

# Child Welfare System: Reducing the Risk of Adverse Outcomes

Report highlights

March 2018

The report offers the Legislature and all child welfare partners a roadmap for reducing the risk of adverse outcomes for children and youth who have been maltreated or involved with juvenile justice.

## Findings

The evaluation addressed three aspects of Idaho's child welfare system.

### 1. Diverting maltreated children from foster care when possible

Child and Family Services' data systems did not support the collection practices necessary for systematic analysis of foster care diversion.

Child protection partners (law enforcement, prosecutors, medical professionals, schools, and families) affected the use of foster care diversion.

Social workers inconsistently applied the child safety assessment model.

### 2. Preventing youth from crossing between the child protection and juvenile justice systems

Data sharing obstacles have hindered stakeholders' understanding of youth who have had contact with both the child protection and juvenile justice systems.

The system lacked a clear legal and policy framework that supports data sharing and coordinated approaches to treating dual system youth.

### 3. Preparing youth who are exiting the child welfare system for independent living as adults

Managing crises took precedence over providing independent living services.

Youth and staff showed inconsistent knowledge of benefits and services.

Unstable caregiver relationships or lack of community connections caused youth to have a false sense of support.

**25%** of child maltreatment cases received safety services that diverted children from foster care in fiscal year 2016

**19%** of diversions escalated to foster care

**70%** of diversion cases relied on extended family or friends to ensure the safety of children

**34%** of youth involved with the juvenile justice system in 2014 or 2015 had previous contact with Idaho's child protection system

The evaluation builds on two of our previous studies:

1. *Child Welfare System*, February 2017
2. *Representation for Children and Youth in Child Protection Cases*, February 2018

## Recommendations

When used in conjunction with our 2017 recommendation to establish system-wide oversight, recommendations in this report will enable child protection partners to further improve collaboration and ensure that responsibility for child protection outcomes is shared.

View the report:  
[www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/](http://www.legislature.idaho.gov/ope/)

