

CSG West Annual Meeting – Chair’s Forum on Foster Care

Due to the passage of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018 and its groundbreaking changes in federal child welfare funding and reimbursement, states have significant opportunities to improve the lives of children either in foster care or at risk of entering foster care. With states beginning implementation, legislative leaders were invited to learn and discuss the successes achieved, the emerging practices, and the challenges that remain ahead.

The forum was made possible through the support of the Casey Family Programs whose experts provided comprehensive national and state-specific data, reviewed best practices and strategies, and provided firsthand experience from a parent’s perspective. Breakout sessions provided additional opportunities for focused conversation addressing issues related to the vulnerabilities of young children, the costs of trauma, and potential return on investment for prevention services. Key themes included the new opportunities to intervene earlier and more effectively to support intact families at risk for child welfare involvement, and new funding for prevention offers an opportunity to prevent the need for out of home placements – which is less costly, and less traumatic on children. Throughout the conversations, participants raised concerns regarding caseloads and burn-out of child welfare caseworkers suggesting that training and other incentives is a key component to improving outcomes for at-risk families and children.

Session Speakers:

Susan Robison – Director of State Relations, Casey Family Programs

Christine Calpin - Managing Director on Public Policy, Casey Family Programs

China Darrington - Director of State Relations, St. John’s Recovery Outreach Center

Ken DeCerchio - Program Director, National Center for Substance Abuse and Child Welfare/Child and Family Futures

Dr. Sheila Idzerda, MD BCP, Billings Clinic Bozeman, Acorn Pediatrics

Charles Sallee – Deputy Director, New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee

CSG West Annual Meeting – Chair’s Forum on Forest and Rangeland Management

With fires becoming more frequent occurrences throughout the western region, this forum set out to host a conversation on best practices, challenges, and recommendations for improving forest and rangeland management. Throughout the forum, two points became the key focus of conversation – the need for more collaborative efforts and better understanding of the impact of ecological changes.

The ecology of forest and rangelands has changed creating a need to shift our maintenance methods, as well as expectations of land use. Technological tools such as the Resource Analysis Platform can offer insights into changes in plant growth over time providing vital feedback to landowners on the growth or decline of plants for more effective assessment of fire prevention methods. Non-native plants have also been identified as a key element in prevention as they are less resistant in the summer months and tend to dry out creating stockpiles of fire fuel.

Livestock grazing was a key recommendation to address non-native plant challenges by minimizing the plant growth. A more complex factor in play is the public expectation of land use. The application of management methods based on historical expectations of goods and services produced by forests should no

longer be considered the most effective. Through shifts in use demands related to recreation, as well as a decline in resources such as truck drivers and timber mills, the balance of use expectations and management ability have become increasingly more difficult.

As discussion turned to policy efforts, the consensus focused on the need for collaborative efforts through all levels of government. Particular emphasis was given to the consultation of local professionals as a key factor in effective crafting and implementation of policy to ensure that local expertise is paired with government resources such as the Good Neighbor Authority of the 2014 Farm Bill.

Forestry Management Speakers:

Sonya Germann – State Forester, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation

Dr. Klaus Puettmann - Edmund Hayes Professor in Silviculture Alternatives, Department of Forest Ecosystems and Society, Oregon State University

Rangeland Management Speakers:

Dr. Jane Mangold – Associate Professor & Extension Invasive Plant Specialist, Montana State University Bozeman

Dr. Jeff Mosley – Rangeland Management Specialist, Montana State University Extension

Kyle Tackett - Partnership Coordinator and Resource Conservationist, Initiatives for the Natural Resources Conservation Service