



# Performance Highlights

## Annual Newsletter

Office of Performance Evaluations

October 2019

### Mission

Promote confidence and accountability in state government through evaluation of programs and policies.

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### From the director

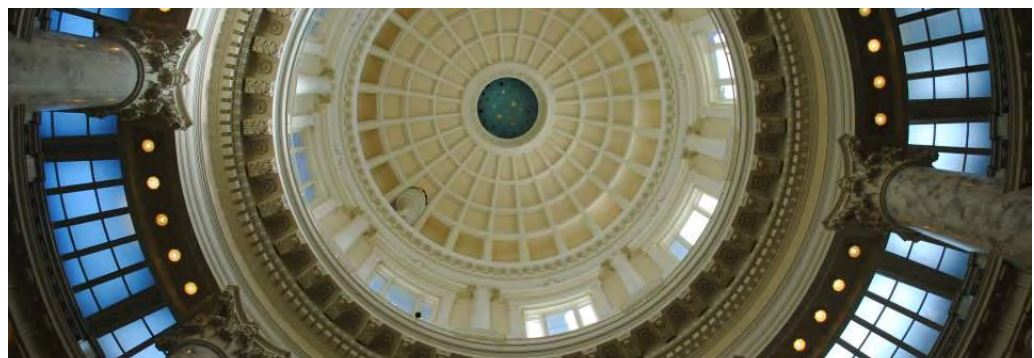
To strengthen legislative oversight, Idaho's Legislature established the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC) in 1993 and the Office of Performance Evaluations (OPE) in 1994.

Senator Bruce Sweeney and Representative Bruce Newcomb, the first cochairs of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee, summarized the benefits of having the Oversight Committee and the evaluation office:

“ By examining the effectiveness of agency administration through performance evaluations, the Legislature can ensure compliance with legislative intent, improve service to constituents, and increase its capability to set policy.

To be responsive to this founding vision, we customize our work products to deliver appropriate, accurate information using professional, ethical research standards. Our reports represent an independent assessment that is nonpartisan and objective.

Independent assessment, rigorous methods, and responsive design ensure that evaluation findings and recommendations can be reliably used to promote confidence and accountability in state government and to strengthen legislative oversight.



Serving the Legislature and citizens of Idaho for 25 years

## Program accountability through evaluation

### We reported haphazard downsizing at SWITC

In January we released a report on the Southwest Idaho Treatment Center (SWITC). SWITC is Idaho's only state-operated institution dedicated to serving individuals with an intellectual disability. We reported that as Idaho transitioned to community-based care, it did not plan well for serving those who continued to need care in an institution. As a result, a haphazard downsizing process and a series of recent traumatic events contributed to organizational trauma in SWITC.

### We responded to emergent concerns over non-emergency medical transportation

In March the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed us to conduct an evaluation of [non-emergency medical transportation \(NEMT\)](#) for Medicaid recipients. The report was to be released during the 2020 legislative session. In late June, however, we were asked by legislators, the Governor's staff, and the staff of the Division of Medicaid to expedite the evaluation and release a report by the end of August.

To meet the intent of the accelerated request, we sent a management letter to the director of Health and Welfare on August 29. We made five observations that demonstrated persistent problems in the Division of Medicaid. We believe these observations are critical for the division to address before issuing the next RFP planned for 2020.

### We followed up to ensure corrective action occurred in residential care

In 2018 we evaluated the residential care program and reported a dysfunctional work environment in the nursing home survey team. After our report release, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed us to follow up on the division's efforts to address the dysfunctional work environment. Members wanted us to ensure that corrective action had been implemented and that no retaliation or intimidation of surveyors had taken place.

In our limited scope follow-up review, surveyors expressed enthusiasm about the division's hiring of new supervisors. Surveyors felt they could openly express concerns with their superiors and with each other. However, more time is needed to strengthen the relationship.



The National Legislative Program Evaluation Society gave us its 2019 Impact Award for the report *Residential Care*.

## We found insufficient accountability for court-ordered fines and fees

In March we reported that decades of unpaid court-ordered fines and fees had added to a substantial backlog of at least \$195 million. We found that the court's data collection, monitoring, and reporting were insufficient to answer basic questions about collection efforts with any precision or depth.

In response, the Oversight Committee asked the courts to bring to them a plan before the 2020 session. The plan should identify next steps and timelines for establishing a system of statewide accountability for the assessment and collection of court-ordered financial obligations.

## Policies strengthened through evaluation

### Senate Bill 1096 (2019 session)

Senate Bill 1096 gave assisted living facilities the authority to use a third party instead of the state's relicensing surveyors for accreditation. The bill's statement of purpose indicated that our 2017 report, *Residential Care*, "identified an alternative to licensing fees to keep up with the growing number of assisted living facilities." By allowing accreditation from a third party, the bill may decrease workload for the state survey team.

### House Bill 151 (2019 session)

In our 2015 report, *Distribution of State General Fund Dollars to Public Health Districts*, we found that regulatory, fee-based programs are subsidized by state general fund dollars and county funds. To address subsidies, the Legislature passed House Bill 151. The bill clarified licensing fees for food establishments and gradually increased food licensing fees for public health inspections. The increased fees will reduce dollars spent from the state general fund and county funds.

## Work products completed in fiscal year 2019

### Performance evaluations

*Southwest Idaho Treatment Center*

*Impact of State Mandates on County Governments*

*Pardons and Parole: Program Improvements and Statutory Changes*

*Court-Ordered Fines and Fees*

### Follow-up reviews

*Residential Care*

*Design of the Idaho Behavioral Health Program*

### 24-Hour reviews

Minimum wage



## Staff

### Director

Rakesh Mohan

### Admin. Coordinator

Margaret Campbell

### Principal Evaluators

Amanda Bartlett

Ryan Langrill

Lance McCleve

### Evaluators

Lauren Bailey

Susie Bergeron

Casey Petti

## Sharing our work

### **Governor's Task Force on Children at Risk**

Summary of three child welfare reports—Amanda and Lance

### **Idaho Council on Developmental Disabilities**

Webinar on the report *Southwest Idaho Treatment Center*—Ryan

### **American Evaluation Association annual conference**

Panel discussions: (1) the role of qualitative inquiry in discovering and speaking truth to policymakers and (2) innovative efforts in state-level evaluation policy and practice—Rakesh

### **American Society for Public Administration**

Webinar on improving accountability and performance—Amanda, Lance, and Rakesh, and annual conference presentation on the importance of data and key challenges in performance management—Rakesh

### **Eastern Evaluation Research Society annual conference**

Plenary talk on “Question Your Assumptions: A Key Step for Conducting Evaluations in a Dynamic Environment”—Rakesh

### **Ohio Program Evaluators' Group spring conference**

Plenary talk on “Trust, Transparency, and Timing: Key Factors in Driving Change through Effective Evaluator Advocacy”—Rakesh

### **National Legislative Program Evaluation Society fall conference**

Panel discussions on evaluation methods and working with lobbyists—Amanda and Ryan

### **Cornell University's Institute for Public Affairs**

Video conference to a graduate class about turning evidence into action by managing the politics of evaluation—Rakesh

### **George Washington University's School of Public Policy and Public Administration**

Video conference to a graduate class about grappling with the political context of evaluation and promoting evaluation use in public policymaking—Rakesh

### **Eurasian Regional Parliamentarians Forum in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic**

Video conference on how parliaments can use evaluation—Rakesh

### **US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program**

Discussion with seven Brazilian government leaders on how an independent evaluation office supports good government—Bryon, Casey, Margaret, Ryan, and Susie

## Two decades of impact

We are pleased to share some evaluations that best exemplify how our work has helped policymakers improve confidence and accountability in state government over the past two decades.

2004: Improved oversight and reduced costs for pupil transportation services, [Fiscal Accountability of Pupil Transportation](#)

2005: Created systemic changes in treating substance abuse; established the Office of Drug Policy, [State Substance Abuse Treatment Efforts](#)

2006: Improved agency accountability and management practices, [Management in the Department of Health and Welfare](#)

2009: Resulted in an executive order that facilitated agency action on our recommendations, [Idaho Transportation Department Performance Audit](#)

2010: Revealed substantial inefficiencies in the management of offender data, [Increasing Efficiencies in Idaho's Parole Process](#)

2011: Identified improvements for contract management, system performance, process efficiency, and program accountability, [Delays in Medicaid Claims Processing](#)

2013: Helped the Governor's Task Force and policymakers understand the issues undermining the long-term availability of dedicated, quality teachers, [Workforce Issues Affecting Public School Teachers](#)

2013: As stated by the State Controller, "[The] study does much to further enhance the transparency and understandability of the largest budget in state government," [DHW's Management of Appropriated Funds](#)

2014: Used by the agency as a roadmap for improving juvenile corrections, [Confinement of Juvenile Offenders](#)

2015: Led the Department of Education to make substantial improvements to data collection requirements and processes for school districts, [K-12 Longitudinal Data System \(ISEE\)](#)

2015: Reported to policymakers the serious missteps made by the Department of Education in procuring and implementing Schoolnet, [Schoolnet Offers Lessons for Future IT Projects](#)

2017–2018: Three reports helped policymakers establish a systems approach to statewide accountability for child protection outcomes: (1) [Child Welfare System](#), (2) [Representation for Children and Youth in Child Protection Cases](#), and (3) [Reducing the Risk of Adverse Outcomes](#)



**Celebrating 25 years of service, Margaret Campbell has been with the office since its inception.**

**A staff section of NCSL, the Legislative Research Librarians gave us its 2019 Notable Document Award for the report *Impact of State Mandates on County Governments*.**



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## Evaluations assigned for fiscal year 2020

The Joint Legislative Oversight Committee received seven requests. In March the committee assigned us five of those requests to study:

- Non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT)
- Operational efficiencies of the prison system
- Chained consumer price index
- County revenues
- Preparedness of Idahoans to retire

We have already released a management letter on NEMT and will release reports on other evaluations during the 2020 legislative session.

## Requesting an evaluation for 2021

Any legislator can make a request. All a legislator needs to do is submit a letter of request to JLOC. The request can be signed by one legislator or by a group of legislators.

JLOC meets to publicly review the requests, vote on which requests will be directed to us for evaluation, and prioritize existing projects. This meeting typically takes place during session but can occur at any time during the year.

Although a full evaluation requires the approval of JLOC, we can research some information for legislators without the need for JLOC's approval. We offer 24-hour reviews to any legislator who would like information on a topic, subject to the approval of the director. A 24-hour review is a policy paper that can be completed in approximately 24 working hours.

## Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC)

Our equally bipartisan and bicameral committee is crucial to independent evaluation.

### Senators

- Mark Harris, cochair (R)
- Dan Johnson (R)
- Michelle Stennett (D)
- Cherie Buckner-Webb (D)

### Representatives

- Mat Erpelding, cochair (D)
- Caroline Nilsson Troy (R)
- Paul Amador (R)
- Elaine Smith (D)