

Oregon Department of Human Services

Child Welfare Progress Report



August 2020 in Child Welfare

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With COVID-19 still present, the Child Welfare program wants to acknowledge both the worries that we all have about the virus and our desire to do visits as safely as possible. We remain dedicated to maintaining parent-child visits and connecting safely through in-person, face to face contact. Updated visitation guidelines outlining health precautions and what can be expected were created with collaboration from multiple community partners, including a public health advisor. We also recognize the anxiety that exists in the community.

As families prepare for a very different school year, and with many having to juggle education, work, and general life during a pandemic, things can be hard and will continue to evolve. Our education coordinator for foster care is working across the state to bring information to caregivers and answer questions related to resources, transfers, and schooling options. This is a challenging time for parents, foster parents and our staff.

Racial justice also remains at the forefront with another very public incident. Our state and local leadership are engaged in efforts to grow our capacity to remove structural racism from our systems and practices.

While much continues to evolve and situations remain dynamic, I am grateful for the widespread community care for Oregon families.

July Highlights

Child Welfare launched new trainings implemented by ODHS Tribal Affairs to work with foster care certifiers on the **spirit and meaning of Indian Child Welfare Act** requirements

Hired **37 Child Welfare** caseworkers

Daily health consultations continue between Child Welfare leadership and Senior Health Advisor regarding COVID-19

Children in out-of-state placements **remain at 0**

Children in foster care remains on a downward trend (6581) **lowest number in 14 years**

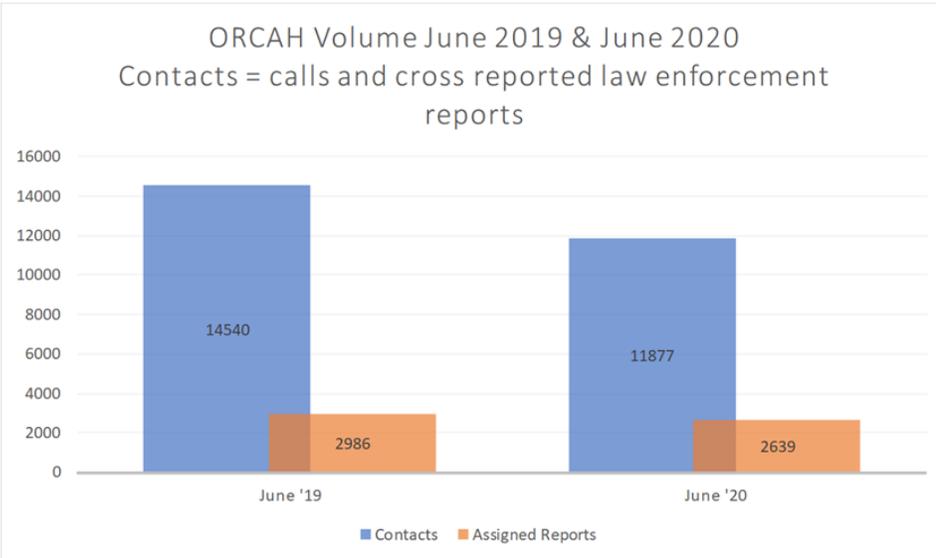
The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline recently updated its **mandatory reporter guide and training resources**

Guiding Principle 1:

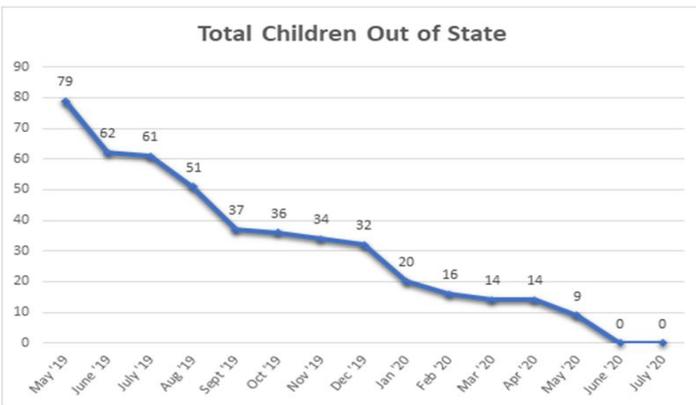
Supporting Families and Promoting Prevention

Significant changes this month to ensure a Child Welfare program that is trauma-responsive, family and community-centered, and focused on safety and prevention.

ORCAH Call Volume



Children in Out of State Placement



Number of Unique Youth with at least one night of temp lodging in the month: July 2019 - July 2020

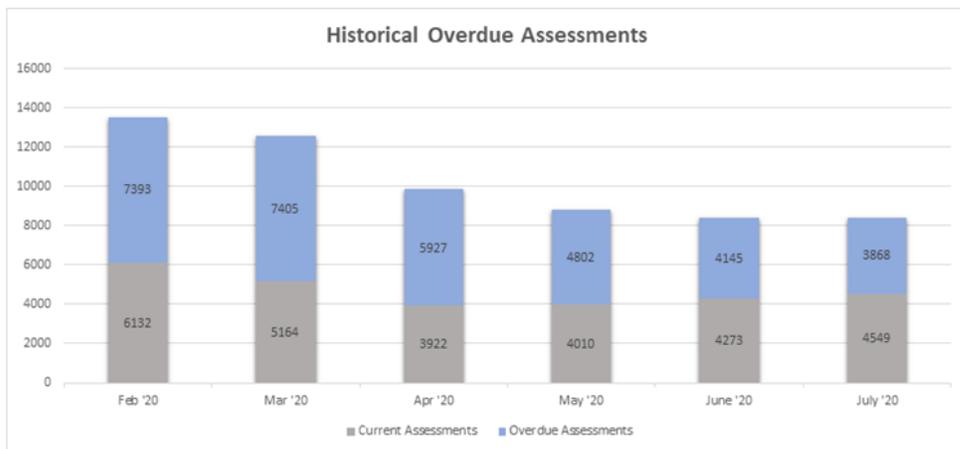


Additional Highlights

- Average wait times at the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) continued to stay low with an **average of 1.32 minutes** even with gradual call volume increases
- ORCAH calls have continued to increase since a nearly 40% drop in April. In the month of July, we saw an **11% decrease** from calls in July 2019
- The unique number of children in temporary lodging was 11 in July

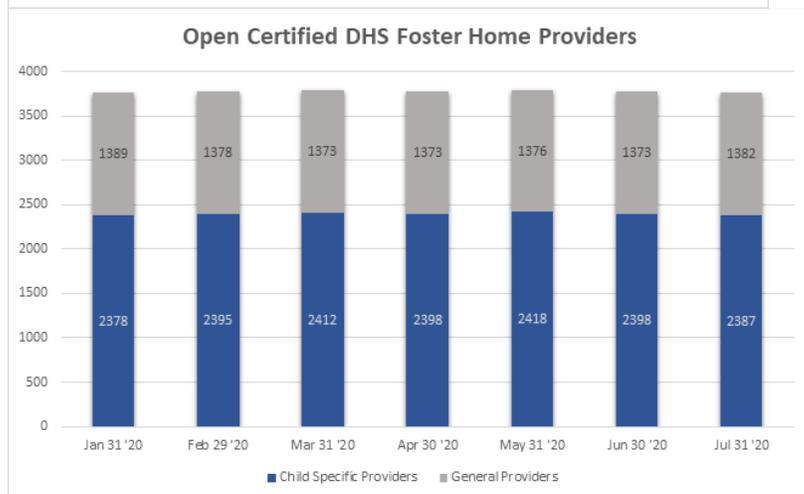
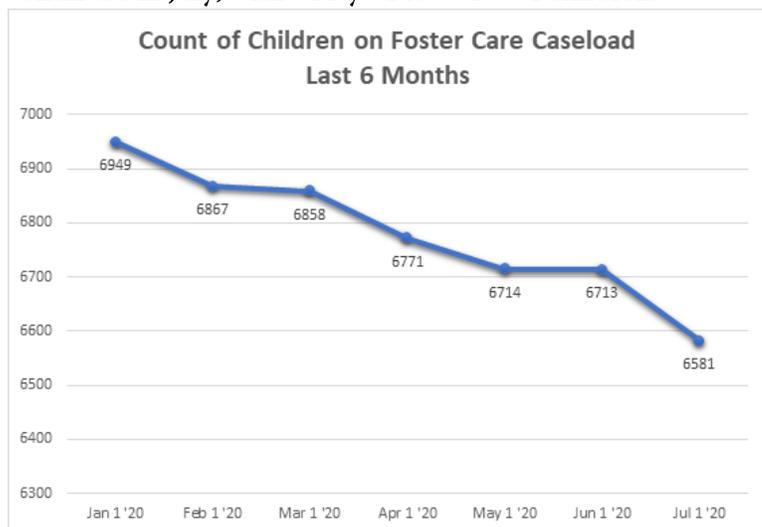
Assessments

During COVID-19, the Child Welfare workforce has been creatively addressing overdue assessments with some staff having shifted duties, due to telecommuting. Thousands of overdue assessments were completed during the last quarter, resulting in a continuing downward trend.



Children in Foster Care and Foster Homes Available

The reduction of the number of children entering foster care continued in July, with a 14-year low of 6581 children.



Child Specific foster homes are certified to care for specific kinship and relative children, while **General Providers** are available to all children in care.

Additional Highlights

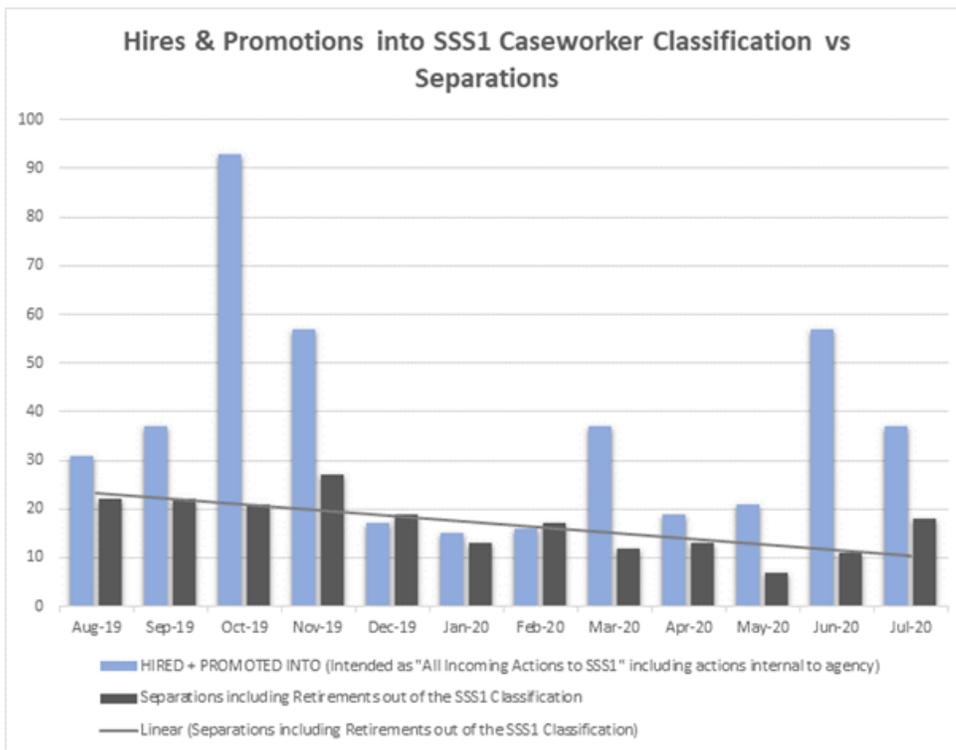
- The **recurrence of abuse rate was 11.2%** in July, up slightly from 11.1% in June
- In July, all Child Welfare offices are facilitating **in-person visits in ODHS offices**, as well as maintaining increased community visits and virtual visitation
- KEEP, the evidence-based skill enhancement program for foster parents, is continuing to reflect support for the diversity of children in care in Oregon, including the first **Native culturally-specific KEEP group** for DHS and tribally-certified homes (this is led by the Native American Youth and Family Center). Two KEEP affinity groups for foster/kinship parents of **LGBTQIA+ youth** are also currently in progress

Guiding Principle 2: Enhancing Our Staff and Infrastructure

Significant metrics for a supported, skilled, and engaged workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

Social Service Specialist (SSS1) Staffing - July 2020

This is a trendline picture of the SSS1 workforce, which includes every type of caseworker position. In July, 37 caseworkers were hired. SSS1 staffing remains steady and hiring and onboarding is continuing predominantly virtually. **Starting in the March 2020 Report, SSS1 staffing numbers are reflective of all SSS1 caseworkers. Separations also include retirements and promotions out of SSS1 classification. Data pulled 8/7*



Guiding Principle 3: Utilizing Data with Continuous Quality Improvement Systems

Data-informed practice supported by modernized information technology systems and tools.

Child Fatality Prevention and Review Team

In 2019, of the 29 child fatalities reviewed by the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Critical Incident Review Team, 17 were infants. Roughly 82% of the cases involving infants had high-risk sleep practices present. These tragic deaths in Oregon and across the country underscore the need for continued community education. To address this specifically, the Oregon Child Welfare Program has begun rolling out safe sleep training and procedures for all staff working with parents and caregivers who care for infants. As of July 28, there were 1291 Child Welfare staff who completed the trainings.

Additional Highlights

- Child Welfare still receives the bulk of the DHS public records requests (65% in July) and the average days to close is up slightly to **8.13** days (from last month's 7.81 days)
- **Anti-racism weekly meetings** with Child Welfare managers have been **expanded through October**. Field program leadership continues to discuss and implement reflection and growth opportunities with all workforce
- Child Welfare has continued **collaboration with SEIU** to maintain communication during COVID-19 via the management and facilitation of twice weekly meetings

In Coming Months



Over the last year, the Oregon Child Welfare Program has implemented a new transfer protocol for transferring cases from Child Protective Services to Permanency. This protocol is trauma-informed, family-driven, data-focused, and strengths-based and creates a warmer hand off between the family, caseworkers, and parents. In July, a statewide effort to talk with these groups and understand opportunities for growth through a Continuous Quality Improvement model began. Results will be shared this fall.

The forthcoming Child Welfare Vision for Transformation is being developed with partner and community feedback and will be linked here when final.

For questions or feedback about this report, please contact:
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