

Modifications to IDHW Foster Care Program:

August 2016

- The program has made efforts to improve communication with staff statewide. We are holding quarterly video conference “fireside chats” with all staff and we have developed a blog to update staff on important program issues.
- Program staff held statewide video conference with Keeping Children Safe Panel (KCS) Chairs and liaisons and encouraged them to be responsive to requests from foster families who want to attend meetings and state their concerns. These panels’ role is to examine how the child welfare system is working and make recommendations for improvement.
- The Division Administrator drafted a memo to all child welfare program managers and specified immediate direction on unplanned placement changes. This action is intended to ensure better documentation of decision-making and improved tracking of unplanned moves until our data management system was updated. It was also intended to eliminate unannounced placement changes unless a safety issue is present.
- The program’s data management system was updated to better capture the reasons for placement changes and whether the changes were planned or unplanned. The system now also generates placement change notices to birth parents, foster parents, guardians ad litem, children’s attorneys, and tribes.
- In the spring of 2016, information regarding updates to the Child Protective Act was shared during annual foster parent conferences across the state.
- In June 2016, the program hosted a webinar and several question and answer sessions to update child welfare staff on the changes to the Child Protective Act.
- A new report has been developed which allows staff to better track newly licensed foster care placements to ensure timely assignment of a peer mentor.
- A new report has been developed to better track recently closed licenses. This report will help the program better ascertain closure reasons and assist in the administration of exit surveys.
- High level placement (including placements in residential treatment centers, group homes, and treatment foster care homes) staffings have been implemented with the entire program manager team to identify best practices and processes related to placement in residential treatment centers and therapeutic foster homes.
- Modifications were made to the Department’s website and foster care and adoption application materials to clarify the program’s emphasis on foster care and foster-to-adopt in certain circumstances. This is in an effort to clarify the Department is not an adoption-only agency. We want to support those families interested in adoption only with referrals to private adoption agencies.

- A pilot in Ada County is underway to improve court processes. The pilot includes use of video-conference equipment in certain cases and utilization of a court specialist to support timely submission of documents and enhanced communication between parties.
- In process – updating and reposting the foster parent/agency problem resolution process.
- In process – in-service trainings, during foster parent support groups, were held in June and will continue to be held throughout the fall to update foster parents on some of the recent changes to the Child Protective Act. Online training in relation to the Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard has also been developed.
- In process – planning is underway to develop a process for supervisors to check-in monthly with a foster family on each of their workers caseloads.
- In process – a critical goal of the Department’s strategic plan is to transform the child welfare system. One objective tied to this goal is to develop a robust, sustainable, and effective foster care program. This includes an emphasis on ensuring foster families are appropriately trained, possess necessary parenting capacities, and receive ongoing communication, mentoring, and support to meet the needs of the children placed in their home.
- In process – another objective included in the Department’s strategic plan goal of transforming the child welfare system is to modernize the program’s data management system to improve the delivery of services.
- In process – the Department is developing a Child Welfare Initiative Executive Steering Committee to assist in guiding the Department’s strategic plan goal of transforming the child welfare system. This committee will include critical internal and external stakeholders.
- In process – the Department is working with the judiciary and county prosecutors to advance legislation which clarifies the Department’s status as a party in Child Protective Act cases and that the Department will not be represented by county prosecutors but the state’s attorney general.
- In process – the Department is updating our Foster Care Academy curriculum for staff with an additional emphasis on foster parent recruitment and retention. The training will now include a panel of foster parents who will provide critical insight into their experiences and perspectives of the system.
- In process – Annual Foster Parent Surveys have been updated to gather more comprehensive information regarding foster parents’ experiences and will be sent out later this summer.