



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

**Monday, December 16, 2024  
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Members:** Merritt Dublin, Jessica Ivancic, Alisha Merrill, Carlos Galindo, Shannon McCarthy-joined at 4:15, Nicole Noltensmeyer -joined at 4:25

**Absent:**, Brian McCauley

**Staff:** Lynn Watkins (CDH)

**Guest:** Racheal Peace (DHW), Teresa Vance (Supreme Court), Jean Fisher (DHW), Wendy Seagraves (DHW)

**Call Meeting to Order**

Merritt Dublin called the meeting to order at 4:02 pm.

**Minutes Approval**

**Motion:** Alisha Merrill made a motion to approve the October meeting minutes as written. Jessica Ivancic seconded. None opposed. The motion carried.

**DHW Staff Introduction**

Jean Fisher, who is the DHW Youth Safety and Permanency Administrator, introduced herself to the group and gave a brief synopsis of her background of 33 years with the Ada County Prosecuting Attorney's office where among many other things she served as chief of special crimes and supervised a child protection team.

Wendy Seagraves has been with DHW for two weeks. Twenty years ago, Wendy worked in child protection for two years and participated in both safety and case management, transitioning to work for the Wednesday's child project. Most recently, Wendy has spent the last 17 years working in the juvenile justice system as a clinician and a clinical supervisor.

Merritt asked Jean if she was willing to share any big initiatives she might be working on and if she had taken time to look at some of the information from various CRPs and had any thoughts about how they might be able to be more helpful to the department. Jean indicated, coming from a criminal prosecutor background, she initially had a more critical perspective of the department with some frustration about the perceived lack of communication. Jean's goal is to make the work that everyone is here to participate in more inclusive, collaborative and effective.

Jean has already written a temporary Rule that the legislature will review shortly, which essentially changes the rule on transparency. It states the department should have maximum disclosure by law to share information with all partners.

Over the summer, Merritt helped Jean revise a visitation rule that the legislature heard some concerns over in the last session. They redrafted the rule that concerned Bio parents, that might have some suspected sexual abuse, to add some broader restraints with much more outline that the legislature will also look at.

Jean shared that the department's number one goal is child welfare, to the extent that every floor of the entire central office is involved in some aspect in foster care and foster care retention. The second major meeting with all of the major leaders, partners, hospital administrators and behavioral health teams just took place with some really interactive conversations and will continue into the future. The goal is to have 150 foster families to every 100 kids by the summer of 2026. July of 2024 started with 72 foster families per 100 kids and there is already an increase to 91 foster families per 100 kids. This report is measured weekly.

Children and Family Services has been divided up creating three new divisions. Jean handles child welfare, foster care and congregate care; all things childhood welfare. Allison Tate is heading the division for infant, toddler and early learning development programs. She will soon transition to the Facility Director for Switzie, State Hospital South, State Hospital West, the Pack, Development of the LAC, all under one director. Laura Denner is handling the community relations division which includes 211 and navigation.

The other large goal and large concern of the department is how long it is taking kids to either be adopted or have permanency provided in their lives. It was proposed that Negative/Positive prognosis indicators be brought back since there are national standards for those. Jean will provide a list of the prognosis indicators. The department is in the process of working with Google to be able to create a report to make those prognosis indicators easier to track, access and provide to the courts. Teresa Vance has been helping set up a training that is scheduled in September for all of the judges statewide.

Stacey Corbett is the bureau chief for the new bureau for Congregate Care. All of the temporary housing and rentals have been closed down as of August 2024. The goal is if a child ends up in congregate care to get them out as soon as possible.

The last major goal is prevention, which will be achieved by developing and pushing prevention services and utilizing the youth and crisis centers to their full advantage.

Merritt mentioned that the CRPs tend to feel a little frustrated about reviewing cases and that their recommendations go nowhere and wanted to know if there is anything the CRPs could be doing to make the communication better around those recommendations. Jean stated that she and the new director have met with over 100 foster families who have indicated that communication is a large issue as well as the length of time it takes a child to get to permanency, both are things the Department is working on. She did also mention that the courts have a lot to do with some of the partner communications issues which they are all working on as well.

Jean spoke about the budgetary ask going to the legislature this next session and the ramifications it might have on the department and the partners if they don't approve most of it.

Merritt asked that the group review the email she sent everyone that Andy Black put together discussing the goals and strategies that the department is putting together. Use it and refer to it when reviewing cases and making recommendations. Everyone is encouraged to remember this is a new year and a new administration and to all focus on the discussions for the next round of cases.

### **Executive Session**

The panel agreed there would be no Executive Session at this meeting.

### **Adjourn**

Merritt Dublin adjourned the meeting at 5:03pm.

*Meeting minutes prepared by Lynn Watkins*