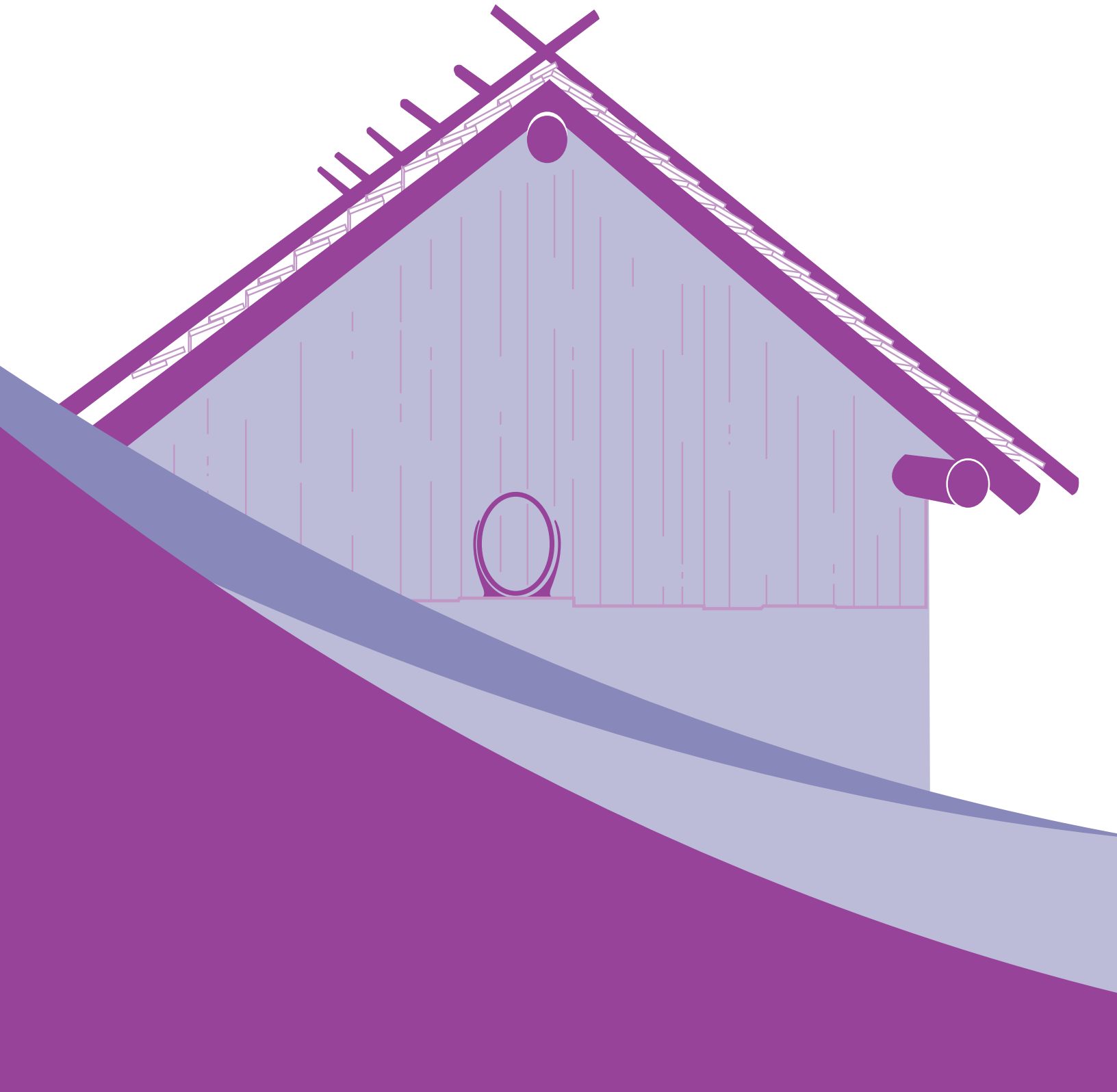


Oregon Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation Update

July 2022







Message from Rebecca Jones Gaston



I am pleased to present the 2022 Oregon Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation Update. The Vision for Transformation is Oregon's roadmap to truly transforming the child welfare system to best serve children, young people and families. The Vision for Transformation is built on core values, with equity at the center and a belief that children do best growing up in a family.

The Vision for Transformation was published in November 2020, after much collaboration with partners, Tribal Nations, and those with lived experience in the child welfare system. Since then, we have made strides in ensuring all of our work aligns with the three guiding principles:

- Guiding Principle 1: Supporting families and promoting prevention, through trauma-informed, family and community-centered and culturally responsive services focused on engagement, equity, safety, well-being and prevention.
- Guiding Principle 2: Enhancing our staff and infrastructure, through a diverse, supported, respected and engaged workforce that reflects and embraces the community we serve.

- Guiding Principle 3: Enhancing the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement, through data-informed practice, supported by continuous quality improvement and modernized information technology systems and tools.

This update highlights activities and actions we have taken in each of the three guiding principles, the results we have seen, and plans for continuous transformation. As you will read, we have implemented programs and practices aimed at keeping families together and preventing foster placements; and when foster care is necessary, we have enhanced efforts to keep children with relatives or kin. Efforts under way to support and develop staff are helping with retention and engagement. Equity training and tools are shaping policy, and we are prioritizing the voices of those with lived experience, Tribal communities and other communities impacted by Child Welfare in all that we do.

We encourage you to connect with us and become part of the transformation. You can find out about upcoming opportunities to collaborate, read our latest community newsletter, and subscribe to updates through our [Community Engagement Webpage](#).



Executive Summary

The Origins of the Vision for Transformation

The process for developing the Vision for Transformation began in January 2020 with internal discussions with the Child Welfare Division workforce at all levels, followed by a series of discussions with Tribal partners, community members, families and children with prior system experience, resource and birth parents, service providers, policymakers and judges. These conversations and meetings formed the basis for the Vision for Transformation, which was published in November 2020.

Child Welfare has made significant strides in integrating the Vision for Transformation into its work. Highlights within each of the three Guiding Principles are:

Guiding Principle 1: Supporting families and promoting prevention.

Key Activities and Outcomes

- Oregon is one of the first states to receive approval for the Family First Five-Year Prevention Plan from the federal government.

- Began tracking and using data to understand how many families are being served at home.
- Launched Family Preservation demonstration sites, that support children to safely remain at home with their families while connecting families to services, resources and supports to prevent maltreatment.
- Using data to identify children at risk of temporary lodging and working with partners to support those children and families.
- Using improved searching techniques to identify relative caregivers.
- Partnering with Oregon Tribal Nations to implement the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act and reducing the number of Tribal children involved with Child Welfare.
- Decreased the number of children in foster care by 11% from January 2021 to January 2022.
- In order to maintain connections to community, culture and family, young people are placed in residential treatment facilities in Oregon when necessary. Oregon no longer places children at out-of-state residential treatment facilities.

Guiding Principle 2: Enhancing our staff and infrastructure.

Key Activities and Outcomes

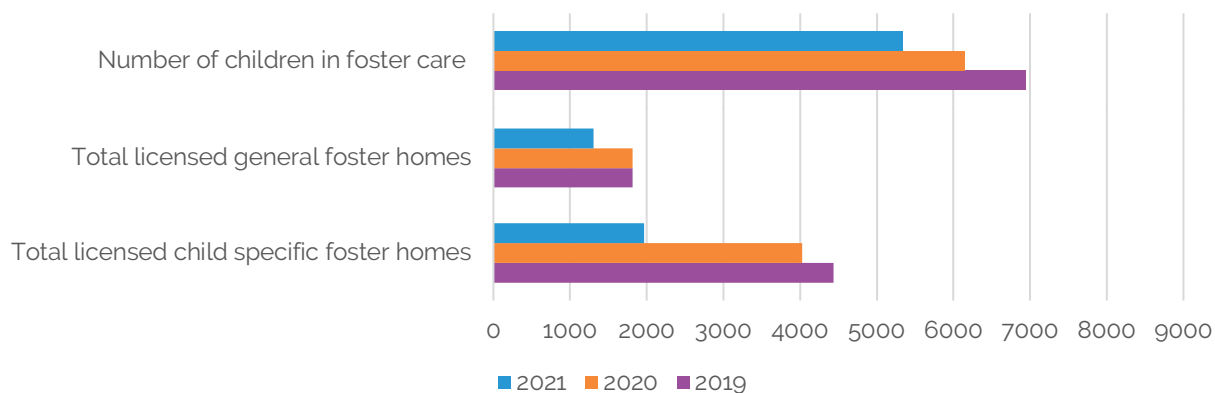
- Partnered with national experts to conduct an assessment of training needs and implemented recommendations.
- Implemented an Equity Tool for staff to use in reviewing policies, procedures and systems to remove racial bias.
- Trained all staff on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how it relates to child welfare.
- Implemented the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) model to support staff experiencing stress or trauma.

Guiding Principle 3: Enhancing the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement.

Key Activities and Outcomes

- Launched the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) [Child Welfare Federal Reporting and Data](#) website.
- Using a continuous quality improvement approach, the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) demonstrated sustainable improvements by doing root-cause analysis and tracking measurements to improve wait times.

FOSTER CARE PROVIDED (2019 - 2021)





Timeline and Milestones

DEC 2019 – MARCH 2020

Timeliness of assessment strategies created by local districts.

The vision for the future of Child Welfare takes form through conversations with community, partners, staff and input from those with lived experience.

MARCH 2020

Deputy Director position started; Hired to develop and lead Equity, Training & Workforce Development program.

APRIL 2020

Virtual listening tours with tribal leaders, partners and community begin statewide.

JUNE 2020

Virtual equity and anti-racism discussion groups for Child Welfare leadership begin across Oregon.

Training coordination and delivery for resource parents transfers to internal Child Welfare training unit.

JULY 2020

Child Welfare begins hosting virtual statewide Critical Incident Stress Management sessions.

OCT 2020

Child Welfare and ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs leadership releases a joint statewide commitment to becoming anti-racist programs and advancing equitable outcomes for staff and families.

NOV 2020

Oregon Child Welfare publishes the Vision for Transformation.

Oregon's Family First Prevention Plan submitted to U.S. Children's Bureau for review and approval.

DEC 2020

Community briefings and feedback sessions for the Vision for Transformation begin.

JAN 2021

Implementation of Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act begins.

Butler Institute publishes an assessment of Oregon Child Welfare's Training System.

FEB 2021

Staff receives equity and permanency training through Alia Innovations.

Domestic Violence toolkit is implemented and used by staff to promote safety and well-being of children.

MAR 2021

Family Preservation planning begins.

Terminology shifts from “foster” to “resource” parent(s)/ family(ies).

Distribution of pandemic funding for young people who have experienced foster care begins.

Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act trainings and virtual learning communities for Child Welfare workforce begin.

APRIL 2021

Title IV-E Family First Prevention Plan under the Family First Act receives federal approval.

Resource family retention and recruitment plans created based on needs of each district.

MAY 2021

Behavioral Health Treatment Foster Care pilot launched to serve children with psychiatric needs within a family setting.

JUNE 2021

Legislature approves funding for Child Welfare training program for staff and resource families, a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program and respite care for families.

Facilitation of Workforce Sustainability Grants begin.

JULY 2021

Capacity Building Center for Technical Assistance begins support training for youth.

Child Welfare launches bi-monthly Community Connection newsletter.

AUG 2021

Collaboration begins with Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and community partners to pilot the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act Plan of Care in Nurture Oregon sites along with Safe Sleep and Suicide Prevention Efforts.

SEPT 2021

Child Welfare becomes a member of the National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS).

Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act virtual learning communities are completed.

OCT 2021

Child Welfare staff begins mandatory Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) training.

Structured Decision Making® (SDM) assessment tool development begins.

DEC 2021

Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act rules finalized.

Federal Performance Measure Dashboard launches to increase timely reporting and transparency of statewide data.



Transforming Child Welfare: Strategic Planning Process and Priorities

The process for developing the Child Welfare Vision for Transformation began in January 2020, when agency staff reexamined and reaffirmed an understanding of the ODHS vision and mission statements:

Vision: Safety, health, and independence for all Oregonians.

Mission: To help Oregonians in their own communities achieve well-being and independence through opportunities that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity.

Senior staff then began a series of discussions with Tribal partners, community members, families and children with prior system experience, resource and birth parents, service providers, policymakers, judges and staff members at all levels. Based on these conversations and meetings, a draft Vision for Transformation was created.

A Vision for Transformation

The resulting Vision for Transformation is founded on building an ODHS Child Welfare Division that supports the individual needs of families and best serves Oregon's children and young people.

Several key points emerged during the listening tour process:

- *Collaboration among diverse partners* is needed to create and implement a strategic roadmap for success.
- *Specific guiding principles, strategies, and measurable outcomes* are key.
- *Racial equity and diversity must be at the center* of the transformation, along with recognition that child welfare systems have harmed communities of color, Tribal Nations, and other marginalized communities, and that Oregon Child Welfare must be committed to doing no further harm.



The Guiding Principles and Supporting Strategies that emerged from this feedback are:

1. Supporting families and promoting prevention
2. Enhancing our staff and infrastructure
3. Improving the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement

The new Federal Family First Act Supports and Strengthens Oregon's Vision.

A 2018 federal law, the Family First Prevention Services Act (Family First), offers states and Tribes an opportunity to adopt an array of services to strengthen families at home and keep children and youth from entering foster care. It is the first major modernization of federal child welfare legislation in 30 years – significantly changing the funding landscape – and aligns nicely with Oregon's Vision for Transformation.

ODHS developed its Family First Prevention Plan in 2020 and it was approved in April 2021, making Oregon one of only a handful of states with approved plans at that time. Family First became an opportunity to support the ongoing transformation effort by promoting innovations and flexibility in funding preventive services. These include in-home, skill-based parent training, mental health care, family therapy and substance abuse and treatment programs.

Quality preventive services and strong federal, state and community collaborations are the foundations for Oregon's Family First implementation. An early phase of the Oregon Plan began in March 2022 with three geographically diverse family preservation demonstration sites. Family Preservation is a practice focus on supporting children to safely remain at home with their families while connecting families to services, resources, and supports to prevent further allegations of maltreatment. The next phase of Oregon's Family First implementation will build on the feedback and lessons learned from demonstration sites to guide implementation statewide while additionally expanding the use of approved evidence-based practices, including culturally specific interventions, a process that is expected to take several years.





Oregon Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation Update July 2022: Transformation in Action

Values and Beliefs: The Foundation for Oregon's Child Welfare Transformation

Oregon's Vision for Transformation is built upon a series of beliefs and values:

- We believe that children and young adults do best when they grow up in a family.
- We value fairness, equity, inclusion, accessibility, diversity and transparency.
- We value the voices, experiences, cultures, intellect and uniqueness of the children and families we serve.
- We value building authentic relationships and accountability to communities of color and other marginalized groups by elevating their voices and engaging with individuals, families and communities.
- We believe that providing earlier, less intrusive support for parents and families means that more children can remain safe and healthy at home and in school.
- We believe that families and communities working together in a more proactive, holistic way will allow ODHS and its partners to allocate resources where they have the greatest impact.
- We believe that when families and communities are strong, fewer children experience abuse and neglect.

These beliefs and values have been put into practice and resulted in families and communities working together in a more proactive, holistic way. ODHS Child Welfare and its partners are allocating resources to better meet the unique, individual needs of children, young adults, parents and families.

These changes have opened the way to more opportunities for innovation, creative solutions, and new programs that improve the overall well-being for children and youth and resulted in a steady decline of the number of Oregon children in foster care.

Outlined in this progress report are examples of the positive outcomes already achieved ranging from reducing the need for costly foster care and unnecessary residen-

tial placements to bringing back to Oregon children and youth placed in out-of-state residential treatment facilities.

While designing a Vision for Transformation in 2020, a spotlight on racial bias and the urgent need for advancing racial equity moved the issues to the top of the national and state agenda. At the same time, with the COVID-19 pandemic child welfare agencies around the United States went beyond business as usual to design new ways of serving children, youth and families. Throughout the development and implementation of the Vision for Transformation, the two issues remain central to achieving positive outcomes for the health, safety and well-being of Oregon's families.

Achieving Racial Equity: A non-negotiable outcome

The work needed to achieve racial equity and reduce the over-representation of Native American and Black children in foster care is complex. Historical structural racism in systems have caused higher percentages of children of color to be removed from their parents and families. In addition, too few children of color were returned to live with their birth parents or relatives (including grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings and extended family members) and too many have aged out of foster care without enough opportunities and supportive resources to succeed in later life.

Part of the Vision for Transformation implementation and the ODHS call to achieve racial equity includes developing a series of new rules and practice changes to reduce over-surveillance, give power to communities and address bias in decision making.

The Equity tool was successfully launched in 2021 that is widely being used by staff. It provides support in decision-making about unintended consequences regarding policy, procedure and system change. It also raises the voice of those most affected by decision-making.

In addition, changes are made regularly to upgrade policies that show a biased and disproportionate impact on people of color, and other traditionally marginalized or underserved communities (such as people in poverty in rural communities). For example, having biological



The pandemic has been hard. I'd been living in a hotel for a few months and was going to have to drop out of college to get money for the repairs I needed for my RV because I had to choose-housing or college. Even though I was nervous about reaching out, the support that has been offered has been a lifeline. I can continue my studies and am taking extra classes now to graduate faster.



—Jazlyn Prater, a foster alumni, received COVID-19 relief support from the Oregon Child Welfare Division.

parents, other family members and Tribal Nation voices at the table when abuse and neglect reports are discussed and as placement decisions made for children and youth can make an enormous difference in their lives and their future as adults.

In past years, disproportionately more children of color were placed into foster homes of strangers often without regard to input by their parents, extended family members or older children and youth. As outlined below, today, staff work to keep families together, especially in cases of neglect that often is due to poverty conditions in their home.

Responding to the unexpected challenge of COVID-19 and other future emergencies

Just months after Oregon's Child Welfare Transformation was taking shape, the global COVID-19 pandemic struck, upending social services around the United States as children, youth and families faced dramatic changes in their lives.

- Within days of the first COVID-19 reports in Oregon in February 2020, ODHS shifted communications and information services to online meetings, telephone calls, texts and email via mobile phones and computers.

- By March 2020, as virtual platforms became more readily available, family visits for children and youth in foster care shifted to video and telephone conferencing. This allowed broader and more frequent connections among the workforce, partners, Tribal Nations, mandatory reporters, resource families, and Oregon children and families, who now faced fewer barriers of distance, time, or transportation.
- Oregon was one of the first states to implement provisions of the federal Consolidated Appropriations Act (CAA) for COVID-19 relief. This included \$1.3 million in funding for more than 300 young people in or with experience of foster care for help with higher education, housing, utilities, food, and other basic living expenses.
- Additional funding supported resource parents, caregivers, and providers during the pandemic. Child Welfare and Every Child launched the My NeighbOR program, which connected goods from community members to families and children affected by foster care.
- Other community groups, such as KEEP (which supports resource and kinship families through an evidence-based program), were able to expand across the state, including Spanish and LGBTQIA2S+ affinity groups. A KEEP curriculum focused on supporting Tribal children was created with the Native American Youth and Family Association.

Progress for Oregon's Transformation Based on Three Guiding Principles

Over the past decade, health and human services agencies throughout the United States have focused on balancing the concerns about a child's safety with their well-being and to recognize the role trauma plays in child and adolescent development.

Oregon's Vision for Transformation includes three guiding principles that reflect this balance and these are built around evidence-based practices and programs to achieve positive outcomes for our families. Each principle is based on the belief that all children deserve to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and grow up in the care of a loving family and community.



Guiding Principle 1: Supporting Families and Promoting Prevention

Through trauma-informed, family and community-centered and culturally responsive services focused on engagement, equity, safety, well-being and prevention.

Focusing on strengthening and preserving connections to family and community

Prior to the development of the Vision for Transformation, Oregon's system had high levels of placements of children and youth in foster care with many living out of state away from family and friends. Children waiting to be adopted often experienced multiple foster care placements without consistent permanency planning.

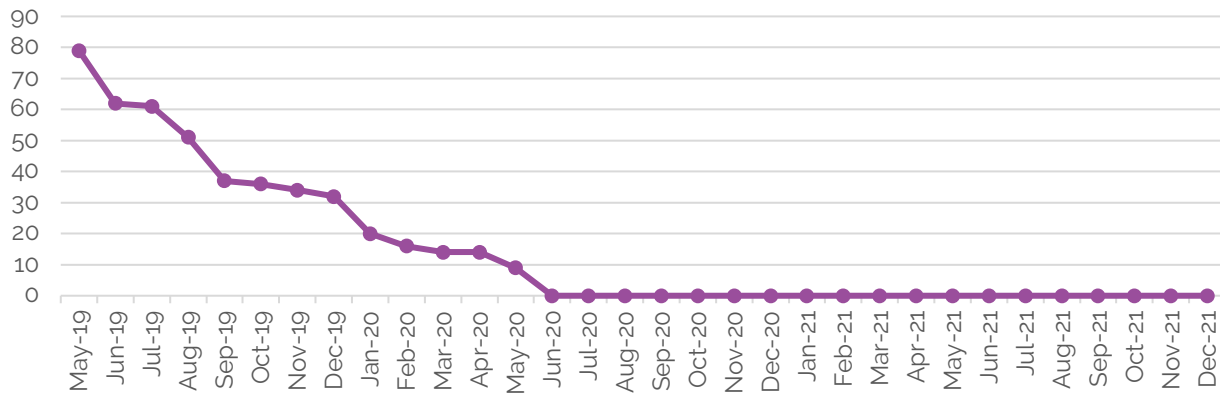
Committed to the belief that every child needs to grow up in a family, the Child Welfare Division sought to build new and expanded programs to keep families together and children safe through special family preservation services. In 2021, the agency focused on establishing a specific set of services while implementing the Family First Act.

Oregon was one of the first states to receive approval for its Family First Five-Year Prevention Plan (FFY 2020-2024) from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. Implementation began in 2021 and has been an important tool for the Vision for Transformation.

Activities include:

- Giving caseworkers training, coaching and support on new Qualified Residential Treatment Placements (QRTP) requirements to better evaluate the individual needs of children in care and ensure the appropriate level of placement for helping children and young people. Thus, any necessary institutional placement normally needed for in-patient treatment, can also include support for the child, young person and their family.
- Working with Oregon's Tribal Nations to create their own Foster Care Prevention Plans.
- Implementing Kinship Navigator services for families caring for children and youth outside the child welfare system who need support and services to maintain caregiving.

TOTAL CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-STATE RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT FACILITIES



- Implementing specialized, evidence-based suicide prevention training called Question, Persuade, Refer for all Child Welfare staff to identify and help at-risk children and youth who may be experiencing suicide ideation.
- Forming Critical Incident Review Teams with community and partner involvement to make recommendations about child fatality prevention.

Comprehensive Family First prevention services will be expanded statewide in 2022 and 2023. A rollout of three Child Welfare demonstration sites, as well as with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, began in March 2022.

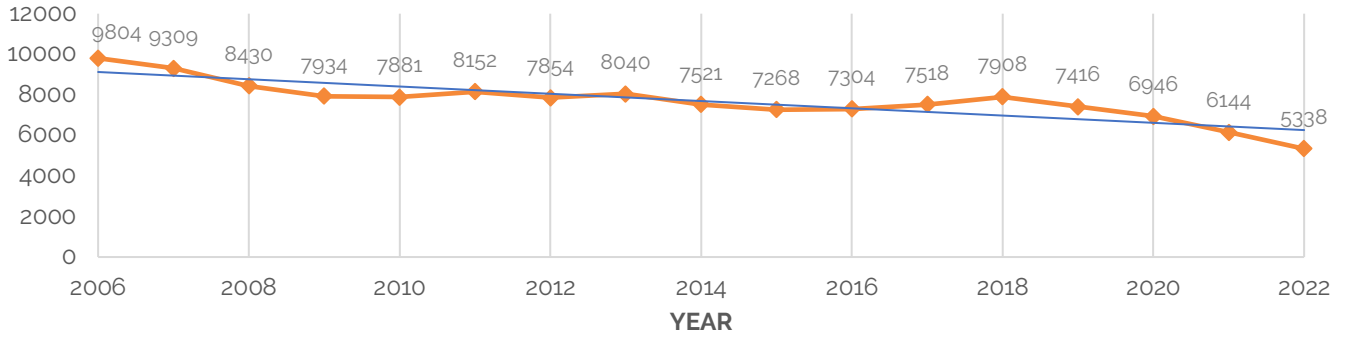
Since 2020, Child Welfare has seen the following outcomes:

- All children and young people who had been in out-of-state residential treatment facilities were returned to Oregon to be closer to parents and relatives.
- No children have been placed in out-of-state residential treatment facilities since the end of June 2020. These children and youth now are getting appropriate services in Oregon, many in their communities.

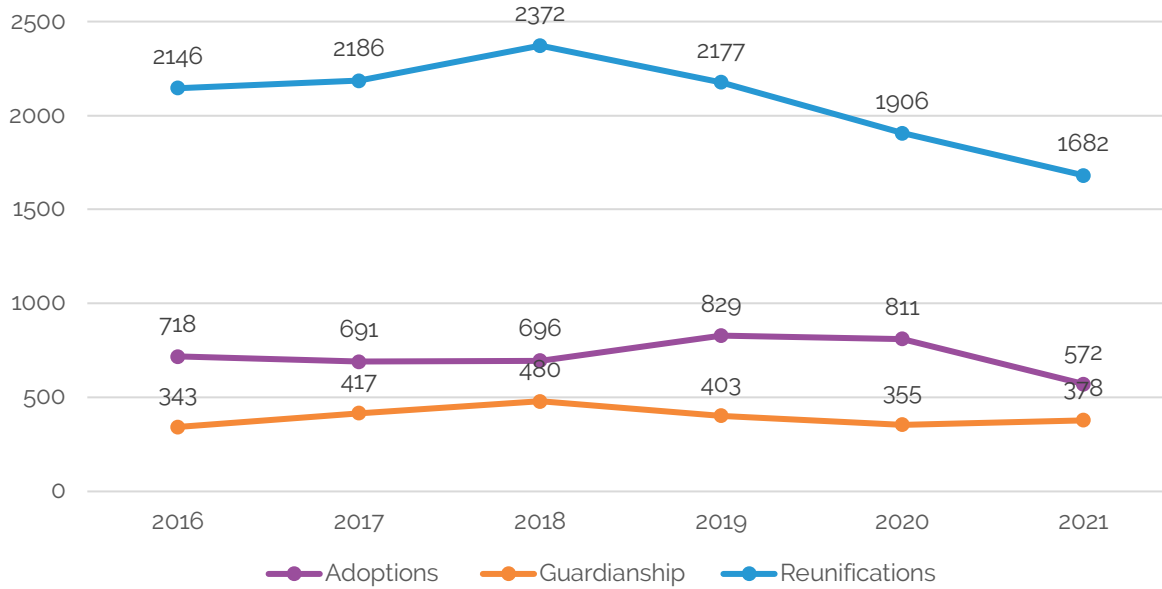
- The overall numbers of children and youth in our foster care system has been reduced to 5,393 in January 2022, the lowest number of children in care in 16 years. From January 2021 to January 2022, the number of children in foster care decreased by approximately 11%. This decrease was due, in part, to better investigations of hotline reports and by providing better services especially focusing on cases of neglect.

Today, when a temporary foster care placement is in the best interest of a child or young person and ordered by a family court judge, increased efforts are being made to maintain family ties by recruiting relatives for a kinship placement that includes standard reimbursements and supports. This has resulted in more children being placed with grandparents, aunts and uncles and other family members.

NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE AS OF JAN. 1



FAMILY REUNIFICATIONS, FINALIZED ADOPTIONS AND GUARDIANSHIP



Initiatives in Klamath County keep Tribal families together

ODHS has worked on a variety of initiatives with the Klamath Tribes in Klamath and Lake counties to advance the goals of ICWA. The number of Klamath Tribal children with open child welfare cases decreased from 54 in 2017 to 22 in 2021.

- ICWA Court. The court works with Tribal Nations in a government-to-government relationship as early as possible in each case. The court seeks to ensure that the rights of children, families and Tribal Nations are upheld in a culturally responsive way.
- ICWA Citizens Review Board. This Board reviews all ICWA cases and aims to make accurate findings that support reunification or permanency.
- Tribal family coach. The Tribal family coach is within the ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs and provides preventive services before Child Welfare involvement. In 2022, the coach worked with 28 members of the Klamath Tribes and 12 members of other Tribes.
- Child Welfare Tribal certifier. This position works to recruit, certify and retain family and Tribal homes according to the placement preferences of the Tribe.
- Peer-parent mentors. In collaboration with ODHS and The Klamath Tribes, Transformations Wellness Center created five Peer/Parent mentor positions. The mentors will help families navigate the Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare systems. Two mentors will focus on families of color in Self-Sufficiency and Klamath Tribal and other Native American families in Child Welfare.



ODHS employee, Leann Wolfe, showing a Tribal baby carrier

CP3 brings community together to support children and families

The Children's Public Private Partnership (CP3) works with ODHS to support children and families involved with child welfare to support the goals of reunification and permanency. CP3 launched a pilot program in Marion County in 2020 and supported more than 37 children and families to exit or avoid foster care through four key initiatives:

- Supportive housing. Raised funding for nonprofits to launch new supportive housing units.
- Safe at Home. Mobilizing community volunteers to serve as family partners during the trial reunification period.

- Child-Family visits. Increasing the number of child-family visits with the help of volunteer drivers.
- Case-by-case strategic reunification. Involving community service organizations in meetings to problem-solve family reunification barriers for specific child-family cases.

CP3 has identified Douglas County as its next site. ODHS has completed research on permanency barriers in the county, and CP3 board members have begun community engagement.

Increasing permanency for children and youth

Throughout 2022, the Child Welfare Division has been working with expert national organizations Casey Family Programs and Alia to provide clinical guidance, consultation and coaching for its workforce on achieving permanency for children in Oregon's child welfare system. Permanency can be a child reuniting with their parent, a child being adopted or a child being placed in a guardianship. A statewide team was formed in July 2021 to review the search process that identifies immediate family members and relatives of children and youth in the system.

The Child Welfare Division is developing additional supports with the goal of placing children with relatives instead of into general certified foster care homes. These include:

- Working across systems to include mental health services among the resources available for children at risk of being placed into foster care and those already in temporary placements.
- Expanding in-home supplemental services, supports and funding for birth parents, especially in cases of neglect, which are often due to poverty.
- Continuing outreach and financial support for relatives who care for children.
- Building on current training for the child welfare workforce on the importance of achieving permanency for children and young people.

- Expanding the use of data to identify children in ODHS custody at risk of disrupting from their respective placement who might enter temporary lodging; instead, allowing earlier and additional supports to keep families together and children safe.
- Improving the ability to locate possible caregiver relatives using available searching techniques and technologies.

Since 2020, the percentage of children in foster care who are in relative or kith care has increased from 34 percent to 38 percent.

Retaining and Recruiting Resource Parents

Resource parents are part of Oregon’s highly valued family-support system. In 2021, Child Welfare shifted from using the term “foster parent” to “resource parent” in order to reinforce the concept of caregivers as family-centered. Resource families work with birth parents in a positive and affirming manner to ensure cultural, community and strong personal connections for children and young people. They are partners in achieving the best outcomes for families while providing for the safety, health and well-being of the young people in their homes.

Sixteen resource family champions across the state now serve as the lead role for retention and recruitment efforts in each Child Welfare District, working collaboratively with staff, community partners and resource parents. These champions have built local retention and recruitment action plans informed by data on the characteristics of the children and young adults in each geographic area. Child Welfare staff work with these champions to retain and support resource parents. For example, in District 1, the Champion helped coordinate and plan the development of an after-hours support line for resource parents. Addi-

tional relevant activities include: participation in community recruitment events, teaming with local Child Welfare leaders regarding resource parent experiences, and working with other providers in the child-serving system.

Other supportive activities and interventions underway to support resource parents are:

- Implementing a new respite program to provide support for resource parents and families with \$19 million in funding allocated by the Oregon State Legislature during the 2021 session. These supports are essential as respite care leads to greater retention and less burn-out of resource families.
- Expanding a mobile crisis unit to meet critical needs and emergency situations with 24-hour support.
- Providing alternative childcare reimbursement during the pandemic to help families access care when child care centers or schools are closed.
- Continuing to partner with Every Child, a nonprofit that works with ODHS on resource family recruitment and outreach opportunities; and My NeighbOR, a program to provide services to families.
- Enhancing the partnership with KEEP, an evidence-based resource family support organization, which continues to add to the pool of affinity groups and resource families so that those children and youth in foster care can be part of a family.

Partnering with Tribes and Enhancing Relationships with Tribal Leaders

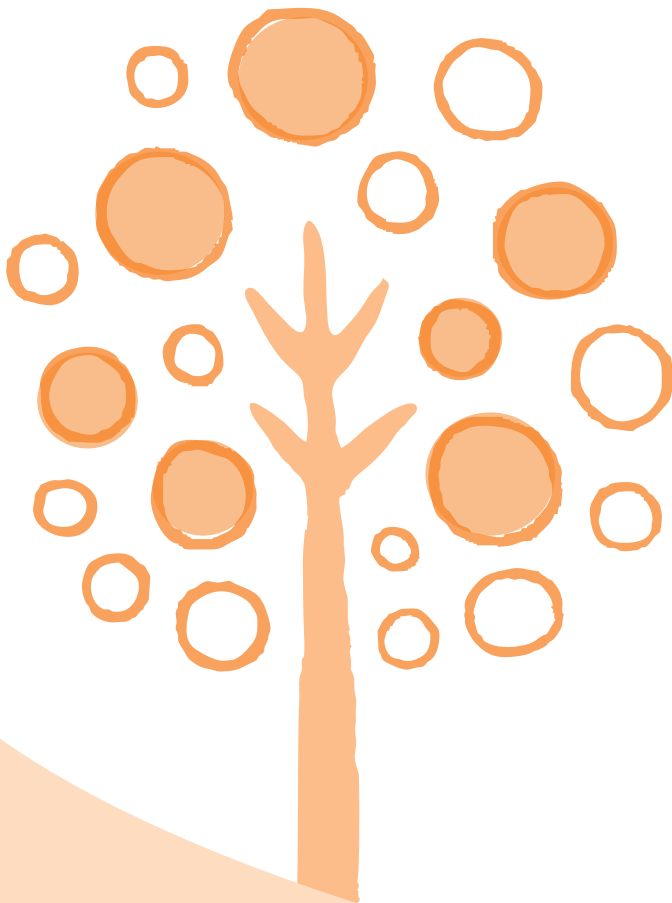
In 2020, the Oregon Legislature unanimously passed the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act (ORICWA) to promote the safety of Tribal children, preserve Tribal families and communities and recognize Tribal sovereignty. In 2021, the Child Welfare Division worked with Oregon's Tribal Nations to incorporate ORICWA and national Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) principles into the agency's policies and practice. Also in 2021, the Oregon Legislature passed legislation that enhances ORICWA, particularly around supporting cultural connections and traditions during adoptions.

An ORICWA Advisory Committee supports statewide relationship-building as a core component of implementation. Results include developing an ICWA practice framework, enhancing family search protocols, increasing trainings for resource parents and staff, and building the capacity of regional ICWA case specialists.

An important public awareness movement, Every Child Matters, highlighted the importance of each child, including adult survivors still healing from the trauma of Indian Residential Schools. These schools systematically undermined Indigenous people and Tribes, disrupting families for generations by cutting their ties to culture and language. In August 2021, ODHS hosted a public event with Every Child Matters that included renowned Indigenous speakers from Canada and the U.S.

ODHS Tribal Affairs Unit and Child Welfare Division continued the tradition of hosting an annual Indian Child Welfare Conference for Child Welfare staff. At both events, participants learned about Indigenous culture, historical trauma, and most importantly, how to heal.

These are stepping stones toward meaningful, permanent partnerships with Tribal Nations across Oregon as a critical foundation for a successful transformation of the Child Welfare Division.





I have thoroughly enjoyed being in a space with folks who can relate to our experience parenting through foster care. So many of the tools provided could really be used to better run our household with so many kids of various ages and stages of life. I didn't know what to expect. I just knew I needed a safe space to be heard, to be resourced with tools to implement, and was especially grateful for a smaller group setting. The facilitators were so wise. I have been a parent for 22 years, fostering for 12, and adopted myself. The facilitators, with their own lived experience and work history, brought their expertise forward and generously shared their knowledge. I will most definitely recommend KEEP to any foster parent, relative guardian I know. This was time well spent. It was an investment into myself as a parent, which in turn will greatly benefit the children I am honored to care for.

Thank you! 

—resource parent who went through KEEP



Guiding Principle 2: Enhancing Staff and Child Welfare Infrastructure

Through a diverse, supported, respected and engaged workforce that reflects and embraces the community we serve.

Creating infrastructure for increased workforce training and support

An important goal in workforce development in 2020 and 2021 was creating foundational infrastructure to effectively train, coach and support staff development.

Effective training systems lead to better-prepared staff, who in turn will engage in best practices that ultimately result in better outcomes for children and families. The Capacity Building Center for States (CBCS), through the Children's Bureau, has been partnering with the Child Welfare Division to build a timeline of workforce development activity over the next three to five years. Activities include:

- Developing a catalog of training programs based on requests from staff and other evidenced-based successful programs.

- Expanding staff training programs based on the CBCS recommendations.
- Instituting a Statewide Coaching Initiative and Youth Engagement Process that focuses on shifting staff mindset away from top-down training and toward mentoring and coaching. The Youth Engagement Process incorporates into decision-making the voices and experiences of foster care alumni and young people who have experienced child welfare.

Portland State University has managed the Child Welfare Training Partnership that has primarily and historically provided initial training for new staff and resource parents, including the administration of the Child Welfare Education Program, that aims to provide support for staff and other PSU students who have both an interest in obtaining a social work degree and serving in the child welfare system. PSU has supported better infrastructure and alignment based on recommendations by the Butler Institute for Families, out of the University of Denver Graduate School of Social Work. The Butler Institute also partnered with ODHS to offer the Oregon Child Welfare Training Needs Assessment. Recommendations included developing consistent curriculum standards; infusing diversity, equity and inclusion in all training; and preparing curriculum designers and trainers through formal and joint development.

Supporting supervisors has become a workable strategy to retain staff. All program and district managers have participated in leadership development sessions in collaboration with ODHS Human Resources to learn best practices for staff recruitment, retention, interviewing and selection. Branch leaders have developed branch-level retention plans that include tools for hiring new staff and providing meaningful orientation and onboarding procedures. While these efforts have improved vacancy rates—which dipped to about 10 percent during a period of time—the workforce challenges caused by COVID-19 and other market forces have made it difficult to maintain.



Vision Boards driving equity and inclusion training in Central Oregon

Over the last two years, the District 10 leadership team in Central Oregon for Self-Sufficiency and Child Welfare identified equity and inclusion topics and did monthly group learning on the topic as a leadership team then facilitated learning discussions with each of their units. This year the leadership team decided to have each unit create an Equity and Inclusion Vision Board for their team, so staff could choose topics meaningful to them. Each unit in the district identified one topic of interest or area of growth per month for their vision board. A small group of people in each unit will then find articles, videos or other information to bring back to the team in order to facilitate a conversation on the topic. The district also gathered all of the topics to identify common topics in order to bring district-wide training opportunities for equity and inclusion growth.



Swift and compassionate communication with the workforce has remained a top priority. In addition to the [Governor's Monthly Progress Report](#), Child Welfare created internal and external newsletters, virtual sessions for updates and question-and-answer periods for the workforce and community partners; and a Transformation in Action campaign that features stories about staff who have put the vision of the transformation into action.

Worker safety workgroup

To evaluate and improve child and family well-being within Oregon, safety of the Child Welfare workforce needs to be a priority. The Child Welfare Equity and Well-being team has enacted a Worker Safety Workgroup to revise, implement, and create policy and procedure while driving agency culture shifts that center the well-being of staff. The workgroup will look at safety in 5 buckets: physical, emotional/psychological, workplace/occupational, financial and social.

Furthering commitment to fairness, equity, inclusion, accessibility, transparency and diversity

As mentioned previously, the Equity Tool launched in 2021 is widely being used by staff to support in decision-making that previously could result in racial bias and unintended consequences regarding policy, procedure and system change. Thirty new policies were reviewed with the tool in 2021, with plans to use the tool to review all standing policies, rules and procedures.

A Cross-Program Equity Coordinator was hired to work across Child Welfare and Self-Sufficiency Programs and to support integrated strategic plans that work to promote diversity and achieve racial equity.

An important training was developed in 2021 related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This computer-based training is designed to reinforce the ADA requirement that all parents and children with disabilities are provided reasonable modifications in accordance with regulations. ODHS collaborated with the U.S. Office for Civil Rights to provide ADA Train the Trainer coaching for staff who work with children and families with disabilities. Another focus has been providing training and development to Child Welfare leadership on anti-racism.

To better incorporate voices with lived experience into decision-making, the Child Welfare Advisory Committee now includes as co-chair a young adult with foster care experience. Child Welfare also meets regularly with Oregon Foster Youth Connection and is committed to including young people on all statewide implementation teams and projects. The voices of youth have been critically important in both the development and implementation of the Vision for Transformation.

Focusing on partnership-focused relations between management and labor

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and Child Welfare Leadership Alliance was formed in 2021 to establish and strengthen labor-management relations. It addresses issues such as collaborating on services, work environment, communication, and problem-solving with strength-based approaches. Child Welfare leadership also worked to create more feedback loops by encouraging staff to reach out directly to local SEIU labor representatives and management with questions or concerns. Two examples of work effort happening now are consistency in on-call protocols, and workforce retention efforts.

Critical Incident Stress Management

In 2021, agency leaders worked to create spaces of support, belonging and connection against the stresses of the COVID-19 pandemic. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) became a crisis intervention model, supporting people with symptoms of stress or traumatic experience. The Oregon Child Welfare Division is one of the first jurisdictions in the country to implement this proven strategy for its staff.

These sessions have proven to help:

- Decrease emotional tension
- Normalize and stabilize reactions
- Restore individuals to adaptive functioning
- Mitigate the negative impacts of events

“

In this line of work, it's good to have reminders to take care of yourself. The work is always there, your to-do list is never done, and it is sometimes easier to just push through and do the work than to pause and take the time for self-care.”

—CISM participant



Guiding Principle 3: Strengthening the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement

Through data-informed practice, supported by continuous quality improvement and modernized information technology systems and tools.



Data helps to tell an important story and puts child welfare trends into context. Part of the Vision for Transformation includes building a culture of inquiry and curiosity that leads to stronger collaboration and better problem-solving. Qualifying for federal and state funding also requires that data be used to determine compliance with laws and policies.

With a commitment by senior managers to strong and continuous quality improvement, staff can now better use data to determine program effectiveness and to measure the progress in implementing the Vision for Transformation.

The ODHS Child Welfare Data Quality Plan supports information literacy and agency-wide data use for informed decision-making. Good data quality is a foundation for informed decision-making, which means better outcomes for families and a more satisfying experience for staff.

Improving data reporting and tracking systems

Child Welfare leaders prioritized development of several dashboards, tools to improve access to data reporting, provide access to Federal performance measures for families and ensure increased transparency. Data processing requests were streamlined internally to track themes in the requests and provide options for recurring requests to better support the workforce.

In an effort to share data publicly in clear way, a new [ODHS Child Welfare Federal Reporting and Data](#) website was launched in December 2021, and is now accessible to external partners, the public and staff through an interactive dashboard, updated quarterly.

Using data to drive education, policy and strategies

Child Welfare's data plan includes an integral process for continuous quality improvement that can be used as a framework for decision-making, to better understand trends and to track the way our practices affect those trends, both qualitatively and measurably.

In 2020, ODHS set up Quarterly Target Reviews (QTR) through which programs report key metrics across the agency. In the same year, Child Welfare started its own QTRs to give program and district managers the opportunity to review the data as a team and discuss its cross-program implications. A regular cadence and structure to these discussions allows for better collaboration on identifying outcomes for families and understanding the impacts of every decision.

Instituting Continuous Quality Improvement and a CQI structure

With the technical assistance by partners at the University of Chicago's Chapin Hall, the Child Welfare Division continues to build the foundation of a robust Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program. Initial support by the Oregon Legislature provided for additional staff positions needed to build a CQI workforce. A Child Welfare CQI Work Group convened in March 2021 to collect information on program-specific processes, staff needs and on feedback from the Tribes in order to conduct a gap analysis. Recommendations for building a sustainable statewide CQI structure were based on that gap analysis and included:

- Articulation of CQI vision and communication plan
- Enabling learning through teaming and transparency
- Development of a comprehensive and concise measurement framework
- Create a program infrastructure

In 2021, Oregon joined the National Partnership for Child Safety (NPCS), a quality improvement collaborative among 26 states, county and Tribal child and family serving agencies. The partnership aims to use safety science and shared data to improve child safety and prevent maltreatment and child fatalities. Oregon already had begun using safety science when reviewing child fatalities, working with the University of Kentucky Center for Innovation in Population Health. Through the new partnership, Oregon Child Welfare will have the opportunity to share data and obtain peer-to-peer support in its work to prevent additional tragedies.

The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) uses Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) to adjust to call volume trends and reduce wait times, as it approaches three years of existence as a centralized hotline. After an initial decrease in calls in spring 2020 after schools shut down in-person learning as a result of the pandemic, calls to the hotline have returned to pre-pandemic levels. New strategies were put in place in early 2022 to reduce wait times for all callers, including a new call queue for medical providers, an electronic reporting pilot for Child Welfare staff, and new expectations for screeners. As a result, call wait times have decreased, and ORCAH is now consistently meeting service standards of being answered in under four minutes.



Overview: Moving Forward in 2022 and Beyond

The work in 2020 through first half of 2022 to develop and implement the Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation was marked by several key milestones: Promoting families, increasing community engagement, expanding and retaining our workforce, and building a useful data system. Amid continued challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic and unexpected natural disasters, the Child Welfare Division still maintains its forward momentum, prioritizing engagement with our Tribal Nations, partners and community.

The last three years have set new higher standards to improve and make sustainable change to support children and families. The Vision for Transformation was created to be a living document -- adapted and adjusted to reflect the needs of children, families and communities in Oregon.

Future work will include:

- Launching of a new online resource family recruitment, training and support program.
- Centralizing and expanding respite care for families.
- Building a new family preservation program.
- Expanding continuous quality improvement teams.



Resources

Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/CHILDREN/CWTransformation/Pages/index.aspx>

Child Welfare Federal Performance Measures Dashboard

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/Data/Pages/CW-FPMs.aspx>

Oregon Family First Act - Title IV-E Prevention Plan

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/Family-First/Documents/IV-E-Prevention-Plan.pdf>

Child Welfare Governor's Progress Report

<https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/CHILDREN/Pages/cw-welfare-progress-report-governor.aspx>



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