



Idaho Chapter

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Due to recent news reports by reporters from Portland, Oregon and Boise, Idaho, the issue of faith-based healing has been brought to the public's attention. Identified in the news reports were numerous Idaho children that were believed to have died as a result of parents not seeking medical attention, but would have survived if appropriate care had been provided. These medical conditions included pneumonia, food poisoning, and diabetes.

The state has clearly recognized its duty to protect members of society that are unable to provide for themselves (i.e. children) when a legal guardian is the cause of, or is unable to prevent, abuse, neglect, abandonment or homelessness (Idaho Statute 16-1627). In addition, when the legal guardian causes or willfully permits circumstances that are likely to produce great bodily harm or death, significant criminal penalties may be imposed by the state (Idaho Statute 18-1501).

The American Academy of Pediatrics released a policy statement that addresses the occasional, but serious, conflict between some religious doctrines and life-saving pediatric care. They conclude, among other things, cases in which parent's religious autonomy and decisions may result in serious and irreparable harm to the child (death, severe disability or severe pain), the state has an interest in ensuring the child receives appropriate medical care. It is important for the state to protect the future autonomy of the child if the parent's autonomous decisions, even based on religious belief, would limit or deny the child the most basic right... the right to life.

The Idaho American Academy of Pediatrics encourages a re-evaluation of Idaho law. We recommend a repeal of the current legal exemption of criminal and civil penalties of parents that – because of religious beliefs - do not seek to obtain life-saving care when a child's death or severe disability is imminent and preventable by the administration of evidence based medical care. The law would not be used to mandate routine medical care (i.e. well child visits, immunizations, etc.)

Thank you for the opportunity to express points of concern regarding the religious shield law in Idaho. Please contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



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President, Idaho Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics



Paul McPherson, MD, FAAP

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