



# Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

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June 22, 2017

The Honorable Kate Brown  
Office of the Governor  
900 Court Street  
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Dear Governor Brown:

When you asked me to lead the Department of Human Services (DHS) in November 2015, my charge was clear: to ensure the safety of Oregon children and youth who come into contact with DHS and increase accountability for their care. This focus is a long term priority for DHS and requires community and national partners working alongside us to improve the safety and outcomes for children. We committed to approaching the important work of child safety as a department, not just as a Child Welfare Program. We promised to organize the work using clear and transparent project management principles, we said we would not attempt to do everything at once, and we said we would focus on both short-term and long-term solutions.

Today, DHS is simultaneously focused on: daily fundamentals of Child Welfare work, short-term strategies to support safety using a 90-day plan with input from all levels of the department, and the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan. These efforts are all based on the independent review you commissioned in November 2015, dozens of related assessments, and valuable community partner input. Leadership and staff are coordinating across districts and offices to focus on improving child safety outcomes:

### Safe Places for Children and Youth

- Certified 660 foster families and placed children in their homes during the first quarter of 2017. DHS received nearly 880 general inquiries about how to become a certified foster family. The department's statewide community partnership with Every Child yielded 387 foster family and adoption inquiries over the same time period. An additional 262 Oregonians wanted to volunteer to support the child safety system in some capacity.
- Implemented a plan to open a short-term shelter ("Willamette Cottage") for children in need of placement in August 2017. This is a temporary solution to a larger capacity problem, which DHS will seek to improve over the next two years. Willamette Cottage will serve 12 children and youth ages 9 to 20, each with an individual bedroom.
- Invested \$6 million in the Behavior Rehabilitation System ("BRS"), which will give DHS a net increase of 85 shelter and residential beds and a goal of a net increase of 150 new treatment foster beds over the course of the next two years, with the bulk of the gain occurring in year one.
- Over fifteen staff and community partners are specifically focused on the development of a statewide multi-agency plan for filling system gaps and developing a "right sized" placement and service

*"Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe"*

continuum across foster and treatment services. Assessing the capacity needs is part of the Unified Child and Youth Safety Plan and was prioritized as a top 10 child safety project.

### Responding to Children and Youth Safety

- Over twenty-five staff, community partners, the Casey Family Program, and members of the inter-governmental Three Branch Initiative (3BI) are implementing a project to centralize hotline operations with standardized screening for allegations of child abuse across Oregon. This is a direct response to the Public Knowledge independent review finding that abuse reporting is inconsistent and was prioritized as a top 10 child safety project in the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan.
- Ordered 904 iPhones and 1,288 mobile tablets for case workers to increase timeliness of initial contact when abuse is alleged. Mobile technology enables case workers to respond more effectively to safety concerns through photo documentation. These technologies also enable access to email and online case management systems during downtimes, such as while waiting for a court hearing. Distribution has already begun and will be complete by September 1, 2017. In late 2016, 250 iPhones were introduced to Child Protective Services in response to the Public Knowledge independent review of child safety in substitute care.
- Trained 126 Child Caring Agency (CCA) staff across 40 CCAs on reporting requirements for child abuse, including mandatory reporting of child abuse, critical event reporting, and incident reporting, as well as explaining the investigations process and statutory definition of child abuse applicable to CCAs.
- Trained 963 Child Welfare Permanency across the state on the safety practice model standards throughout the life of a child's case. Trained 205 Child Welfare Permanency staff over 10 quarterly sessions on differences between in-home family support cases and in-home cases where a safety threat exists. Trained 53 Child Welfare Permanency staff on the protective assessments and case plan best practices.
- Modified department rules to require child abuse screeners to assign a report when the current report would be the fourth or greater consecutive "closed at screening" report regarding the same family, and there is at least one child in the home who is less than five years of age (previously four years of age). This new requirement was put in place to increase the level of intervention for young children who are the subject of multiple "closed at screening" reports.
- Developed curriculum on Commercially Sexually Trafficked Children and Youth that will be delivered by DHS child safety consultants to all child welfare staff from June to December 2017. This training will increase awareness and provide guidance on how to determine when children and young adults have been commercially sexually trafficked or if they are at risk.
- Finalized an Inter-County Case Responsibilities, Requirements and Oversight Protocol, which provides consistent statewide requirements that promote safety. This is a direct response to a Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) recommendation. The protocol outlines clear direction involving Cross County Case Supervision, CPS Assessment and Courtesy Interviews, Out-of-County Placements, Transfer of Jurisdiction and Foster and Adoptive Home Studies. Finalized a statewide Out of Home Care Assessment Protocol that provides clear information and direction regarding the DHS' responsibilities when a Child Protective Services assessment is assigned on a certified foster home. Implementation will begin in July 2017.
- Over fifteen staff and community partners are establishing increased consistency and oversight with the foster home review process. Improving the foster home review process is part of the Unified Child and Youth Safety Plan and was prioritized as a top 10 project.

- Ten staff and community partners are establishing Core Competencies for caregivers and will be implementing a redesign of training that insures foster parents are optimally prepared to care for children and youth in their homes. This was prioritized as a top 10 project in the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan.
- All Office of Adult Abuse and Prevention (OAAPI) abuse investigators, who also investigate child safety issues within residential facilities, were trained in Dialectical Behavior Therapy approaches in facility settings to increase trauma informed responses.

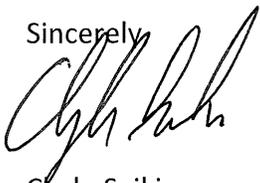
On-going Challenges: Overdue Assessments

While DHS has made gains in developing safe places for children and youth and responding to safety allegations, the Child Welfare Program continues to work on keeping up with completing child abuse assessments. As a department, we have shown that we can temporarily reduce the number of overdue assessments by redirecting staff from other duties, but we are unable to sustain an adequate clearance rate with current staffing levels. In May 2016, we determined that there were approximately 6,000 assessments statewide that had been open over 90 days. The department prioritized case worker workload to focus on this measure and reduce overdue assessments. By November 2016, the 6,000 overdue assessments were completed during this focused effort.

The number of overdue assessments has been rising again, as district staff have returned to non-assessment related case work, such as regular face-to-face contact with foster children and youth and their families and ensuring timely contact with foster families.

We continue working on the daily fundamentals of Child Welfare work, the 90-day plan to support safety, and the Unified Child and Youth Safety Implementation Plan to ensure the safety of children across Oregon. Improving Oregon's child safety system is a priority we share with you and we appreciate your support and continued attention on this important issue.

Sincerely,



Clyde Saiki  
Director

CS:dd

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