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Technical questions:

Goal is 20% Reduction by 2011: Oregon Launches Plan to Safely Reduce Number of Children in Foster Care

SALEM -- The Oregon Department of Human Services and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families today announced that a new partnership with national foundation Casey Family Programs will support Oregon's efforts to safely reduce the number of Oregon children in foster care.

Foster care placement in Oregon continues to be one of the highest in the nation, and national research shows that when children are safe at home with their family or in another permanent placement option, they have better social, emotional and educational outcomes. Even though the number of children entering foster care in Oregon has recently declined, state leaders believe the rate can be further reduced by as much as 20% by the year 2011.

"Our first obligation is to keep kids safe," said Erinn Kelley-Siel, Interim Director of the Children, Adults and Families Division. "We believe that working collaboratively with local Commissions on Children and Families and communities across Oregon, we can do more to proactively support families and safely keep more kids at home or, when that isn't possible, identify safe placement options with relatives rather than have them enter the foster care system. We also believe we can do more to ensure that if a child must temporarily enter foster care, he or she can exit as soon as it is safely possible to a permanent family."

"Through its statewide structure, the Commission on Children & Families successfully mobilizes communities and leverages resources in each county to support Oregon's most vulnerable children and families. We are excited to be in partnership with DHS working with local communities to improve the lives of children and families. With strong community resources, families can get the

support they need so that more children can remain safely in their own homes," said Mickey Lansing, Director of the state Commission.

Governor Kulongoski spoke at the partnership kickoff event today in Salem, along with Oregon Supreme Court Justice Paul De Muniz, Multnomah Circuit Court Judge Nan Waller, Executive Vice President of Casey Family Programs David Sanders, and former foster youth Josh Griggs.

As part of this effort, the Governor signed an executive order creating a task force to recommend strategies aimed to reduce disparities for children of color and their families who are involved in the child welfare system. To view a copy of the executive order, follow this link:

http://governor.oregon.gov/Gov/docs/executive_orders/eo0902.pdf

"Too many children of color, particularly Native American and African American children, are in foster care," said the Governor. "The time has come for us to move beyond good intentions to intentional action so we can ensure that children with the same needs are treated equitably, no matter the color of their skin."

The event brought together nearly 100 people, including Legislators, community members and leaders from eight Oregon counties to begin a targeted process of developing locally based action plans with the aim of reducing foster care. Final plans will be completed by March 2009.

The counties (Coos, Deschutes, Jackson, Malheur, Marion, Multnomah, Tillamook and Washington) were chosen because of the number of children in foster care and their ability to assist in expanding the work statewide. Each local plan will include six statewide goals to achieve by 2011:

1. Safely reduce the number of children in foster care by 20%
2. Increase placements of children with relatives by 50%
3. Reduce the number of children entering care by 10%
4. Increase foster care exits by 20%
5. Reduce the unequal treatment for Native American and African American children in Oregon's foster care system
6. Maintain or reduce current child abuse/neglect recurrence rate of 7.9%.

In 2007, more than 10,000 children in Oregon were confirmed victims of child abuse and neglect. On any given day, more than 9,000 kids are served in Oregon's foster care system. Most of those children (64%) eventually return home to their parents. Nevertheless, national research shows that children who experience foster care are more likely to struggle with behavioral health issues, are less likely to be

successful in school, and those youth who age-out of foster care at age 18 often face unemployment and homelessness, or end up in low-wage, unsteady jobs.

Governor Kulongoski has designated the local planning effort as an Oregon Solutions project. All counties in Oregon will eventually have local plans supporting the overall statewide effort.

Casey Family Programs is the largest foundation focused solely on improving the lives of children and youth in foster care. The foundation has over 40 years experience providing direct services and serving as a national advocate for change. Casey Family Programs' mission is to provide and improve-and ultimately to prevent the need for-foster care. The Seattle-based foundation was established in 1966 by U.P.S. founder Jim Casey and currently has an endowment of more than \$2.2 billion.

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