection of the review team from discovery and provides full access to records.