



Region IV Citizen Review Panel
707 N. Armstrong Pl, Boise, ID 83704
Huckleberry 2
Tuesday, April 5th, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Panel Members: Brian McCauley, Kym Nilsen, Britney Journee, Shannon McCarthy, Nicole Noltensmeyer, Allison Berkson. Merritt Dublin and Katie Fidyrich joined after Executive Session at 5:03 pm.

Staff: Heather Slavin, Niki Flock (DHW); Courtney Boyce, Laura Smith (CDH)

Guests: Ann Bingham, Lakel Permann, Ernie Weyland

Call Meeting to Order

Brian McCauley, the Region IV Citizen Review Panel Chair called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

Heather Slavin provided a brief introduction as the Region IV Child Welfare Chief, supporting program management over case management and permanency.

Motion: Brian made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from March 10, 2022. Britney seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

Motion: Britney made a motion to approve the March 11, 2022 meeting minutes. Nicole seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

Motion: Britney made a motion to approve the March 17, 2022 meeting minutes. Nicole seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

Motion: Britney made a motion to approve the March 1, 2022, monthly meeting minutes. Nicole seconded. Brian abstained as he was not present. None opposed. The motion carried.

Motion: Brian made a motion to approve the April 5, 2022 agenda. This was amended on Friday, April 1, 2022, to include a discussion on applicants. Nicole seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

Motion: Nicole Noltensmeyer motioned to move into Executive Session. Per Idaho §16-647 (d), the Region IV Citizen Review Panel can enter Executive Session to discuss items exempt from public disclosure, as outlined in §74-105. Britney Journee made this motion. Nicole seconded.

The motion was approved by roll call. Kym Nilsen, Aye; Nicole Noltensmeyer, Aye; Allison Berkson, Aye; Shannon McCarthy, Aye; Britney Journee, Aye; Brian McCauley, Aye.

The Region IV Citizen Review Panel entered into Executive Session at 4:06 pm.

Motion: Brian motioned to move into Executive Session. Per Idaho §16-647 (d), the Region IV Citizen Review Panel can enter Executive Session to discuss items exempt from public disclosure, as outlined in §74-105. Nicole seconded this motion. The motion was approved by roll call. Kym Nilsen, Aye; Nicole Noltensmeyer, Aye; Allison Berkson, Aye; Shannon McCarthy, Aye; Britney Journee, Aye; Brian McCauley, Aye.

The Region IV Citizen Review Panel exited into Executive Session at 5:03 pm.

The Panel discussed case reviews exempt from public disclosure. The Panel discussed systemic issues, including formal and complete access to case reviews where they can read the documentation but not edit it. This would include but is not limited to notes from caseworker meetings. This would address some barriers in case reviews including incomplete documentation or gaps in the timeline of care. The Panel would also benefit from DHW policy and procedures regarding how caseloads are addressed when a caseworker leaves. The Panel also discussed how parents need access to resources outside of the foster care system, including treatment and residential-level care for individuals exhibiting extreme mental and behavioral health conditions. Providing this level of care in some cases may prevent children from entering the child welfare system if parents are provided with adequate support. The Panel could also benefit from additional information or reports regarding the court improvement project at DHW.

Update HB629

Brian provided an update on HB629. This legislation establishes an independent office of Administrative Hearings and otherwise provides for the independence and impartiality of hearing officers in the Administrative Hearing Act contested case proceedings by the recommendations in the Administration Hearing Officer Interim Committee and the “Bias in Hearing” findings by the Office of Performance Evaluation. More information can be found here: <https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2022/legislation/H0629/>.

Update on Governor’s Taskforce for Children at Risk

Allison provided an update on the Taskforce phone call, including issues presented at other CRPs that were aligned with the work and concerns of the R4CRP. This Taskforce is not addressing child fatalities through reviews, as there is some disconnect with DHW. Roxanne mentioned they are behind on the internal reviews through the child fatality cases that Allison requested from DHW. There is some conflict regarding who, when, and how is conducting child fatality case reviews. The Panel would like to request the case numbers from all the fatalities, citing a struggle with the internal documentation that is not available to CRP members to adequately address case reviews. A written explanation of the denial, including the name from DHW, regarding the refusal, is requested in future communication with Allison. The Panel does not have a count of how many cases open over 120 days where there was a child fatality in Region IV.

Update on Idaho CRP Leadership Conference Call

Brian attended the meeting last month. He reported that there were lots of resignations by volunteer Panel members across the state with inconsistencies in meeting frequency and Panel objectives across the state.

Trauma-Informed Conference Update

Courtney provided an update on the Trauma-Informed Conference, including the speakers and the presentation titles. Both presentations will be entirely virtual, with free CEUs provided for the event provided by Ashwood Recovery. Event promotions are ongoing.

Quarterly Report

Courtney needs the Monthly Evaluation Forms for several Panel members to complete the Quarterly Report. The Panel will not be submitting any recommendations this quarter.

Break

The Panel took a break from 5:20 pm to 5:30 pm.

Public Testimony

A community member named Lakel from Region IV provided public testimony. She suggested several solutions to common child welfare issues, such as fewer caseloads, increased pay for caseworkers and foster families, more resources, treatment supports, and reimbursement for basic supports such as food security and transportation. She also addressed trauma-informed approaches to cases as well as foster families managing trauma in the home through additional training. In this particular case, they did not agree to the formal placement of one of their children, and they ultimately closed their home to future placements due to the disruption it had on their home.

Lakel addressed one systemic issue they experienced. Their family was frequently told, “one thing by the caseworker, but they did something else.” They did not have a consistent point of contact at DHW and frequently experienced inconsistent or incomplete communication. She shared that they did not receive payment on time and were not provided with resources for basic support such as transportation, diapers, and clothing.

A resident from Ada County named Ann provided public testimony at 5:46 pm. Ann shared it was concerning that they were not provided with the results of drug tests in foster children, for foster parents to take care of the children appropriately. She expressed that having this level of understanding would illuminate a relationship between behavior and drug testing, especially in infants. Additional concerns included biological parents attending supervision intoxicated. She encouraged to have background checks and more supervision from DHW around visitations and starting counseling and services immediately. Another concern her family experienced was “terrible” communication from caseworkers, including the last-minute notice for new visitations or visitation cancellations. She also shared that caseworkers did not respond to issues, including medical issues and/or emergent threats, or misrepresented issues in court later on. She perceived that cases move too fast, out of order, or without compliance with DHW policy and procedures. She shared that reunification should happen if it is in the child’s best interest and should not be an incentive. She felt that training principles were not being utilized by DHW, including the expectation of thorough, complete communication at all stages with foster parents as resources. She spoke about the importance of communication, honesty, accountability, and

empathy/love by both the foster family and DHW in working together. She did share that they had positive experiences with licensing workers and their mentor support. They did not have support at CASA from their GAL initially, and they did not have communication or visitations with their GAL. After addressing those needs with CASA, they were re-assigned and had a GAL that was thorough and changed the trajectory of their case, especially to resolve issues that were presented at court where accounts were misrepresented.

After the testimony of the second speaker concluded, a virtual meeting participant was introduced. Ernie Weyland is the former FBI Supervisor in Boise and has a career working with children impacted by crime. He currently works with a consulting firm (Alvarez and Marsal) in public sector services practices. Through this firm, he has done child welfare reform projects in several states, including Oregon and Montana. While reading about the issues impacting the workforce and foster care in Idaho, he stated these were two issues they addressed in Oregon.

Applicant Discussion

Kym shared with the Region IV Citizen Review Panel that she will submit her formal resignation in writing to the Panel.

Motion: Brian motioned to approve Katie Fidrych as a new Panel member, pending the official resignation of Kym Nilsen. Britney seconded. Roll call vote to confirm this motion. Kym Nilsen, Aye; Nicole Noltensmeyer, Aye; Allison Berkson, Aye; Shannon McCarthy, Aye; Britney Journee, Aye; Merritt Dublin, Aye; Brian McCauley, Aye. The motion passed, and none opposed.

Adjourn

Brian McCauley, the Region IV Citizen Review Panel Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:25 pm.

Meeting minutes prepared by Courtney Boyce.