



Report to the Governor
C.L. "Butch" Otter
and the
1st Regular Session of the
64th Idaho Legislature

IDAHO JUDICIARY

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JUDICIAL INNOVATION IN TIMES OF CHANGE: COORDINATED FAMILY SERVICES

Family Court Services (FCS), Court Assistance Offices (CAO), and Domestic Violence Courts (DVC) were established by Idaho Code Title 32, Chapter 14, as, "Coordinated Family Services," to meet the needs of families and children in the courts by fostering family relationships, offering legal assistance, and responding to domestic violence. FCS, CAO, and DVC provide innovative case management practices which are designed to promote an efficient use of family and court resources.

Family Court Services

Families in transition may be better suited for alternative methods to resolve their dispute than the adversarial process. Separating and divorcing parents may be in a highly emotional state and, for those families, the adversarial process can increase tensions and put additional stress on children. Family Court Service Managers assist with case management from the time of filing, through case disposition, to the final decree, with a number of helpful services along the path to a new family structure.

The Children and Families in the Courts Committee has adopted seven statewide core services. These core services helped Idaho families in the following ways in FY2016:

- Co-Parent Education helped 9,028 parents understand how to keep their children out of the middle of a dispute and focus on their children's best interests.
- Supervised Access afforded the opportunity for 895 children to spend time with their parents under circumstances that would ordinarily make access difficult.
- Mediation was used in 668 custody disputes and family courts managed another 1,645 mediation cases with referrals to community professionals.
- Civil Intake Screenings assist the courts in triaging cases and efficiently finding the best service suited to the case. Family Court Services completed 301 Civil Intake Screens.
- Pre-Filing Workshops gave 1,326 parents the opportunity to work with Family Court Services on parenting plans.
- Brief Focused Assessments help answer discreet questions by providing unbiased information to the court and were used in 89 cases.
- Parenting Time Evaluations assist the court in the most difficult cases. FCS provided for 41 evaluations, aiding families in transition.

In addition, the State's seven Family Court Service programs offered an array of other services to thousands of Idaho's citizens including, but not limited to, child interviews, classes for children with divorcing parents, case screenings, pre-filing workshops, recruitment and training of experts, assistance with child support calculations, and parenting plan development. Each office works hard to meet the specific needs of each district, each judge, and each family who accesses an Idaho court.

Court Assistance Office

The role of the Court Assistance Office is to promote equal and meaningful access to the courts and increase the accessibility of resources and legal information for self-represented litigants. In FY2016, Court Assistance Officers throughout the state assisted over 57,000 people by providing information on the court process and court approved forms,

reviewing court forms, and organizing legal advice clinics to help those without an attorney navigate the court system and better understand their rights and responsibilities. These are only some examples of the services provided and the office is constantly improving its warehouse of information to increase its ability to address litigants' needs more efficiently. This in turn decreases the demand on other court offices and results in self-represented litigants being better prepared for court.

The Court Assistance Office continues to expand its use of technology to increase the ease of accessing the resources available to self-represented litigants. The office partnered with Idaho Legal Aid, Inc. on a grant from the Legal Services Corporation to create a text-line for obtaining immediate responses to frequently asked legal questions on areas such as eviction and completing service of legal documents. This places a helpful, low cost resource at the fingertips of people looking for legal information. The office is also using technology to simplify the process of completing and e-filing court forms via the continued development of the Guide & File interviews. These interviews use plain language questions to collect necessary information for court forms and produce pleadings that will allow self-represented litigants to e-file Court Assistance Office forms.

Domestic Violence Courts

Idaho Domestic Violence Courts are characterized by a judge specially trained in domestic violence, dedicated on-site staff, and a coordinated community response between the justice system and community stakeholders. These dedicated courts ensure that offenders are carefully monitored, victims have access to comprehensive services, and judges have the information they need to make prompt and effective decisions. Domestic Violence Courts hold offenders accountable through judicial oversight. Judicial review hearings are based on comprehensive reports provided by probation officers, treatment providers, and victim input (if appropriate and possible) to monitor compliance with court orders. Each component of Idaho's Domestic Violence Courts is designed to promote victim safety and hold offenders accountable.

Idaho's nine established Domestic Violence Courts monitored over 1,650 offenders in FY2016. Domestic Violence Court Coordinators assisted over 1,600 victims navigate the court system in both criminal and civil cases in the same time frame. As Domestic Violence Courts expand throughout Idaho and promote best practices in effectively handling these difficult civil and criminal cases, more counties are incorporating these practices. Judges, who have integrated judicial review hearings in their criminal domestic violence cases, have reported an increase in compliance with offender treatment and less probation and no-contact order violations. Domestic Violence Courts use best practices throughout the state and are essential to the civil and criminal justice systems response to domestic violence.

Creating the Foundation Today for Idaho's Courts of Tomorrow

With the support and policy direction of the Legislature, Idaho's courts are meeting the challenge of providing coordinated family services to meet the needs of children and families. The Idaho Supreme Court is committed to continue the work of Family Court Services, Court Assistance Offices, and Domestic Violence Courts, using services, technology, and innovation to provide Idahoans access to justice.

For more information, contact
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Mission Statement of the Idaho Courts

*As the Third Branch of
Government, we provide
access to justice by ensuring
fair processes and the timely,
impartial resolution of cases.*

The Idaho Courts stand for:

*Integrity
Fairness
Independence
Respect
Excellence
Innovation*

The Idaho Courts strive to:

**Provide Timely,
Impartial Case
Resolution through
Legally Fair Procedures**

Ensure Access to Justice

**Promote Effective,
Innovative Services**

**Increase Public Trust
and Confidence in
Idaho Courts**

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