



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

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September 18, 2017

The Honorable Kate Brown
Office of the Governor
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047



Dear Governor Brown:

First, let me thank you for the opportunity to serve Oregon in this new capacity. I intend to continue to foster a clear and open channel with you about the Department's child safety focus and work. I am writing to you today to inform you, as Director Clyde Saiki had, on the progress DHS has made on that front. I have inherited many of the same system stressors that Clyde faced, but I have also inherited people in the Department and partners in the community dedicated to child safety and implementing the needed changes towards improving child safety. And that gives me both hope and opportunity.

One of my most immediate tasks has been to find a new Child Welfare program Director and this week, we announced Marilyn Jones's appointment, effective October 9, 2017. Marilyn comes to us from Eastern Oregon where she has acted as the District Manager for both Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare programs. Marilyn will continue the efforts of staff retention and recruitment as well as short-term improvement efforts Child Welfare started in May 2017. This will bring relief to field staff, enabling them to improve focus on child safety ([DHS Child Welfare September 1st Action Plan Work Schedule](#)). Marilyn and her leadership will also continue to work with our federal partners on strategically implementing the Child and Family Services Review Performance Improvement Plans.

Also, I will be leading and engaged in the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan work out of the Director's Office. Our priority focus will continue to be child safety through the top 10 improvement projects identified by our community-based steering team (www.oregonchildsafetyplan.org).

And finally, in parallel with the short and long-term improvements in place, I am committing to continued organizational improvement work through the use of data and research. This approach lends itself well to project management, culture change, and preparing our staff and community partners to meet the current and future needs of Oregonians.

The department will continue to pursue these projects until completion using the rigor of project management, data and research, and an inclusive, community-based process. It is my understanding that over the last year Director Saiki has provided lists and updates of the various child safety improvements. For a summary of improvements developed over the course of the past year, we've attached "Keeping Kids Safe in Oregon."

Sincerely,

Fariborz Pakseresht
DHS Director

EC: Nik Blosser, Ivo Trummer, Berri Leslie, Debbie Koreski

"Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe"

Keeping Kids Safe in Oregon

DHS developed the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan, which defines a specified scope of work for transforming the child safety system and governance structure. The project team is now driving 10 priority projects geared towards increasing child safety and is inclusive of language, race, and culture. DHS also implemented a 90-day plan with nearly 20 specific efforts to improve the Child Welfare Program.

October 2016-Present

IMPROVED PLACEMENT OPTIONS



Added treatment beds for kids in need of placement.
Increased number of foster homes and inquiries to become foster families.
New partnerships formed with New Avenues for Youth, Youth Villages and Maple Star to serve youth.
The Background Check Unit now responds to emergency placements within four work hours.
Zero treatment substitute care providers have left the system since the 3 percent rate increase in 2016.

CHILD PROTECTION



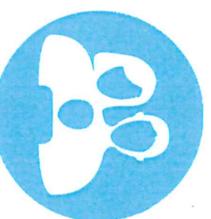
Retained staff on mandatory reporting in agencies that care for vulnerable youth.
Additional safety training completed for caseworkers.
Caseworkers managing cases that cross county lines now have clearer direction about their roles in keeping children safe.
Automatically open investigations when children under 5-years old have a fourth consecutive report closed at screening.
Expedite Child Protective Services (CPS) background checks in child caring agencies

MEET CHILDREN'S SPECIFIC NEEDS



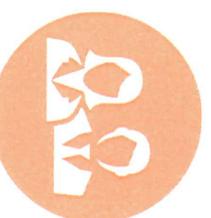
All children and youth entering foster care now receive medical assessments by nurses to identify their immediate health and nutrition needs.
Abuse investigators for child caring facilities were trained in February 2017 to help kids who experience a traumatic event.

FOSTER FAMILY SUPPORT & TRAINING



Foster Parent Support Line available 24/7.
Planned to increase foster care payments.

CASEWORKER SUPPORT & TRAINING



Issuing cell phones and tablets to caseworkers to assist face-to-face work with children and families in the field.
Hiring 28 new positions to reduce administrative burden on caseworkers and introducing 50 positions to provide coaching and support to staff.
Phasing in legal representation for caseworkers to decrease their time in court and increase their time doing social work.

Follow Child Safety Plan improvements:

Twitter: @OregonDHS | Website: www.oregonchildsafetypplan.org | Email: child_safety@state.or.us