

Assistant director letter

CAF's contributions to the DHS mission

The Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Division provides essential services to meet many of the most basic and urgent needs of Oregon's vulnerable families and individuals. Through its child protection and foster care services, CAF protects children who have been abused and neglected or are at immediate risk. Through its self sufficiency and vocational rehabilitation programs, CAF helps families and people with disabilities achieve economic security with temporary supports for their most basic needs, such as food, health coverage and child care, while working to meet their employment goals.

In addition, many CAF clients require services to address complex and interrelated issues - such as addiction and/or mental health challenges - that interfere with their capacity to be independent, healthy and safe. CAF works directly with our individual, family and child clients, and with various partner providers, to address these service needs.

CAF is responsible for three key program areas:

- Child Welfare (Child Protective Services, Foster Care, and Adoptive Services)
- Self Sufficiency (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, Food Stamps, Employment Related Day Care, Self Sufficiency Medical Programs, Temporary Assistance for victims of Domestic Violence, the Refugee Program, and Prevention Services (for teen pregnancy and risk behavior);
- Vocational Rehabilitation (Basic Rehabilitation Services, the Youth Transition Program, Supported Employment Services, and the Independent Living Program).

The need for these services

CAF programs are part of a continuum of supports designed to help keep Oregon children safe. On one end of that continuum, CAF self-sufficiency programs help strengthen families' ability to meet their children's health and safety needs at home and prevent child abuse and neglect. On the other end of that continuum, child protection, foster care and adoption services keep child abuse and neglect victims safe while meeting their physical health and behavioral health needs. CAF programs are also part of a continuum of supports that help Oregon parents and people with disabilities meet their employment goals and gain greater independence.

Challenging economic times, coupled with the erosion over time of services for addiction, mental health and domestic violence, is creating rising need and consequently rising demand for CAF services.

Here's a snapshot of the level of need in Oregon for CAF Services:

- DHS receives 60,000 reports a year of alleged abuse against children – that's one report every ten minutes;
- In 2007, there were 10,716 confirmed child victims of abuse or neglect;
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of abuse and neglect against children is committed by family members – mostly parents;
- Parental substance abuse was cited as a factor with more than half of the Oregon children who entered foster care in 2007;
- Domestic violence is also a risk factor for child abuse and neglect, ranked second only to alcohol and drug issues;
- Untreated mental illness in a parent is also a risk factor to children. Less than half of the 260,000 Oregonians who suffer from mental illness receive treatment;
- Nearly half a million Oregonians are living in poverty – about one in eight;
- One out of four Oregon children are living in poverty;

- Childcare costs about \$9,000 a year – more than half of a fulltime minimum wage salary of \$16,536 a year;
- Over 313,000 Oregonians between the ages 21 and 64 have one or more disability;
- 57 percent of Oregonians with disabilities between the ages of 21 and 64 are unemployed.

Responding to these needs

In 2007, CAF directly or through its partners provided the following services:

- Nearly 1,000 children were adopted – about one every seven hours.
- Approximately 21,000 safety assessments were conducted to protect children.
- Over 15,000 children were served in out-of-home foster care placements.
- Sixty four percent of children served were safely reunified with their parents.
- One in eight Oregonians – 617,142 - received food stamps;
- 32,930 low income families with dependent children received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program benefits;
- 18,235 low-income working families received help paying for child care for 34,305 children, so parents could stay employed;
- Approximately 6,000 families (with 12,000 children) trying to escape domestic violence received assistance including temporary housing, relocation, emergency food and medical support.
- Over 830 refugees received comprehensive resettlement services.
- Nearly 16,000 people with disabilities received OVRS services; nearly 3,000 of these achieved employment in 2007.

Strengthening service delivery through a needs-based budget

Key requests contained within this budget support the following DHS goals:

Keeping children safe and healthy

- Reducing the need for foster care placements and the length of time in foster care through expansion of services for families before they enter child welfare, enhancing our services to families and children in child welfare so that they can safely parent their child at home, expanding capacity to identify and engage relatives as out-of-home caregivers for children, and creating a reunification program.
- Removing financial barriers for placement of children in foster and adoptive homes (including out-of-home placements with relatives), through better supports for caregivers, including subsidies for child care for foster parents and enhanced adoption subsidies.
- Enhancing our ability to meet the health and safety needs of children in foster care through increased medical and prevention services and support for foster children.
- Better serving children of color in foster care and reducing the over-representation of African American and Native American children in foster care.
- Expanding alcohol and drug treatment services to help addicted parents retain or regain custody of their children.
- Improving our ability to safely and effectively intervene when domestic violence threatens the safety of a child by placing domestic violence advocates inside child welfare offices.
- Increasing successful and safe family reunification through greater capacity for visitation between foster children and their families.
- Improving our ability to respond to critical incidents involving child death or serious injury by enhancing CAF capacity to conduct Critical Incident Response assessments.
- Reducing time to adoption by expanding our capacity to perform home studies for placement of children in foster care.

Helping families be safe and stable

- Enhancing family capacity to meet basic needs by providing a cost of living increases to TANF recipients through an increase in the cash-assistance payment.
- Stabilizing families transitioning off assistance to independence by extending Food Stamps Transitional Benefits.
- Expanding supports for parents with disabilities who are unable to work due to their disability while they qualify for federal disability benefits.
- Expanding the scope of DHS prevention and intervention services for youth, including teen pregnancy prevention and youth risk behavior reduction.
- Improving families' ability to retain employment by increasing child care subsidies for stable, quality child care arrangements.

Helping people with disabilities live independently in their communities

- Working collaboratively with local schools to insure the transition of youth (ages 14-24) from school to work.
- Addressing barriers to employment for Oregonians with disabilities in order to secure and/or maintain employment.
- Addressing the workforce needs of employers.
- Through state Independent Living Centers, increasing training in independent living skills so people with disabilities can live independently in their communities.

Ensuring services are safe and available in communities where they are needed

- Increasing payment rates for community partners, such as foster parents, behavioral health care providers, employer sponsors, and more, to preserve critical service infrastructure and enable CAF to continue meeting client needs.

Ensuring DHS has the capacity to meet client needs

- Strengthening CAF staff capacity to address the rising need for our services by closing the gap between current staffing levels and a new workload model.
- Improving the quality of services delivered through enhanced training and education for CAF staff.
- Strengthen tools and training for Training and Program Integrity staff to improve processes to prevent errors and fraud, strengthen licensing and compliance monitoring capability, and develop medical care oversight for foster children.
- Modernize CAF data systems to allow integrated and improved data collection and reporting to reduce inefficiencies and inconsistent data results.

Improving DHS Efficiency

- Enhancing CAF's operational infrastructure to improve the quality of our client services, increase the amount of time workers have to spend with clients, and better support workers to improve their efficiency.

Summary

Every day, hundreds of thousands of Oregonians rely on CAF services to meet their families' most basic needs, keep their children safe, and support their efforts to achieve economic independence. CAF services are a significant piece of the larger effort in Oregon to keep children safe and families strong. CAF's success as a partner in that effort is dependent on more than 4000 employees across the state, as well as the support of thousands of community partners, all of whom are dedicated to improving the lives of children, adults and families in Oregon.

It is on behalf of those children, adults and families, and community partners, that I respectfully submit this CAF budget.

Erinn Kelley-Siel
DHS Assistant Director for Children, Adults and Families Division

CAF program narratives

The Children, Adults and Families (CAF) Division helps Oregonians with programs to:

- protect children and improve their health, safety and welfare;
- stabilize and strengthen families;
- provide vocational rehabilitation and reduce barriers to employment;
- provide crucial temporary support for families and individuals, including cash assistance, food benefits, childcare assistance and access to health care, while helping them become self-sufficient.

CAF serves families and individuals with a variety of needs, including basic nutrition; medical care; mental health; alcohol and drug treatment; and employment. CAF works directly with families and various partner providers to coordinate these service needs, as well as contracting for specialized services from local providers.

Services are delivered directly through approximately 100 field offices and outstations across the state. CAF also supports a network of foster homes for children, treatment providers for adults and children, and day care providers for low-income parents. CAF contributes to the DHS mission of keeping Oregonians independent, healthy and safe through the following programs, each of which includes a number of subprograms.

Child welfare

The CAF Child Welfare program is responsible for assuring the safety of children referred to CAF, and providing services to their families. Protective service assessments were completed for approximately 21,000 families in 2007.

- The Child Protective Services (CPS) program assesses reports of child abuse or neglect, completes safety assessments of children, assesses the capacity of parents or caregivers to protect children, and determines whether child abuse or neglect has occurred. CPS caseworkers prepare an action plan to provide safety for the

child using the strengths of the family, provide case management and coordinate services for substance abuse treatment, domestic violence and sexual abuse, parent training and intensive family services as needed.

- Foster Care or Out-of-Home Care involves an array of programs serving children who cannot remain safely in their homes, providing a safe, temporary living arrangement for abused or neglected children while the parents receive necessary support services. The program arranges relative care, family foster care through an extensive network of foster homes, and residential care settings for children. The program's primary goal is to reunite children with their parents, which it achieved for approximately 65 percent of children leaving foster care. When reuniting families is not possible, the goal is to place each child in a permanent loving home as soon as possible through adoption.
- Adoptive Services coordinates and supervises adoption and guardianship for children in foster care who are unable to return to the care of their biological parents. A key goal is to provide permanent homes within a short time frame. Adoptions were finalized for over a thousand children in 2007.

Self-sufficiency

The CAF Self-Sufficiency programs provide assistance for very low-income families to help them become independent, through the following major programs:

- The Food Stamp program provides approximately \$44 million in monthly benefits for nearly 480,000 Oregonians, almost 13 percent of the state's population, to help eligible people individuals to supplement their food needs, encourage and provide education on healthy nutrition, and confer eligibility for reduced or free lunch programs for children.
- The Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program provides temporary support and services to approximately 19,000 low income families with children through several subprograms. These include TANF cash assistance grants, State Family Pre-SSI/SSDI services, Job Opportunity and Basic Skills (JOBS), prevention (Family Support and Connections), Temporary Assistance for Domestic Violence Survivors (TA-DVS) emergency assistance, and post employment (Post TANF) payments to aid family stabilization.

- The Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) program helps approximately 9,300 low-income working families pay their child care bills, find and keep child care, and improve the quality and stability of child care arrangements so parents can stay employed, and access quality child care for their children.
- The Refugee Program provides comprehensive resettlement services to refugees fleeing persecution in their homelands, who have been legally admitted into the United States. The Refugee Program served over 860 refugees in 2007.
- Prevention Services works with other state and local partners to develop strategies that strengthen families and support positive youth development to help teens develop skills to prevent teen pregnancy and avoid risky behaviors.
- Medical Eligibility works with the Division of Medical Assistance Programs to provide medical coverage to approximately 400,000 low income Oregonians, who otherwise would be unable to access affordable health care.

Vocational Rehabilitation

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) assesses plans and coordinates vocational rehabilitation services to people with disabilities that impede their ability to get and retain employment. In 2007, OVR assisted 16,030 people and helped 2,871 achieve employment. Services are provided through field offices and outstations across the state.

Comment [D1]: These numbers are for FFY 2007

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services help individuals with disabilities obtain, maintain and advance in employment through provision of counseling, training, job placement, assistive technology, and extended services and supports.
- The Youth Transition Program (YTP) assists young people with disabilities in bridging the gap between high school and employment or post-secondary education by coordinating the planning and provision of vocational rehabilitation, education and other services.

- Supported Employment Services (SES) provides individuals with the most significant disabilities with the vocational rehabilitation and extended services and supports they need to obtain and retain competitive employment.
- The Independent Living Program (ILP) helps clients with severe disabilities maintain or increase their level of independence at home, in the community and in employment.

CAF environmental scan

CAF has identified the following challenges in their mission to keep children, vulnerable adults and families and people with disabilities as safe, healthy and independent as possible; opportunities for addressing those challenges; and proposed actions.

Challenges

- Child welfare Performance Improvement Plan implementation to meet federal mandates.
- Federal disallowance of TANF fund use in Child Welfare
- Program access: ensure multiple program access points for Oregonians applying for food stamps.
- Ensure all eligible families and individuals receive benefits they are eligible for.
- Nutrition: encourage healthy eating and reduce obesity among low income families and individuals in Oregon.
- Insufficient staffing resources to provide expected level of services for families and individuals with nutritional, financial, physical, emotional, health and vocational needs.
- Limited state and local resources dedicated to ensuring adequate services are available.
- Need for consistent, timely and high quality training for CAF staff, both initially and for on-going professional development.
- Need for budget stability.
- Need for improved quality assurance and program integrity capability.

- Inadequate computer systems: systems were mostly developed in the 1970s and 1980s and do not support today's program and staff needs. Current efforts need to be accelerated to improve capacity, client access and staff efficiency
- Current economy, increased costs of living, and near future financial projections has increased need and demand for CAF related services in Oregon.
- With the current economy, state revenues may flatten or drop. As a consequence, critical programs will be at risk of reduction or elimination when the need for services is increasing.
- Increasing costs for food and fuel will result in greater pressures on CAF budgets for support services for clients, diverting money from other urgent client needs.
- TANF cash assistance as well as TA-DVS income limit and Payment Standards have largely been unchanged since 1991 for TANF and 1999 for TA-DVS.
- Proposed reductions to federal Medicaid funding in child welfare.
- Levels of advocacy for social services when compared with other state funded programs put these programs at greater risk in this current economic environment.
- Infrastructure needs updating and strengthening (e.g., central support, support staff, aging facilities and equipment, outdated information services.)
- In child welfare, there are multiple initiatives and multiple goals within each initiative and insufficient resources to effectively reach goals.
- Low-income families seeking higher wages completely lose access to the child care subsidy because they no longer qualify when their income reaches 185% of FPL; creates disincentive to move to higher wage jobs.
- In 2005, the most recent year for which data are available, Oregon had 1,859 reported pregnancies among 10 to 17 year olds.
- Many families are not eligible for existing coverage and struggle with unmet health care needs. Their illnesses go untreated making them more likely to end up in emergency rooms, where they receive extremely expensive care.

Opportunities

- Transition to ORKids computer case management system could increase efficiency, accuracy and reduce child welfare caseworker time.
- Ongoing Transformation and other strategies and efforts aimed at process improvement may provide some relief for the increasing staff workloads.
- Approval of a rate increase for child care providers.
- Rise in employment placements of TANF families highlights JOBS outcomes.
- The full effect of the HB 2469 program redesign is yet to be fully realized, however, initial indicators reflect increased participation.
- Steady rise in Post TANF caseload shows increased performance.
- Increased utilization of the Employment Related Daycare program demonstrates increased access to quality care and provider willingness to participate in program.
- Significant expansion of Family Support and Connections program, to provide critical supports for families to successfully transition to self sufficiency.
- USDA bonus money for food stamps outreach and nutrition education.
- Developing capacity for online food stamps application/enrollment process.
- Efforts underway to expand on-line application availability to include all Self-Sufficiency related programs.
- Increased revenue through the Social Security Administration's Ticket to Work program

Response to critical challenges addressed by this budget

This budget contains the following elements central to the DHS mission of assisting Oregonians in becoming independent, healthy and safe, followed by CAF's recommendations for achieving the fundamental goals of DHS.

Children's Health and Safety

The Children's Health and Safety initiative strengthens services for physical and emotional health, safety and stability for children and their families, and helps provide every child with an opportunity to succeed. The actions in the initiative focus on children in their homes as well as children in the state's custody. This initiative also covers a range of service needs for children and families at various stages on a vulnerability continuum. Among CAF's recommendations to reduce risks to children by strengthening families:

- Increase culturally competent services and culturally specific services
- Continue refining the TANF cash assistance and JOBS program improvements in services for very low income families in Oregon;
- Improve families' ability to retain employment by increasing child care subsidies for stable, quality child care arrangements;
- Improve DHS capacity to provide services and child safety by bringing child welfare caseload sizes and supervisor-to-caseworker ratios into alignment with national standards and allow better program outcomes, family stability, and more children returning home or finding permanent placements sooner.
- Strengthen DHS ability to provide caseworkers with legal support;
- Remove barriers to placing children in foster homes by providing subsidies for child care services for foster parents who work outside the home and cannot afford the financial hardship of child care for foster children. This would leverage general funds to federal match funds.
- Remove barriers to placing children in foster homes by improving access to medical and prevention services and support for foster children;
- Strengthen DHS capacity to address increased caseload and cost per case for TANF, Domestic Violence Assistance, and ERDC programs;
- Provide early identification and treatment services for non-Medicaid eligible youth;
- Ensure DHS can consistently perform requested home studies for placement of foster children within federally prescribed time limits;
- Provide financial assistance to caregivers related to foster children who are not eligible for federal foster care assistance;

- Provide cost of living increases for TANF families;
- Expanding alcohol and drug treatment services to help addicted adults retain or regain custody of their children; and
- Restructure Family-Based Services, expand Family Support and Connections to meet identified need, extending relative searches, and creating a reunification program to reduce the need for foster care placements and the length of time in foster care.

Community Infrastructure

The Community Infrastructure initiative helps begin to improve compensation to health care providers and other partners who provide services to DHS clients. This initiative begins to increase certain rates above the standard inflationary allowances incorporated in the department's essential budget package. This initiative also promotes a strong, independent home care commission and improves access to local centers for independent living. CAF elements include assisting seniors and people with disabilities to live safely and independently in their communities

- Increased funding for State Independent Living Centers services for people with disabilities.
- Provide the resources that Vocational Rehabilitation needs to meet its caseload needs by fully matching available federal Basic 110 grant dollars.
- Provide specialized training to Vocational Rehabilitation staff in motivating clients to seek and obtain employment, and prompting employers to hire and retain individuals with disabilities.
- Establish a statewide network of work incentive counselors to assist Vocational Rehabilitation clients and prospective clients in planning and utilizing benefits and work incentives to obtain and maintain employment.
- Increase training in independent living skills so people with disabilities can live in their own homes, increase self-care, and obtain employment.
- Increase contract provider rates.

DHS Efficiency Improvements

The DHS Efficiency Improvements initiative upgrades the infrastructure of DHS and permits the department to better deliver on its commitment to accountability, accuracy, financial stewardship and transparency. Actions include improving the ability to recover overpayments, enhancing actuarial and caseload forecasting services, strengthening the ability to prevent criminals from becoming DHS employees or service providers, and enabling DHS to better identify significant risk and exposure within the department that impact its ability to meet performance expectations and goals. Finally, this initiative enables the department to engage in a strategic planning process, a financial planning process and resolve its working capital needs. For CAF, this includes:

- Creating a comprehensive quality assurance and program integrity program for self-sufficiency and child welfare programs to enhance processes to prevent errors and fraud, and strengthen medical oversight, licensing, rate and compliance monitoring capability to provide better outcomes for those we serve,
- Modernize CAF data systems to allow integrated and improved data collection and reporting in order to reduce inefficiencies and inconsistent data results.
- Enhancing training for self sufficiency and child welfare staff in order to provide for a well trained and skilled workforce knowledgeable in programs and policies and able to better serve Oregon children and families. This includes training of foster parents as well as ongoing staff development and skills and cultural competency training aimed at assisting families and children to build on strengths and achieve positive outcomes.