Tab 11

Office of Performance Evaluations Update

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Performance Highlights

Annual Newsletter

Office of Performance Evaluations October 2018

Mission

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

Staff

Director
Rakesh Mohan

Principal Evaluators
Amanda Bartlett
Lance McCleve
Bryon Welch

Senior Evaluator
Ryan Langrill

Evaluator
Lauren Bailey

Associate Evaluator
Casey Petti

Admin. Coordinator
Margaret Campbell

Worldwide interest in good governance

A delegation of five Iraqi government leaders visited our office in April under the auspices of the US Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program.

Under the same program, eight delegates from Bahrain, Brazil, Cameroon, Czech Republic, Ghana, Jamaica, Montenegro, and Vietnam visited us in June.

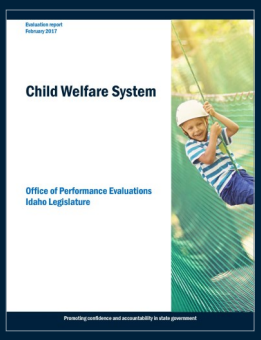
Both groups explored how a nonpartisan, legislative evaluation office can support and monitor good governance.

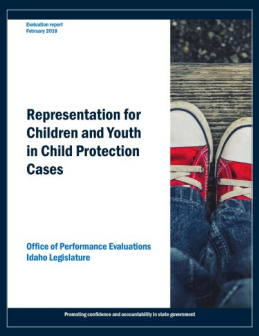
Joint Legislative Oversight Committee (JLOC)

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

Senators
Clifford Bayer, cochair (R)
Mark Harris (R)
Michelle Stennett (D)
Cherie Buckner-Webb (D)

Representatives
Mat Erpelding, cochair (D)
Maxine Bell (R)
Caroline Nilsson Troy (R)
Elaine Smith (D)





Senator Abby Lee and Representative Christy Perry sponsored bills to create system-wide accountability and oversight to the child welfare system.

Strengthening Idaho's Child Welfare System

In the past two years, we have released three reports on child welfare:

Child Welfare System (2017)

Representation for Children and Youth in Child Protection Cases (2018)

Child Welfare System: Reducing the Risk of Adverse Outcomes (2018)

Our findings and recommendations from these evaluations have contributed to significant changes.

System-wide accountability and oversight

We found gaps in the representation of children and youth. We reported that the state could not validate whether all children and youth were being represented by a public defender or guardian ad litem. We recommended a coordinated, collaborative effort to bring together relevant stakeholders to strengthen representation.

We reported that the child welfare system lacked system-wide accountability and oversight. We recommended the formation of a formal, system-wide oversight entity. This entity would have authority to ensure ongoing accountability, visibility, and accessibility for all child welfare partners and stakeholders.

The Legislature passed Senate Bill 1341 and House Bill 716. Senate Bill 1341 added more review and oversight to the foster care system by establishing citizen review panels and a Child Protection Legislative Review Panel. House Bill 716 appropriated $50,000 in fiscal year 2019 to the Supreme Court to develop and train the new citizen review panels. The bill appropriated $32,000 and $20,000 from separate funds to public health districts to manage and oversee the panels.

Support to foster parents

The number of foster parents decreased 8 percent between 2014 and 2016. We reported the worsening shortage of foster parents threatened the fidelity of the system. Consistent with these findings, the Legislature appropriated funds to increase compensation for foster parents.

Excessive workloads

Our evaluations looked at the performance of social workers. We reported on the effects of excessive workloads:

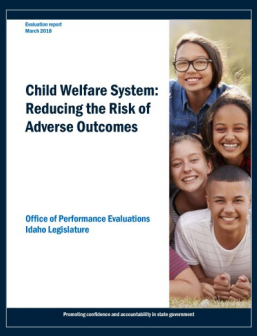
Compromise in which poor performance is explainable, excusable, and expected

Inconsistent application of the child safety assessment model

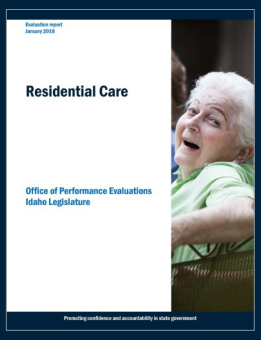
Precedence of crisis management over independent living services

The Legislature responded to excessive workloads by appropriating an additional $1,781,400 to the child welfare program for fiscal year 2018. This appropriation funded nine more full-time equivalent positions.

Although additional staff will improve workloads, adding staff is not sufficient to address workload challenges. We directed the Department of Health and Welfare to improve workload efficiency by examining processes, expectations, documentation, technology, and other requirements.



Improving Integrity of the Regulatory Program for Residential Care

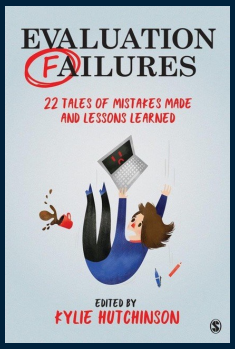


Nursing home providers had been reporting to the Legislature that surveys (inspections) were stricter and seemed to be more punitive compared with other states. The Division of Licensing and Certification, which conducts the surveys, had made positive changes to address concerns. But even with these changes, providers were still discontent. As a result, we were assigned to evaluate the program. We found a dysfunctional work environment.

Surveyors reported to us that they felt berated and belittled within the division. This dysfunction carried over into interactions with nursing home administrators. Administrators reported a mistrust and fear of the survey process. The gap in trust between the division and the providers undermined the division's work to improve the regulatory culture.

Being careful not to disclose information that could identify individuals, we discussed our concerns with the director and management team of the Department of Health and Welfare who oversees the division. Dysfunction was affecting their program integrity. It had the potential to reduce productivity, cause absenteeism, increase staff turnover, and increase costs to recruit and train new employees. Until dysfunction was addressed, providers would continue to fear and mistrust the regulatory process. The department director acknowledged our concerns and committed to resolve them.

After our report release, the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee directed us to follow up on the division's efforts to address its work environment. Members want us to ensure that corrective action has been implemented and that no retaliation or intimidation has taken place.



Rakesh wrote a chapter in a recently released book.

Sharing our work

In the book *Evaluation Failures*, Rakesh wrote a chapter titled, "I Did Not Know I Would Be a Tightrope Walker Someday."

Rakesh gave a plenary speech to the annual conference of the Association of Local Government Auditors in Colorado Springs. He spoke about increasing the use of audits and evaluations.

Rakesh spoke at the annual conference of the American Society for Public Administration in Denver. His presentation was titled, "What will it take for the promise of evidence-based policymaking to be realized?"

At the American Evaluation Association conference in Washington D.C., Rakesh talked about learning from failure, learning to balance public policy or political preferences with evaluation best practices, and managing factors that affect evaluation use and nonuse.

Amanda, Bryon, Lance, and Ryan also made presentations at the American Evaluation Association in Washington D.C. Their topics included scope creep, meeting the needs of competing stakeholders, and working where you're not wanted.

Rakesh guest lectured via video conferencing to a graduate class at Cornell University's Institute for Public Affairs. He talked about turning evidence into action by managing the politics of evaluation.

Awards from staff sections of NCSL

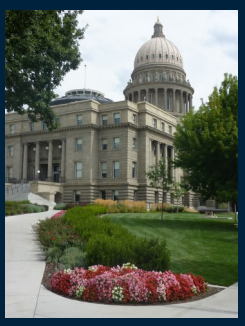
The report *Child Welfare System* received the National Legislative Program Evaluation Society's 2018 Impact Award

The report *Residential Care* received the Legislative Research Librarians' 2018 Notable Document Award

Upcoming evaluations

JLOC received six requests from 19 legislators. In March, the committee selected four evaluations for us to study. We will release them during the 2019 legislative session:

- Investigating Allegations of Child Neglect
- Southwest Idaho Treatment Center
- Legislative Mandates on Local Governments
- Collecting Court Fines and Fees



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