

## **Idaho's Children at Risk Task Force Annual Report on Recommendations and Strategic Plan: 2025**

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. Particular attention is paid to cases involving child sexual abuse and exploitation, suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and a potential combination of jurisdictions. The following annual report documents Idaho's progress in relation to the Children at Risk Task Force's recommendations and strategic planning previously submitted for the period of 2024-2027. This report covers performance from May 1, 2024, through April 30, 2025, 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: *to make the system more sensitive and responsive to child victims.*

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### **Strategies- Update on Implementation of Recommendation/Objective and Strategies Projects, Activities, Individuals Involved, Outcomes, and Expenditure of CJA funds for 2024-2025**

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#### **Goal One (Category A)**

*Continue to support the development and enhancement of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) in each Idaho county in accordance with Idaho Code Section 16-1617. Support development of training in core competencies for professionals involved in the investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect.*

**Strategy A: Over the next three years, survey local MDTs to assess needs, create a strategy to help meet those needs, and then implement a plan based on those strategies.**

CARTF, in partnership with the Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Committee and Idaho Network of Child Advocacy Centers, developed and deployed a statewide MDT survey in Fall 2024 to assess county MDT needs and challenges.

- Responses were received from 22 counties, covering approximately 80% of Idaho's population.
- Follow-ups with non-responding MDTs were conducted in Winter 2024.
- Data analysis is currently in progress, with a final report to be presented to CARTF in April 2025.

This survey will help shape statewide MDT training and support strategies in the coming years.

**Strategy B: Provide MDT training to promote the continued formation of MDTs and enhance existing MDTs.**

CARTF co-hosted the Awareness to Action: Transforming Responsive Services in Idaho Conference in June 2024, drawing 430 attendees from diverse fields, including social workers, counselors, law enforcement, attorneys, educators, medical professionals, probation officers, and victim witness coordinators.

The event featured two national keynotes and 36 sessions across the following six tracks:

1. Child Maltreatment
2. Domestic Violence and Stalking
3. Trauma-Informed Care & Service Enhancements
4. Criminal Justice and Law Enforcement
5. Simulation Exercises
6. Neurobiology of Trauma

High-attendance sessions included:

- Internet Crimes Against Children
- 7 Stages of Grooming and Delayed Disclosure
- Human Trafficking
- Trauma-Informed Interviewing
- Children of Trauma and Resilience
- Internet Grooming and Offenders
- Heroes, Villains, and Healing
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CARTF contributed \$15,000 in Children’s Justice Act (CJA) funds to support this conference:

- \$4,300 for conference meals
- \$7,300 for keynote speaker Kevin Mulcahey. Presentation titled: “Randy and Me: A Prosecutor’s Story of Child Abuse”.
- \$3,500 for the WHOVA conference app

**Strategy C: Create an MDT subcommittee comprised of members from CARTF and outside stakeholder groups to support the formation, development and training of MDTs at a statewide level.**

CARTF formally established an MDT Subcommittee in December 2023, which meets eight times per year and serves as a central hub for statewide MDT support and strategy.

Key efforts include:

- Conducting the statewide MDT survey outlined in Strategy A to assess county needs.
- Hosting listening sessions with both high-functioning and struggling MDTs.
- Connecting MDTs with resources and peer mentorship.

Key findings:

- Rural counties face unique challenges, including limited resources and partner engagement.
- High turnover rates among MDT professionals require ongoing training.
- Lack of role clarity creates barriers to effective collaboration.

MDT Subcommittee Three-Year Plan:

- Year 1 (2024-2025): Deploy MDT survey, conduct statewide MDT listening tour.
- Year 2 (2025-2026): Develop targeted support strategies.
- Year 3 (2026-2027): Implement training and support initiatives.

**Strategy D: Encourage multidisciplinary team formation and functioning amongst prosecutors via various formats through the Idaho Prosecuting Attorney’s Association and other venues.**

CARTF encourages MDT formation and prosecutor engagement by:

- Distributing the MDT survey to all county prosecutors to assess needs.
- CARTF’s prosecuting attorney representative attended and presented at the Spring 2024 Idaho Prosecuting Attorneys Association (IPAA) Conference. CARTF is exploring an exhibitor booth for the next conference.
- Providing free copies of the NACC Child Welfare Law and Practice (Red Book). 21 books distributed this reporting period.

**Strategy E: 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.**

CARTF collaborated with stakeholders in the child welfare system during this reporting period, including:

- Idaho Public Defenders Office – Discussed new statewide public defender system improvements.
- Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Leadership – Presented on increasing the ratio of children in care to licensed foster homes and decreasing the time to permanency.
- Citizen Review Panel Representatives – Shared regional child protection concerns.
- Idaho Health & Social Services Ombudsman – Reviewed mandates and objectives of the newly formed office.
- Two Rivers United Child Advocacy Center (CAC), Lewiston – CARTF provided a \$5,000 grant to support startup efforts. Lewiston, Idaho was the last region in the state to not be served by a local CAC.
- Building Hope Today Executive Director – Discussed statewide MDT training strategies.

**Strategy F: Using federal Criminal Justice Act funds, continue to provide funding resources that are available for training MDTs.**

CARTF continues to distribute MDT grant funds, supporting the following partners:

- Idaho Network of Child Advocacy Centers (INCAC)
- Building Hope Today
- Two Rivers United CAC

**Grants Distributed Between May 2024 – April 2025**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Recipient</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Amount Awarded</b>
May 2024	Building Hope Today	MDT Training & Technical Assistance	\$5,000
May 2024	INCAC	Support Protecting Our Kids Symposium	\$2,350
Nov 2024	Two Rivers United CAC	Startup costs & forensic interviewing training	\$5,000

**Strategy G: Foster relationships with and support county MDTs and regional CACs through site visits by task force members, periodic updates from MDTs and CACs at task force meetings and facilitating training through grants and conferences.**

In May 2024, CARTF conducted a virtual regional meeting with Region 7 MDT partners and in March 2025, CARTF met with Idaho’s newest CAC, Two Rivers United.

**How the Activities Support Implementation of the Task Force’s Recommendation**

CARTF’s work in 2024-2025 has strengthened MDTs statewide through:

- Surveying and listening to MDTs to guide future support strategies.
- Providing essential training and funding to MDTs and CACs.
- Expanding access to training through conferences and online initiatives.
- Enhancing MDT engagement through regional site visits and direct collaboration.

These efforts strengthen Idaho’s child protection response, ensuring improved investigative and judicial handling of child abuse cases.

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### ***Goal Two (Category C)***

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

**Strategy A: Develop and maintain a legislative subcommittee which will review proposed legislation and rules relating to child abuse and neglect and will communicate feedback to appropriate entities to potentially influence changes.**

CARTF maintains an active Legislative Subcommittee, which meets every other week from January through early May to review proposed legislation relating to child abuse, neglect, foster care, adoption, and juvenile justice. The subcommittee evaluates each bill's impact on Idaho's child protection system. During the 2025 legislative session, the Legislative Subcommittee is tracking several key bills relevant to the child welfare system.

**Strategy B: Review the Child Protective Act and if appropriate, make recommendations for revision.**

CARTF's Legislative Subcommittee in their work during the legislative session also reviewed specific areas of the Child Protective Act to determine if any of the proposed legislation was in conflict with another area of statute.

**Strategy C: Invite Office of Performance Evaluation (OPE) to update CARTF on current legislative issues regarding child protection system.**

As part of its efforts to improve child protection oversight, CARTF and the Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) collaborated with the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) during the 2024-2025 reporting period. Specifically, the CFRT contributed case data and insights to OPE's County Coroners and Death Investigations report. This collaboration allowed for a more comprehensive evaluation of child death investigations in Idaho, strengthening investigative practices and increasing transparency in child welfare system reviews.

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

CARTF's Legislative Subcommittee continues to play a vital role in evaluating new and existing laws impacting Idaho's child welfare system. Through legislative review, policy recommendations, and ongoing impact analysis, CARTF has:

- Tracked and provided feedback on 10 legislative bills in 2025 addressing child protection, foster care, adoption, and juvenile proceedings.
- Reviewed outcomes of key 2024 legislation to determine if laws are achieving their intended effects.
- Engaged in direct collaboration with the Office of Performance Evaluations, helping refine child fatality review and death investigations in Idaho.

By actively monitoring policy changes and evaluating legislative impact, CARTF ensures that Idaho's child welfare laws remain effective, responsive, and aligned with best practices for protecting children and supporting families.

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### ***Goal Three (Category B)***

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

**Strategy A: 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.**

CARTF is committed to ensuring that professionals and the public have access to accurate and up-to-date information on child abuse, neglect, and the legal processes surrounding child protection. Over the past year, CARTF has updated and distributed educational materials to improve awareness and strengthen Idaho's child welfare system.

#### Key Resource Updates and Distribution:

- Rebranding Effort: In Fall 2024, CARTF rebranded its materials, refreshing the logo, website, community resources, conference displays, and letterhead to better reflect its mission and engagement with the public.
- "What's My Job in Court" Coloring Book: Designed to help children understand their role in court and reduce court-related trauma. Distributed 180 copies to courtrooms, child protection social workers, attorneys, and CASA/GAL programs.
- "What Happens in Court" Activity Book: Developed to assist children navigating the child protection legal system. 180 copies distributed.
- Care Enough to Call Brochure: Outlining mandatory reporting responsibilities for professionals, available in English and Spanish. 90 copies of each distributed.
- Streaming Training Video on Child Abuse Reporting: CARTF converted its mandatory reporting training video into an online streaming format. As of this report, the video has been viewed 922 times.

#### Revamped Resource Order System:

CARTF updated its resource order form to track how materials are used. Sample feedback from professionals who received resources:

- *"We plan on using these brochures as part of our onboarding training for new clinicians."*
- *"I will use these materials to ease Indigenous children's worries about out-of-home placement...thank you from the bottom of my heart"*
- *"Our Prosecutor's Office uses these books to help children understand what happens in court and reduce their stress... keep up the good work!"*

**Strategy B: Receive updates from the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee to identify and monitor practices within the legal process.**

CARTF continues to strengthen its partnership with the Court Improvement Program and the Child Protection Committee to ensure better alignment between CARTF’s mission and the judiciary’s role in child welfare cases.

Key Collaborative Efforts:

- Task Force Representation: A dedicated court administrator representative serves on the CARTF Task Force to provide regular updates on court policies, training efforts, and legislative developments.
- Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Subcommittee Support: The court representative provided data analytics resources for the MDT survey.
- Statewide Training Contributions: CARTF supported the Children and Families Institute, specifically the following Child Protection Session:
  - a. *Harm of Child Removal* – Presenter Shanti Trivedi, JD, University of Baltimore, discussing the legal and psychological impacts of child removal decisions.

**Strategy C: Identify, intervene, and train in areas of child trauma as it pertains to child maltreatment.**

CARTF promotes trauma-informed training to help child protection professionals understand, mitigate, and respond to the effects of trauma on child victims. Key Training Initiatives Supported:

- Awareness to Action Conference (June 2024): CARTF supported training on neurobiology of trauma, forensic interviewing, and resilience in children of trauma.
- Protecting Our Kids Symposium (September 2024): Sessions on:
  - *Trauma-Informed MDTs: Improving Mental Health Outcomes*
  - *HOPE - Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences*
- Judicial Training with the Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Committee (April 2025) focusing on courtroom interactions with traumatized children.

**Strategy D: Regularly review Idaho Department of Health and Welfare’s child welfare units and processes such as central intake, case management, permanency, foster care licensing, prevention, etc.**

CARTF regularly engages with IDHW leadership to monitor child welfare system processes, ensuring continuous improvement in foster care, permanency planning, and prevention services.

Key Findings from IDHW Meetings (2024-2025):

- Foster Care Licensing: New policies allow for an individualized approach to training foster families.
- IDHW’s Wildly Important Goal: To increase the ratio of foster homes to foster children from 0.74 to 1.5. To support this goal, efforts are in place to increase prevention supports to maintain children in their homes as well as a coordinated system wide effort for children to achieve permanency more timely.

### **Strategy E: Identify and review how societal issues affect child welfare in Idaho.**

CARTF explores how broader societal factors impact child welfare policies and outcomes.

Key Areas of Focus (2024-2025):

- IV-E Funding and Poverty Thresholds: CARTF is discussing Title IV-E funding criteria which reflects the 1996 AFDC poverty rates, which do not reflect modern poverty levels, impacting family eligibility.
- 40th Annual San Diego International Conference on Child and Family Maltreatment (January 2025)
- Awareness to Action Conference (June 2024): CARTF sponsored training on how economic hardships impact domestic violence survivors and child safety.

### **Strategy F: Explore and learn more about due process and how it relates to the child welfare system.**

CARTF is committed to gaining a deeper understanding of due process issues affecting children and families involved in Idaho's child protection system. This effort includes attending a national conference and engaging with stakeholders. Activities included:

- CARTF attendance at the San Diego Conference (January 2025) sessions focused on:
  - Ensuring Procedural Fairness in Child Welfare Hearings
  - Balancing Parental Rights with Child Safety in Removal Cases
  - Legal Protections for Parents in Child Welfare Proceedings
- Meetings with the Idaho Public Defenders Office:
  - Learned about the new statewide child protection public defender system, implemented on October 1, 2024.
  - Discussed improvements in time to assignment of a public defender, now averaging 0.3 days for appointment of legal counsel.
  - Reviewed efforts to expand remote court appearances to increase attorney availability statewide.
  - Explored the potential creation of a dedicated family/child protection division within the Public Defender's Office.

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

CARTF's efforts in 2024-2025 have strengthened Idaho's child protection system by enhancing public education, interagency collaboration, and trauma-informed training. The six key strategies under Goal 3 have resulted in measurable improvements in training accessibility, policy evaluation, and systemic coordination.

- Public Education & Resources
  - CARTF updated and expanded educational resources, ensuring children, families, and professionals have access to court guides, trauma resources, and training videos.

- The revamped resource order system provides CARTF with direct feedback from professionals, helping refine distribution strategies.
- Judicial and Legislative Collaboration
  - CARTF strengthened its partnership with the Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Committee by participating in training efforts and aligning priorities on court processes affecting child welfare.
  - Engagement with the Idaho Public Defenders Office has provided key insights into due process improvements, particularly regarding placement delays, remote legal access, and parental representation in child protection cases.
- Trauma-Informed Training & Intervention
  - CARTF expanded trauma-focused training initiatives, integrating forensic interviewing, child trauma resilience, and mental health strategies into statewide conferences and judicial training programs.
- Monitoring & Improving Child Welfare System Practices
  - CARTF’s regular engagement with IDHW facilitated discussions on foster care licensing improvements and permanency planning goals.
- Evaluating Societal Challenges in Child Welfare
  - CARTF investigated Title IV-E funding, raising concerns that current federal poverty thresholds may not accurately reflect family eligibility needs.
  - CARTF also examined economic and social barriers affecting child welfare policy through national and statewide conferences.

Through comprehensive education, policy review, interagency collaboration, and legislative engagement, CARTF continues to strengthen child welfare investigations, enhance due process protections, and promote evidence-based training—ensuring Idaho’s child protection system is equipped to serve children and families effectively.

*Oversee the Statewide Child Fatality Review Team to examine child fatalities and child near-fatalities.*

**Strategy A: Continue to seek technical assistance as needed from the National Resource Center on Child Fatalities to assist Idaho’s active statewide Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT).**

For the past year, the Idaho Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT) has worked closely with the Michigan Public Health Institute (MPHI), which hosts the National Center for Fatality Review and Prevention (NCFRP). NCFRP provides technical support and data services for child death review teams nationwide.

After several planning meetings, Idaho CFRT hosted an all-day, in-person meeting in February 2025 with NCFRP representatives. The meeting focused on:

- Closing the gap between the time of fatalities and case reviews.
- Standardizing working processes and documentation for improved efficiency.
- Developing a sustainable framework for increasing case reviews as the team expands.

The collaboration with NCFRP has led to a plan for improvements in data collection and review processes to ensure timely and accurate assessments of child fatalities in Idaho.

**Strategy B: Provide financial support to CFRT.**

CARTF continues to fully fund all CFRT meetings throughout the year. While the team previously met seven times annually, the meeting schedule has been expanded to ten meetings in 2025 to accelerate case reviews and reduce delays in analyzing child fatality data.

This funding allows CFRT to:

- Conduct more timely reviews.
- Enhance training opportunities for CFRT members.
- Improve data-driven policy recommendations for the child welfare system and prevention efforts related to child fatalities.

**Strategy C: Review and provide feedback to legislation as it is presented to meet the needs of the statewide CFRT.**

In addition to benefiting from the work of the CARTF Legislative Subcommittee, CFRT actively participated in legislative discussions related to child fatality review processes. The team worked closely with the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) in developing the state report on county coroners. This engagement has strengthened legislative understanding of child fatality investigations and improved policy recommendations for how deaths are reviewed and reported statewide.

**Strategy D: Continue to support the ongoing development of Child Fatality Review Team bylaws and procedures for the gathering of child fatality data.**

See the response under Strategy A as these are related strategies.

**Strategy E: Support the continued development of a robust Child Fatality Review Team membership.**

The membership structure of the Idaho CFRT continues to be robust and consistent. Key advancements in team participation include:

- Two county coroners now attending consistently, addressing a prior gap in representation.
- All members now have designated proxies, ensuring continuity in case reviews.
- Addition of subject-matter experts who do not attend every meeting but assist with specific case types, such as Sudden Unexpected Infant Deaths (SUIDs) or motor vehicle accidents.

These improvements have increased expert representation on the team, enhancing the quality and scope of case evaluations.

**Strategy F: Support the dissemination of the CFRT annual report to county MDTs throughout the state and among other entities.**

The CFRT Annual Report for 2021 cases was released in Fall 2024. The report, along with a quick fact sheet, is available on the CARTF website.

To ensure widespread access and engagement, bound hard copies were distributed to:

- All county prosecutors statewide.
- The Governor of Idaho.
- Co-chairs of the Idaho Child Protection Committee.

Additionally, all past CFRT reports remain accessible to the public on the CARTF website, supporting transparency and community awareness regarding child fatality trends and prevention strategies.

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

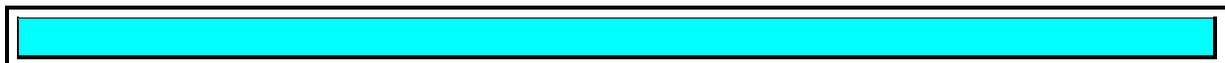
CARTF's support and oversight of CFRT activities have significantly strengthened Idaho's child fatality review processes. Key achievements include:

- Expanded CFRT meeting frequency, ensuring faster and more comprehensive case reviews.
- Enhanced collaboration with national experts (NCFRP), improving technical assistance and best practices for child death reviews.
- Engagement with the OPE on coroner investigations and child fatality data collection.
- Improved CFRT membership structure, filling critical expertise gaps and ensuring sustained participation.
- Wider dissemination of CFRT annual reports to key decision-makers and community partners, increasing public awareness of child fatality prevention efforts.

Through these efforts, Idaho’s Child Fatality Review Team is now better positioned to analyze, respond to, and prevent child deaths, ensuring that the state’s child protection system continues to evolve and improve based on real-time data and expert recommendations.

**Proposed Activities for May 2024 to May 2025**

<b>GOAL 1</b>	
<b>Continue support 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. (Category A)</b>	
STRATEGIES	TIME FRAMES
a. Over the next three years, survey local MDTs to assess needs, create a strategy to help meet those needs, and then implement a plan based on the strategies.	Ongoing, Annually
b. Provide MDT training to promote the continued formation of MDTs and enhance existing MDTs.	Ongoing, Annually
c. Create an MDT subcommittee comprised of members from CARTF and outside stakeholder groups to support the formation, development, and training of MDTs at a statewide level.	Completed
d. Encourage multidisciplinary team formation and functioning amongst prosecutors via various formats through the Idaho Prosecuting Attorney’s Association and other venues.	Ongoing, Annually
e. 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.	Ongoing, Annually
g. Using federal Criminal Justice Act funds, continue to provide funding resources that are available for training MDTs.	Ongoing, Annually
h. Foster relationships with and support county MDTs and regional CACs through site visits by task force members, periodic updates from MDTs and CACs at task force meetings and facilitating training through grants and conferences.	Ongoing, Annually



GOAL 2	
<b>Review and make recommendations to improve current and proposed legislation and rules pertaining to the child protection process. (Category C)</b>	
STRATEGIES	TIME FRAMES
a. Develop and maintain a legislative subcommittee which will review proposed legislation and rules relating to child abuse and neglect and will communicate feedback to appropriate entities to potentially influence changes.	Ongoing
b. Review any pending legislation related to the Child Protective Act and if appropriate, make recommendations for revision.	Annually
c. Invite Office of Performance Evaluation to update CARTF on current legislative issues regarding child protection system.	Completed

GOAL 3	
<b>Evaluate and improve the investigation and prosecution process for civil and criminal cases involving child abuse and neglect. (Category B)</b>	
STRATEGIES	TIME FRAMES
a. 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.	Ongoing, Annually
b. Receive updates from the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee to identify and monitor practices within the legal process.	Ongoing, Annually
c. Identify, intervene, and train in areas of child trauma as it pertains to child maltreatment.	Completed
d. Regularly review Idaho Department of Health and Welfare's child welfare units and processes such as central intake, case management, permanency, foster care licensing, prevention, etc.	Ongoing
e. Identify and review how societal issues affect child welfare in Idaho.	Ongoing
f. Explore and learn more about due process and how it relates to the child welfare system.	Completed



<b>GOAL 4</b>	
<b>Oversee the Statewide Child Fatality Review Team to examine child deaths. (Category A)</b>	
<b>STRATEGIES</b>	<b>TIME FRAMES</b>
a. Continue to seek technical assistance as needed from the National Resource Center on Child Fatalities to assist Idaho's active statewide Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT).	Completed
b. Provide financial support of Child Fatality Review Team.	Ongoing
c. Review and provide feedback to legislation as it is presented to meet the needs of the statewide CFRT.	Ongoing
d. Continue to support the ongoing development of CFRT bylaws and procedures for the gathering of child fatality data.	Ongoing
e. Support the continued development of a robust CFRT membership.	Ongoing
f. Support the dissemination of the CFRT annual report to county MDTs throughout the state and among other entities.	Ongoing