

Date: Dec. 11, 2019

DHS Statement from Director Fariborz Pakseresht on Out-of-State Placements

The Oregon Department of Human Services goal is, and should always be, to serve Oregon children in their communities with local providers.

In recent years, Oregon has experienced the loss of a significant number of residential treatment services for children and a reduction in the number of foster families— all while children’s needs have become more complex.

As a result, DHS increasingly relied on out-of-state facilities for children in the foster care system who need a specialized residential treatment setting. Last spring, when a peak of 88 children were being served out of state, serious concerns were raised about the quality of care and treatment provided in these out-of-state facilities as well as the effectiveness of DHS in monitoring how our children were doing.

Thanks to efforts to bring these issues to light by Senator Sara Gelser, and Governor Brown’s Executive Order on Child Welfare, we have made significant progress in addressing the long-standing issues that led us to where we are today.

- There are currently 29 children placed out of state today, down from a high of 88 in March 2019.
- Cross-agency teams are working to increase in-state capacity across the entire children's continuum of care. This work has resulted in a net gain of 31 behavioral rehabilitative service beds in Oregon in 2019.
- New contracts are in place with the out-of-state providers who are still serving our children, to hold them to the same standards as our in-state providers.
- We have improved visitation practices for children in out-of-state facilities. Caseworkers, DHS staff, CASAs, and third-party contractors are visiting children being served outside of Oregon. During these visits, our staff have been talking with youth and getting their perspectives.

Our goal is to reduce our reliance on out-of-state providers and focus on supporting our trusted Oregon partners and providers to develop appropriate services.

But we know this will not happen overnight and some out-of-state capacity will still be needed. In the meantime, every decision to place a child will prioritize the needs of the child and the efficacy of the available treatment options. Placing a child out of state is the last possible option. Returning children to Oregon with the appropriate services and placements to meet each child’s needs will be our top priority.

We appreciate the attention that has been brought to this issue and the continued support of the community in transforming our child welfare system so we can best serve the Oregon families and children who need us the most.

There are many opportunities to help foster children. Contact one of these organizations to learn more: [Every Child Oregon](#), [The Oregon Alliance](#), [Oregon Casa Network](#), and [Oregon Foster Youth Connection](#).

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