Oregon Department of Human Services

Child Welfare Progress Report

This month in Child Welfare:

As we find the world being upended by the public health pandemic COVID-19, many of the ways in which we work, communicate, and function are changing.

In the field of Child Welfare, we have moved many of our staff to telework and are conducting meetings virtually, when possible. Our communication and stakeholder engagement is also ramping up, and an external website with the most recent information for Child Welfare partners has been created.

COVID-19 has changed visitation guidance for children in care. Our staff is working diligently to create solutions to maintain strong connections to family, when in-person visits are not able to safely occur. While there are many changes, Child Welfare workers continue to handle cases and the Child Abuse Hotline is still taking calls 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

April is also National Child Abuse Prevention Month. While public coordination for events is not happening in the same way this year, our ongoing collaboration with partners on child safety is still active. I want to honor the work that is being done in the larger system of child safety- the relief nurseries, the Child Abuse Intervention Centers, Prevent Child Abuse Oregon, CASA, educators, health professionals, and many more.

We are a stronger child welfare system because of our partnerships. Our Child Welfare program plays one part in that larger system of child safety, and each role is critical.

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

A community response to COVID-19 and supporting children in care

The Oregon Department of Human Services (Oregon DHS), Child Welfare Program is proud to have partnered with Every Child to launch the My NeighbOR initiative that helps support children and foster families in need during COVID-19. My NeighbOR is a 36-county decentralized community mobilization effort designed to match community goods and services with foster families and youth in foster care who need them.

When families send a request, My NeighbOR pairs the goods and services needed with a pre-screened driver or community volunteer. “Community Anchor Sites,” across all Oregon counties, are public locations where items can be dropped off and picked up.

“The welfare of children, youth, and families is the responsibility of our entire community. This My NeighbOR collaboration is the perfect demonstration that partnerships, shared resources, and collective efforts are needed to best support children and families. This will be a shining example of how Oregonians support each other when in need,” says Rebecca Jones Gaston, DHS Child Welfare Director.

If you are an Oregon foster family or a youth in foster care, share your need at https://everychildoregon.org/need/

If you want to meet a need for foster families, visit https://everychildoregon.org/myneighbor/

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 January 2020 to share progress in specific areas connected to the directives from the Governor.

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

Past Oregon Child Welfare Progress Reports are posted at www.oregon.gov/dhs.

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

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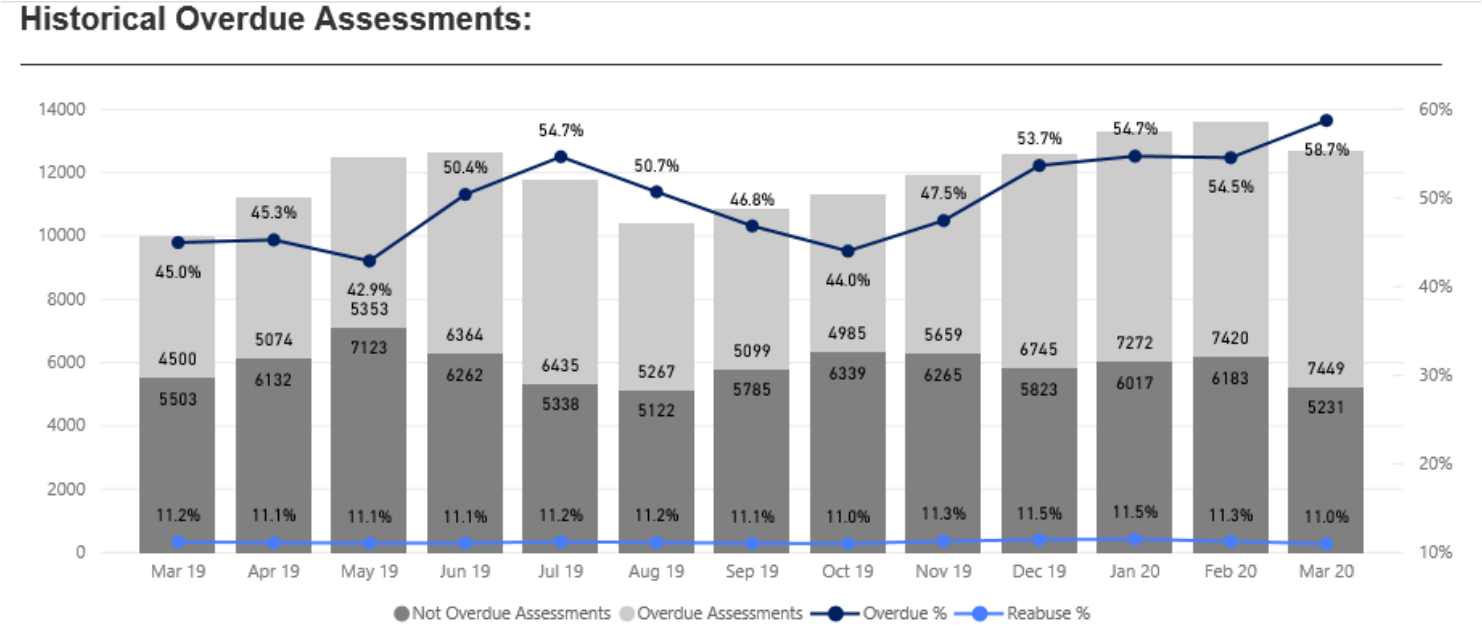
Child Safety

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. 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, listed on this chart as "re-abuse") within 12 months of their initial report. The federal target is 9.1 percent.

Data from April 9, 2020

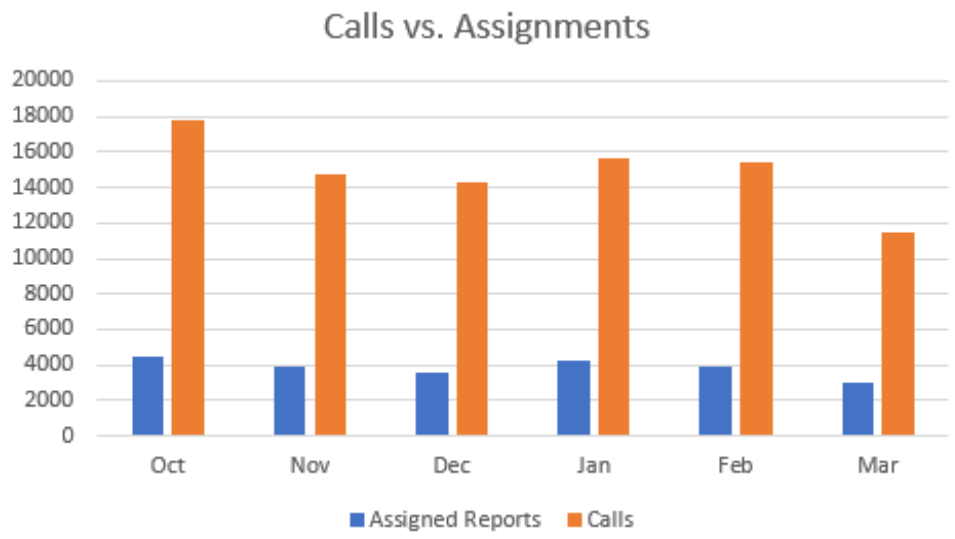


Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRTs)

Critical Incident Review Teams (CIRTs) 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 Prevention and Fatality Review program is currently building out prevention work focused on chronic neglect, safe sleep and suicide, three areas which make up many of the child fatalities in the state. In March, CIRTs were assigned for six child fatalities, and are listed on the CIRT report website.

Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH)

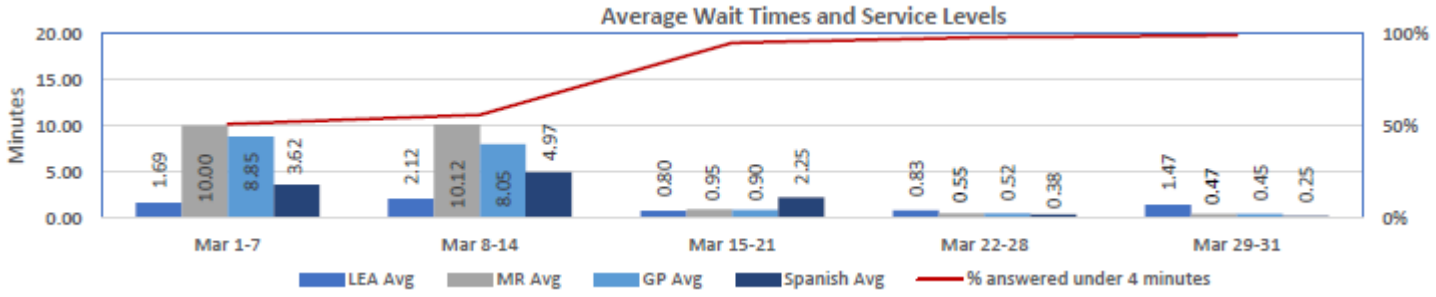
Over 2019, 15 regional child abuse reporting hotlines were centralized into a single hotline called the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) to improve safety, consistency and customer service. By consolidating 15 regional hotlines into one and streamlining screening processes, Child Protective Services (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 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. Through continuous quality improvement, we have tracked calls coming into the hotline that are not specific concerns of child safety or suspicions of abuse and are working to streamline outward facing information and direction to ensure non-abuse related queries are accessible for the public. The hotline is ensuring fidelity of the screening assessment model and that contacts meeting criteria for assignment are assigned in a timely manner to CPS. This chart below shows the trendline of ratio of hotline calls to assigned reports from October 2019 through March 2020.



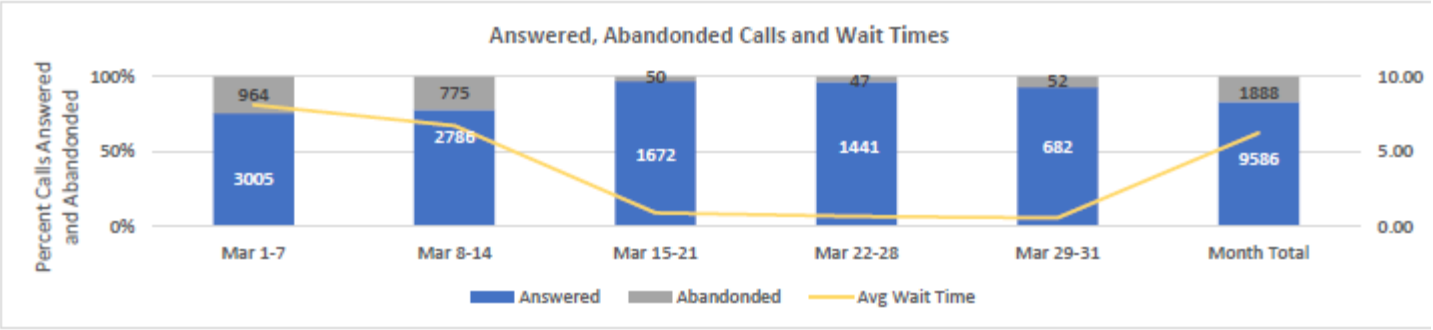
ORCAH average wait times

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. Based on national best practice, the service level goal is to answer within four minutes.

Data for March 2020



LEA: Law Enforcement Agencies, MR: Mandatory Reporters, GP: General Public



Contacts=Calls and Emails ORCAH received
OR-Kids 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.

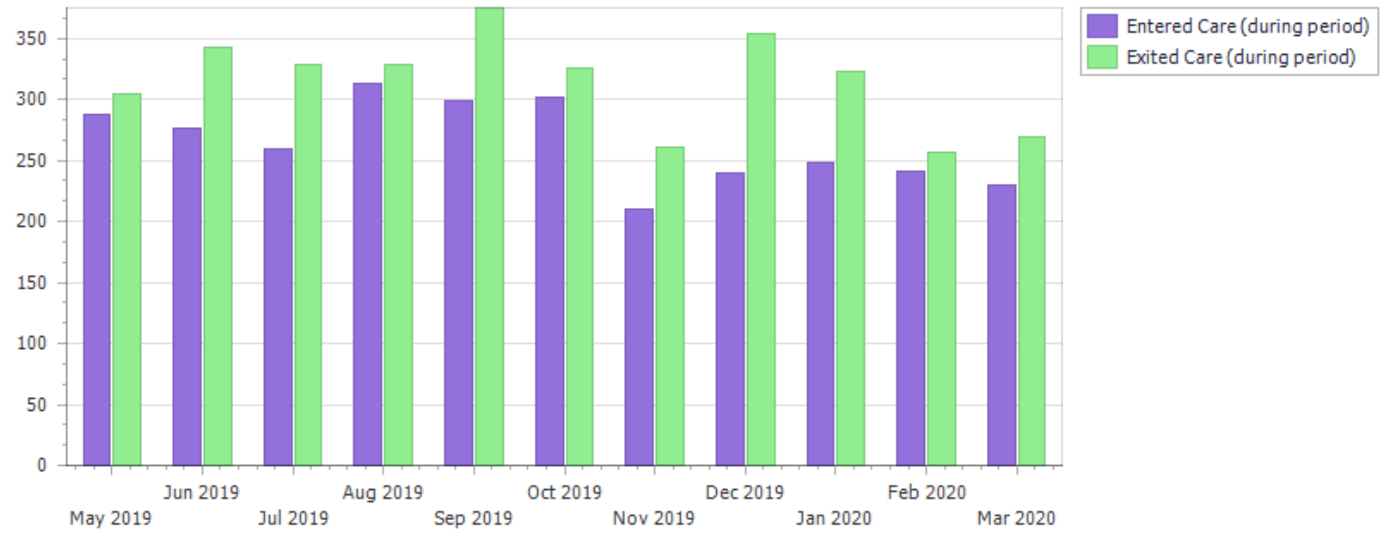
DHS certified providers: increasing capacity

DHS has a priority to seek relative placement for children entering care, to maintain family and community connections. This category of caregivers is called "child-specific homes." In March, 35.7% of initial placements were with relatives when children entered care. When those placements are not possible, DHS finds certified foster families ("general providers/certification families") that are able to meet a child's individual care needs. In order to expand the number of general certification homes available, multiple efforts to recruit families are underway including a partnership with Every Child (currently in multiple counties) and the hiring of 15 foster family recruitment champions. These charts reflect data as of March 1, 2020. We are continuing to see the number of children in care continue to decline.

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.*

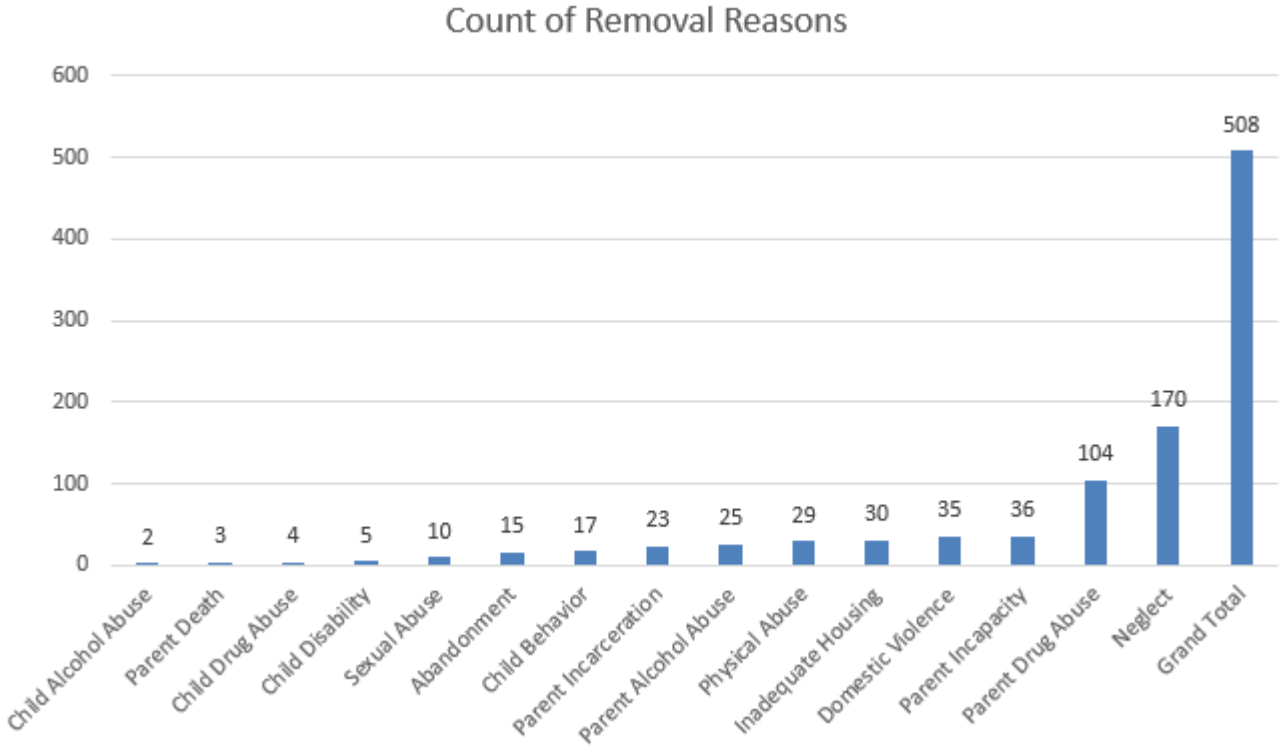
	19-Nov	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Desired Direction	Direction
Child Specific Providers	2357	2558	2441	2441	/	/
General Providers	1360	1546	1389	1370	↑	↓
Children in Care	7141	6956	6884	6833	↓	↓

Report Time Period: May 1, 2019 - March 31, 2020

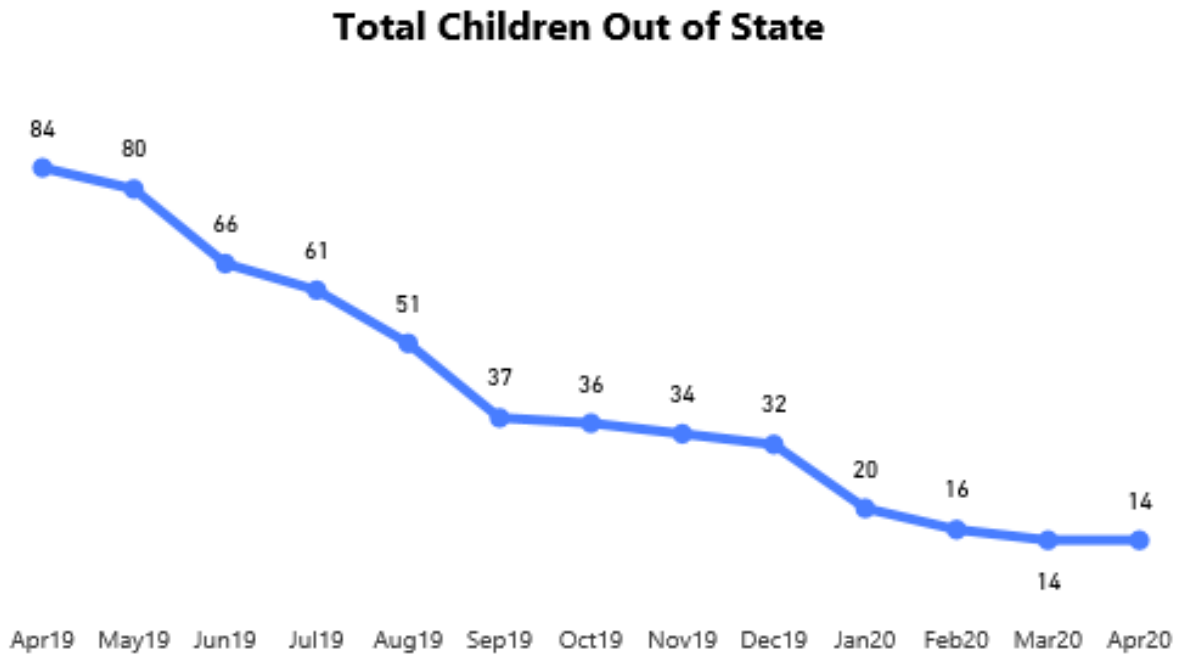


Factors for children entering foster care

Data reflects the primary reason for children entering care in the month of February, pulled 4/2/20. A child may have more than one factor related to entry. Total # of children= 238 with 508 reasons

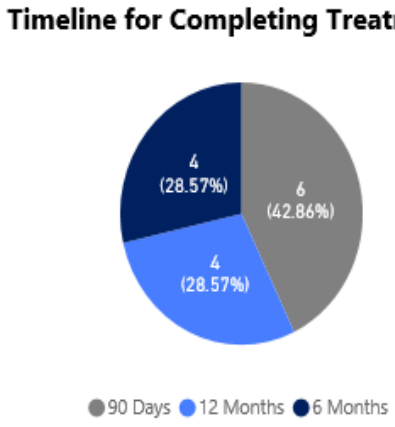


Youth in foster care receiving treatment services outside Oregon

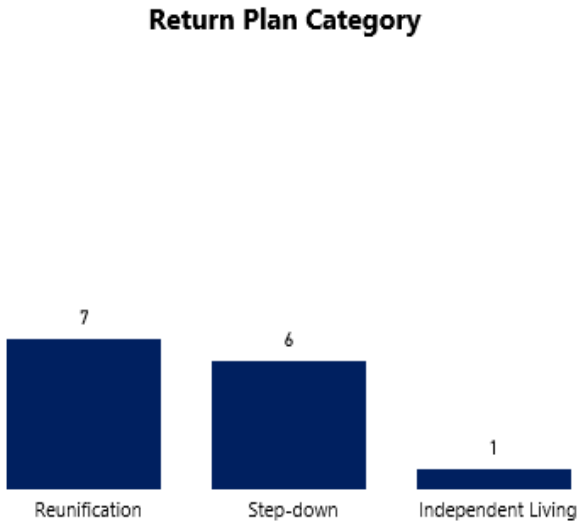


DHS is working with the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) and other partners to expand capacity to serve children and youth in Oregon. We continue to decrease the number of children in out-of-state treatment services, currently at 14, the lowest number in the past year.

Data is from April 9, 2020



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



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 and supportive services 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, services and appropriate daytime activities.

Child Welfare continues working to decrease the use of temporary lodging. Due to COVID-19, a new deadline of June 1 was set for a comprehensive plan to address the necessary efforts to come into compliance with our settlement agreement.

Children and young adults in temporary lodging in as of April 6, 2020

Current Number of Children and Young Adults in Temporary Lodging (4/6/2020)	Occasions of Temporary Lodging, year to date (4/6/2020)	Children in Temporary Lodging to date (4/6/2020)
3	53	42

Child Welfare Workforce

Throughout the COVID-19 crisis, Child Welfare is committed to hiring positions within the workforce. Child Welfare Deputy Director of Workforce Development and Equity, Aprille Flint-Gerner and Training Manager Kim Lorz continue the commitment to training and onboarding recent hires even through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Trend in Social Service Specialist (SSS1) staffing

This is a trendline picture of the entire Social Service Specialist (SSS1) workforce, which represents all caseworkers. Note: reports from February 2020 and prior include SSS1 Salary Range 24 only. Data pulled on 4/17/2020.

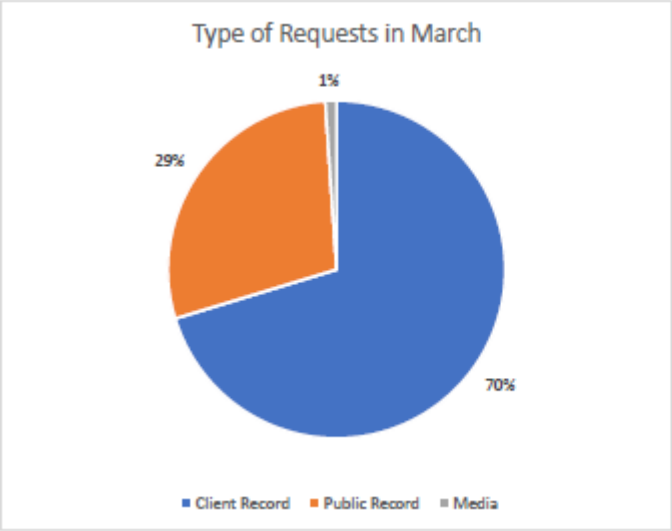
SSS1 Staffing	Jul-19	Aug-19	Sep-19	Oct-19	Nov-19	Dec-19	Jan-20	Feb-20	Mar-20
New Caseworker hires	33	31	37	93	57	17	15	16	37
Separations (including Retirements	20	22	22	21	27	19	13	16	12
Promoted Out (not counted as a Separation)	5	5	9	24	9	4	1	1	6
Retirements	0	0	3	0	1	4	1	0	1

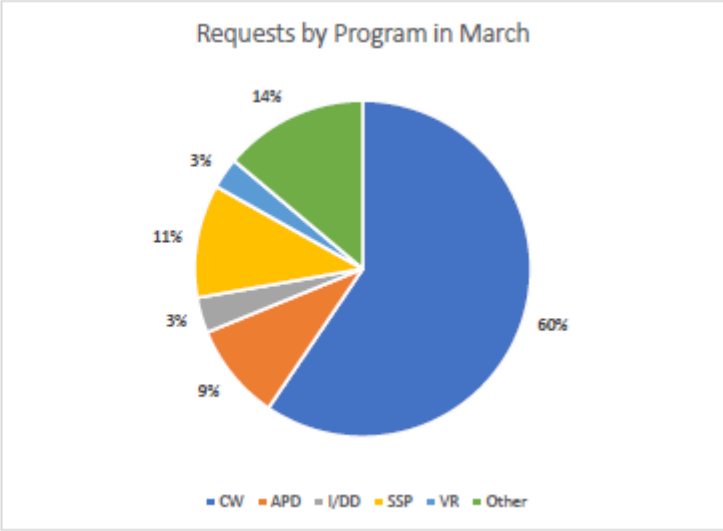
Operational Support

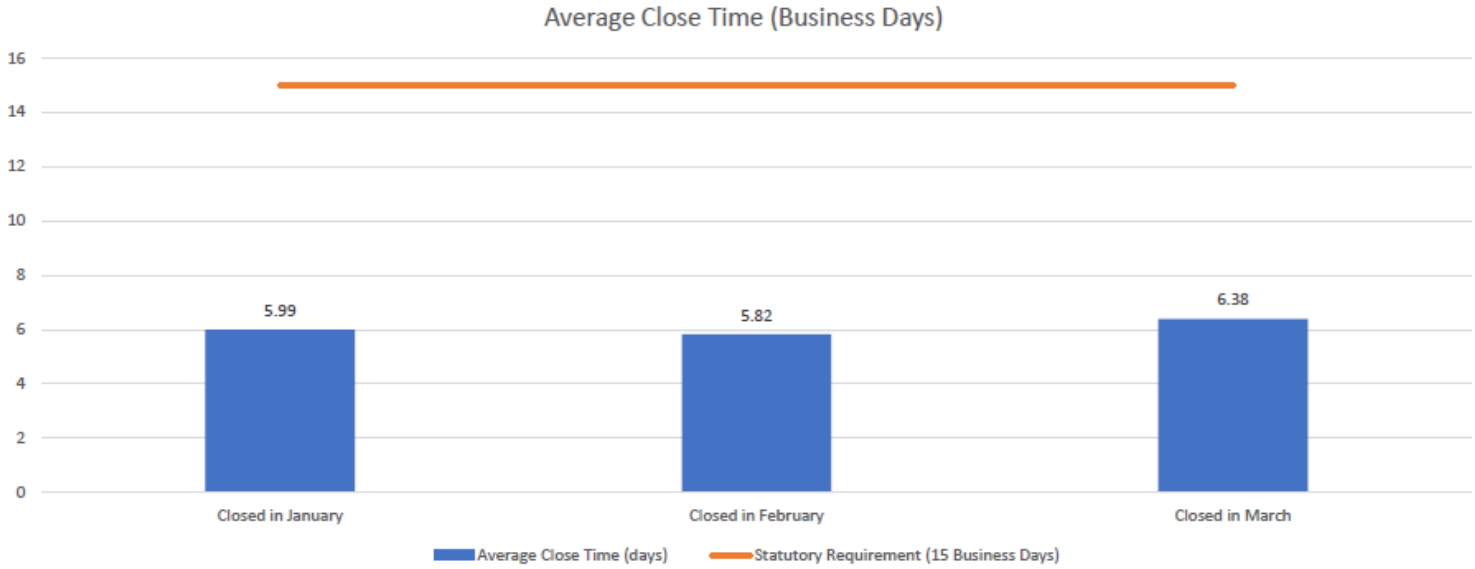
The Governor's Executive Order included direction to address operational challenges, including compliance with public records law and ensuring accurate and timely data is available to improve operations, processes and decision-making.

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 Public Records Unit continues to have low average processing times, currently at 6.38 days.







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.

March accomplishments

CHILD SAFETY:

- The Safety program is focused on addressing COVID-19 to ensure essential safety functions continue.

- The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) has continued hiring additional screeners to add another shift during peak hours and has transitioned much of its workforce to working remotely.
- Child Welfare is considering funding and resource changes across programs and practice to respond to COVID-19.

FOSTER CARE AND TREATMENT SERVICES:

- Child Welfare has scheduled a reset meeting for implementing the Family First Prevention Services Act on April 1 with Chapin Hall and Casey Family Programs. This will include creating a Family First leadership team, a governance structure, and a refined scope of work for the prevention plan.
- DHS and OHA met for the second time in March and prioritized the efforts to create next day auto assignment of children in care to a Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) and the District 2 pilot to create mobile response services. The group will likely be repurposed to address COVID-19 issues starting in April.
- Child Welfare temporarily expanded the increased payment for medical designation to include families who are willing to take children and young people who have been exposed to a person COVID positive, and/or have symptoms or confirmed infection.

OPERATIONAL SUPPORT:

- OR-Kids is continuing to work on CCWIS implementation while also making regular updates to the system.

TEMPORARY LODGING:

- Resource Management Director Kim Keller is continuing her work with field engagement and practice improvements to eliminate the need for temporary lodging. Kim now has several staff members assigned to support her management of temporary lodging.

WORKFORCE:

- The new Child Welfare Deputy Director of Workforce Development and Equity, Aprille Flint-Gerner, was onboarded in March and is becoming familiar with the various initiatives related to services for LGBTQIA+ children and young adults to determine next steps. She will be working closely with OEMS and supervising Melissa Sampson-Grier, who has been involved in various efforts.