

HJR 48/49: CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES CPS STATISTICS IN SURROUNDING STATES

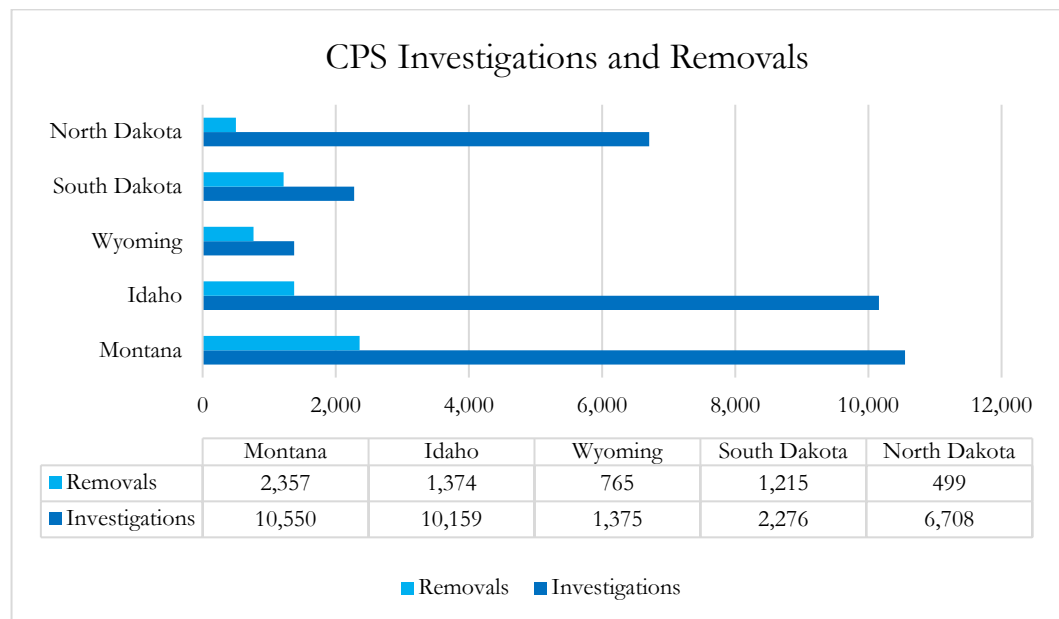
BACKGROUND

During its study of the Montana child protective services system, the Children, Families, Health, and Human Services Interim Committee has heard concerns about the high caseloads and turnover in the system. Committee members asked in November 2019 for information on caseloads and salaries in surrounding states.

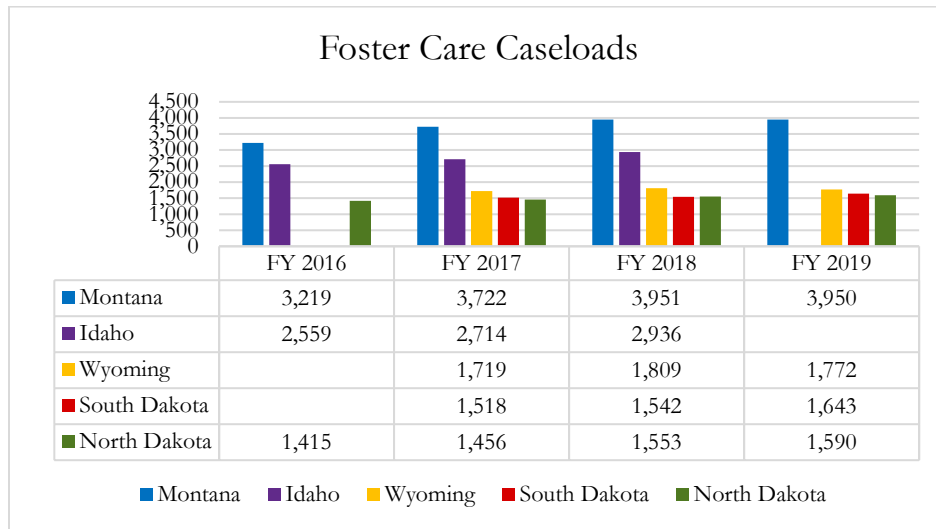
This briefing paper summarizes information provided by child welfare agencies in Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming and compares the information to available information for Montana. In some cases, direct comparisons can't be made because of the way in which child welfare services are provided or because of the limited data that was available from the states.

CASELOAD COMPARISONS

The charts below show the number of investigations and removals in each state for the most recent fiscal year that data was available, as well as recent foster caseload numbers. Data was available from North Dakota and Idaho for Fiscal Year 2018. Data from Montana, Wyoming, and South Dakota is for FY 2019.



Montana foster care caseloads were consistently higher than those in other states over the last few years, as shown in the table below. Where data is missing for a state, the information was not available.



AVERAGE CASELOAD PER WORKER

Information on the average number of cases that each caseworker carries was limited. Wyoming said the 2,200 children involved in a case during FY 19 would have resulted in an average caseload of 18 children for its 123 CPS workers. But representatives of the various state agencies noted that numerous factors affect caseloads, making it difficult to calculate an average number. Factors they cited include:

- data systems in some states are out of date and don't contain good information for making the calculation;
- new caseworkers or caseworkers who are in training may not have any cases or only a minimal caseload, potentially skewing the averages if they're included in a count;
- some caseworkers who are carrying a lower number of cases may be covering a larger geographic region and spending a lot of time traveling to visit families; and
- cases vary in their complexity. For example, one case could involve several children with multiple parents, while another case could involve only one or two children with the same set of parents.

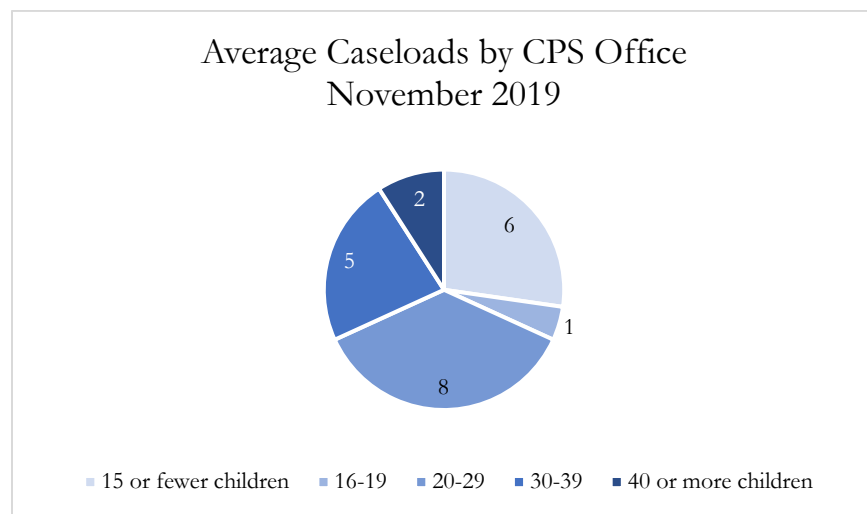
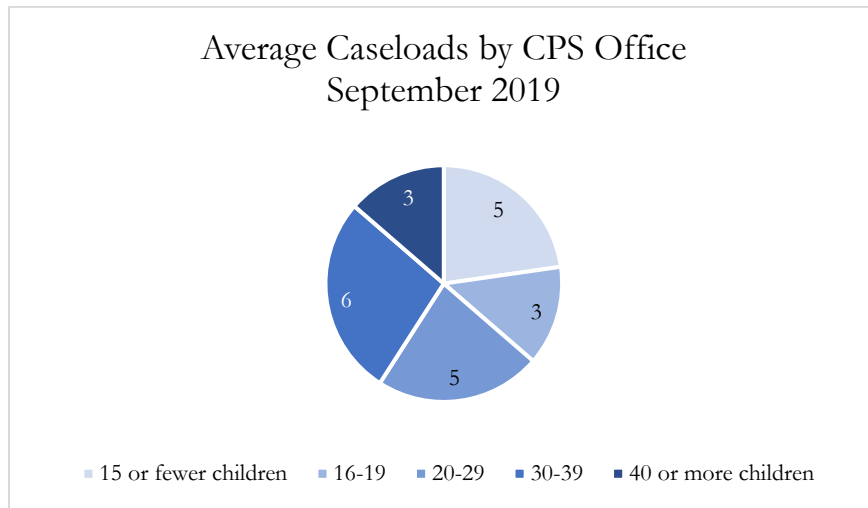
National groups also note that caseloads should be based on the type of work the caseworker is carrying out, as well as other factors that could affect optimum workloads. However, in general, the Child Welfare League of America has recommended caseloads of 12 to 15 children for foster care caseworkers.

MONTANA CASELOADS

DPHHS runs reports each month on CPS caseworker staffing levels and average caseloads. The reports group the state's 56 counties into six regions. Within those regions, the counties are grouped into 22 distinct hubs.

DPHHS has provided the Children and Families Committee with reports showing staffing and caseload levels for September and November 2019. The reports show that in those months, workers in about one-fourth of the hubs were carrying caseloads of 15 or fewer children.

The charts below show how many of the 22 hubs reported caseloads in one of five ranges, from caseloads of 15 or fewer children to caseloads of more than 40 children. In more than half of the hubs, workers had average caseloads of 20 to 39 children, while caseloads of 40 or more children occurred in only a few hubs.



In general, the hubs with the lower caseloads were located in more rural and less populated areas of the state. In September, the Billings, Kalispell, and Wolf Point hubs reported average caseloads of more than 40 children per worker. In November, caseloads were above 40 in the Great Falls and Wolf Point hubs.

Caseloads were above 35 children per worker in Great Falls in September, while caseloads for workers in the Glasgow, Hamilton, and Helena hubs were above 35 in one of the two months.

TURNOVER

Surrounding states generally have significantly lower turnover among caseworkers than does Montana, as the table below shows. However, the figure for North Dakota represents turnover in only 28 of the state's 47 counties. The information was based on a voluntary survey of the county-run programs, and 19 counties -- including two of its four largest -- did not respond. The figure also does not include foster care or in-home services caseloads.

State	Turnover	Year
Montana	40.6%	FY 2019
Idaho	19%	FY 2019
Wyoming	22.6%	CY 2019
South Dakota	27.7%	FY 2019
North Dakota*	23.4%	FY 2018

* Covers only investigative assessments for 28 of 47 counties.

Turnover affects everyone involved in the child protective services system. When positions are vacant, caseloads increase for the remaining caseworkers in the office. Families and service providers may have difficulty trying to contact workers as cases are handed off or the available staff is spread more thinly. Newly hired workers typically need training before they take on cases and don't carry full caseloads immediately. Court deadlines may be extended. And families and caseworkers both lose continuity if ongoing cases are passed from one worker to another.

TURNOVER IN MONTANA OFFICES

The November 2019 staffing report for Montana's CPS offices shows that 180 of 206 funded caseworker positions were filled that month, or 87%. The table below shows the number of hubs in each region that were fully staffed, staffed at 71% to 99% of their planned staffing level, or staffed at 50% to 70% of their planned staffing level.

Region	Percentage of Filled Positions			
	50%-70%	71%-80%	81%-99%	100%
1		3	1	1
2			1	2
3		1		1
4	2			3
5				4
6	1	1		1

The Deer Lodge and Helena hubs in Region 4 and the Kalispell hub in Region 6 were at 50% to 70% of their funded staffing levels. A map of the CPS regions is on page 6.

PAY SCALES

Montana's starting salary for caseworkers ranked fourth among the five states, as shown in the table below.

State	Starting Salary	Other Considerations
Montana	\$42,640	Pay for Montana caseworkers just increased on Jan. 1. Before that, the starting salary was \$38,500 a year.
Idaho	\$46,051	Idaho requires that caseworkers be licensed social workers and requires 9 months of training for newly licensed social workers, who are paid \$2.53 less per hour until they complete that training.
Wyoming	\$46,696	Pay for caseworkers in the county that includes Jackson Hole is \$1,630 higher a month, for an annual full-time salary of \$66,256.
South Dakota	\$39,025	State CPS staff working on the five Indian reservations with state services receive an additional \$1.50 an hour work, for an annual full-time salary of \$42,145.
North Dakota	\$52,392 minimum	Starting pay can vary by location and experience; North Dakota's system is supervised by the state but administered at the county level.

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Sources

- “Annual Legislative Foster Care Report for SFY 2018.” *Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Division of Family and Community Services*. Jan. 17, 2019.
- “Allegations of Child Maltreatment, Removal and Foster Care Count.” *Wyoming Department of Family Services*. Provided by Clint Hanes, Public Information Officer. Dec. 4, 2019.
- “Average and Median Statewide Pay Rates by Classification.” *State of Wyoming*. September 2019.
- E-mail from LuWanna Lawrence, Public Information Officer, North Dakota Department of Human Services. Dec. 12, 2019.
- “CPS Workforce Survey.” *North Dakota Department of Human Services*. May 24, 2019.
- Letter from Laura Ringling, Director, Division of Legal Services, South Dakota Department of Social Services. Dec. 20, 2019.
- Conversation with Don Lee, Operations Bureau Chief, Family and Community Services Division, Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. Jan. 3, 2020.
- “Current Caseload Calculation.” *Department of Public Health and Human Services*. Months ending September 2019 and November 2019.
- E-mail from Fiscal Bureau Chief Robin Graham, DPHHS Child and Family Services Division. Jan. 2, 2020.

CFSD Region Map

REGION VI

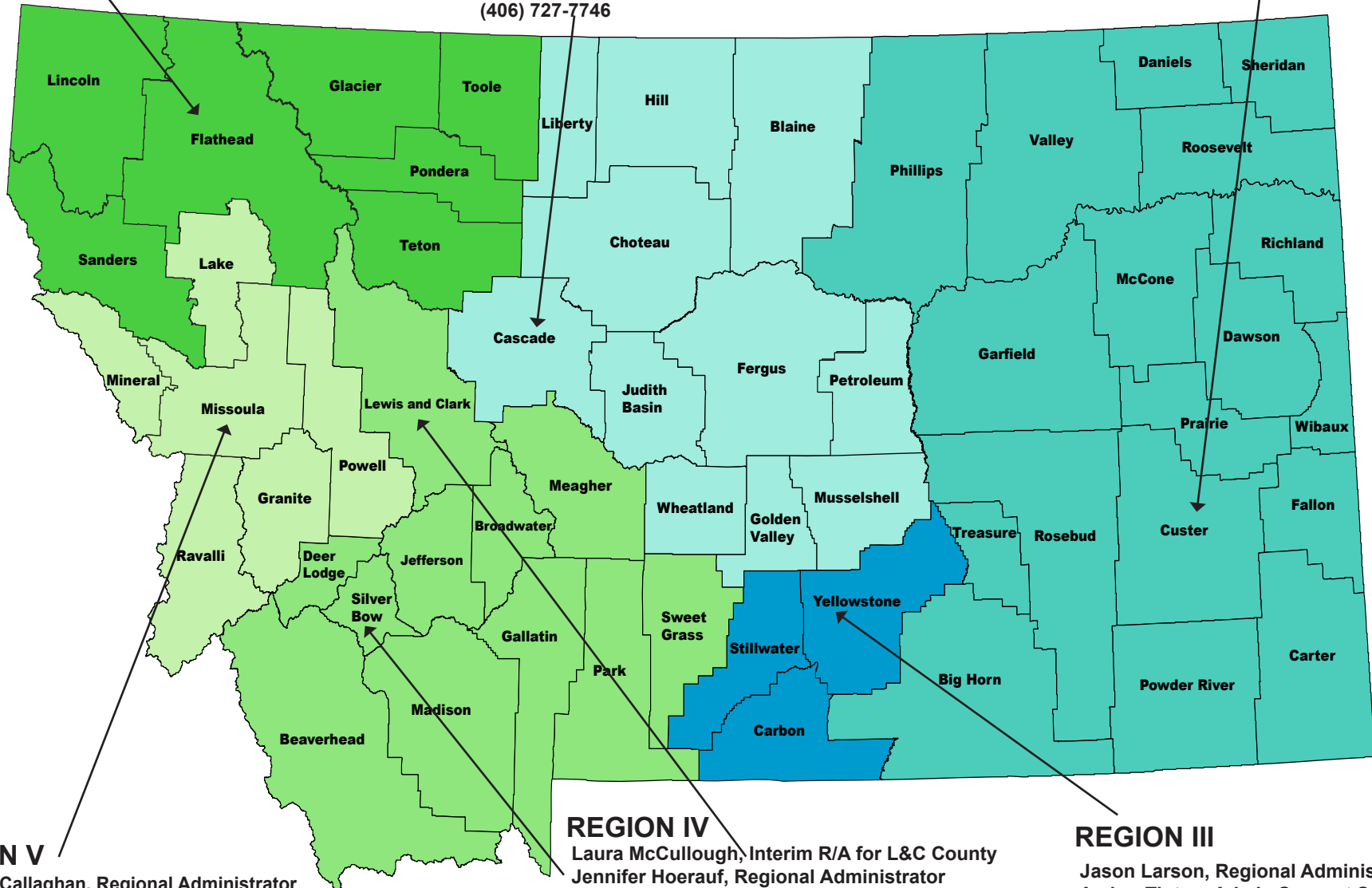
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