



Idaho KIDS COUNT: Small Faces in a BIG Recession Project Qualitative Report (2009)

Focus Group Research Question: *How is the recession affecting children's education, health, safety and employment opportunities and what is most needed from civic leaders to protect children and build better support systems?*

Child Welfare and Family Safety Focus Group Responses

"After watching the news last night, I got a little scared because I saw that the firemen and the cops are getting laid off and there's a lot of crime in my neighborhood. It took overnight to get over being scared." (Primary student)

"When there is a crime in the neighborhood, I would love to have someone talk to me, reassure me when that happens. There used to be a lady that was really nice that would talk to us, but she committed suicide." (Primary student)

"I wish my Dad wasn't mad." Kindergartner)

"I am alone to much times." (Kindergartner)

"I am sad a lot because I can't be with someone else." (Kindergartner)

"We need safe places for kids in case they are in trouble." (Youth)

"In foster care, they care, but you're not their kid. When you are 18 you're out of there. It makes me want to do more destructive things to myself and others." (Youth)

"If I were Major, I'd put my parents in jail." (Youth)

"My parents are getting away with almost murder, and they are getting away with it because they couldn't find enough evidence." (Youth)

"Do you guys realize how common this is for kids to be in trouble? Very common. Just look at a child." (Youth)

“Abusive homes are everywhere.” (Youth)

“There are more kids this year than last year coming in with borderline neglect-nutrition, parents working more and longer hours, no supervision at home. Kids are reporting that they only have Raman Noodles at home.”(Provider)

“Family dysfunction especially happens when older kids are watching their younger siblings in situations where they are really not appropriate to watch younger kids. Nine year olds are taking care of six year olds because the parent is now working two to three jobs and the kids are really suffering. The parents are just hoping they don’t get caught but they don’t feel they have a choice. (Provider)

“We all wish there was a full-on investigation to every call that is made to Health and Welfare on child and youth issues. And, please make sure adoptive and foster homes are safe. That is a really, really big issue. There needs to be more follow through and the kids are not getting listened to. I had a kid come in with bruises and burns and it took three cal for us as providers to get an investigation. Three calls! How many times does a kid have to be injured before we do something about it. Three times for a kid to get brave enough, that’s ridiculous!”(Provider)

“Being back in care doesn’t mean the kids’ needs are all being taken care of. The community can’t just wash their hands and think it’s covered. The kid still needs a wrap around approach, especially for when they leave the system, they need follow up.” (Provider)

“I think a lot people think that domestic violence is going hog wild during the recession but I just talked to a woman who is not leaving a situation because she has a roof over her head. Where else would she go? She might have left, but it’s so uncertain.” (Provider)

“I work in the courts, and we talk to victim witness coordinators on how many domestic violence victims are returning to the relationship. They may be calling the police for help but they need him in the home to pay the bills and keep the home. The children are being exposed to that. If she does leave and doesn’t have anywhere else to go, she is in jeopardy of losing her kids because he has the house even though he is the abuser. Judges see the house as a stable environment.” (Provider)

“We need stricter laws for domestic violence so that abusers are punished the way should be not just slapped on the wrist.”(Provider)

“Children being exposed to domestic violence is a reality and there are very few laws protecting them. Men can abuse their wife and still have joint custody. It is low of criteria that a judge looks at.” (Provider)

“You have situations where a Dad is holding a child and beating his wife at the same time, and the judge still gave joint custody. Or the case where a man attempted to strangle his wife on the bed, with the two year old watching and he was still awarded joint unsupervised visits with his child.” (Provider)

“One judge here calls domestic violence a myth. After everything abused women have been through, that really irks me that our judges are not on board.” (Provider)

“Boise is considered this great place to move, this is a wonderful place for families to live, and yet there’s this whole culture of violence and ugliness and that’s embarrassing.” (Provider)

“Boise is very pro-family, but not pro safety all the time. It looks more at keeping the family together instead of keeping the family safe. especially the kids.” (Provider)

“Foster kids need to be able to go to college. When these kids try to make it on their own there has to be an outlet for those kids that really have it together.” (Provider)