



**Region IV Citizen Review Panel  
707 N. Armstrong Pl, Boise, ID 83704  
Bluebird**

**Tuesday, December 5, 2023  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

### **Meeting Minutes**

**Members:** Brian McCauley, Alisha Merrill, Nicole Noltensmeyer, Britney Journee, Merritt Dublin, Carlos Galindo, Shannon McCarthy

**Absent:** Jessica Ivancic

**Staff:** Jason Shaw (CDH), Rachael Peace (DHW), Teresa Vance (ID Supreme Court)

#### **Call Meeting to Order**

Brian McCauley, the Region IV Citizen Review Panel Chair, called the meeting to order at 4:00 pm.

**Motion:** Britney made a motion to approve the November meeting minutes as written. Shannon seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

**Motion:** Brian made a motion to amend the December agenda to add time to discuss the Panel's three focus areas. Nicole seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

The Panel discussed the following areas for systemic improvement that they intend to pursue going forward: shortening time in care, the safety referral process, and improving the court process.

#### **New Member Updates**

The Panel introduced themselves to ensure the new members knew who everybody was. Britney announced it would be her last meeting as a Panel member. Background check requests for both new members have been submitted to DHW to allow them to attend the Executive Session portion of meetings and get them E-Cab access. Jason will explore the possibility of getting their E-Cab accounts started and then only sending them their login credentials after their background check clears.

#### **Panel Focus Areas**

The Panel started the discussion with the focus area of improving the court process. Ideas related to this included bringing in subject matter experts to bring in additional information and perspective and talking to those involved in the court process to see what issues they've been running into. Teresa, who works in the Idaho Supreme Court, spoke about a case that had come to the Court that resulted in rules changes regarding the appeals process for cases going through the court system. The Court also made an emergency order that related to this, which was made permanent by the Child Protection Committee.

The Court found that some forms being used by lower Courts were missing some information, so a revised form was submitted to the Child Protection Committee for review and approval. There are preliminary rules being developed regarding the rules of discovery for adjudicatory hearings to make them more specific to child protection cases, and materials for a Child Protection 101 class being piloted in Ada County. It was requested that Judge Ellis be invited to attend the January meeting. The Panel has the following questions for Judge Ellis:

- When a Judge reviews a case, does he have access to details on previous safety referrals?
- Would he like to see that information included in the documentation for a case coming before him?
- Could he explain his views on guardianship versus adoption, and where he feels each is appropriate?
- What would his reaction be if he suspected he was being lied to by a case worker, and what would the remedy be?
- What is his view on having foster families share their perspective on a case in court?
- Does he feel that the number of cases is impacting his ability to move cases along in accordance with the best interests of the child?
- In his view, are there actions that any of the parties could take to shorten the cases?
- What major systemic obstacles currently exist that prevent the Court getting the best possible outcome for the child?
- What are his feelings on having the child speak about his or her preferences?

The Panel moved on to discussing the intake process. Some systemic concerns about the intake process include: the number of safety referrals on some cases; whether the department tracks who investigates each safety referral, what documentation is made on the investigation, how they arrived at their conclusion; and whether any testing is done to see if a child has been exposed to illicit substances, and what it would take to trigger an investigation for drug exposure as against an allegation of something like sexual abuse. The Panel discussed the difference between a parent who is abusive, and one who is struggling with an issue like mental health or substance abuse. The Panel wondered how much data was used in the decision-making process and whether external data could be used, or if that would create a bias in the decision being made. There were questions raised regarding the collection of evidence when there's an allegation of sexual abuse and whose consent would have to be obtained and when.

The Panel shifted the discussion to trauma informed care. The Panel discussed the idea of funding trauma-informed care training for those working in DHW. The impact of ACES and Resiliency scores were discussed, and ways to integrate these into the child welfare and adoption system to aid in raising awareness of the impact of trauma on the long-term mental wellbeing of children.

## **Executive Session**

The Panel did not go into Executive Session during this meeting.

## **Adjourn**

Brian McCauley, Region IV Citizen Review Panel Chair, adjourned the meeting at 6:00pm.

*Meeting minutes prepared by Jason Shaw*