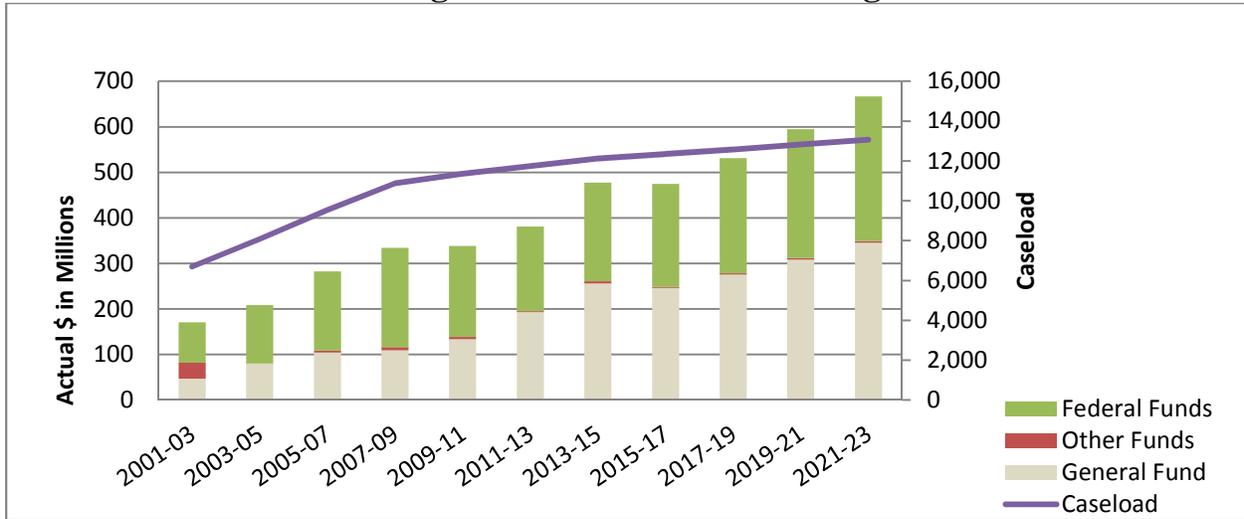


Department of Human Services: Permanency Planning and Post-Adoption/Guardianship Support Programs Child Welfare Program

Primary Outcome Area: Safety
 Program Contact: Kathy Prouty, 503-947-5358

Program Caseload and Funding



Note: Over 60 percent of children served in the foster care system return to their parents. Adoption and guardianship are the next most permanent placements for children. An average of 1,005 adoptions and 280 guardianships occur each year.

Executive Summary

Children in foster care who are unable to return to the care of their parents receive assistance through the Permanency Planning and Post-Adoption/Guardianship Support Programs. DHS helps find a permanent family for them through adoption or guardianship. Once these children are placed in a permanent family, this program continues providing support to the families to meet the special needs and lifelong challenges of children who have been abused and neglected.

Program Funding Request

	Permanency, Post Adoption, Guardianship			
	GF	OF	FF	TF
LAB	69,222,043	932,716	73,471,866	143,626,625
ARB	73,075,455	979,403	74,833,140	148,887,998
Difference	3,853,412	46,687	1,361,274	5,261,373
Percent Change	5.6%	5.0%	1.9%	3.7%

Significant Proposed Program Changes from 2011-13

	Permanency, Post Adoption, Guardianship			
Child Welfare Investments/Reductions	GF	OF	FF	TF
Restore Post Adoption Program to 11-13 levels - replace one time funds	0.11	0.00	0.33	0.43

(\$ millions)

DHS proposes a small investment in post-adoption services to maintain the 2011-13 level of funding. Funding for post-adoption services was eliminated in the 2011-13 budget. The department was able to maintain the program using federal Adoption Incentive funds which is not available after the current biennium.

Program Description

Adoption and guardianship services are delivered through the joint efforts of field and central office staff. When children are unable to return to their parents’ custody, the department’s efforts are directed to finding a permanent family so the children can leave the foster care system. Research shows that children who turn 18 and age out of the foster care system have poorer outcomes than children who are raised in a permanent home. The process of preparing children for adoption or guardianship, searching for an appropriate family, transitioning the children and monitoring the placement until the adoption or guardianship is finalized is work that is carried out by field staff. The process of insuring the completeness of the file for adoption or guardianship, supporting the field in determining which children are not able to return to their parents, finalizing the adoption and supporting families after the adoption or guardianship is carried out by central office staff.

From 2006 through 2010, DHS completed an average of 1,005 adoptions and 280 guardianships each year. Most children adopted through Oregon’s foster care system are eligible for ongoing adoption financial support and medical coverage. Overall, approximately 12,000 families receive ongoing adoption and guardianship financial support to meet children’s special needs. We also provide administrative oversight in all private and independent adoptions, and operate a Search and Registry Program, which is mandated by law. This adds program responsibility for an additional 600 to 800 children who are adopted privately or independently each year in Oregon.

DHS works closely with the Department of Justice (DOJ) who provides legal representation for all children under its jurisdiction. DOJ also handles termination of parental rights cases. Other key partners include county District Attorneys, private mediators and attorneys, private adoption and recruitment agencies, the Child Protective Services and Foster Care programs of DHS, and the Division of Medical Assistance Programs at the Oregon Health Authority.

Primary cost drivers for the Permanency and Adoption/Guardianship Assistance Programs include the legal costs of freeing and placing children for adoption, and the number of eligible children for adoption and guardianship subsidies. Based on their history of abuse and trauma, almost 100 percent of the 1,005 children adopted annually from the child welfare system are considered special needs children and eligible for an adoption subsidy. Families for approximately 95 percent of the eligible children choose to receive some monetary adoption assistance to assist in meeting these children’s special needs.

Program Justification and Link to 10-Year Outcome

The Permanency Planning and Adoption/Guardianship Support Programs are designed to impact the safe and equitable reduction of children in foster care. Children in the foster care system, who cannot safely return to their biological parents, need safe and appropriate alternate forms of permanency. Evidence shows that children who do not have permanency have issues in the future such as lack of education, unemployment, homelessness, and incarceration at much higher rates than the general population. Specifically, former foster children have high rates of mental illness with over half having clinically diagnosed mental health problems, including depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These grown former foster children have a greater chance of using the services provided by the Oregon Health Authority and the Addictions and Mental Health sub-program (Healthy People Outcomes area).

Several studies have shown that children in foster care need a permanent home. The safety and stability that comes with a permanent home help mitigate the risk of poor future outcomes for those who were abused and placed into foster care as children. The Education and Economy & Jobs Outcomes areas may also be impacted if children cannot find permanency through adoption and guardianship. These grown former foster children tend to complete high school at a rate comparable to the general population. However, most of the high school completion is done via a GED versus a high school diploma, known to lead to lower wage jobs. Further, completion of post-secondary education is low for this group, affecting the lifelong earnings and living standards of these former foster children. The low educational achievement and mental health issues result in many of the grown former foster children living at or below the poverty level and requiring more public assistance. From a 2005 study, one-third of the grown former foster children lived in poverty and one-third had no health insurance. The rate at which these grown foster children used Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) was five times higher than the general population.

Post-adoption and guardianship services are important in assisting families in providing care for children who often enter adoption and guardianship with significant special needs. Children who have experienced significant abuse and neglect will be challenged to address their history as they move through different developmental stages. Ongoing support of the families who are parenting these children is essential to preserve the placements. Post-adoption and guardianship services include information and referral, consultation in response to imminent and current family crises, support groups, training, and a lending library. Each year, approximately 1,400 to 1,600 contacts are made to the post-adoption services program for help. Some of these contacts are for reported crises or disruption-related issues. Children who disrupt from adoption or guardianship re-enter the foster care or residential treatment system.

Program Performance

Program performance is generally measured by the number of children who leave foster care into a successful permanent plan, and the timeliness of achieving the adoption or guardianship. The timeliness of achieving these outcomes is dependent not only on the number of children moving into adoption or guardianship, but also on the number of staff available to carry these cases. In the past four years, the median months to achieve adoption have been between 33 and 36.

Performance is also measured by the number of children who enter guardianship or adoption with relatives or persons with whom they have important relationships. In the past four years, approximately 81 percent of all children leaving foster care for permanency were adopted by or in guardianships with a relative or person known to them.

A third performance measure is by the number of children who do not experience a disruption in their placement prior to finalization and who do not reenter foster care or residential treatment from their adoptive home. Oregon's disruption rate for adopted children has been approximately 3.5 percent. This is below the national average.

All these measures are important because they show how successful we are in getting children out of the foster care system, in achieving stability with one primary caretaker, in keeping their lifelong family connections, and in matching children to the family who can best meet their long-term needs for safety, well-being, and permanency.

Enabling Legislation/Program Authorization

The following Federal and State laws mandate the operation of permanency planning for children in the foster care system:

- Public Law 96-272 Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980 which established the program of adoption assistance and introduced the requirement to make reasonable efforts to keep children out of foster care
- Public Law 105-89 The Adoption and Safe Families Act which set federal time lines for moving children out of foster care
- Social Security Act Title IV-E which mandates the payment of adoption assistance for eligible children
- The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- ORS 419A and 419B which provide a series of requirements for services to children in the foster care system
- ORS 109.309 which mandates the Department of Human Services to provide administrative services for independent adoptions and to operate a state Search and Registry program

Funding Streams

A combination of General and Federal Title IV-E funds the adoption and guardianship subsidy programs. Title 19 Medicaid funds the provision of medical coverage for children in adoptions and guardianship subsidies. A combination of General Fund and Title IV-B funds support programs such as recruitment and retention of foster and adoptive homes, post-adoption support and services and training.