

Idaho Voices for Children Policy Goals and Priorities

Mission

Idaho Voices for Children is a statewide organization that develops and promotes a policy agenda that improves child health, child welfare, education, safety, and family economic security.

We believe that:

- Idaho children should have access to healthcare coverage and a medical home.
- Idaho child care programs should provide safe, high quality, and stimulating environments for our young children.
- Idaho children should have access to quality learning opportunities.
- Idaho work places and families are strengthened when low-income working families have access to subsidized child care.
- Relatives of children should be prioritized and supported to care for their related children when it is not feasible or safe for them to be with their parents of origin.

In support of these beliefs, Idaho Voices for Children sets the following long- term goals (3-5 years):

- Increase the State Children's Health Insurance Program eligibility from 185% to 200% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) ¹ and provide ongoing outreach to Idaho's working families about the availability of insurance for their children
- Establish and provide resources to implement a statewide Child Care Quality Rating System
- Establish a Joint House and Senate Early Learning Commission and create a blueprint for developing early education opportunities in Idaho
- Increase the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) rates to meet the federal benchmark from 60% to 85% state median income (SMI)².
- Reform the Idaho's de facto custodian laws to support grand families

2009 Policy Priorities

Child Health and Safety

IVC will work towards increasing the numbers of children enrolled in the Idaho Health Plan Coverage for Children (Medicaid and S-CHIP) by encouraging the State of Idaho to provide ongoing high quality outreach, implement a streamlined health insurance application process and establish the eligibility level of S-CHIP at 200% Federal Poverty Level.

Early Learning

IVC will work towards the establishment of a commission to provide a means to bring together gubernatorial representative(s), legislative leaders, and key stakeholders concerned with the early learning of young children (ages 0-5 years) in Idaho and begin the work towards establishing a quality rating system that will meet the needs of Idaho's children and families.

Family Economic Security

Research shows that access to high-quality, affordable childcare improves employment stability of workers. IVC will seek to strengthen Idaho's current and future workforce by raising the

¹ 100% of the Federal Poverty Level for 2008 for a family of 4 was \$21,200. 185% FPL is \$38,850 for a family of 4. 200% FPL is \$42,400 for a family of 4. <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/08Poverty.shtml>

² 100% of the 2008 Idaho State Median Income (SMI) is \$52,470 for a family of 4. The current ICCP eligibility rate is set at 60% SMI which is \$31,482 for a family of 4. Raising the rate to 85% SMI would qualify a family of 4 earning \$44,600. <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/income/4person.html>

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eligibility rate for the Idaho Childcare Program (ICCP). The federal government sets the eligibility level equal to 85% of the State Median Income (SMI). States can expand access to child care by increasing eligibility up to that level. Idaho's current eligibility rate is set at about 60% SMI or 135% of the federal poverty level.

Child Welfare

IVC will advance legislation to enhance the legal process and strengthen the legal supports for relatives caring for related children (a.k.a. "Grand Families") by supporting legislation that:

1. Reforms the Idaho de facto custodian provisions (New Chapter 17 of Title 32) to:
 - o Better define the circumstances under which an individual has standing as a de facto custodian
 - o Better defines how de facto custodians can pursue custody of a child and what legal rights are accorded the de facto custodian when custody is granted by the court.
2. Reforms the Grandparent Visitation Statutes to better clarify position of grandparents' rights to visit related children.
3. Reforms the Child Protective Act to require that the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare to actively consider whether a child may be safely placed with relatives in lieu of non-relative foster care.

Emerging Issues

IVC will actively monitor emerging issues that affect child health, child welfare, education, safety, and family economic security. The legislative committee will take action where appropriate.