



Child Protection

*Keeping Idaho's Children Safe,
Healthy, and Home*

*There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul
than the way in which it treats its children. ~~ Nelson Mandela*

For the past sixteen years, Idaho courts have worked diligently to strengthen and enhance the role of the courts in Idaho's child protection process and thereby improve outcomes for some of Idaho's most vulnerable children and families.

Report to the Governor
C.L. "Butch" Otter
and the
2nd Regular Session of the
63rd Idaho Legislature

OUTCOMES FOR IDAHO'S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REMAIN STABLE

In FY2015, the courts and the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) continued their long history of working collaboratively for the benefit of Idaho children and families. One of the results of this collaboration is that outcomes for Idaho children and families remained stable in FY2015.

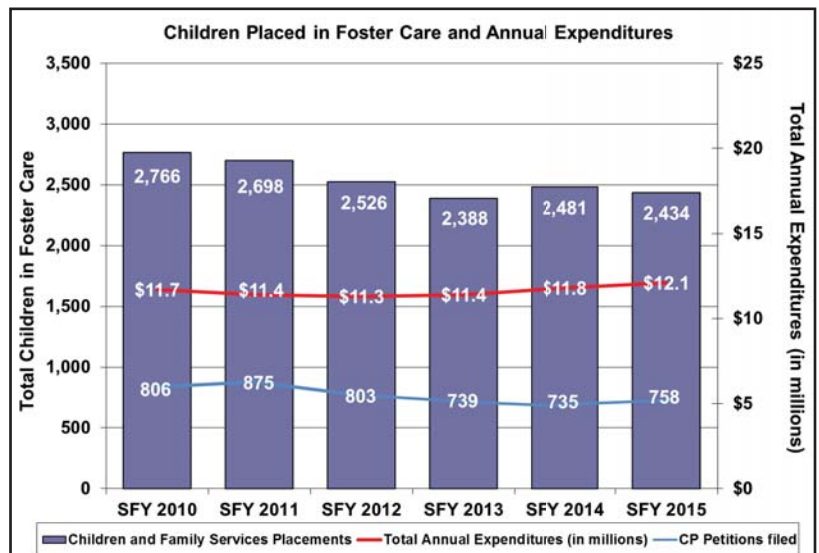
Number of Child Protection Cases. The number of child protection petitions filed in FY2015 remained stable, with a very slight 3% increase when compared with FY2014 (735 petitions filed in FY2014 and 758 filed in FY2015), but a notable decline of 13% when compared to the five-year high in FY2011.

Number of Children in Foster Care. In FY2015, the number of Idaho children in out-of-home care decreased by approximately 2% when compared to FY2014. FY2015 data evidence a return to a downward trend in the number of children in care, with an almost 10% decline when compared to the five-year high in FY2011.



Cost of Out-of-Home Care. The cost of foster care in FY2015 increased by about 3% when compared to FY2014. The increase in the cost of foster care in FY2015 is, for the most part, attributable to increased costs for therapeutic foster care.

The courts and IDHW remain committed to keeping Idaho children safely at home and to placing them in out-of-home care only when there is no way for a child to be safe at home. When placement in out-of-home care is unavoidable, an effort is made to safely reunify the family within twelve months whenever possible.



Idaho Supreme Court
451 W. State Street
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0101
208-334-2246
isc.idaho.gov

ENHANCED SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR IDAHO FAMILIES CHALLENGED BY SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND TRAUMA AND/OR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Idaho families faced with both a child protection case and a substance use disorder are among Idaho's highest risk and highest need families. Child protection cases involving a substance use disorder are complex and challenging. Idaho's three child protection drug courts (CPDCs), one each in Twin Falls, Bannock, and Bonneville counties, provide enhanced treatment, services, and support to families with an open child protection case. To qualify, families must meet the drug court eligibility requirements (high risk/high need) and voluntarily agree to participate. Enhanced services and support may include assistance with transportation, housing, child care, employment, and medical/dental care not covered by other funding sources. For those Idaho families with an open child protection case, a substance use disorder, and a history of trauma and/or a co-occurring mental health diagnosis, enhanced trauma informed treatment and services are available in the Twin Falls and Bannock County child protection drug courts. In FY2015, child protection drug courts served a total of 64 participants and 74 children; 16 participants graduated from a child protection drug court; 13 children were reunified with their families; and 2 substance free babies were born to child protection drug court participants!

MULTI-SYSTEM COLLABORATION TO BETTER SERVE DUALY INVOLVED YOUTH

Idaho's most vulnerable and at-risk youth include those who are known across multiple systems (crossover youth), particularly the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. In late October 2015, Idaho sent a team to Georgetown University to participate in an intensive weeklong program to develop a collaborative multi-system, multi-disciplinary approach to better meet the needs of, and ultimately improve outcomes for, crossover youth. The Idaho team includes leaders from the courts, IDHW, Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections (DJC), and the Idaho Criminal Justice Commission (ICJC). The Georgetown program focused on collaborative leadership, shared funding, effectively using shared data, and engaging families and youth. The Idaho team will apply the knowledge gained at Georgetown by developing an Idaho "Capstone Project" to better serve Idaho's crossover youth.

EFFORTS TO ERADICATE TRAFFICKING OF CHILDREN

The ICJC and other key stakeholders have been working diligently to end human trafficking in Idaho. The courts, IDHW, DJC, and other key stakeholders are working with ICJC to focus specifically on the trafficking of children in Idaho. Nationally, the average age of entry into the commercial sex industry for children who are trafficked is 12 or 13 years old. Both girls and boys are trafficked and many children who are trafficked come from the foster care system. Idaho teams, including representatives of the courts, IDHW and ICJC, attended a White House Summit and a Summit for State Courts on trafficked children. In the upcoming year, these stakeholders and others will gather data to begin to define the scope of the problem in Idaho, conduct a community mapping session to determine what resources are currently available to trafficked children, and develop a strategic plan to end the trafficking of children in Idaho.

IDAHO'S GUARDIAN AD LITEM PROGRAMS: PROTECTING PRECIOUS RESOURCES

Idaho's seven guardian ad litem programs (GAL programs, CASA) exemplify a successful public/private partnership greatly benefitting Idaho children and families. The Idaho GAL programs are funded by a combination of funds from the Idaho Legislature (approximately two-thirds of total funding) and from community donors. GAL volunteers worked incredibly hard in FY2015, contributing 18,118 hours — roughly the equivalent of nine full-time positions — to advocate for Idaho's abused, abandoned, and neglected children. Last year, Idaho judges appointed a GAL program to advocate on behalf of 2,303 children. Of those children, 1,682 (73%) benefitted from the steady, positive influence, and compassionate advocacy of a GAL volunteer. The remaining 621 children were monitored by GAL program staff, but did not have the long-term support and child-focused advocacy of a volunteer GAL. Despite the support of the Legislature and the citizens of Idaho, Idaho's GAL programs continue to pursue funding sources so they can meet their statutory mandate to provide a volunteer GAL for every child under age 12, as well as every child age 12 and over for whom a GAL is appointed.

Much has been accomplished to improve outcomes for Idaho's most fragile families and children in the past year. Much remains to be done.

Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. ~~ Garrison Keillor

For further information, contact Senior Judge Barry Wood
Email: bwood@idcourts.net /// Phone: 208-334-2246

