

Idaho

The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk

2024

Three-Year Assessment

State Review and Summary



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Task Force Members

Facilitating the Work of the Children at Risk Task Force

Joshua Wickard, Public Defender (Chair)
Jennifer Tachell, Educator/Counselor (Vice-Chair)
Susan Bradford, MD, Pediatrician
Curtis Carper, Law Enforcement
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Hon. Mark Rammell, Criminal Magistrate Judge
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Nadine McDonald, Juvenile Justice Services
Sheila Sturgeon Freitas, PhD, Mental Health
Tahna Barton, CASA Representative
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Mindy Peper, Task Force Coordinator

Mission Statement

The mission of the Idaho Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk (CARTF) is to promote activities that improve:

- The handling of child abuse and neglect cases, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner which limits additional trauma to the child victim; and
- The handling of cases of suspected child abuse or neglect related fatalities; and
- The investigation and prosecution of cases involving child abuse and neglect, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation, in a manner that protects the rights of all parties involved in the case; and
- The handling of cases involving children with disabilities or serious health-related problems who are victims of abuse or neglect.

Introduction

The state of Idaho Governor’s Task Force on Children at Risk (CARTF) Three Year Assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of the state’s handling of child abuse, neglect, and exploitation cases throughout various child protective, investigative, and judicial systems. The report reflects the work of the Task Force members and their efforts to identify problems in the current system’s response, and further make recommendations to combat those inadequacies in the response to crimes involving children. Although the findings contained in this report satisfy a federal requirement, more importantly, they provide a systemic look at the array of services and procedures in place for the protection of children. This report was completed with full cooperation and input from Children’s Justice Act (CJA) Task Force members. Other professionals, agencies, and organizations committed to improve the system were consulted when needed in order to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this report. The following sections summarize the issues and recommendations by providing a brief overview of critical matters the Task Force will be addressing over the next three years. The issues correspond with the Criminal Justice Act guidelines governed by the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) regulations, which relate to the following:

- A. investigative, administrative, and judicial handling of cases involving child abuse and neglect, including child sexual abuse and exploitation, as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities and cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, in a manner which reduces the additional trauma of the child victim and the victim’s family, and which also ensures procedural fairness to the accused;
- B. experimental, model, and demonstration programs for testing innovative approaches and techniques which may improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial and administrative action in child abuse and neglect cases, particularly child sexual abuse and exploitation cases, including the enhancement of performance of court-appointed attorneys and guardians ad litem for children, and which also ensure procedural fairness to the accused; and
- C. reform of State laws, ordinances, regulations, protocols, and procedures to provide comprehensive protection for children, which may include those children involved in reports of child abuse or neglect with a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as intrastate, interstate, Federal-State, and State-Tribal, from child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse, and exploitation, while ensuring fairness to the affected persons.

The following report documents the Task Force reviewed for the period of May 2021 through May 2024. It outlines the review and findings, then presents new recommendations for the period of 2024-2027. The recommendations will be written as goals the Task Force will pursue and monitor over the next three years in the form of a strategic plan.

History and Background of Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk

The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk (CARTF) is a nonpartisan, broadly representative organization with concerns related to children at risk in Idaho. CARTF is dedicated to providing informed recommendations to the Governor of the State of Idaho regarding the full scope of issues related to child abuse and neglect.

In 1988, by Executive Order, Governor Cecil Andrus established the Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk. The group's first assignment was to review research on sex crimes against children and develop recommendations to address the issue. This included reviewing testimony from public hearings, national research, and interviews with investigators, treatment providers, law enforcement personnel, perpetrators, citizen advocates, victims, and their families.

Findings and recommendations were published in *A Report on Idaho's System for Protecting and Serving Children at Risk of Sexual Abuse*, containing 14 specific recommendations. Most of these have been followed to completion.

Since 1988, the Task Force has continued to make recommendations to the Governor on issues pertaining to Idaho's children. Some of their accomplishments include:

- State mandated county Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDT).
- Continuing education of mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect including development and publication of Idaho's *Care Enough to Call* brochure.
- Sponsorship of new DVD/video related to mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect.
- Sex offender minimum evaluation standards.
- Support for Idaho's State Child Fatality Review Team.
- Victim's Rights Act.
- Sponsor for Idaho's Educational Neglect report.
- Support for Idaho's Child Advocacy Centers.
- Annual multidisciplinary team training provided through the Keeping Children Safe Conference.
- Development of materials to reduce trauma of children participating in the court process.

Established Maintenance of the Governor’s Task Force on Children at Risk

The Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk (CARTF) meets approximately 8 to 10 times a year, either virtually or in a hybrid meeting format. In 2023, the Task Force met January 5, February 2, March 1, April 5, May 3, June 11, July 19, September 8, October 3, and November 1.

CARTF meets with regional partners one to two times a year to discuss child welfare issues related to the area and to meet with local partners from the MDT’s, CAC’s, tribal child welfare, and nonprofit organizations. In March of 2023, CARTF traveled to Pocatello, Idaho (Eastern Idaho) and in September CARTF traveled to Lewiston, Idaho (North Central Idaho).

CARTF maintains a website, www.IDCARTF.org, which lists meeting dates and location in accordance with open meeting laws. The site also lists current and past year agendas and minutes (www.IDCARTF.org/general-information). The website is maintained and updated regularly by the Task Force Coordinator.

Current Subcommittees of the Governor’s Task Force on Children at Risk

Child Fatality Review Team- Tahna Barton, Chair
MDT Review Subcommittee- Kyle Bringham, Chair
Legislative Review Team- Nadine McDonald, Chair
Grants Subcommittee- Nadine McDonald, Chair
Conference Planning Subcommittee- Jennifer Tachell, Chair
Strategic Planning Subcommittee- Andie Blackwood, Chair

All subcommittee work is supported by the Task Force Coordinator.

Child Fatality Review Team (CFRT)- Formed by executive order in late 2012, the CFRT actively and regularly meets and conducts comprehensive reviews of statewide deaths of children under 18-years old. CFRT releases an annual report each year with findings and recommendations that inform the public how Idaho can improve the safety and well-being of children in Idaho.

MDT Review Subcommittee- The MDT Review Team, established in late 2023, collaborates with statewide partners including county MDTs serving rural and metropolitan areas, Idaho’s seven accredited CACs, and other stakeholders. Currently, the team is partnering with the Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Section data analysis division to develop a survey for all county MDTs. This survey aims to assess needs, identify obstacles, and analyze successes. The findings will inform the development and implementation of strategies to support MDTs statewide.

Legislative Review Team- The team began in late 2022 and meets regularly during the Idaho legislative session, typically January through April. The purpose is to track any legislation or department rule making that pertains to child welfare and update the task force on changes or concerns for the purpose of awareness and to make recommendations.

Grants Subcommittee- Initially began meeting in 2020 to overhaul the CARTF grant program. Currently, the subcommittee is tasked with overseeing the bi-annual grant cycles: receiving and reviewing applications, conducting technical reviews, summarizing requests, scoring applications based on a rubric, and making recommendations to the task force for award decisions.

Conference Planning Subcommittee- The work of this subcommittee has been ongoing for several years and includes designing annual training opportunities based on the needs of Idaho's MDTs. The work includes conference planning as well as partnering with other stakeholders to ensure training in the state is accessible and relevant.

Strategic Planning Subcommittee- Newly formed subcommittee tasked with helping shape the overall direction of the task force, ensuring that goals and strategies fit within the grant mandates as well as ensuring the goals meet the needs of the those who handle child neglect and maltreatment cases.

Methods Used in Conducting Idaho's Three-Year Assessment

A comprehensive study was conducted using the following methods to review and evaluate the system:

1. The Children at Risk Task Force (CARTF) gathered and reviewed reports of other groups who are also mandated to review the system and make recommendations for improvement. Reports that were used in this comprehensive study include:
 - a. Annual recommendations of Idaho's Citizen Review Panels.
 - b. Idaho's Five-Year Child and Family Service Plan (CFSP) and Annual Progress and Service Reports (APSRs).
 - c. Annual reports of the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee (Idaho's Court Improvement Project).
 - d. Annual Legislative Foster Care Report
 - e. 2022 Child Sex Abuse Report by the Idaho Office of the Attorney General
 - f. US Bureau of Labor Statistics- "Idaho Economy at a Glance"
 - g. Crime in Idaho Report 2022
 - h. Idaho Statistical Analysis Center, Drug and Alcohol Related Crime Trends, 2013-2022
 - i. Community Planning Association of Southwest Idaho (COMPASS) Population and Demographics Data
2. Representatives involved in the reporting, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect were invited to meet with the Task Force to share their experience regarding the strengths and concerns of Idaho's child protection system. Professionals from the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, the Idaho Department of Education, the Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections, the Idaho Department of Corrections, the Idaho Attorney General's Office, the Idaho Supreme Court Child Protection Committee, the Idaho Office of Performance Evaluations, Idaho Council on Suicide Prevention, and representatives from the Idaho Network of

Children's Advocacy Centers attended meetings during the past three years to share their perspectives regarding the handling, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases, including suspected child abuse related fatalities.

3. Finally, as a multidisciplinary team Task Force, each of the members of CARTF have discussed issues of child abuse and neglect and the criminal justice system with other professionals from their respective fields and contributed their input to the review and evaluation.

The Status of Investigation and Judicial Handling of Child Maltreatment, Exploitation, and Neglect in Idaho

Population Density

Idaho, known for its vast natural landscapes and rural areas, has a relatively low population density compared to many other states in the United States. As of January 2022, the population density of Idaho was approximately 22.1 people per square mile, making it one of the least densely populated states in the country. The state's rugged terrain, including mountains, forests, and vast stretches of wilderness, contributes to its lower population density.

Despite its predominantly rural character, Idaho does have several metropolitan areas that serve as population centers and economic hubs. The largest and most populous metropolitan area in Idaho is the Boise metropolitan area, also known as the Treasure Valley. This region encompasses Boise, the state capital and largest city, as well as surrounding cities and suburbs such as Meridian, Nampa, and Caldwell. The Boise metropolitan area is home to the majority of Idaho's population and serves as the cultural, economic, and political center of the state.

In addition to the Boise metropolitan area, Idaho has several other smaller metropolitan areas, including:

1. Coeur d'Alene metropolitan area: Located in the northern part of the state, near the border with Washington state, the Coeur d'Alene metropolitan area includes the city of Coeur d'Alene and surrounding communities. It is known for its scenic beauty, outdoor recreation opportunities, and tourism.
2. Idaho Falls metropolitan area: Situated in the eastern part of the state, the Idaho Falls metropolitan area includes the city of Idaho Falls and neighboring communities. It is a regional center for healthcare, education, and agriculture.
3. Pocatello metropolitan area: Located in southeastern Idaho, the Pocatello metropolitan area includes the city of Pocatello and nearby towns. It is home to Idaho State University and serves as a transportation and commercial hub for the region.

These metropolitan areas, along with smaller urban centers and towns scattered throughout the state, contribute to Idaho's social and economic diversity despite its primarily rural character.

In addition to metropolitan areas, the Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) also defines micropolitan statistical areas, which are areas with an urban core of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population. Here are the metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas in Idaho as recognized by the OMB:

Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs):

1. Boise City metropolitan area (Boise City, ID MSA)
 - Includes Ada, Boise, Canyon, Gem, and Owyhee counties

2. Coeur d'Alene metropolitan area (Coeur d'Alene, ID MSA)
 - Includes Kootenai County

Micropolitan Statistical Areas:

1. Idaho Falls micropolitan area (Idaho Falls, ID)
 - Includes Bonneville and Jefferson counties
2. Pocatello micropolitan area (Pocatello, ID)
 - Includes Bannock County

These statistical areas provide a framework for understanding population distribution and demographic trends within Idaho. They encompass urban and semi-urban areas, helping to delineate regions with distinct economic and social characteristics.

The delivery of services in Micropolitan Statistical Areas, which are composed of rural and frontier areas, poses many challenges. Foremost among these are:

1. Low population densities spread across immense geographic distances.
2. Limited access to experienced/knowledgeable service providers.
3. Disproportionate levels of poverty.
4. Local units of government (cities and counties) typically lack sufficient resources to meet community needs. Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) – Child and Family Services and Idaho tribes provide most child welfare services using a combination of federal and state funds.

In low population density areas of the state, it is important to maintain resource flexibility and creativity while being as responsive as possible to individual, family, and community needs.

Population Growth and Demographics

1. According to the US Census estimates for 2023, Idaho experienced significant population growth between April 1, 2020, and July 1, 2023. The population increased from 1,839,117 to 1,964,726 during this period, representing a 6.8% growth rate.
2. Age and Sex Distribution: Idaho has a diverse age and sex distribution. Approximately 5.8% of the population is under 5 years old, while 23.9% are under 18 years old. Meanwhile, 17.0% of the population is 65 years and over. The population is almost evenly split by gender, with females comprising 49.6% of the population.
3. Race and Hispanic Origin: The majority of Idaho's population identifies as White alone (92.6%), followed by Hispanic or Latino individuals (13.5%). There are smaller percentages of Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and individuals of two or more races.
4. Veterans and Foreign Born: There are 119,733 veterans in Idaho, and approximately 5.7% of the population is foreign-born.
5. Housing: Idaho has a total of 796,958 housing units as of July 1, 2022. The owner-occupied housing unit rate is 72.0%, and the median value of owner-occupied housing units is \$331,600. The median gross rent is \$1,061.

6. Education: A significant portion of Idaho's population has attained high levels of education, with 91.4% having a high school diploma or higher and 30.2% holding a bachelor's degree or higher.

Economy

Idaho's economy is diverse and has experienced steady growth in recent years with significant contributions from sectors such as retail sales, transportation and warehousing, accommodation and food services, and health care and social assistance.

The median household income in Idaho is \$70,214, and the per capita income is \$34,919.

Several key sectors contribute to the state's economic prosperity:

1. Agriculture: Agriculture is a significant contributor to Idaho's economy, with the state being a leading producer of several agricultural products. Idaho is known for its potato production, and it is one of the top potato-producing states in the country. Other important agricultural products include dairy, wheat, barley, sugar beets, and trout.
2. Technology: Idaho's technology sector has been growing rapidly, particularly in areas such as software development, semiconductor manufacturing, and cybersecurity. Boise has emerged as a tech hub, attracting startups and established tech companies alike.
3. Manufacturing: Manufacturing plays a vital role in Idaho's economy, with industries such as food processing, wood products, machinery manufacturing, and fabricated metal product manufacturing being prominent. The state's skilled workforce and business-friendly environment have contributed to the growth of the manufacturing sector.
4. Tourism and Outdoor Recreation: Idaho's stunning natural landscapes, including mountains, rivers, and national parks, attract tourists and outdoor enthusiasts from around the world. Outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, skiing, fishing, and whitewater rafting contribute significantly to the state's economy.
5. Healthcare: Healthcare is an essential sector in Idaho, providing employment opportunities and essential services to residents. The healthcare industry includes hospitals, clinics, medical research facilities, and healthcare-related manufacturing.
6. Retail and Services: Retail trade and service industries also play a crucial role in Idaho's economy, providing jobs and consumer goods to residents. Boise and other urban areas in the state have vibrant retail scenes, with shopping centers, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

The poverty rate in Idaho is approximately 11.8%, based on estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey. Comparing this to national statistics, the overall

poverty rate for the United States is around 10.5%. This suggests that Idaho's poverty rate is slightly higher than the national average.

Overall, Idaho's economy benefits from a diverse range of industries, a skilled workforce, and a business-friendly environment. The state's natural resources, including agricultural land and outdoor recreational opportunities, contribute to its economic resilience and continued growth. However, like any economy, Idaho faces challenges such as workforce shortages, infrastructure needs, and economic disparities between urban and rural areas.

Status of Child Abuse, Neglect, and Abandonment Referrals

The Child and Family Services program has a Centralized Intake Unit in Boise to which all reports of child abuse or neglect throughout the state are directed. Each report is assessed to determine whether the allegations fall under the statutory definitions of abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Once that determination is made, the report is prioritized for a response. Referrals involving a life-threatening and/or emergency require an immediate response. Other reports receive a priority which requires a response within either 24 or 72 hours. On all reports requiring an immediate response, CFS coordinates the response with local law enforcement. CFS staff take and respond to child abuse and neglect reports 24 hours a day across the state.

In State Fiscal Year 2023, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, Child and Family Services received 24,442 referrals with concerns of abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Of these referrals, 8,693 were assigned for a safety assessment, and are labeled as referrals “screened in.” If a referral does not meet the statutory guidelines for abuse, neglect, or abandonment, a safety assessment will not be scheduled. In these cases, a secondary referral may be made to other entities or agencies based on the unique circumstances of each situation. These referrals are labeled as “screened out” and 15,749 referrals were “screened out” (about 64 percent of all referrals) in SFY 2023. As a result of the “screened in” referrals, and the subsequent safety assessment, 1,130 children were placed in Foster Care in SFY 2023. Although in Idaho, every citizen is a mandatory reporter, school personnel are the primary source of referrals with more than 18% of all referrals in SFY 2023. Parents had been the second most common referral in past years; however, for the last four fiscal years, including SFY 2023, private agencies and law enforcement made more referrals than parents. An increase in anonymous referrals was observed in SFY 2023.

Referral Type	Number of Referrals by Referral Type by State Fiscal Year					SFY 2023 Percentages	
	SFY 2019	SFY 2020	SFY 2021	SFY 2022	SFY 2023	Screened In	All Referrals
1. Neglect	8,234	7,132	7,585	6,309	5,865	67.47%	24.00%
2. Physical Abuse	2,230	2,220	2,163	2,188	2,102	24.18%	8.60%
3. Sexual Abuse	775	694	801	785	704	8.10%	2.88%
4. Other	1	107	44	9	11	0.13%	0.05%
5. Human Trafficking	0	26	13	11	11	0.13%	0.05%
6. Abandonment	0	*	0	*	0	0.00%	0.00%
Screened in Referral Total	11,240	10,180	10,606	9,303	8,693	100.00%	35.57%
Screened out Referrals	12,316	11,948	12,566	13,828	15,749		64.43%
Total all Referrals	23,556	22,128	23,172	23,131	24,442		35.57%
Children Placed in Foster Care	1,407	1,173	1,346	1,213	1,130		

In general, the number of referrals, assessments, and foster care placements are relatively stable with a very slight downward trend from SFY 2019 through SFY 2023. However, SFY 2020 differed from past years in that the number of referrals, safety assessments, and children placed in foster care all decreased.

Distribution of Age of Children in Foster Care

The Child and Family Services program has identified children age birth to five-years old as being the population at greatest risk for maltreatment. The identification of this population as being at greatest risk was made in consideration of Idaho child welfare data, this population being least able to self-protect and potentially having very little visibility to the communities in which they live as they are not school age.

Foster Care Population FFY 2020 – 2023 (census on 9/30 each year)

0-5 Population Percentage of Total Foster Care Population				
	FFY 2020	FFY 2021	FFY 2022	FFY 2023
Children in Foster Care	1,587	1,585	1,504	1,488
Children Age 0-5 in Foster Care	666	655	616	584
	42%	41%	41%	39%
Children Age 6-17 in Foster Care	921	930	888	904
	58%	59%	59%	61%

Race/Ethnicity in Idaho and in Foster Care

During the transition to a new Comprehensive Child Welfare Information System, the data elements related to race and ethnicity were no longer required data elements for case workers to enter to proceed through their cases. As a result, it is much more unclear what the race and ethnicity is of the children in foster care over the past few years. The practice reflects the ongoing need to recruit non-relative families specific to American Indian or Alaskan Native, Black or African American and Asian populations. Children and Family Services needs to highlight these strategies and continue efforts to recruit families of similar race and ethnicity to the children placed in foster care.

Foster Child Race & Ethnicity FFY 2020 – 2023 (census on 9/30 each year)

Race	FFY 2020				FFY 2021				FFY 2022				FFY 2023							
	Total	Ethnicity			Total	Ethnicity			Total	Ethnicity			Total	Ethnicity						
		Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Unable to Determine		Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Unable to Determine		Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Unable to Determine		Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino	Unable to Determine				
American Indian or Alaskan Native	45	18	27		52	20	32		50	17	33		58	11	47					
Asian	5	0	5		*	0	*		6	0	6		*	*	*					
Black or African American	30	6	24	0	26	6	20	0	28	9	19	0	27	10	17	0				
Multiple	59	8	51	*	95	18	77	0	12	6	26	100	0	12	8	33	95	0		
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	5	*	5	0	6	0	6	*	6	*	6	0	5	*	5	0				
White or Caucasian	38	5	6	27	33	5	*	28	0	0	0	*	0	*	0	*				
Unable to Determine	13		109		13		112		13		108		13		109					
	51	252	0	9	99	272	7	*	65	283	2	*	70	271	9	*				
Grand Total	15	36	291	8	37	16	23	321	70	32	15	82	336	46	*	15	88	330	64	5

* Counts less than 5 are suppressed to protect identity

The chart below shows the count of foster children and foster families and where children were placed respective to non-relative placement and relative/fictive kin placement.

Count of Foster Children and Foster Families FFY 2020 – 2023 (census on 9/30 each year)

	FFY 2020	FFY 2021	FFY 2022	FFY 2023
# of Children in Foster Care	1,587	1,585	1,504	1,488
Total Licensed Foster Homes	1,187	1,338	1,342	1,226
Non-Relative Family Home	1,030	1,031	1,050	1,089
Relative/Fictive Kin	506	593	537	510

The number of children placed in foster care has gradually decreased over the past few years. At any given time, there are approximately 1,550 children in foster care. Despite the increased use of relative/fictive kin placements, Child and Family Services is in continual need of more non-relative licensed resource families.

Independent Living

Idaho’s Independent Living Program assists foster youth in their transition to adult responsibilities. Independent Living funding accesses supports and services for employment, education, housing, daily living skills, and personal needs.

To help foster youth transition to adulthood and provide educational opportunities, the federal Education and Training Voucher program provides up to \$5,000 per year. The voucher is available to youth who have been in foster care after the age of 14 and have received a high school diploma or GED.

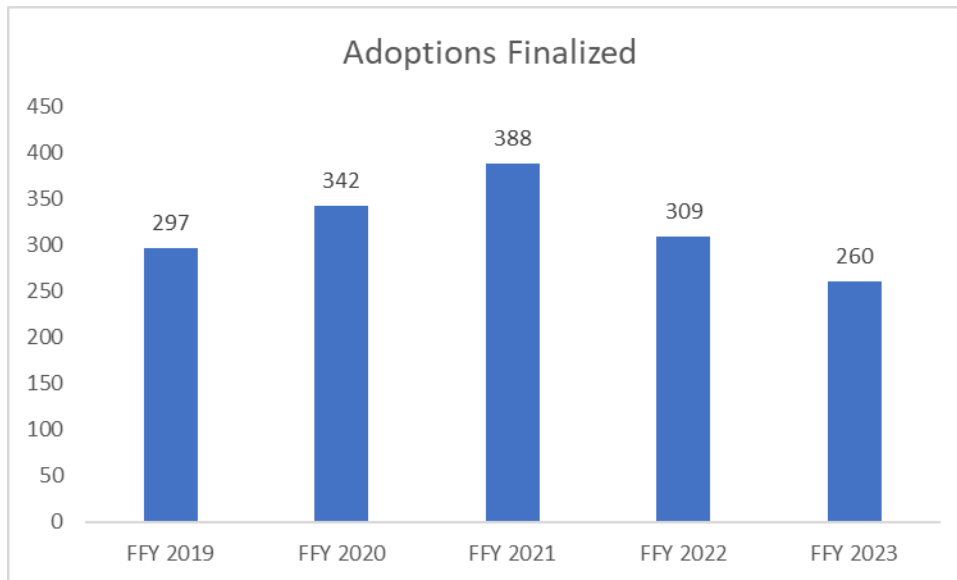
In addition, the 2021 legislature extended foster care to young adults up to their twenty-first birthday. This allows for support to this group as they launch into adulthood. Young adults who have been in foster care as children are eligible if they are pursuing education, job training, working or are disabled. Young adults may choose not to opt into the extended foster care program. For those who do choose to participate, they are able to terminate their participation at any time. On June 30, 2023, 50 young adults were utilizing extended foster care.

Adoption

Child and Family Services provides adoption services for children in foster care whose parents’ rights have been terminated by the court. In almost all cases, children adopted through Idaho’s foster care system have special needs. These children may be part of a sibling group that must stay together, or are children who have physical, mental, emotional, or medical disabilities. Some children may be older but still need a permanent home through adoption. The department’s goal is to find a family who can best meet an individual child’s needs within 24 months of the child entering foster care. Individualized adoption recruitment involves a variety of strategies and collaboration with community partners. To

help meet this goal, the Department of Health and Welfare has revised the process to approve families for adoption, making it easier for current foster families to adopt.

Families who adopt special needs children are eligible to apply for either federal or state adoption assistance benefits. These benefits help adoptive families meet the expenses associated with finalizing an adoption and the cost of parenting a child who has special needs.



260 children were adopted in Federal Fiscal Year 2023. At the state and local level, the Department of Health and Welfare and the judicial system work closely to improve the monitoring and system processes to reduce delays and help children join safe, caring, and stable families. Permanency issues, including timeliness to permanency continue to be subject of program improvement planning in collaboration with the Children’s Bureau. There are interventions on the submitted program improvement plan to address timeliness to permanency and data visibility with the court system to ensure hearings are happening on time.

Interstate Compact

Overall timeliness has been improving statewide over the last three years and system improvements have been made in the comprehensive child welfare information system to track data at the preliminary report as well as the final home study date. New templates have assisted workers in timeliness in this area as they do not require workers to create a new report but use a more streamlined communication tool. Idaho also was the second state in the nation to upgrade from NEICE 1.0 to NEICE 2.0.

Idaho’s Child and Family Services Plan

Idaho submitted their most recent 5-year Child and Family Service Plan in June 2019. This plan was developed in collaboration with multiple stakeholder groups, including the Task Force. The Task Force will continue to provide feedback on and support of CFSP efforts and will make attempts to align CJA and CFSP work efforts. Beginning in 2023, Idaho began the

Child and Family Service Review Round 4. This work involves a statewide assessment, onsite review and partner interviews. The final report from the Children's Bureau was released to the state in mid-December and kicked off the program improvement planning process. The task force has been kept informed and multiple members of the task force participated in situation groups to conduct root cause analysis and make recommendations for the program improvement plan. The overarching goals related to the program improvement plan are as follows:

Goal 1: Increase safety practice through improving timely and accurate assessments initially and throughout the life of a case.

Goal 2: Increase trust through engagement with families by providing clear guidelines of information sharing, role clarification, timely transparent communication, and use of motivational interviewing.

Goal 3: Adopt and implement a strong continuous quality improvement system to monitor key data elements and respond proactively when monitoring indicates the need to address a specific area of the system.

Goal 4: Adopt and implement a model of supervision and coaching throughout all levels of the agency to support increasing knowledge, skills and competencies of leadership to support the engagement of parties involved in child welfare cases.

Goal 5: Increase access to services through communication of contracted resources and coordination with the managed care organization to ensure the needs of the children and families in the child welfare system are met with appropriate services.

Goal 6: Increase the number of foster parents and support to those foster parents to ensure Idaho children placed in foster care have a placement that fits their unique needs.

The program improvement plan has not been approved by the Children's Bureau at this time but any updates or changes to the plan will be communicated to the task force and their feedback will be integrated as the system grows and evolves.

Idaho will be developing a new CFSP for submission in early summer of 2024 and the goals will be consistent across the program improvement plan and the CFSP.

Law Enforcement

In 2022, Idaho's crime landscape saw shifts and notable trends across various categories. While arrest rates for most crime types have been on a downward trend since 2005, property crime and juvenile crime witnessed increases between 2021 and 2022. The property crime arrest rate rose by 2.8%, while the juvenile arrest rate increased by 12.2%.

Demographic data revealed that offenders across crime types tended to be male and between 18 and 44 years old. However, characteristics of most property crime offenders remained unknown due to the nature of these offenses often occurring in the absence of victims providing descriptions.

The percentage of offenders arrested closely mirrored offense clearance data, indicating consistency between arrests and resolution of crimes. Additionally, the type of arrest varied by crime type, with some variability observed within categories. For instance, while the percentage of offenders physically arrested for sex offenses and intimate partner violence was higher than the total percentage for any person crime, property crimes had a lower percentage of physical arrests.

In terms of drug and alcohol-related offenses, although the overall rate remained relatively stable, there were significant shifts in the types of offenses and demographics of arrestees. Drug offenses increased by 31% over the period from 2013 to 2022, while alcohol offenses decreased by 36%. In 2022, a quarter of all reported offenses were drug or alcohol-related. Demographically, drug and alcohol arrestees tended to be older and included a larger share of women and racial/ethnic minorities compared to previous years. Additionally, there was an increase in the percentage of person/property crime offenders suspected of being under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs during the commission of those crimes.

Despite an overall increase in both violent crimes and crimes against society compared to 2021, crime rates per 100,000 inhabitants decreased. Notably, aggravated assault and drug/narcotic violations offenses experienced significant surges, highlighting areas that require targeted intervention and attention. These findings underscore the evolving nature of Idaho's crime landscape and the need for tailored strategies to address emerging challenges effectively.

Multidisciplinary Teams

Idaho's Child Protective Act requires multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) be formed in all counties, headed by the county prosecuting attorney. These multidisciplinary teams review child protection cases and coordinate investigations and case preparation for prosecution. In smaller counties, MDTs are not formed due to a lack of child protection activity. In 2013, the last formal survey of Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) was conducted. In response, the Task Force initiated a comprehensive survey to assess the presence and organizational structures of MDTs across Idaho's counties. The survey findings revealed that out of the 44 counties in Idaho, 37 have established MDTs. Among these, 29 MDTs convene on a monthly basis, although there are variations in frequency among others.

Predominantly, MDTs comprise representatives from key agencies such as the Department of Health and Welfare, law enforcement, and the prosecutor's office. Additionally, some MDTs involve other entities like schools, victim/witness coordinators, and private mental health providers to enhance collaboration and service provision. Despite this, several counties reported challenges in securing participation from certain entities, notably law enforcement and schools, underscoring ongoing efforts to strengthen MDT engagement and effectiveness.

The MDT subcommittee is currently in the process of developing a new statewide survey aimed at collecting updated information and comprehensive statistics regarding county MDTs. Our objective is to gain insights into the challenges, strengths, needs, and achievements of these county-level MDTs. We seek to understand the factors influencing

their frequency of meetings, the barriers they encounter, and the reasons behind their successes or lack thereof.

By gathering this valuable data, we aim to identify areas where MDTs may require additional support and resources. This includes understanding the obstacles they face and how CARTF can tailor training initiatives to better address their specific needs. Through this proactive approach, we endeavor to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of county MDTs in fulfilling their vital roles within their respective communities.

Prosecution of Child Sexual Abuse

Each year, the Attorney General and Governor prepare a report on prosecution of child sexual abuse. This report is submitted to the legislature pursuant to Idaho Code § 67-1405. The report covers cases of child sexual abuse in which criminal charges were filed in Idaho courts. It includes statistical data on victims and offenders, disposition of cases, and sentencing practices. During Fiscal Year 2022, Idaho reported 785 incidents of child sexual abuse, which is 2% fewer than the previous fiscal year, representing a decrease of 16 reported incidents. However, despite the decrease in reported incidents, the number of child sexual abuse cases filed by prosecutors increased to 1,043 cases in FY2022, indicating a 10% rise compared to FY2021.

Among the cases filed, 842 involved adults and 201 involved juveniles. Regarding conviction and disposition status, 88 adults were sentenced to prison, while 11 juveniles were placed in juvenile corrections. Additionally, 31 adults and 49 juveniles were placed on probation, and 34 adults were placed under retained jurisdiction. Furthermore, 532 adult cases and 94 juvenile cases were pending, while 152 adult cases and 44 juvenile cases were dismissed. Finally, five adults and three juveniles were acquitted of child sexual abuse charges.

In terms of offenders, the Commission of Pardons and Parole granted parole to 372 inmates and discharged 569 inmates who completed their sentences for child sexual abuse crimes during FY2022. These statistics provide insights into the prevalence of child sexual abuse in Idaho, the legal proceedings associated with such cases, and the outcomes for offenders within the criminal justice system.

Victim Services/Coordinators

To reduce a victim's trauma associated with participating in the legal process, prosecuting attorneys have appointed someone in each county to fulfill the role of Victim Witness Coordinator. These individuals assist children in becoming familiar with the courtroom and the judicial process.

Social and support services for those who have been victimized tend to be centered in Idaho's urban areas. Service availability throughout the state is not sufficient to meet the needs. In rural areas there are a lack of any services and in more urban areas what services there are present have wait lists which impact ready availability. Services for child victims of crime, specifically physical and/or sexual abuse, are spread especially thin. There are forensic interviewing services in all the hubs of the state but due to the vast geographical area covered by each hub victims still may need to travel a great distance to get to the

nearest facility. For some, this obstacle can be too large to overcome. This makes victims of sexual and domestic violence especially vulnerable to victimization, as key resources (such as emergency or transitional housing) may not be available.

Idaho Courts

Over the span of 2021 to 2023, Idaho's Courts have been actively engaged in various initiatives aimed at enhancing child protection and welfare services across the state. In 2021, efforts focused on improving the quality of court hearings through independent evaluations, establishing mandatory statewide forms for Child Protective Act cases, and monitoring Title IV-E funding losses. The year also saw significant collaboration with external partners and stakeholders to ensure effective communication and training on new processes and initiatives.

The following year, in 2022, the Courts continued their commitment to child protection by updating essential resources such as the Idaho Mini Rule Book and collaborating with national organizations like the National Association of Counsel of Children (NACC) to advance child welfare law curriculum. Additionally, efforts were made to reform data-sharing groups to inform continuous quality improvement in Idaho's child welfare system. New court rules and bench cards were developed to guide judges in navigating processes related to placement in Qualified Residential Treatment Programs and Extended Foster Care.

In 2023, the focus shifted towards further enhancing collaboration and engagement within the child welfare system. Initiatives included recruiting individuals with lived experience to the steering committee, presenting child protection curriculum at conferences, and conducting webinar training sessions on Extended Foster Care policies and procedures. Hands-on training labs were also implemented for court clerks to improve their proficiency in handling Child Protection cases. Additionally, the development of a statewide survey aimed at legal and judicial stakeholders provided valuable data to inform policy and programmatic decisions, ensuring ongoing improvements in Idaho's child welfare services. Through these comprehensive efforts, Idaho's Courts have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to safeguarding the well-being of children and families across the state.

Child Fatality Review Team

In May 2012, Idaho's Governor signed Executive Order No. 2012-03, which allows for CARTF to establish and support a statewide child fatality review team to allow comprehensive and multidisciplinary review of deaths of children younger than 18 years-old, in order to identify what information and education may improve the health and safety of Idaho's children. In September 2012, CARTF worked with the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Bureau of Vital Records and Health Statistics to hire a research analyst utilizing CJA funds. This research analyst has been tasked with gathering case records and preparing case information for Child Fatality Review Team meetings. The research analyst also assists in gathering data for national reporting and entering that data into the National Fatality Review Case Reporting System through the Center for Fatality Review and Prevention.

The review team consists of twelve (12) representatives from: law enforcement, child protective services, prosecuting attorney's offices, coroner's offices, public health, the

pediatric medical field, emergency medical services, the education system, behavioral health, and child advocacy groups.

In 2022, the Idaho Statewide Child Fatality Review Team met to review 2020 child fatality cases. In 2020, 196 children under the age of 18 died in Idaho. Of the 196 deaths, 112 were selected for detailed review by the Child Fatality Review (CFR) team. Deaths that are not selected for full CFR team review include most deaths due to congenital anomalies, malignancies, or other diagnosed medical conditions. Deaths were identified, and manner and cause of death were categorized using the Vital Records system. The team utilized information gathered from coroners, law enforcement, medical providers, and other state government agencies in their reviews. The team noted a couple of key takeaways from 2020 cases:

- Idaho's youth suicide rate increased in 2020, with 21 suicides that occurred that year. Idaho historically has a higher rate of suicide than the national rate.
- Of the child deaths by age group, children under 1 year of age accounted for 46.9% of the child deaths in 2020.

The team created a fact sheet to share with the community which included identified risk factors and recommendations to prevent future child deaths.

In 2023, the Idaho Statewide Child Fatality Review Team met to review 2021 child fatality cases. Of 193 child deaths in Idaho in 2021, 106 were selected for detailed review by the CFR Team. The CFR Team met six times between April 2023 and January 2024 to conduct the 2021 case reviews. Risk factors, systems issues, missing information, and recommended actions were identified for each case. The team noted a few key takeaways from 2021 cases:

- A high percentage of 2021 motor vehicle fatalities occurred on Idaho's rural roads, as was also the case in 2018 and 2019.
- Idaho's youth suicide rate continues to increase, with a total of 24 youth suicides reviewed out of 25 that occurred in 2021.
- Infants under one year of age continue to have a much higher death rate compared to other age groups, totaling 50% of all child deaths from 2019-2021.
- The CFR team continues to identify cases of inaccurate coding and categorization of SUID deaths in infants and continues to emphasize thorough investigation techniques and consistent coding to ensure all infant deaths are correctly identified and categorized as SUID.

In 2024, the team wrapped up the 2021 cases by reviewing the final deferred cases. Cases are deferred when there are open investigations preventing a detailed review or when there is missing information that needs to be received to complete a detailed review. A full report of 2021 cases have been published for the community, including risk factors and recommendations from the CFR team to prevent future child deaths. Also in 2024, the statewide CFR team met with Canyon County's new SUID review team. This new team established themselves outside of the statewide review team and is funded by the CDC for the specific purpose of reviewing SUID deaths in Canyon County. It is not a part of the statewide team. However, the statewide team continues to connect with the Canyon County SUID team to ensure consistency in national reporting and for consistency in information

provided to Idaho's communities regarding child deaths and prevention practices. The CFRT Team continues to meet through 2024 to review cases of 2022 child deaths.

Findings of the Three-Year Assessment

The findings, recommendations, and strategic plan emphasize the need for continued efforts to integrate the child protection response systems in each community in Idaho, through the development and enhancement of multidisciplinary teams. Many of the goals outlined in this new plan are designed to support the development, training, and technical assistance for local multidisciplinary teams. These recommendations, in the form of goals and strategies, reflect the on-going mission of the Governor's Children at Risk Task Force which is to make the system more sensitive and responsive to child victims.

As a result of this review process, the Task Force found progress has been made to improve the investigation, administration, and judicial handling of cases of child abuse and neglect as well as cases involving suspected child maltreatment related fatalities. The prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases and the responsiveness and sensitivity of the system to the victim's issues improves each year. However, these areas continue to be the state's top priorities for improvement in the system that handles child abuse and neglect.

Findings of the three-year assessment includes the following strengths

- There continue to be improvements in the court system, largely due to a well-functioning court improvement project, the Supreme Court Child Protection Committee.
- Existing multidisciplinary teams are working together in a coordinated effort to investigate referrals of child abuse, neglect, and child exploitation for civil and criminal judicial proceedings.
- There is additional coordination of multidisciplinary training as a result of increased grant opportunities available through Children Justice Act funds.
- The conference within the last year focused on the MDT process and participants through following a case through the court process.
- There are victim witness coordinators in most counties.
- Idaho citizens continue to have increased awareness about their responsibility of being a mandated reporter.
- The Governor's Children at Risk Task Force is making active efforts to build relationships and strengthen awareness about its role and functions. The team had individual outreach to MDTs in Pocatello, Coeur d'Alene and Lewiston.
- Existing Child Advocacy Centers are growing stronger and new Child Advocacy Centers are developing and being sustained throughout the State.
- Idaho continues to have an established and well-functioning Statewide Child Fatality Review Team.
- Idaho's Child and Family Services program continues to meet or exceed the national standards for maltreatment in care, recurrence of maltreatment, and reentry to foster care for the past several years.
- Strong investigation and initial handling of cases can lead to better outcomes in quickly resolving cases and this is shown through Idaho's time to permanency rates.

Findings of the three-year assessment includes the following concerns

- Not every county has a multidisciplinary team as mandated by statute.
- There continues to be a need for additional training and collaboration of services between MDT members.
- Idaho continues to have a gap in mental health services in rural communities.
- Access to in-state residential support services for children is limited.
- Access to substance use treatment for parents, including for pregnant women, is limited.
- Access to counseling services for youth and parents is limited.
- Idaho continues to struggle in achieving placement stability for children placed in foster care. This means children in the foster care system experience too many placement changes. Federal measures state that children should have two or fewer placement settings while in foster care. Placement moves also are shown to create additional trauma for children in care. This need is especially great for older youth and larger sibling groups. Therapeutic foster care placements are also needed to meet complex trauma needs. Additional recruitment effort to Native American families would provide more placement options for children who are Native American and enhanced compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.
- Due to limited resources, parents are not able to have visitation as frequently as would be beneficial in cases where children are removed.
- The work of the Child Fatality Team is not in statute and therefore not resourced well

These findings, as well as others to enhance the handling, investigation, and prosecution of child abuse and neglect cases, particularly cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation, and suspected child maltreatment related fatalities are reflected in the new recommendations and strategic plan for 2021-2024.

Recommendations of the Children at Risk Task Force for 2024-2027

The recommendations submitted for 2021-2024 have been modified to reflect the findings of the review and the current needs of Idaho's child protective system. The goals and strategies address ongoing and new priority areas. They are broad in their focus and are the vehicles through which a variety of changes to Idaho's system for investigating and prosecuting child abuse and neglect can be made. They include improving the system for cases involving a potential combination of jurisdictions, such as interstate and state-tribal involvement. Many of the recommendations allow for innovative approaches and techniques which will improve the prompt and successful resolution of civil and criminal court proceedings or enhance the effectiveness of judicial action in cases including child physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect. During the next three-year period, the Task Force will work on goals and strategies reflected in the new recommendations and strategic plan that is submitted below.

Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk Strategic Plan 2024-2027

GOAL 1

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)

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.	Ongoing, Annually
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	
Review and make recommendations to improve current and proposed legislation and rules pertaining to the child protection process. (Category C)	
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.	Ongoing

GOAL 3	
Evaluate and improve the investigation and prosecution process for civil and criminal cases involving child abuse and neglect. (Category 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.	Ongoing
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.	Ongoing

GOAL 4	
Oversee the Statewide Child Fatality Review Team to examine child deaths. (Category A)	
STRATEGIES	TIME FRAMES
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).	Ongoing
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