Presentation to House Human Services Committee
Rebecca Jones Gaston, Director
May 27, 2020
ORCAH
- The Hotline is still operating 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Moved 95% of operations remote
- Calls decreased with Stay Home, Stay Safe order
- Targeted exploration of efficiencies

Safety
- Continue to respond to safety concerns
  - Visits to homes still occurring
  - Virtual contact when possible
- Sharing info with partners about child safety
  - Safety at forefront, opportunities to re-educate
  - Important to not create disparity
- Info shared with media and partners
- Critical Incident Reviews moved to virtual environment
Permanency – Children, Youth, & Young Adults

• Federal guidance allowing for virtual face-to-face

• Guidance for parent-child visitation created
  – No visits in DHS offices; Encourage visits in community; virtual visits and connections expected

• Permanency slowed
  – Reunifications are still occurring
  – Adoptions continue

• Supports to young adults – prevent aging out
All Oregon placements in out-of-state placements are being reviewed.
Unannounced visits to all programs to review safety and wellness of all children placed out of state.
Additional transition planning is being completed at this time; however there are limited appropriate placements for these youth in Oregon.
The Department has been steadily reducing the number of kids out of state, but due to COVID-19, moving children (particularly across state lines) has become especially difficult and raises new risks to health of youth and staff.
As of the morning of 5/26/2020:

- 51 youth in care have been tested for COVID-19.
- Of those:
  - 48 have tested negative,
  - 2 tested positive
  - 1 is awaiting results.

*DHS Child Welfare COVID 19 Tracking - Testing for Children in DHS Custody*
Resources For Foster Parents

• 6,768 children and youth in foster care as of end of April 2020

• Certifications continue
  – Slowed completion of certifications
  – Increase in inquiries since pandemic began

• Foundations training and trainings through KEEP are being done virtually

• Additional $375 per month is available to foster parents based on need related to COVID-19 related to respite and child care

• Additional rate for foster homes able to provide care for COVID-19 positive or exposed youth, when needed
Workforce

- Most staff are now telecommuting
- CPS assessments are still happening in person, with appropriate physical distancing guidelines being followed when possible.
- Safety and wellbeing of children and families is still a priority.
- Hiring continues but have shifted to developing virtual options for interviews and onboarding
- Moved Essential Elements training to virtual
- Creating venues to address trauma and needs of the workforce.
Partnerships

• Implementing Child Welfare communication strategies
  – Courts, tribes, health care providers, education, providers, parents, youth and foster parents
• Regular and frequent virtual meetings with our partners
• Sharing commitment to children, youth and families
  – Innovation, creativity, compassion

Every Child, in direct partnership with DHS Child Welfare, has launched a comprehensive statewide emergency response to the fast-growing needs of children and families in Oregon’s foster care system. The initiative is called My NeighbOR.

  – If you are an Oregon child or young adult in foster care or foster family share your need at everychildoregon.org/need/
  – If you can step up to meet the needs or Oregon’s foster children and foster families, visit everychildoregon.org/myneighbor/
Other important information

• Building and implementing data dashboards to increase capacity for being data informed.

• 6768 - Lowest number of children and youth in foster care in recent history

• Child welfare using vision for transformation and lessons learned to shape our way forward
Debunking Child Welfare myths during COVID-19

• **Fact:** In-person visits between children in foster care and the biological parents are still happening, even during the COVID-19 pandemic.

• **Fact:** Oregon Child Welfare will not place children in foster care because their parents or caregivers are diagnosed with COVID-19.

• **Fact:** Not following Governor Brown’s Stay Home, Save Lives executive order or not following physical distancing guidelines is not a reason for a Child Protective Services (CPS) assessment.
Questions?