



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

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February 23, 2017

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



Dear Governor Brown:

Since the completion of the independent review of child safety in substitute care in September 2016, the Department of Human Services ("DHS") made policy and operational changes to the existing child safety system to ensure that all children in Oregon are safe while in DHS care. The Department has also developed and is beginning to implement a Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan to transform the child safety system over the next two years. The Unified plan launches project work based on the independent review, report recommendations dating back to 2004 and input from community members, such as the Citizen Review Board. It is built upon race and culture informed and trauma-informed principles.

Programs related to child safety are coordinating more consistently and effectively than in the past. Over the past four months, we have implemented the following changes with child safety and families at the center of our service provision model:

- All children and youth coming into foster care now receive intake nursing assessments, which addresses the immediate health and nutrition needs of each child.
- All foster parents with foster children and youth with specific health and medical needs now receive educational training.
- DHS child safety consultant employees were re-embedded within sixteen DHS districts to provide frequent, in-person coaching and consultation to improve child safety outcomes and achieve compliance with safety policy across the state.
- Oregon's thirty-six counties are recruiting new foster care families through the "Every Child" non-profit partnership.
- We improved coverage for eligible Indian families and children by updating department rules related to the Indian Child Welfare Act ("ICWA").
- The department implemented new Critical Incident Response Team ("CIRT") temporary rules.
- We hired a new Child Welfare Program Director, Lena Alhuseini to oversee the Child Welfare Program.
- We hired a new Executive Projects Director, Nathan Rix to develop and implement a department-wide child safety plan.
- We developed and finalized the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan, which defines a two-year scope of work for transforming the child safety system and governance structure.
- We launched the Unified plan website, child safety system email box (child.safety@state.or.us), and GovDelivery listserv for use by all Oregonians.
- We hired a new Office of Adult and Abuse Prevention and Investigations ("OAAPI") Director, Justin Hopkins to improve CCA investigation processes.

"Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe"

- OAAPI cleared the backlog of all past child care agency (“CCA”) investigations.
- CARES Northwest, a collaborative and community-based program trained all OAAPI investigators on trauma-informed principles.
- OAAPI revised standard operating procedures for investigation of non-abuse complaints in CCAs.
- OAAPI implemented standard operating procedures for CCA investigations.
- We updated department-wide rules related to child safety and implemented new CCA licensing rules due to the passage of SB1515 (2016).
- The 24/7 “Foster Parent Support Line” through 211info yielded a total of 143 calls, emails and texts, across 24 counties, since initiation in late Autumn 2016.
- The Background Checks Unit completed Child Protective Services (“CPS”) background checks for all workers on the long-term care registry, enabling more portability for workers across the DHS safety system.
- The DHS Background Checks Unit streamlined and centralized procedures to create a faster service experience for prospective caretakers.
- DHS Human Resource completed a policy change to allow DHS employees to become certified foster families.
- The Child Welfare program implemented collaborative staffing between program divisions (e.g. Self-Sufficiency and Permanency staff) to optimize the child and youth safety.

Oversight for the portfolio of projects resides in the Department of Human Service Director’s Office, with a steering team of community partners to help guide the work. Child safety system work that is already underway will be reflected using the same structure and rigor as new projects, such as the Three Branch Initiative’s work plan and work related to Oregon’s response to the federal Child and Family Services Report findings. Project work supporting the plan has already engaged and will continue to engage with a broad range of partners, including foster youth and caretakers, in an inclusive and transparent way.

We invite you and all Oregonians to learn more about the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan here:

<https://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ABOUTDHS/Child-Safety-Plan/Pages/index.aspx>

We will continue working on short-term changes and medium-term Unified Plan improvements with persistence. We know that improving Oregon’s child safety system is a priority for you and appreciate your support of key policy option packages and continued attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



Clyde Saiki
DHS Director

EC: Debbie Koreski

Attachments (1)

1. Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan