



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

IDAHO JUDICIARY

Idaho Supreme Court
451 W. State Street
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0101
208.334.2246
FAX 208.334-2146
www.isc.idaho.gov

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 Assists Families in Resolving Ways that are Least Adversarial and Intrusive

The legislature established as a matter of public policy under Title 32, Chapter 14 of the Idaho Code, the purpose of coordinated family services. Among these is to address the needs of families and children involved in disputes, provide resources for the family to assist in early case resolution, educate families on the adverse impact of high conflict family disputes, and emphasize the importance of parenting plans and mediation techniques which peacefully resolve child custody and visitation issues. All seven Judicial Districts in Idaho have an active Family Court Services Office (FCS) that promotes core services statewide. The umbrella of services supported by FCS is diverse and broad, but dependent on individual county and district needs and resources. They may include:

Pre-Filing Workshops: 1,193 parents were provided the opportunity to work on their parenting plans with dedicated professionals.

Civil Intake Screenings: FCS screened 303 individuals to identify the services that best fit the family's needs.

Co-Parent Education: 8,295 parents were given developmental information about their children to assist in making informed decisions regarding their needs during and after divorce or separation.

Mediation: 2,342 families received referrals to community mediation professionals or received services directly from FCS staff. Early mediation of disputes may prevent some cases from developing into high-conflict cases by lessening tension between parents and empowering them to make shared decisions regarding custody.

Brief Focused Assessments: In 48 cases, courts ordered the service of professionals that provide both the court and the parents with answers to specific or narrowly defined questions in a particular case. This process assists the court in making informed decisions regarding the family and custody.

Parenting Time Evaluations: In 67 cases, courts ordered that an expert investigate and analyze the best interest of the child(ren) with regard to disputed parenting time issues and report findings to the court.

Supervised Access: 1,945 visits occurred between parents and one or more children with support from supervised access providers. Supervised access allows parents in high conflict or high-risk situations access to their children in a safe and supervised environment.

Training, Collaboration, and Support: Approximately 45 mental health providers from across the state of Idaho attended a training sponsored by the Idaho Supreme Court on process, protocol, and best-interest factors surrounding Parenting Time Evaluations and Brief Focused Assessments governed by the relevant rules of family law procedure (IRFLP 719 and 720).

Idaho Domestic Violence Courts Improve the Civil and Criminal Justice System's Responses to Domestic Violence

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. Each component of Idaho's domestic violence courts is designed to promote victim safety and hold offenders accountable.

Currently, Idaho has nine active domestic violence courts in five judicial districts. Domestic violence courts connect victims with advocacy and other services early in the process. In FY2017, Idaho's domestic violence court coordinators provided referrals to and assisted 1,500 victims in navigating the court system in both criminal and civil cases. Domestic violence courts also hold offenders to a higher level of accountability 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. Domestic violence courts conducted over 3,900 judicial review hearings in FY2017. The review process enables the court to increase victim safety by imposing immediate consequences for offender violations, assessing treatment progress, and addressing conflicting or confusing orders.

As domestic violence courts expand throughout Idaho's judicial districts they are promoting best practices in effectively handling these difficult civil and criminal cases. Many rural counties are incorporating domestic violence court practices, even in the absence of a formal domestic violence court. Statewide mentoring within and between districts has increased judicial awareness of the need for consistency and timeliness in these cases. Promoting access to services, addressing victim safety and increasing offender monitoring are the key elements that all courts in Idaho support.

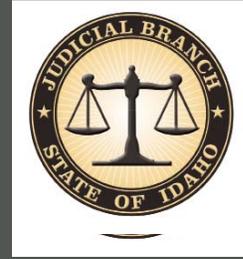
Court Assistance Offices Promote Equal and Meaningful Access to the Courts

Over 50,000 Idahoans are served each year by Court Assistance Offices. 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. The court assistance offices around the state provide information on the court process, distribute court approved forms, review completed court forms, and organize legal advice clinics. All of these services decrease the demand on other court and county offices, enhance access to the courts, and result in self-represented litigants being better prepared for court.



The first Guide & File Small Claims interactive interviews are now available for the public to use. The interviews use plain language questions to collect necessary information and generate court forms for self-represented litigants.

These interviews simplify the process of filing a lawsuit in many ways. For example, users do not have to figure out which forms to use as the interviews will produce the



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**

Adopted by the
Supreme Court
October 31, 2011
and revised
April 25, 2016

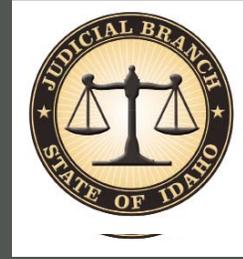
necessary court forms and instructions automatically. Additionally, help topics and instructions appear throughout the interviews so that people can find answers when they need them.

These interviews will later be integrated into the court's E-filing system to allow self-represented litigants to directly e-file Court Assistance Office forms through Guide & File.

Helping Families Deal with Challenges through Professionalism, Collaboration, and Innovation

Families that access Idaho's courts to resolve custody issues often face multifaceted and complex challenges during separation and divorce. As a result, families require an individualized approach recognizing the developmental needs of children and the challenges that families face. As the level of conflict and stress increases, families frequently need court and community services to help them cope and resolve their disputes in a timely and more satisfactory manner. Family court services, domestic violence courts, and court assistance offices work together to provide a flexible response to the diverse court-related needs of Idaho families.

For more information, contact
Sara B. Thomas, Administrative Director of the Courts
stthomas@idcourts.net // 208-334-2246



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**

Adopted by the
Supreme Court
October 31, 2011
and revised
April 25, 2016