Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) State Plan

Substantive Changes to State Law or Regulations

There were no substantive changes in Oregon's laws or regulations during the past year, relating to the prevention of child abuse and neglect, that could affect the State's eligibility for continued CAPTA funding.

Significant Changes to Oregon's CAPTA Plan

In September, 2012, Oregon's Department of Human Services (DHS) entered into an agreement with the Oregon Judicial Department's Citizen Review Board (CRB) to establish at least three citizen review panels, as required by CAPTA. These boards evaluate state and local child welfare practices and make recommendations for improvement.

CRB work is a natural complement to the requirements of CAPTA. The CRB already has 67 boards composed of citizen volunteers in 33 of Oregon's 36 counties. These citizen volunteers have the benefit of already having a detailed understanding of local child welfare practices from monthly case reviews. Additionally, the CRB has access to statewide statistical data through a computer system that integrates data from Oregon's state courts and the DHS child welfare program.

Under this agreement:

1. The CRB established three citizen review panels in Deschutes, Lane, and Lincoln counties.
    a. The CRB volunteer board members from each board in Deschutes and Lincoln counties come together as the panels in those counties; and
    b. For Lane County, one or two volunteer board members from each of the nine local boards volunteered to serve as the panel for Lane County.

2. Each year, these panels prepare a report summarizing the activities of the panel and provide recommendations to improve the child protection services system at the state and local levels.

CAPTA State Grant Fund Use

Child Protective Service (CPS) Coordinators – 2 FTE	
CAPTA Sections 106(a)(1), (3), (4), (5), and 106(b)(C)(ii), (iii)	**CPS Areas** **All 16 areas**

Child Protective Service (CPS) Coordinators play a critical role in the intake, assessment, screening and investigation of reports of child abuse or neglect. CPS Coordinators develop policies and procedures and provide training and consultation to program administration and staff to assure consistent and appropriate CPS response. This consultation and training also extends to the public and community partners.

CPS Coordinators also participate in the design, development and implementation of modifications and enhancements to the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS). This is Oregon DHS Child Welfare system of record, tracking reports of child abuse and neglect from intake through final disposition.

These positions work in partnership, under supervision and direction of the CPS Program Manager. The CPS Coordinators develop and implement strategies for more effective communication between the State's central program office and child welfare field offices on policy and practice issues. In addition, the CPS Coordinators participate in quality reviews of CPS practice and performance.

Responsibilities

- Provide statewide technical consultation to District managers, Child Welfare Program managers, supervisors, child welfare caseworkers and community partners on CPS program and practice.
- Evaluate effectiveness of CPS policy, performance, service delivery and outcomes.
- Coordinate training with other state agencies.
- Improve communication between the central program office and local field offices.
- Participate in the State's child welfare Founded Disposition review process.
- Conduct quality reviews of CPS/Child Welfare practice, procedures and performance.
- Provide technical consultation to community partners and the general public on sensitive, high profile and high-risk family abuse situations.
- Provide support and technical assistance to the CPS program manager in research, policy and protocol development and legislative tracking.

A. <u>Child Protective Service Coordinator – Position 1</u>
Summary of Activities from April 2013 through May 2014

1) As part of Oregon's Technical Assistance on the Oregon Safety Model, Coordinator partnered with the National Resource Center for Child Protective Services (NRCCPS) in developing and writing curriculum for an Oregon Safety Model Refresh training specifically targeting child welfare line supervisors and Program Managers. The curriculum consisted of five intensive classroom sessions (starting with Round 1 pilot counties in April 2013), and concluded with all child welfare supervisors and Program Managers trained by early May 2014.
2) Coordinated training schedules and training assignments for the OSM Refresh for all CPS and Differential Response Consultants.
3) Provided training on the OSM Curriculum to identified child welfare supervisors and other Program consultants from Well Being, Permanency, and Field who assisted in the OSM training efforts for Round 2 and Round 3. Coordinated their training schedules and training assignments
4) Individually matched CPS, DR, Well Being, Permanency, and Field Program consultants to all line supervisors (who supervise caseworkers) for Intensive Field Consultation (IFC). IFC was provided weekly by the consultants to further coach Supervisors on the OSM concepts learned in the classroom sessions.
5) Provided weekly debrief sessions for all trainers following the classroom sessions/IFC for ongoing support.
6) Participated in a review of comprehensive safety assessments in Round 1 (pilot counties) to determine application of the OSM concepts.
7) Developed a 3.5 hour OSM training curriculum for the Differential Response Implementation in three counties.
8) Participated in ongoing design sessions for the State's SACWIS system to insure CPS policies and best practice are being adhered to in the system.
9) Completed sensitive case and CIRT reviews for the purpose of identifying systemic issues resulting in bad outcomes.
10) Reviewed and edited curriculum on Domestic Violence training for Portland State University's Child Welfare Partnership.
11) Ongoing participation in the Founded CPS Assessment Disposition Review Committee (appeal process).
12) Participated in the Training Sub-Committee for Differential Response.
13) Coordinated three workgroups (foster care investigations, conditions for return, OSM Quality Assurance) in partnership with the NRCCPS for Technical Assistance.

14) Coordinated a case file review of Conditions for Return and Expected Outcomes for the OSM Round 1 (pilot counties) to determine application of the OSM concepts learned in the Refresh Training.

In addition, this position worked closely with other agencies and community partners representing child welfare on a variety of workgroups and committees, including:

- Child Welfare Governance Committee
- Child Welfare Training Advisory Committee
- Child Welfare Refugee Committee
- Q & A following Mandatory Reporter Training
- SACWIS Implementation Team

B. <u>Child Protective Service Coordinator – Position 2</u>
Summary of Activities from April 2013 through May 2014

This position has focused on and been successful in providing greater statewide consistency in child welfare practice through extensive reorganization and development of new and revised child welfare policies, administrative rules, procedures, and guidelines.

1) Drafted amendments to Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) which include definitions related to child protective services rules, screening, assessment, notice and review of founded dispositions, DHS and law enforcement cross reporting, child abuse assessment dispositions, daycare facility investigations, accessing Oregon's Law Enforcement Data System (LEDS) in local Child Welfare offices, and assessing safety service providers.
2) Drafted new OAR to implement Oregon's new differential response system.
3) Revised the Child Welfare Procedure Manual to address changes in the Oregon Safety Model, and to reflect the new differential response system.
4) Revised OAR to address notification of the Teacher Standards and Practices Commission when DHS receives reports alleging abuse by teachers.
5) Created and revised forms and pamphlets, including a form for documenting safety plans, and informing parents about a CPS assessment.
6) Coordinated Founded Dispositions reviews.
7) Facilitated rule advisory committees.
8) Serving as policy expert in trials.
9) Assisted with reviews of critical cases.

10) Facilitated CPS case reviews for quality assurance.
11) Reviewed child abuse and neglect fatalities.
12) Analyzed legislation, as needed.

In addition, this position worked closely with other agencies and community partners representing child welfare on a variety of workgroups and committees such as:

- Administrative Rule Advisory Committees
- CPS Assessment Disposition Review Committee
- CPS and Office of Investigations and Trainings meetings
- Forms Committees
- Policy Councils
- Law Enforcement Data Systems meetings
- State Child Fatality Review Teams
- Rule writing workgroups

Summary of Training Activities

- Provided twenty hours of Mandatory Reporting Training to child welfare and child protective services caseworkers, other DHS staff, community partners and to the legislature.
- Provided fifteen hours of training to Mandatory Reporting Training trainers.
- Developed training plans for implementation of all new and revised rules.

In 2011, the Oregon Legislature passed legislation that led to Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 419B.021. It is now required that any CPS worker will have a degree. The only exception to this is for CPS workers who have continually conducted investigation without a break in that service.

Below are the number Social Services Specialists 1 (caseworkers) who have degrees and the types of degrees. This information is from Human Resources and therefore, is a reflection of all caseworkers (CPS, On-Going, Permanency, Adoption Worker, Certifier, etc.). Job classification narratives for all Child Welfare professionals specify the degree and/or certificate requirement for that position.

Social Services Specialist 1

Number of Employees	Degree Descriptor
3	Associates in a Non-Related Field

4	Associates in a Related Field
132	Bachelors in a Non-Related Field
838	Bachelors in a Related Field
16	Masters in a Non-Related Field
103	Masters in a Related Field
91	Masters in Social Work
34	No Degree
1,223	Total

Data from Human Resources

SS1 Position Percentages

Child Protective Services/Intake Worker	Permanency Worker	Foster/Adoptive Home Certifier
33%	50%	17%

Data from OR-Kids Data
CPS Assessment Assignment and User Role Assignment

Promotional path for caseworkers is from a Social Services Specialist 1 to a Supervisor. In 2013 and 2014, there were 58 promotions of SS1s to Caseworker Supervisor. The minimum qualification of a Caseworker Supervisor is "Five years of experience in supervision, staff-technical or professional-level work". As of August 2014, the Child Welfare Supervisor to Non-Supervisor ratio is 8.78 per one Supervisor. This ratio is not specific to Supervisor to Caseworker and includes all other Child Welfare employee types (i.e., support staff).

Ethnicity of Social Services Specialist 1

Number of Employees	Ethnicity
44	Asian/Pacific Islander
49	Black
1	Black/White
27	Declined (Obsolete as of 10/21/04)
132	Hispanic
1	Hispanic/Asian/Pacific Islander
1	Hispanic or Latino/Visual Assessment
2	Hispanic/White
16	Indian/Alaska Native
1	Indian/Alaska Native/Asian/Pacific Isl.
926	White
1	White/Hispanic

22	White/Indian/Alaska Native
1,223	Total

Data from Human Resources

DHS will continue to develop more consistent reporting methodology for CPS Workforce in order to meet the requirements. There has been significant turnover in the position where part of their responsibility for coordinating the CAPTA. In the last five years, there have been three different people assigned the work and the inconsistent assignment has made it difficult to make any progress on the new requirements. These reporting requirements will be included in the 2014-2019 CFSP, in that the first six month of our next CFSP. DHS will be developing our logic models that include how to obtain necessary data for reporting outcomes.

Child Welfare Alcohol and Drug Addiction Education and Training Wurscher Jay M	
CAPTA Sections 106(a)(1), 106(a)(6)(A) and (C), and 106(a)(13)(B)	**CPS Areas All 16 areas**

Nationally recognized trainer, Eric Martin was utilized in the delivery of alcohol and drug education and training modules to DHS child welfare caseworkers and DHS partners who refer and work with clients involved with Oregon's child welfare system. As drug trends change from time to time, marijuana has evolved as one of the most popular training subjects. Our northern neighbor, Washington State, has legalized marijuana, and the ever increasing use of medical marijuana in Oregon has brought about a variety of new challenges with this drug. As in the past three years, Oregon's continued increase in the illicit use of opiates, both prescription pills and heroin, is a primary reason opiates continued to be a major emphasis in his trainings. Methamphetamine remains a primary drug of abuse in Oregon, and trainings on issues related to the use of methamphetamine continue to be a standard topic of training offered in our training series

Mr. Martin also continued to deliver parent education and intervention classes to parents in the child welfare system regarding chronic use of marijuana. These trainings have been tracked, and participants report a very positive response to them in terms of how they think about their use of marijuana, and what they know about the dangers of this drug, and how they will consider it in their future

From July 01, 2013 through June 30, 2014, Mr. Martin will have completed 20 one-day sessions on the topics listed above.

- 14 training sessions on addiction and drug specific topics; and

- 6 parent education/intervention classes on chronic marijuana abuse.

Mr. Martin's training sessions often include the participation of parents who have attained recovery from their addiction and had their child welfare cases successfully closed.

This strategy not only allows the caseworkers to talk directly with clients who have come through the system, but it is empowering for parents to know they play a part in the training of workers who will be dealing with addiction in the future

Other CAPTA Funded Programs

CAPTA Fatality and Near Fatality Public Disclosure Policy	
CAPTA Section 106(b)(2)(B)(x)	**CPS Areas** **All 16 areas**

DHS' policy on confidentiality (which broadly discusses disclosure and touches upon the major statutes) is I-A.3.2, Confidentiality of Client Information. If the fatality or serious injury is determined to be abuse and neglect or is founded for abuse/neglect, then statute mandates specific information must be disclosed if information is requested.

The full policy can be found at:
http://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/childwelfare/manual_1/i-a32.pdf

Per Oregon Revised Statute (ORS) 419B.035, Confidentiality of Records, section 1(i):

(1) Notwithstanding the provisions of ORS 192.001 (Policy concerning public records) to 192.170 (Disposition of materials without authorization), 192.210 (Definitions for ORS 192.210 and 192.220) to 192.505 (Exempt and nonexempt public record to be separated) and 192.610 (Definitions for ORS 192.610 to 192.690) to 192.990 (Penalties) relating to confidentiality and accessibility for public inspection of public records and public documents, reports and records compiled under the provisions of ORS 419B.010 (Duty of officials to report child abuse) to 419B.050 (Authority of health care provider to disclose information) are confidential and may not be disclosed except as provided in this section. The Department of Human Services shall make the records available to:

… (i) Any person, upon request to the Department of Human Services, if the reports or records requested regard an incident in which a child, as the result of abuse, died or suffered serious physical injury as defined in ORS 161.015 (General definitions). Reports or records disclosed under this paragraph must be disclosed in accordance with ORS 192.410 (Definitions for ORS 192.410 to 192.505) to 192.505 (Exempt and nonexempt public record to be separated).

State CAPTA Coordinator Contact Information

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CAPTA Citizen Review Panel Annual Reports	
Section 106 (c)	**CPS Areas** **All (Panels Option)**

The following information was provided to DHS Office of Child Welfare Program by the Citizen Review Board on May 30, 2014. The agency will review the findings and recommendations set forth in this report and will create a plan to address any concerns with the individual counties. The agency will also evaluate the information provided to determine if larger systemic issues are present that would require larger scale changes or improvements throughout the State.

One of the requirements of the federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is that states create at least three citizen review panels (CRPs) to evaluate the extent to which state and local child protection system agencies are effectively discharging their child protection responsibilities. In September 2012, the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS) transferred responsibility for ensuring compliance with this requirement to the CRB. The law requires that panels prepare, on an annual basis, a report containing a summary of panel activities and recommendations to improve the child protection services system.

The role of the panels is to identify issues to explore, to review DHS policies, collect data and information, and make recommendations for system improvements. Panels do not implement the recommendations or establish policies or programs.

The CRB established three CRPs in Deschutes, Lane, and Lincoln counties. Panel members included CRB volunteer board members and staff as well as community stakeholders from child welfare, public defense, local court appointed special advocate programs, and others involved in the child welfare system. Panels met in Newport, Oregon on July 30, 2013, for a two-day kickoff session. Attendees heard from Maurita Johnson, Deputy Director of DHS' Office of Child Welfare Programs, about various "hot topics" within Oregon's child welfare system; and Blake L. Jones, Program Coordinator for Kentucky's Citizen Review Panels for a national perspective on CAPTA and guidance on identifying issues for panels to explore.

Panels were then asked to brainstorm a list of system issues they were concerned about. Each panel prioritized those issues and selected one or two to explore throughout the year.

Between August 2013 and March 2014, each panel examined federal and state laws and policies; reviewed data and resources; and met with community stakeholders, including local juvenile court judges and staff, child welfare managers and staff, child advocates, attorneys, foster parents, service providers, educators, and business leaders to discuss system issues and review draft recommendations. In April 2014, each panel hosted a community forum to share their findings and draft recommendations, and solicit community input and recommendations.

DESCHUTES COUNTY CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
Members of the Deschutes County CRP:

- Patricia Craveiro, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Kathrine Edwards, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Marcia Houston, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Kristina Knittel, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Joan Springer-Wellman, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Bill Wagner, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Patrick Carey, DHS District Manager
- Tom Crabtree, Public Defender
- Pam Fortier, CASA Executive Director
- Jennifer Goff, CRB Field Manager

	Deschutes County	Statewide
Dependency Petitions Filed	82	4,670
Children in Substitute Care*	170	8,770
CRB Reviews	129	3,744
Children Reviewed	186	4,830
No Reasonable Efforts Findings	15	202
*The table is OJD data from the 2013 calendar year except for "Children in Substitute Care," which is point-in-time data collected by DHS on 9/30/12.		

Financial disincentives to permanency and workload of child welfare workers emerged as the two system issues most concerning to Deschutes County CRP members.

Financial Disincentives to Permanency

At the beginning of its work, the Deschutes County CRP focused on financial disincentives to permanency. The CRP raised concern that the statute which allows for payment of college tuition for foster youth inadvertently impacts their ability to find a permanent home. Specifically, if older youth leave care before their 16th birthday, they become ineligible to have their college tuition paid. While exploring this issue, the panel discovered additional, more pressing financial disincentives to permanency.

To better understand the supports in place for youth in care presently, the panel worked with the CASA program to gather information. CASA volunteers interviewed a small sample of 13 foster youth, aged 14 and above, to learn whether they felt supported as they pursued their educational and career goals. Survey questions focused on whether the youth had a mentor or strong support person in their lives, help with their schoolwork, a vision for their future, and barriers to achieving their vision, and a desire to continue their education.

Of the 13 foster youths interviewed, five said they did not have a role model in their lives, yet all stated they have someone "in their corner" to support them. While most of the youth had a positive view of their future, only four attended or planned to attend college. However, almost all stated they would attend college if funding was provided.

Seven of the youth were not involved in independent living services. Of those seven, some were waiting for referrals and one was on the waiting list. For the youth who were involved, their opinions were mixed about the program.

Barriers to Permanency

HOUSING ASSISTANCE: Housing emerged as a much more pressing disincentive to permanency than tuition payments, which foster youth can access from numerous sources. Youth can access housing assistance payments until age 21, as long as their cases remain open. Child welfare workers noted that sometimes youth are so eager to leave the system when they turn 18 that they want their cases closed regardless of the consequences. One of those consequences is that housing assistance ends immediately upon closure of the case and cannot be reinstated, not even if the youth seeks voluntary services through child welfare until they are 21.

UNDERSTANDING ACCESS TO BENEFITS: Independent Living Program (ILP) coordinators ensure that youth receive written information about all education benefits available to them. Not all youth, however, are enrolled in ILP. For those not enrolled, child welfare workers are not required and do not consistently provide older youth with comprehensive information about benefits to which they are entitled.

ILP staff also noted that there are common misperceptions that some youth cannot get into the program because there is a waiting list or a belief that the youth would not benefit from the program and should not be referred. In truth, there is not a waiting list and all youth should be referred.

Community Forum Feedback

The Deschutes County CRP conducted its community forum on April 3, 2014. The forum was attended by the local juvenile court judge, attorneys, child welfare staff, CRB volunteer board members and staff, court appointed special advocates, community members, and the press. Participants noted that there are many financial disincentives to permanency, and multiple road blocks to preparing older foster youth for successful adulthood. These include:

- DHS pays a lower subsidy for adoption than the foster care payment. Relatives and foster families may be less likely to pursue adoption because of the decrease in financial support.
- Older youth are often eager to leave foster care and do not understand that they will lose access to housing subsidies once their cases are closed.

- If child welfare would consider changing the Oregon Administrative Rule that ends housing subsidies once a youth's case closes, there would likely be an important ancillary benefit of reducing the homeless population of older youth and young adults.
- Oregon law provides support for "children attending school" if parents are divorced, yet the state does not provide the same benefits for children in the foster care system.
- All children 14 years and older should be referred to ILP. Participants also suggested child welfare hold a yearly seminar for all children in foster care over the age of 14, to clearly outline the benefits to which they are entitled. Youth participation in this seminar, however, should be voluntary.

Workload of Child Welfare Workers

In addition to financial disincentives to permanency, the Deschutes County CRP expressed concern that workload often prevents child welfare workers from spending face to face time with families. Results from the last two federal Child and Family Services Reviews note that more caseworker contact often corresponds with a higher likelihood of successful reunification. As a result of budget increases, child welfare will be staffed at 75% of the capacity they require to ensure workers can effectively manage their caseloads. This is an improvement from prior budget cycles; however, child welfare remains concerned about mandates on worker's time.

The panel discussed that court appointed special advocates are mandated to do some of the same activities as child welfare workers (visiting foster homes; talking to foster children, parents, and relatives; and meeting with service providers, etc.). While all panel members, including the CASA Executive Director and DHS District Manager, acknowledged the importance of maintaining clarity of role and independence, all also agreed that some tasks were duplicative, and efficiencies could be created by sharing information.

The panel worked with community partners to craft a pilot project in which court appointed special advocates and child welfare workers come together to avoid duplication of activities while still maintaining independence of each other's roles. A focus group of representatives from the two organizations was held to identify ways to enhance partnerships as well as conditions that might cause them to be less successful. Mutual respect, responsiveness to requests for help, effective follow through, true understanding of roles, and an understanding that disagreements over the direction of cases may arise were cited as elements of successful working relationships. New volunteer inexperience, ineffective time management by some

child welfare workers, and lack of understanding of roles and responsibilities were cited as barriers to effective partnerships.

Community Forum Feedback

Participants in the community forum noted that there are many ways that court appointed special advocates can coordinate activities with child welfare workers. There are current prohibitions, however, that make the most effective partnership opportunities difficult. These include:

- The inability of court appointed special advocates to transport children in foster care. Elimination of this prohibition would enable court appointed special advocates in Oregon to drive foster children to appointments as they do in other states, such as California and Nevada.
- ILP staff do not know the identity of the assigned court appointed special advocate. If they did, ILP staff could better utilize court appointed special advocates to encourage older youth to participate in ILP, and assist with transportation and coordination of other activities related to participation.

DESCHUTES COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DHS provide all foster youth and their foster parents' written documentation of the benefits to which older foster youth are entitled. Attorneys and CASAs should also receive this information so they can most effectively advocate for the youth they represent. The court and CRB should inquire at each hearing and review to ensure this information has been provided to all foster youth.

2. The Independent Living Program conduct a yearly, voluntary, in person seminar for all foster youth outlining all the education and other benefits to which they are entitled.

3. DHS explore whether the requirement that housing benefits are eliminated once a youth's case is closed is an Oregon Administrative Rule, and whether it can be amended to allow for a former foster youth to access housing assistance until age 21, even if the case has been closed.

4. DHS propose amendments to the foster youth tuition legislation to allow the use of funds for housing while attending school.

5. DHS and CASA work together to outline, in writing, ways in which the caseworkers and CASAs can coordinate activities.

6. New workers receive training, by DHS and CASA staff, about the role of CASAs and ways in which the relationship between the DHS worker and CASA can be most effective.

7. DHS and CASA explore the viability of a staffing between DHS and CASA early in the case management process to clearly outline how activities might be coordinated.

8. DHS and CASA work together to explore allowing CASAs to drive children and youth to appointments and other activities.

9. DHS provide CASA appointment orders to the ILP staff so they can connect with the youth's CASA.

LANE COUNTY CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
Members of the Lane County CRP:

- Marjorie Biehler, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Wagoma Burdon, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Norton Cabell, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Ellen Hyman, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Stephen John, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- LouAnn Martin, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Barbara Newman, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Bev Schenler, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Roz Slovic, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Tricia Hedin, Public Defender
- Amanda Monet, DHS Supervisor
- Melissa Pistono, Defense Attorney
- Sydney Putnam, DHS Program Manager
- John Radich, DHS District Manager
- Julie Spencer, DHS Program Manager
- Christina Sterling, CASA Program Supervisor/ Training Coordinator
- Lisa Romano, CRB Field Manager

	Lane County	**Statewide**
Dependency Petitions Filed	583	4,670
Children in Substitute Care*	1,158	8,770
CRB Reviews	702	3,744

Children Reviewed	1,033	4,830
No Reasonable Efforts Findings	21	202
**The table is OJD data from the 2013 calendar year except for "Children in Substitute Care," which is point□in□time data collected by DHS on 9/30/12.		

Parent/child visitation for children in foster care emerged as the issue most concerning to Lane County CRP members.

Parent/Child Visitation

When a child is placed in foster care, regular contact with the parents and siblings is critically important so long as the child's safety can be assured. National research has shown that frequent, quality parent/child contact is one of the strongest predictors of successful reunification.

Beginning in July 2013, the CRP met with child welfare staff and other stakeholders multiple times to review policies governing parent/child visitation and their implementation. At one of those meetings, the panel heard a candid presentation from DHS staff during which they indicated that the structure of effective visitation time is laid out in current child welfare policy. However, the internal mechanisms and working patterns of the agency actually govern practice more than policy does. This is due, in part, to reductions in funding that have occurred over the last several years.

For example, child welfare policy requires the development of a Temporary Visit and Contact plan as soon as the child is placed in substitute care. This temporary plan must articulate why visits must be supervised, if supervision is required. Thirty days later, the child welfare worker is required to develop an Ongoing Visitation and Contact Plan, which is supposed to be updated every 90 days to ensure that visitation is becoming less restrictive as the safety threat to the child diminishes. In practice, however, there is no mechanism for internal supervisory review of the initial plan, which raises concern that initial plans are not updated. In addition, visitation plans are not typically included with documents submitted by DHS for CRB reviews.

Visitation Survey

To learn more about visitation practices and how they evolve over the life of a case, the panel created a 64-question survey to be completed by child welfare workers. The survey was quite labor intensive as many of the questions required workers to

review their case files for specific information about visits that occurred during the review period, January 2014.

Ultimately, child welfare workers completed surveys for 188 of 200 randomly selected cases with return to parent permanency plans. This was a response rate of 94%. Of those responses, 103 cases met the criteria of: (1) having a permanency plan of return to parent through the end of January 2014; and (2) the child not being in a trial reunification placement in January 2014.

The results showed that the majority of children entered foster care because of neglect (61%) and/or parent substance abuse (also 61%). Just over half (54%) of the children were placed with relatives, and most of the remainder (37%) were placed with non-relative foster parents.

On average, children in the survey had 7.8 visits in January 2014, for a total of 15 hours of visitation. This amounts to roughly two 2-hour visits per week. While 43% of the visits took place at DHS, 54% of total visitation hours occurred in the home of a parent or relative. Thus, not surprisingly, visits tend to be longer when they occur in the home of a parent or relative.

This result is troubling when it is paired with how infrequently there are opportunities to update visitation plans, including moving visits out of DHS. Fewer than half (43%) of all visitation plans had been reviewed in the past 90 days, and fewer than a quarter (24%) had been addressed in the last court order beyond the standard boilerplate language giving DHS authority to determine appropriate visitation levels. Additionally, only a minority of parents (33%) with a low assessed risk of harm had in-home visits with their children. It is, therefore, possible that more frequent review of visitation plans by DHS and the court could result in more in-home visits and more total visitation hours.

Survey results also showed:

- Supervision (70%), transportation for the child (60%), and transportation for a parent (53%) were each provided for visits in more than half the cases.
- A parent mentor or coach was provided during visits in 34% of cases.
- 81% of children who had siblings in other placements had at least one visit with siblings during the review period (January 2014).
- 93% of children aged 11 to 18 were consulted during formulation of the visitation plan.

Barriers to Visitation

Canceled Visits: Visits are sometimes canceled by DHS as a punitive measure even though they are not supposed to be canceled as punishment for a parent failing to comply with a service plan.

Transportation: Parents must be participating in three services in order to receive a monthly bus pass. If they do not qualify, they can get daily passes but must pick them up at the office. However, if they cannot get to the office, they cannot get a pass.

Visitation Plans are Not Updated: DHS staff report that the very reason the child is placed in foster care establishes safety concerns, so it makes sense that visits need to be supervised at the beginning of the case. However, supervision should "step down" as the safety threat diminishes. Concerns were expressed that in most cases this does not happen.

Part of the problem may be that the request for supervised visits that is made to the court is proforma, and the court order includes standard language giving child welfare broad latitude in determining the amount of visitation and level of supervision. Additionally, attorneys and court appointed special advocates do not routinely ask for unsupervised visits.

Technology: DHS encounters difficulties in utilizing technology to maximize the contact parents have with their children. For example, DHS only has one computer set up to use Skype for all three local DHS branch offices. The Department of Corrections also has policies, like fees for use of the videoconferencing equipment, that tend to discourage inmates from utilizing technology to visit more with their children.

Space Limitations: Space at the DHS office to conduct supervised visitation is limited. The panel discussed ways in which DHS could partner with community organizations to expand their capacity for visits. For example, churches are currently providing visitation space for families.

One CRP member noted that the United Way is an excellent convener and may be willing to bring community resources together with child welfare to explore options. The Lane County Safe and Equitable Foster Care Reduction team, sponsored by Casey Family Programs, is also focused on the issue of visitation.

Community Forum Feedback

Lane County's CRP held its community forum on March 21, 2013. It was attended by the local juvenile court judge, attorneys, DHS staff, CRB volunteer board members and staff, court appointed special advocates, community members, and the press. The panel received the following feedback:

- There does not seem to be an objective methodology to assess current safety threats. Conducting refresher training on the Oregon Safety Model might help workers apply more case specific and present time criteria.

- While visitation guidelines are reviewed with all parents, more intensive pre-visit coaching is only being made available to approximately 25% of parents.

- Case plan documentation and court order language is often not case specific. Updating plans and methods to step-down supervision should be better defined so decision-making is case specific and consistent across the agency.

- Expanding the use of technology to increase visitation would be helpful on several levels, not the least of which would help increase visitation with children and incarcerated parents. Participants suggested that DHS appoint a single point person to work with the Oregon Department of Corrections to establish methods and safety mechanisms to increase visitation with incarcerated parents.

LANE COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DHS and CRB work together to create and deliver interdisciplinary training on DHS visitation policy, including content focused on the importance of visitation and methods to assess current safety threats.

2. DHS expand technology options to increase parent/child/sibling contact including contact with incarcerated parents. Appointment of a single DHS point person with DOC would assist in ensuring development of a viable plan that could be implemented statewide.
3. DHS provide updated visitation plans to the court and CRB for all hearings and reviews.

4. The Juvenile Court and CRB consider visitation when making reasonable efforts findings.

5. CRB and DHS work together to create a 90 day review process to ensure that visitation plans are created and updated in accordance with DHS policy. This review process, whether it is internal or external to DHS, would provide opportunity to assess all levels of case progress.

6. DHS expand partnerships with local churches and other potential partners, including resources in rural areas in Lane County, to increase opportunities for visitation in churches and other community facilities.

LINCOLN COUNTY CITIZEN REVIEW PANEL
Members of the Lincoln County CRP:

- Ned Brittain, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Diane Flansburg, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Fawn Hewitt, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Sandy Allen, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Steve Waterman, CRB Volunteer Board Member
- Jamie Auborn, DHS Certifier
- Angela Cazares, DHS Supervisor
- Carol James, CASA Program Manager & Coordinator of Volunteers
- Jeff Pridgeon, Defense Attorney
- Amy Benedum, CRB Field Manager

	Lincoln County	**Statewide**
Dependency Petitions Filed	101	4,670
Children in Substitute Care*	137	8,770
CRB Reviews	100	3,744
Children Reviewed	155	4,830
No Reasonable Efforts Findings	7	202
**The table is OJD data from the 2013 calendar year except for "Children in Substitute Care," which is point-in-time data collected by DHS on 9/30/12.		

Community engagement in the foster care system emerged as the issue most concerning to Lincoln County CRP members. The county is in need of foster parents, CRB and CASA volunteers, mentors, volunteer drivers, and other paid and volunteer positions.

Need for Foster Parents

In 2013, there were over 130 children in foster care in Lincoln County. About half of them were placed with relatives; therefore, non-relative foster homes were required for the remaining half. Unfortunately, DHS in Lincoln County does not have enough foster homes to meet this need, particularly in Newport and the Southern part of the county.

Barriers to Foster Parent Recruitment

Accessing Services: Foster parents report it is challenging to access services for children in their care. A foster parent navigator would be of help. The system is very complex and having someone help foster parents navigate it would relieve some of the pressure on foster parents.

Receiving Complete Information: It is critically important that foster parents receive a full background on the children in their care. Children who have experienced trauma often exhibit behavior including severe temper tantrums and night terrors. This type of behavior may catch a foster parent by surprise if they are not fully informed about the child's background and experiences, making the behavior even more difficult to manage.

Foster Parent Training: Foster parents need ongoing training and want to be involved in selecting the training topics.

Information Overload: Foster parents describe the training manual they receive as being very large and somewhat overwhelming. Additionally, many online training opportunities for foster parents exist, yet all foster parents do not have access to the internet so they are not available to all.

Misperceptions About Opportunities to Foster: Some people interested in fostering do not think they are the kind of family that DHS is recruiting.

Fear of Retaliation: While DHS has worked hard to communicate that the agency is interested in hearing directly from foster parents, whether it be about successes, concerns, or needs; some foster parents still believe they may be subject to retaliation if they challenge the agency at all. This perception is difficult to eliminate, although the agency is committed to doing so.

Need for Community Volunteers

Many volunteer opportunities are available in the community including serving as a CRB volunteer board member or CASA, volunteering to drive for foster parents and

children, mentorships, navigators, and respite care providers, among others. Volunteer navigators who could help interested community members understand all the options are needed.

A member of the press noted that the community must be made aware, and not just once in a while, about the opportunities to help children and families involved in the foster care system. Agency and volunteer programs need to be relentless in their pursuit of community involvement. Keeping the story of foster children and families' front and center in the eyes of the community might garner more success in community buy-in and willingness to serve.

The panel discussed whether it is possible to track the outcomes for children and families, if more people in the community would become involved. For example, if there were more respite care providers, would foster parent retention be higher? If there were more places for safe and longer quality family visits, would permanency be achieved more quickly? Tracking these types of outcomes and reporting them to the community might breed success in getting more people involved. If people can see how they are making a difference, they may be more likely to engage.

Various opportunities for community engagement in the foster care system were presented at a community forum on April 4, 2014. Elizabeth Platt, President of the Lincoln County Foster Parents' Association, spoke about the myths and realities of foster parenting. Representatives from DHS, CRB, and CASA explained both paid and volunteer opportunities. While few members of the public at large attended the forum, the presentations did excite those who did attend and assisted the panel in finalizing their recommendations.

Community Forum Feedback

LINCOLN COUNTY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. DHS review its foster parent recruitment materials and ensure that people can see themselves in those materials. Using the "22 Ways to Help Children in Foster Care" document, DHS, CASA, and CRB work together to write and publish regular and ongoing press stories about foster care and ways in which the community can get involved. Recruitment should create ever present celebrations of the accomplishments of foster parents and community volunteers to excite people to get involved.

2. DHS work through the interfaith board to reach churches in the community and explore ways in which churches might be able to assist in providing space for visitation and volunteers to serve as mentors, drivers, and other opportunities.

3. DHS ensure that all foster parents receive complete background information on the children in their care. Retention may increase if foster parents are clear on the issues children are facing.

4. DHS explore creating a foster parent navigator paid or volunteer position, and ensure that the person in that position is well equipped to guide foster parents in seeking services and supports. The panel recommends that DHS convene a group of stakeholders to define what is needed for the person in the position to succeed.