

Youth Services to request \$423,000 of federal money

Youth Services Director John Lawrence, who is administering a grant request for Wallowa County's Building Healthy Families program, recently received the blessing of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners to ask the federal government for \$423,000 as the second phase of a federal Safe Visit Program.

The first phase, which amounted to \$362,000, is near the end of its three-year lifetime. It covers both Wallowa and Union counties, and will expire in

September unless the federal government extends the program, says Lawrence. The proposed extension would continue to serve Wallowa and Union counties for another three years.

Amy Johnson is executive director of Wallowa County's Building Healthy Families program and oversees the Safe Visit Program project. She says the project is one of the more successful Safe Visit Programs in the nation and allows noncustodial parents to have opportunities to visit their children ages infant to

19 in safe, monitored environments. About 10 visit supervisors and security officers have been highly trained on an individual basis to remain present during visitations to prevent any chance of abuse, says Johnson.

Currently, she says, about 22 families from Union County and eight from Wallowa County meet an average of once a week in monitored settings for up to two-hour visitations. How often those visits can occur is a matter determined by judges from the two counties.