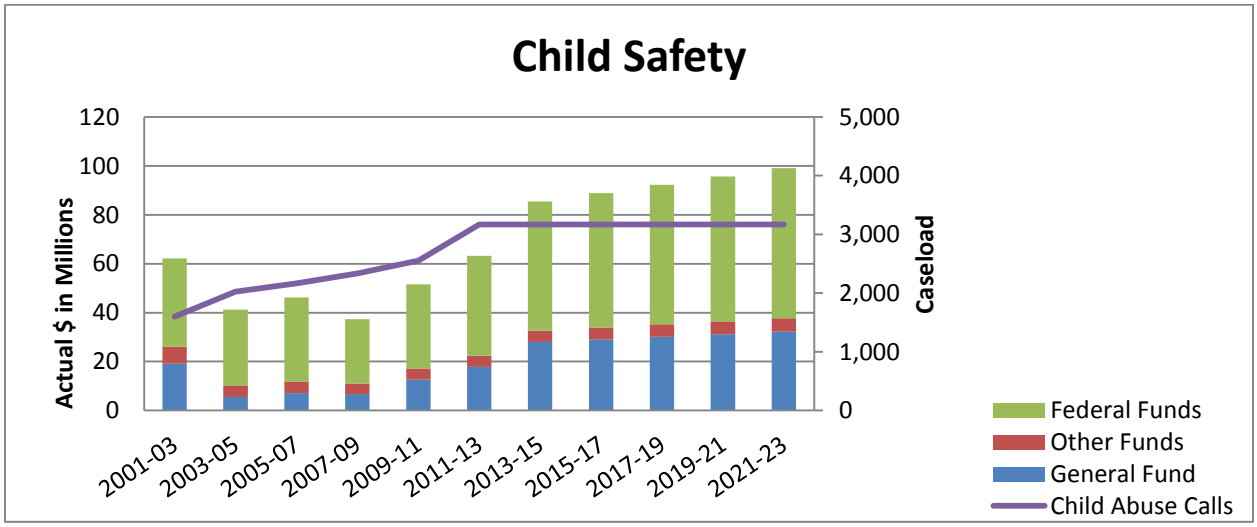
Department of Human Services: Child Safety
Child Welfare Program

Primary Outcome Area: Safety
Secondary Outcome Area: Healthy People
Program Contact: Stacey Ayers, 503-945-6696



Note: Neglect and Threat of Harm of Neglect are the primary abuse categories driving the increase in Child Welfare caseloads, currently representing over 60 percent of all founded abuse.

Executive Summary

This program provides protective and social services to children and families when allegations of child abuse or neglect are reported. Specially trained workers conduct comprehensive safety assessments to determine if the child is safe and if abuse happened. Services are delivered through DHS staff or contracts that require linguistic and culturally appropriate services. They are delivered in a manner that is designed to keep children safely with their parents, whenever possible, and to quickly reunite children with their parents when they have been removed.

Program Funding Request

	Child Safety			
	GF	OF	FF	TF
LAB	17,831,513	4,633,896	40,761,134	63,226,543
ARB	27,992,799	4,633,896	52,744,433	85,371,128
Difference	10,161,286	0	11,983,299	22,144,585
Percent Change	57.0%	0.0%	29.4%	35.0%

Significant Proposed Program Changes from 2011-13

This request includes increased funding for child safety programs in order to implement the Strengthening Preserving and Reunifying Families (SPRF) (SB 964 – 2011) program necessary and to support the implementation of a Differential Response model in Oregon. This effort compliments the work of the Coordinated Care Organizations and the future work of the Early Learning Council. It is imperative that the staffing levels proposed in the Delivery and Design

bid form are funded in order to fully practice safety and intervention strategies as outlined in the Oregon Safety Model. With an appropriate investment in staffing, adequate in-home and SPRF services Oregon will have the framework to successfully implement a differential response model and reduce the number of children entering the child welfare system and safely serving more children in their homes.

Program Description

The Child Safety Program is a subset of the Office of Child Welfare Programs and usually is the first contact for families with the child welfare system. This is where children enter the State foster care system. Foster care is a temporary service, designed to keep children safe while we work to reduce safety threats. We work with families to make sure that children are only removed when they cannot safely stay at home. When children are placed in care, which can only be done with a courts approval, we place urgency of ensuring that children get home quickly and connect to family or other relatives whenever possible. Similar court involvement and approval is required when children leave foster care and return home. This approach is a critical element of the safe reduction in the number of children that enter foster care and with the Department's initiative to implement a Differential Response (DR) system which allows for multiple pathways to respond to allegations of child abuse. Child abuse investigations are inherently intrusive and can be traumatic to families. The DR system is being implemented with an emphasis on reducing the intrusive nature of child abuse investigations and focusing on family engagement. The Child Safety Program can best be described in three sections: Screening, Assessment and In-Home services.

- **Screening:** Screening is the front door of the service delivery system that, with very few exceptions, begins with a child abuse report at a child abuse hotline. Trained social workers screen approximately 75,000 child abuse reports from all across the State each year and collect key information from the reporter of the abuse in order to determine how the report of child abuse and neglect should be handled. If the report meets the criteria to be assigned for an in-person investigation, the family's information is given to a DHS Child Protective Services (CPS) trained worker who will conduct a comprehensive safety assessment of the family in a respectful and sensitive manner.

- **Assessment:** Approximately 38,000 cases per year, of all reports of child abuse or neglect, receive an in-person investigation. As part of the comprehensive assessment the DHS CPS worker gathers information in the following categories: Extent of the maltreatment, circumstances surrounding the abuse, adult functioning, child functioning, parenting practices and disciplinary practices. Cultural and linguistic considerations are also factored. This important information is used to determine overall child safety.

- **In-Home Safety and Reunification Services (ISRS):** The ability to keep children safely at home is in large part dependent on the services that can be wrapped around the family to support them while safety concerns are addressed. Services are available to families during the course of child abuse assessments when child safety issues are present or are likely to occur without the Department's intervention. Services are designed to provide immediate protection to children without removing them from their parent or caregiver. If circumstances require a child be removed from their parent or caregiver, these services

provide necessary support to the family so the child can be safely reunited with the family. The goal of these services is to provide a combination of concrete safety and strengths-based change services that will lead to lasting safety changes within the family's home. These services support crucial child welfare initiatives to increase the number of children who can remain safely at home after a safety threat is identified, and decrease the length of time a child spends in foster care. By contracting with a wide variety of providers, ISRS also allows for a culturally and linguistically specific approach in an effort to reduce the disproportionate placement of children of color in foster care.

Legislation in 2010 created Strengthening, Preserving, and Reunifying Families programs and identified them as the primary programs to serve families involved in the child welfare system. The goal of these programs is to foster collaborations between state and community programs and resources, as well as help children remain safely with their families. This must occur through partnerships and collaborations with State and community programs and resources that will stabilize the family in their time of need, work with the family to develop goals for family preservation services, and empower the family to make changes which may alleviate the need for an out-of-home placement. These programs are an extension and enhancement to ISRS service, and are delivered through contracts with community providers.

A key necessary partner for program success is the Attorney Genera's Office who provides legal representation to DHS for all children under its jurisdiction. DOJ also files and litigated termination of parental rights cases. The District Attorney office provides legal services from the petition until jurisdiction.

Program Justification and Link to 10-Year Outcome

There is a direct link between the Child Safety Program and the Safety Outcome that Oregonians will be safe where they live, work and play. Each year, thousands of Oregon families come through the child welfare system due to allegations of child abuse or neglect.

The services are designed to strengthen families and to prevent further child abuse and neglect. We provide support to prevent the unnecessary removal of children from families, and promote the reunification of families where appropriate. Drug and alcohol abuse, together with domestic violence, are the two major family stressors contributing to children entering foster care in Oregon. By supporting families early with services designed to keep children safely with their parents, costly foster care placements are avoided. The average monthly cost per child in foster care is approximately $2,200.

Without the services and interventions that are provided to parents and their children there are costs that will be felt at a later date in the Safety and other Outcomes areas. For example, often it is the risk of having their children placed in foster care that motivates parents who are deep into drug or alcohol addiction to seek treatment and maintain sobriety. Not only does seeking treatment and maintaining sobriety help keep their children in their home, but it also allows parents to take the steps needed to be self-sufficient, reducing costs in the Economy and Jobs Outcomes area. It decreases the likelihood that these parents will engage in illegal activities and any resulting criminal proceedings or incarceration, reducing future costs to the Safety Outcomes area. Similarly, helping a family deal with their domestic violence issues so that the children and

non-offending parent can live without fear reduces long-term costs that are associated with the child's education performance (Education Outcomes Area) and the non-offending parent's health and well-being (Healthy People outcomes area). Being able to provide In-Home and Reunification Services reduces the costs of foster care (Safety Outcomes area).

Program Performance

The Child Safety Program measures its performance in three primary categories:

- **First contact**: As a way to measure how well DHS assures initial child safety, the timeliness of first contact is measured for those reports of child abuse and neglect that are assigned for in-person investigation. Since 2008, timeliness of first contact has remained about 86 percent. By 2016, using a growth rate of four percent, if there are no changes in our current staffing levels, we can expect to see this measure drop to 73 percent. This means that the rate of our first contact with the alleged child victim will continue to decrease.

- **Assessment**: DHS measures the comprehensiveness of the CPS assessment, the level of services that were provided and the appropriateness of safety planning for the child by monitoring whether the child experienced repeat maltreatment within six months of a prior abuse. From 2007 through 2010 re-abuse rates improved incrementally. However, in 2011 we began to see a slight reversal in this trend. The Department will continue to monitor this reversal but the concern is similar to that with timeliness of first contact. With no expected changes in staffing levels, and with growth rates expected to increase, the comprehensiveness of safety assessments will likely be compromised. This will likely increase the number of children who are re-abused within a six-month period following a founded incident.

- **Equity**: DHS measures disparities in terms of success outcomes for various populations of clients in order to ensure equity in service delivery.

Enabling Legislation/Program Authorization

ORS 419B.020 is the statute that mandates the Department and Law Enforcement to conduct investigations upon receipt of reports of child abuse or neglect.

The Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) is one of the key pieces of legislation that guides child protection. CAPTA, in its original inception, was signed into law in 1974 (P.L. 93-247). It has been reauthorized in on multiple occasions since then with multiple amendments that have strengthened and refined the scope of the law.

ORS 418.575 through 418.598, Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families legislation, was passed during the 2011 legislative session. The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) also applies.

Funding Streams

Funding for this program area comes from a combination of sources that are dedicated and do not require a match, as well as leveraged funds which are matched. The following list is inclusive of each of the funding sources:

- Social Security Block Grant (SSBG) accounts for 26 percent of the child safety budget
- Title IV-B part 1 makes up 15 percent
- Title IV-B part 2 makes up 12 percent
- State only General Fund makes up nine percent
- Family Violence makes up 11 percent
- Title IV-E Independent Living makes up three percent