

# Oregon Department of Human Services

## Child Welfare Progress Report



## This month in Child Welfare

2020 is poised to be transformational for our agency, as well as the wider system of child welfare across the state.

Implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) will be a priority this year for the DHS Child Welfare Program. In the coming months, we will be working with our partners to create a prevention plan for submission. The FFPSA is aligned with our goals of strengthening the child safety system with a focus on preventing entry into foster care.

I have also enjoyed hearing from, and listening to, a diverse set of partners from across the state. Robust conversation offers the ability to identify strategies and improve outcomes for those we are serving. Some focus areas of these conversations include opportunities to increase efficiencies, streamline practice, decrease duplication, and create stronger connections within our programs.



Sincerely,  
Rebecca Jones Gaston, MSW  
Director, Oregon Child Welfare

### Oregon Child Welfare Workers Honored for Role in Reducing and Preventing Human Trafficking

To recognize Human Trafficking Awareness Month, a joint Oregon DHS and DOJ ceremony was held to honor individuals and interagency groups working to prevent and reduce human trafficking. Oregon DHS Child Welfare was proud to have eight caseworkers recognized for their exemplary work. Director Rebecca Jones Gaston remarked, “preventing human trafficking is not just one organization’s goal, it takes everyone to work together to make a difference in this issue, which is why the teamwork and passion exhibited by these awardees is so critical.”

Recent data shows that nearly 750 victims of human trafficking were identified in the state of Oregon between October 2018 and October 2019. Child Welfare has now implemented training for all caseworkers, held advanced training for hotline screeners in recognizing red flag indicators, and has recently finalized curriculum for all foster parents to be trained in trafficking awareness.

**Lane County Child Welfare Program (Team Impact Award):** Susan Lopez, Deena Loughary, Tanya Huff, Melissa Erickson, Kyle Belknap, Bridget Byfield, Chuck Nyby, Melissa McCormack. **North Clackamas Child Welfare Program (Above & Beyond Award):** Kelly Walsh



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# About the Oregon Child Welfare Progress Report

In March 2018, Governor Kate Brown requested a monthly progress report on Child Welfare. In April 2019, the Governor issued Executive Order No. 19-03 (<https://go.usa.gov/xVnH6>) which created a Child Welfare Oversight Board to assist her in making and implementing recommendations to improve Oregon's system for supporting safe children and thriving families. The report is published monthly and was revised in October 2019 to share progress in specific areas connected to the directives from the Governor and the Board.

For more information, contact the Child Welfare Director's Office at [ChildWelfare.DirectorsOffice@state.or.us](mailto:ChildWelfare.DirectorsOffice@state.or.us) or (503) 945-6953.

Past Oregon Child Welfare Progress Reports are posted at [www.oregon.gov/dhs](http://www.oregon.gov/dhs).

See the annual Child Welfare Data Books (<https://go.usa.gov/xVnHU>).

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## Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Child Safety</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| Open Assessments and Recurrence of Maltreatment .....                  | 4         |
| Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRTs) .....                           | 4         |
| Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH).....                                | 5         |
| <b>Foster Care</b> .....   | <b>6</b>  |
| Certified Providers Trendlines and Foster Home Capacity.....           | 7         |
| Factors for Children Entering Foster Care .....                        | 7         |
| Youth in Foster Care Receiving Treatment Services Outside Oregon ..... | 8         |
| <b>Children and Youth in Temporary Lodging</b> .....                   | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>Child Welfare Workforce</b> .....                                   | <b>10</b> |
| Trend in Social Service Specialist (SSS1) Staffing .....               | 10        |
| <b>Operational Support</b> .....                                       | <b>11</b> |
| Public Records Request Processing .....                                | 11        |
| <b>January Priorities</b> .....  | <b>11</b> |

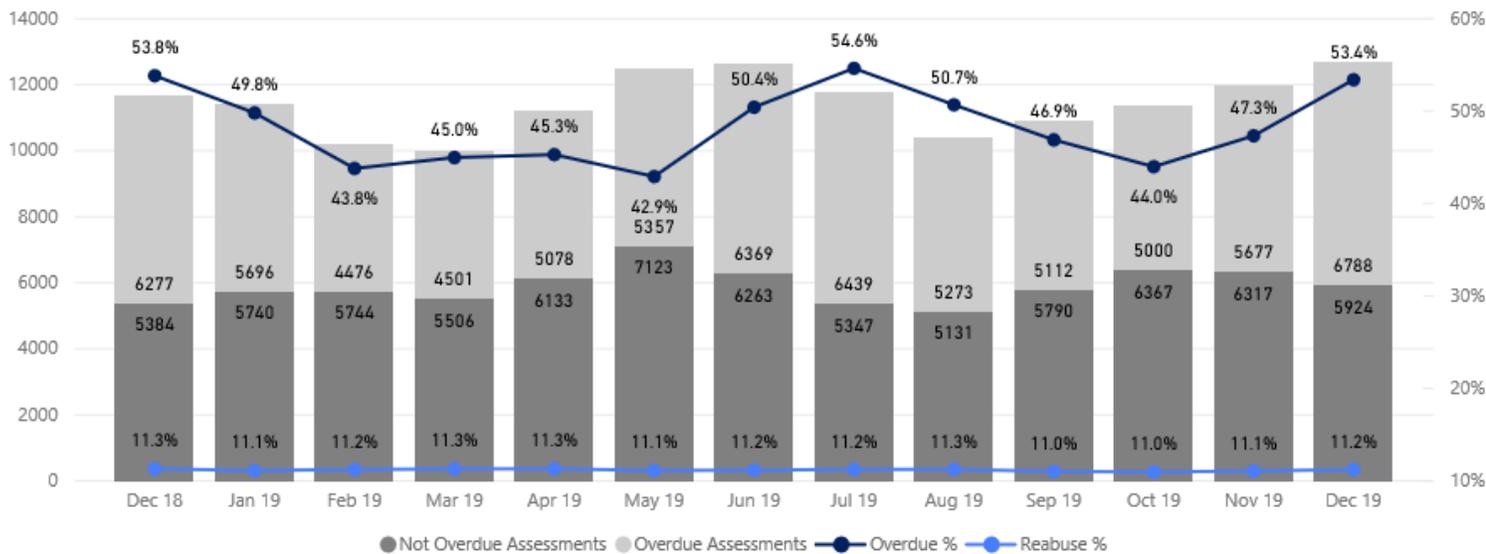
# Child Safety

Child Welfare receives reports of potential child abuse, assesses situations and prepares safety plans to assist children and families, working closely with law enforcement and other community partners. In some cases, a safety plan is put in place, which enables a child to stay at home with the family. When child safety can't be ensured in the home, an out-of-home safety plan is developed where DHS considers relative placement as its first option, followed by foster care.

## Open Assessments and Recurrence of Maltreatment

Child Protective Services (CPS) assessments describe our response to a report of child abuse and if needed, the level of intervention necessary for children to be safe. With the high caseloads workers carry, situations with present or impending danger take priority, resulting in a backlog of overdue assessments. Child Welfare is implementing two plans simultaneously: One to reduce the backlog of overdue assessments and a second sustainability plan for timely completion of new assessments to prevent future backlogs. This chart reflects the percentage of children who were victims of another substantiated or indicated maltreatment allegation (recurrence of maltreatment, or listed on this chart as “re-abuse”) within 12 months of their initial report. The federal target is 9.1 percent.

Data from January 15, 2020



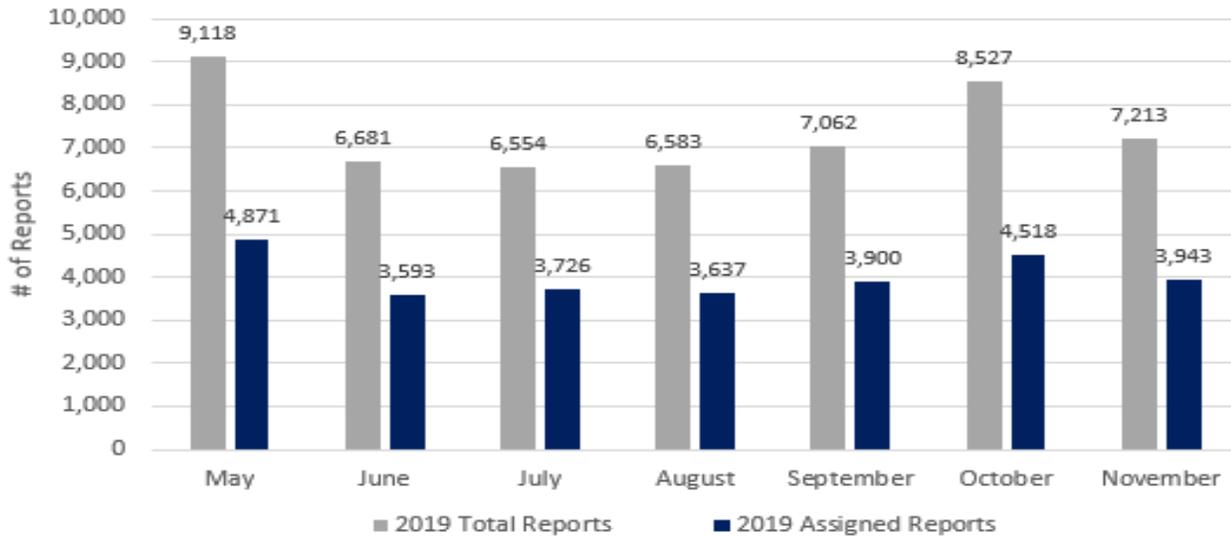
## Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRT)

Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRT) are formed to investigate child fatalities when the victim, their siblings or other children living in the household have had previous interactions with Child Welfare within 12 months of the fatality. CIRTs focus on identifying systemic issues contributing to a child fatality and how they can be corrected or minimized to prevent future fatalities. The new Child Fatality Review and Prevention program is in the process of hiring two new coordinator positions and will report to the Oregon DHS Director. In December, CIRTs were gathered for 4 cases.

# Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH)

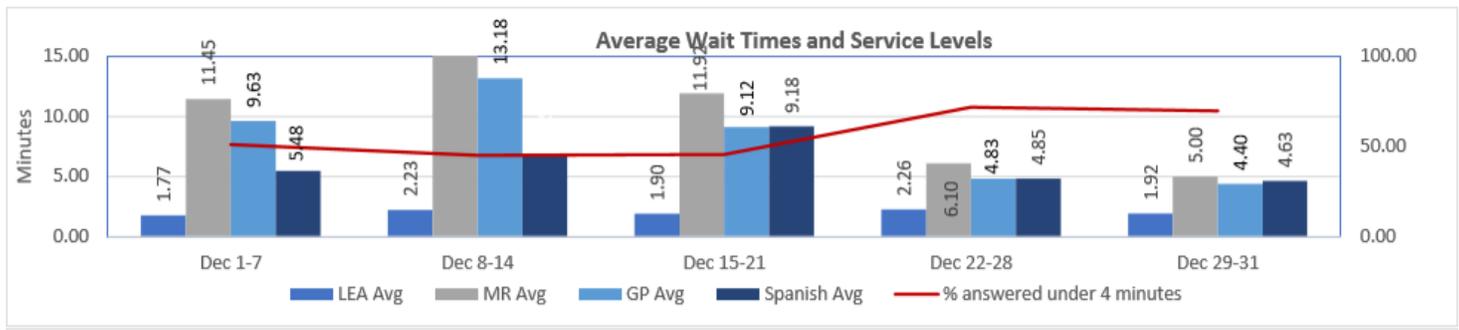
Over 2019, 15 regional child abuse reporting hotlines were centralized into a single hotline called the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) to improve safety, consistency and customer service. By consolidating 15 regional hotlines into one and streamlining screening processes, Child Protective Services (CPS) workers are better able to meet the complex needs of the diverse communities that make up our state. As part of this streamlining plan, all screening staff are being trained in the same interpretation of rule and Child Welfare policies and procedures. This ensures that all children and families are served and evaluated in a consistent way.

## ORCAH total reports



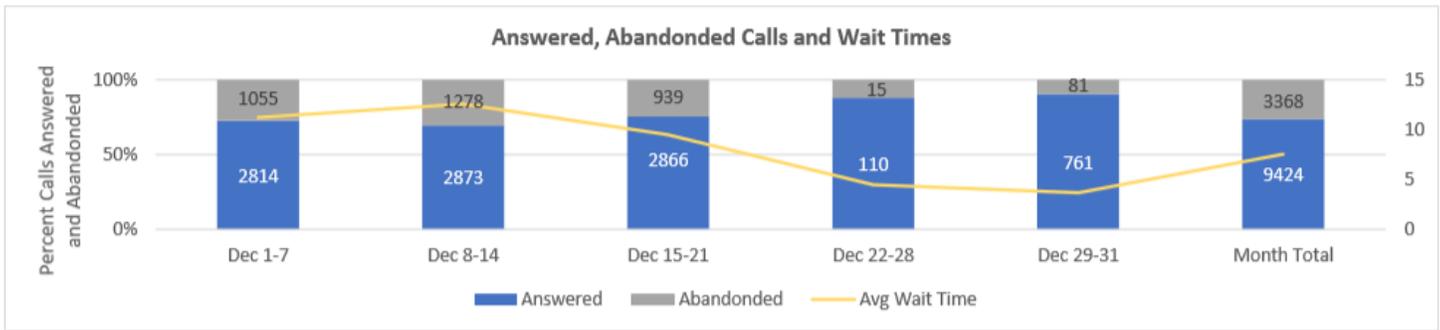
## ORCAH average wait times

Average wait time measures the wait times for all categories of callers. ORCAH continues hiring and training screeners, and improving business processes, which will assist in reducing wait times. In December, the service level goal was to answer within four minutes.



Definitions: LEA: Law enforcement agency; MR: MR: Mandatory reporter; GP: General public; Spanish: Spanish language line

## Maximum wait times for December 2019



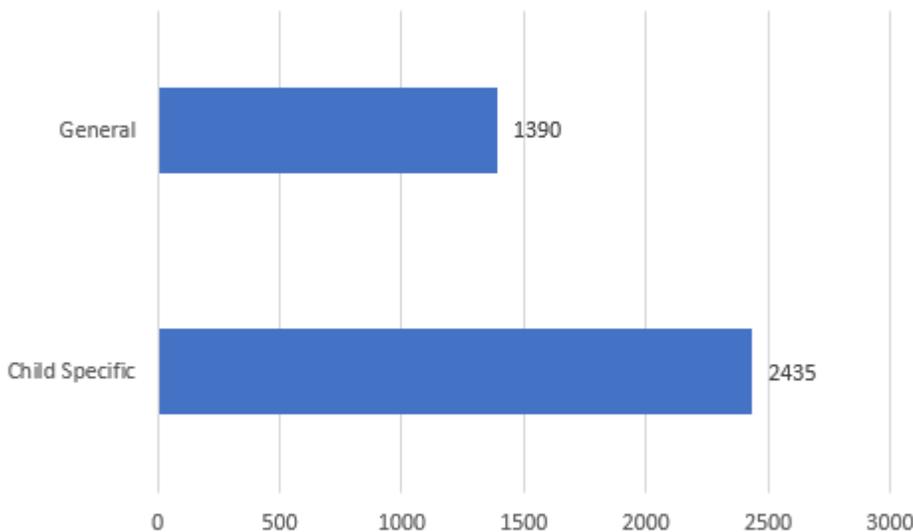
Contacts=Calls and Emails ORCAH received  
 ORKids Reports=Calls and Emails that resulted in a documented report  
 Spanish Queue makes up no more than 1% of ORCAH calls.

## Foster Care

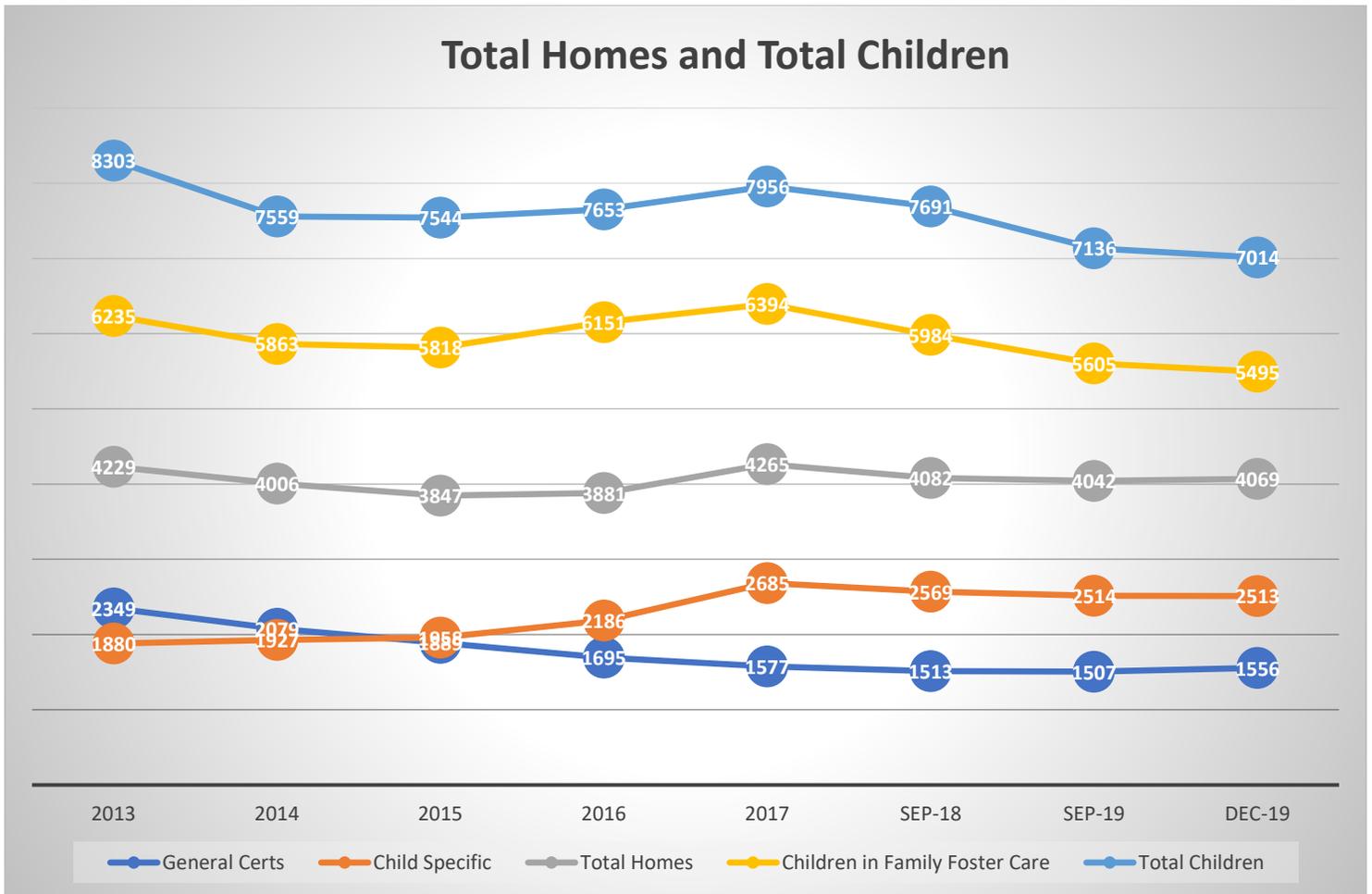
Foster care efforts are focused in three primary categories: Safely reducing the number of children who enter the foster care system; safely reducing the length of stay in the foster care system; and increasing foster system capacity to match the unique needs of every child with a safe, stable and caring foster home in their community.

### DHS certified providers: increasing capacity

Having more foster homes available that are able to meet a child's individual care needs will help ensure an appropriate first-time placement. DHS has a variety of efforts aimed at increasing the number of available foster homes, including a recruitment partnership with Every Child (currently in multiple counties and aiming for a presence in all counties by 2022) and the hiring of 15 foster family recruitment champions to cover Oregon by the end of 2020. These charts reflect data as of December 31, 2019, and show how the trendline of types of homes and children in care have tracked in parallel fashion since 2013. In December, and for the first time in seven years, we've seen the first uptick in total number of foster homes (including General Applicant foster home) while our number of children in care has declined.



## Total Homes and Total Children



**Definitions:** **Certificate of Approval (General Certs):** A document DHS issues to a certified family to approve the operation of a home to provide care for a child or young adult in the care or custody of DHS and for whom DHS determines a placement is needed. **Child Specific:** These are foster homes that are open only for specific children, often kinship/relative family placements. **Children in Family Foster Care:** The number of children in DHS care who are determined to need family foster care rather than treatment or a higher level of care.

## Factors for children entering foster care

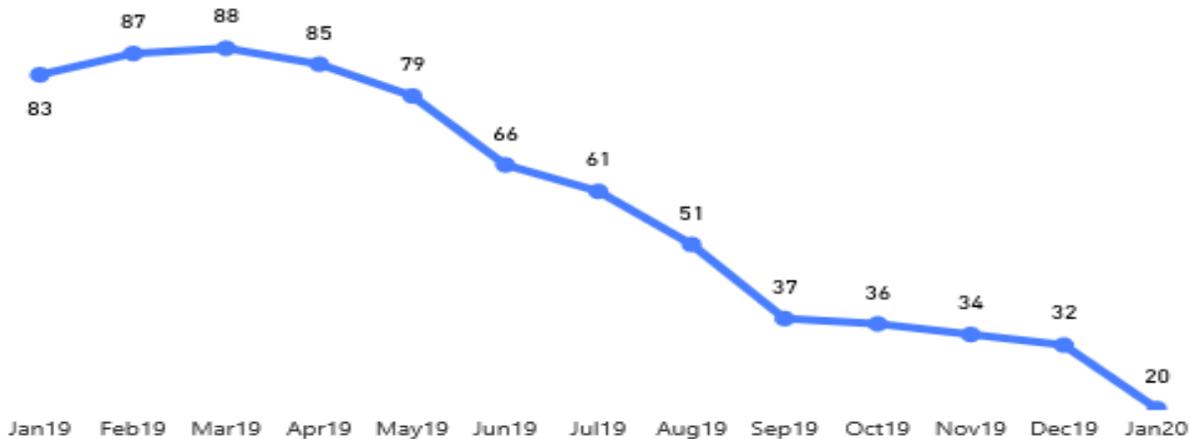
Data reflects the primary reason for children entering care in the month of November. A child may have more than one factor related to entry. Total # of children= 205

|                      |            |
|----------------------|------------|
| Abandon              | 4          |
| Child Alcohol Abuse  | 2          |
| Child Disability     | 3          |
| Child Drug Abuse     | 3          |
| Child_Behavior       | 11         |
| Domestic Violence    | 53         |
| Inadequate Housing   | 57         |
| Neglect              | 166        |
| Parent Alcohol Abuse | 21         |
| Parent Drug Abuse    | 101        |
| Parent Incapacity    | 27         |
| Parent Incarceration | 19         |
| Physical Abuse       | 23         |
| Sexual Abuse         | 3          |
| <b>Grand Total</b>   | <b>493</b> |

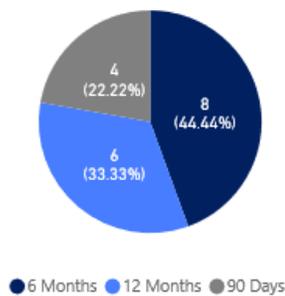
## Youth in foster care receiving treatment services outside Oregon

Oregon does not have capacity in residential treatment programs to serve all children and youth with complex or specialized needs. As a result, DHS sometimes places youth in treatment programs outside of Oregon. DHS is working with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and other partners to expand capacity to serve children and youth in Oregon.

**Total Children Out of State**

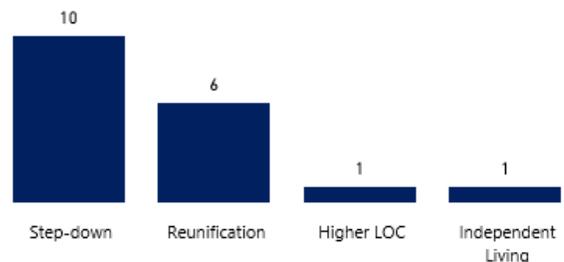


**Timeline for Completing Treatment**



**Note:** Timeline is time in which kids are expected to be done with treatment and back in-state

**Return Plan Category**



\*Return plan and treatment data as of 1/15/2020

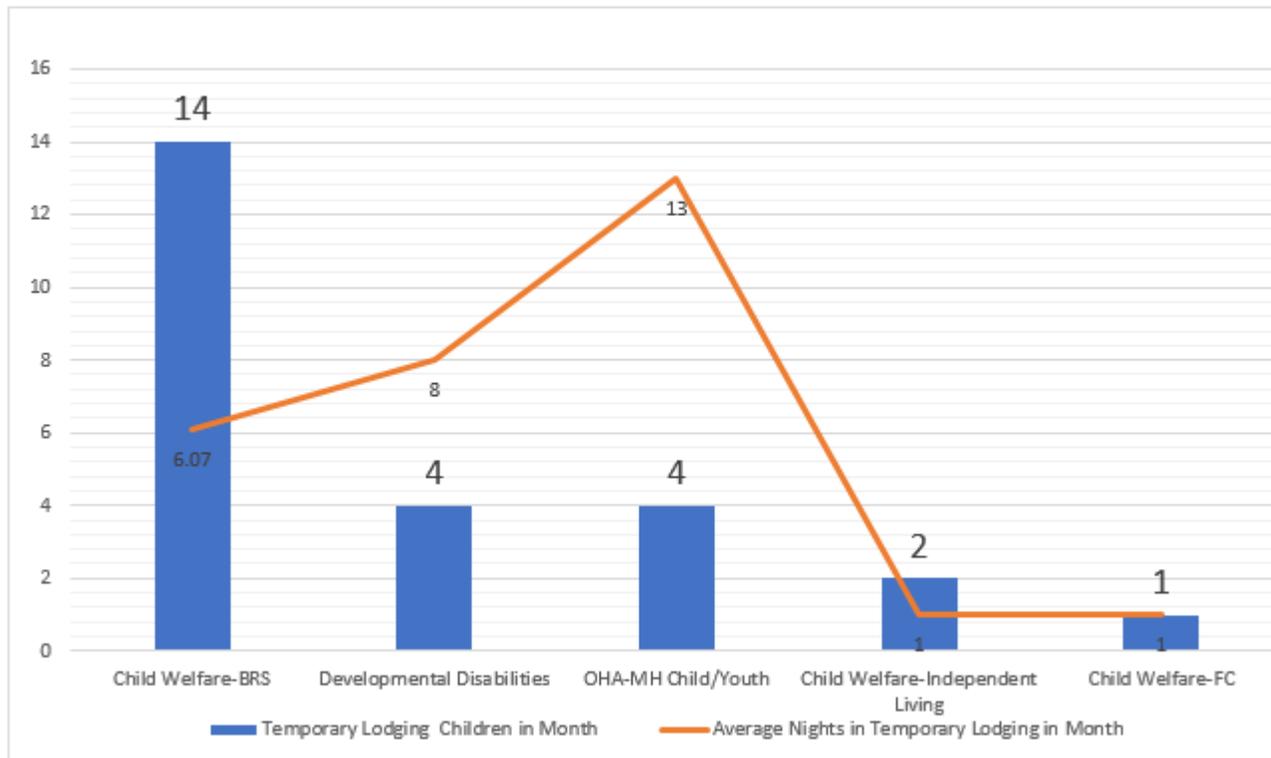
# Children and young adults in foster care in temporary lodging

All children and young adults in the custody of Child Welfare should be provided services and placements that meet their needs. When efforts to find an immediate placement are exhausted, a child or young adult may experience temporary lodging. Temporary lodging involves a child or young adult being housed in a hotel with DHS staff while an appropriate placement is developed. Those in temporary lodging have access to school and appropriate daytime activities. Oregon currently lacks the type of services or capacity among existing providers to meet the needs of all children and young adults in its care in an appropriate placement. Child Welfare continues working to decrease the use of temporary lodging.

## Children and young adults in temporary lodging in December 2019

| Total children in temporary lodging for December | Total children currently in temporary lodging (as of 1/09/20) |
|--|---|
| <b>24</b>  | <b>3</b>  |

Children in Temporary Lodging and Average Nights spent in December 2019 by placement Level of Care



\*The sum of children by placement level of care can be greater than the number of unique children served in the month if children experience multiple temporary lodging occasions in that month in two separate level of care placements.

# Child Welfare Workforce

With investments from the Oregon State Legislature, Child Welfare is hiring new positions to reduce caseloads to more manageable levels in line with national averages and at the same time, working to reduce staff turnover.

## Trend in Social Service Specialist (SSS1) staffing

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Total # of New SSS1 Caseworkers                  | 14 |
| Total # of SSS1 Caseworker Separations           | 2  |
| Total # of SSS1 Caseworker Promotions            | 0  |
| Retirements (already counted within Separations) | 0  |

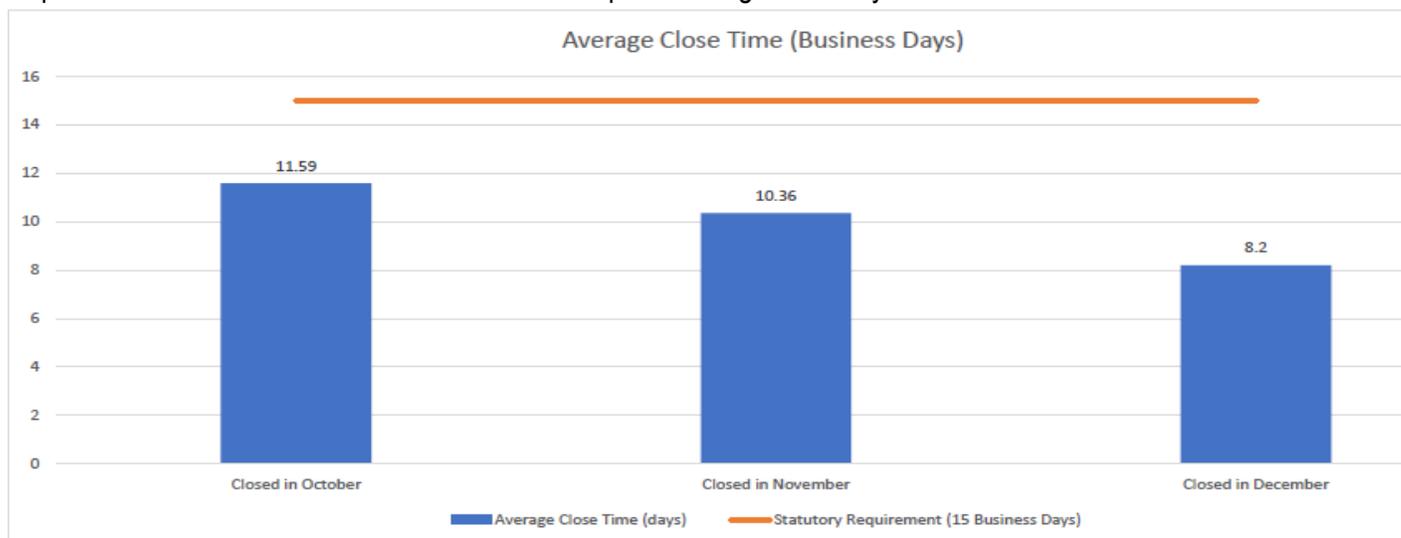
This is a monthly picture of the SSS1 workforce, which includes every type of caseworker position. The table reflects the most recent data available for December 2019, pulled 1/15/2020.

## Operational Support

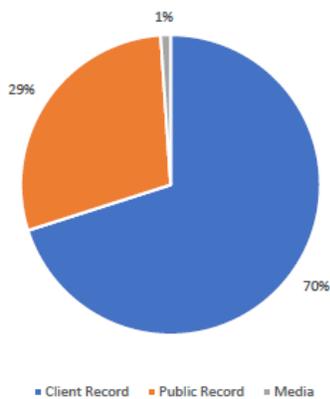
The Governor's Executive Order included direction to address operational challenges, including compliance with public records law and ensuring accurate and timely data is available to improve operations, processes and decision-making.

### Public records request processing

DHS created a centralized Public Records Unit (PRU) in June 2019 to respond to public records requests, track policy compliance and report outcomes. The charts reflect the types of public records requests received and the average time to close the requests. The PRU has continued reducing average processing time from 11.5 days in October to 8.2 days in December. In compliance with statute, we acknowledge requests within five business days and make every effort to complete requests within 15 business days. On the rare occasion that we are unable to complete a request within 15 business days, we send a notice regarding why we need more time and providing a new estimate of when we will complete the request. These instances could include: DHS needing more information; the staff needed to finish the request are unavailable or the number of other requests being worked by DHS makes the deadline unrealistic.



Type of Requests in December



## January priorities

### CHILD SAFETY:

- CIRT (Critical Incident Review Team) leadership met with DHS Shared Services to develop a 2020 plan for Suicide Prevention Training for all DHS staff and will be hiring two new CIRT coordinators.

### FOSTER CARE AND TREATMENT SERVICES:

- DHS Child Welfare is partnering with the OHSU Collaborative Problem Solving Project to provide online Collaborative Problem Solving training for foster parents starting in February.
- We continue Family First Prevention Services Act preparations and are working collaboratively with Oregon Health Authority on several shared initiatives, including creating a charter for the Mobile Response effort, designed to help children and youth in care experiencing emotional or behavioral crises. The services will be planned to defuse an immediate crisis, keep children and their families safe, qualify youth for additional service through assessment, and maintain the children in their current living situation (such as a foster home, treatment home or group home) in the community.
- Child Welfare received funding in its 2019-21 budget to expand the KEEP program statewide. KEEP is a foster parent support and training program designed to stabilize placements of youth in foster homes. Currently, there are active groups covering Multnomah, Washington, Clackamas, Columbia and Lane Counties. Provider contracts have been signed to serve Marion, Yamhill, Polk, Douglas, Deschutes, Jefferson, Crook, Jackson and Josephine Counties and groups will start in February/March. In addition, four active Tele-KEEP groups are active, especially important for rural foster families, and the program now offers Spanish language Tele-KEEP groups.

### OPERATIONAL SUPPORT:

- The development and deployment of the automated dashboards for child welfare data as requested by the Governor and consultant group, A&M, is underway, helping connect staff with real time data.
- The first training for the initial implementation sites for Safety at Reunification is planned for January in District 4.
- In January, we will develop and launch a workgroup to consider improvements to child welfare staff engagement, development of a complementary supervisor survey, and planning for next steps within research upon data collection from the survey.

### TEMPORARY LODGING:

- 
- Implement cross-agency executive oversight communication mechanisms for children or young adults in Temporary Lodging 5 nights or longer
  - Implement an automated data dashboard to assist with transparency and reduce manual tracking processes
  - Identify and improve inefficiencies in the communications processes between Child Welfare, Oregon Health Authority and CCOs to maintain services and improve stabilization efforts

**WORKFORCE:**

- Onboarding new Training and Workforce Manager to focus on training and retention of workers.
- Opening new recruitments to establish applicant pools for Child Welfare districts and branches with high attrition rates.

