

# Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare Progress Report



## December 2020 in Child Welfare

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As we close out this year, I want to thank our partners, our leaders, and the Governor's office for their continued support and assistance as we continue the transformation of Oregon's Child Welfare system. While 2020 showcased multiple challenges, we had some key achievements to note, such as continuing to have zero children in out of state placements, increasing the number of qualified and professional caseworkers through a hiring surge, having the lowest number of children enter care in over 14 years, bridging gaps with our Oregon Tribal Nations through the passage of the Oregon ICWA legislation, and infusing training and communication on diversity and equity through all of our work. There are many more areas to highlight, but these are a snapshot to remind us of the greater role our work has in strengthening Oregon's promise to create thriving communities.

I want to express my deep gratitude to the Governor's inclusion of Child Welfare priorities in her Recommended Budget. The proposal shows confidence in the work we are doing and a continued dedication to provide the necessary resources to implement future improvements in Child Welfare. We are very grateful to see continued support for the Child Welfare Division and funding for strategic investments to help support families and children during and beyond this challenging and uncertain time.

I am pleased to have received positive community feedback for the Oregon Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation since it was rolled out last month. This Vision is a roadmap and compass to improve the Child Welfare Division. Partnerships and collaboration will drive our successful transformation, and the connections and investments will pave the way for that success, benefitting Oregon's children and families.

## November Highlights

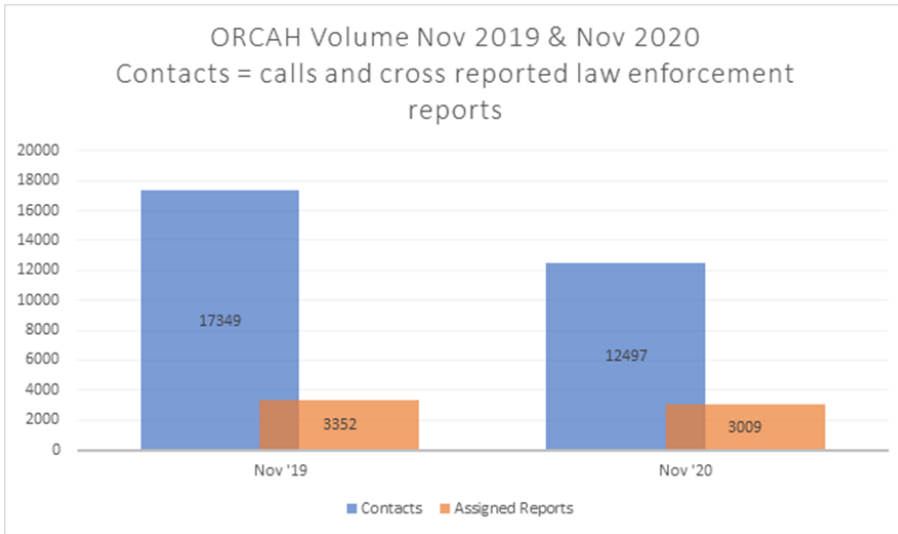
- Read the [Vision for Transformation](#)
- Hired and trained **19 Child Welfare** caseworkers. Overall, the division's caseworker staffing is at 91.47% of position authority
- **Weekly health consultations continue** between Child Welfare leadership and Senior Health Advisor regarding COVID-19
- Children in out-of-state placements **remain at 0, the lowest number of children in temporary lodging (6) since 2019**
- Children in foster care remain on a downward trend (6,296) **lowest number in 14 years**

# Guiding Principle 1:

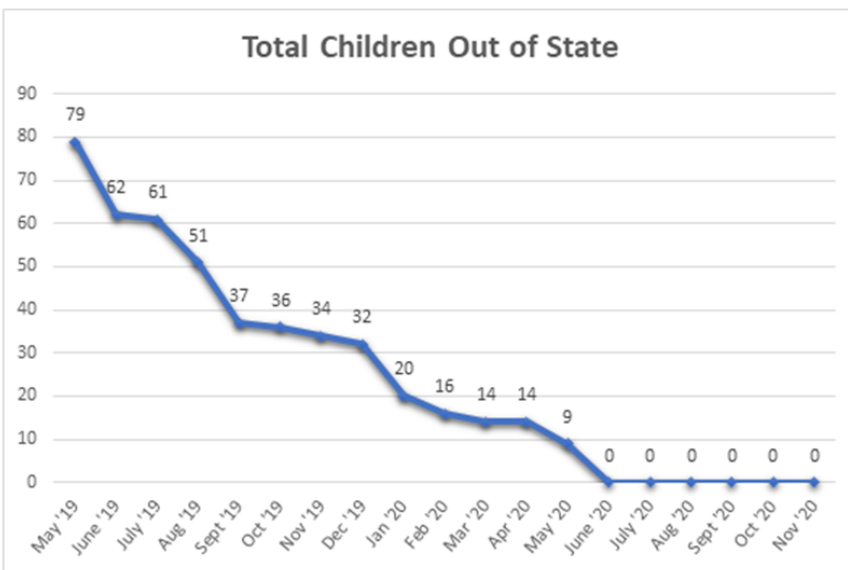
## Supporting Families and Promoting Prevention

Continued efforts to ensure a Child Welfare program that is trauma-responsive, family and community-centered, and focused on safety and prevention.

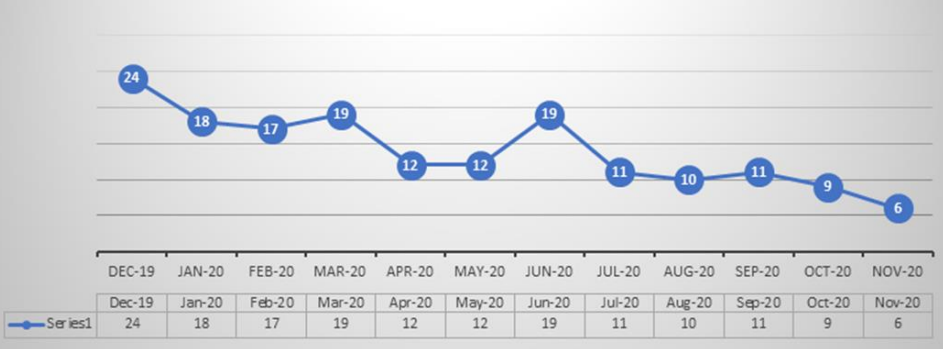
### ORCAH Call Volume



### Children in Out of State Placement



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

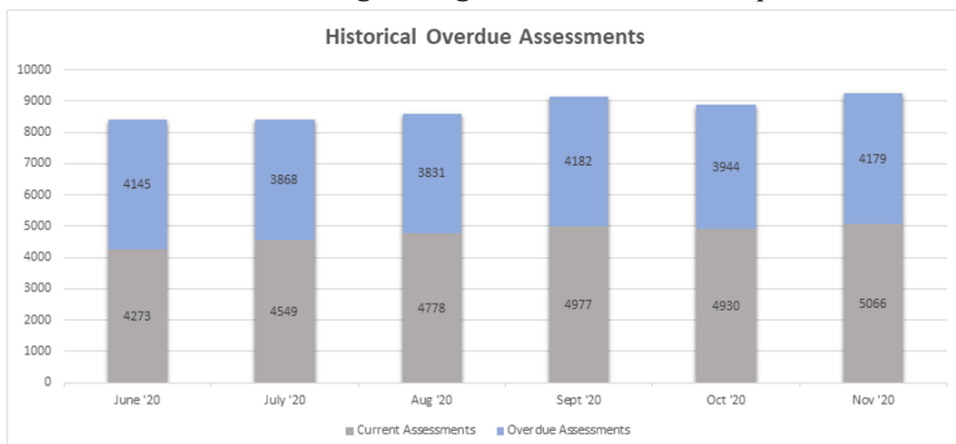


## Additional Highlights

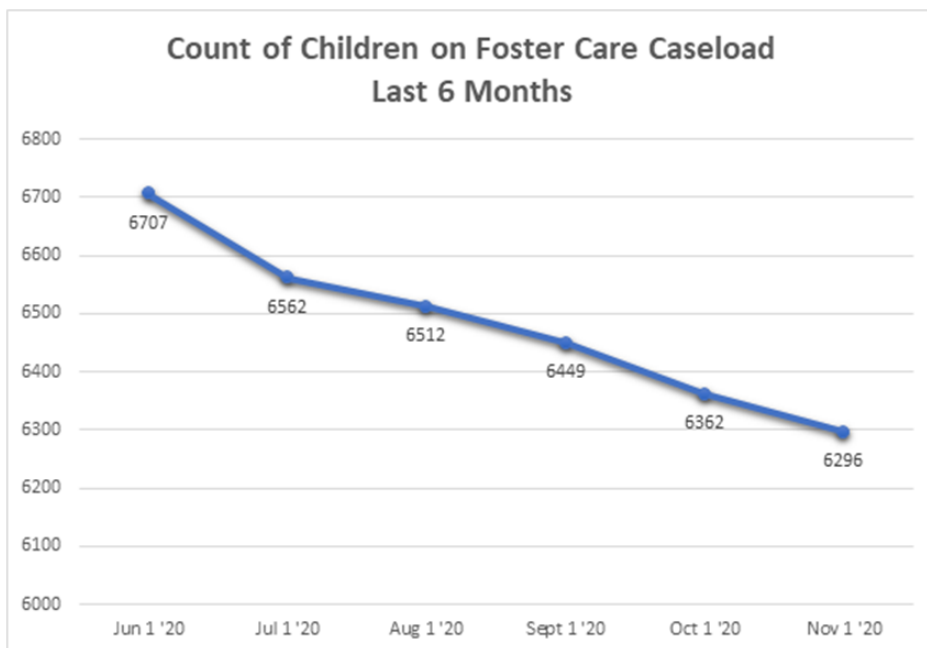
- **Average** wait times at the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) continued to stay low with an **average of 3.37 minutes** despite call volume increases.
- The unique number of children in temporary lodging was **6** in November, the lowest number since 2019.
- As part of the KEEP program (foster family/kinship caregiver skills enhancement), **1238 foster (resource) families have been enrolled** statewide as of November 30. The first **LGBTQIA+ KEEP safe** group graduated in November and the KEEP manual was made culturally connected with the assistance of the Native American Youth and Family Services organization.

## Assessments

An increase in assessments when children return to school in the Fall is normal and is continuing through November and the pandemic.



## Children in Foster Care and Foster Homes Available



We continue to see the number of children in care decrease and are maintaining reunifications and in-home services through the pandemic. We are also improving retention strategies for foster families, both for kinship/child-specific placements and general foster care families. In November, this included monthly communication and trainings. Additionally, the KEEP for Kin (foster family/kinship caregiver skills enhancement) partnership with Kinship Navigator is running 4 groups for non-ODHS relative caregivers. This offers services to relative caregivers who do not have an open ODHS Child Welfare case but may need assistance to support the children in their care.

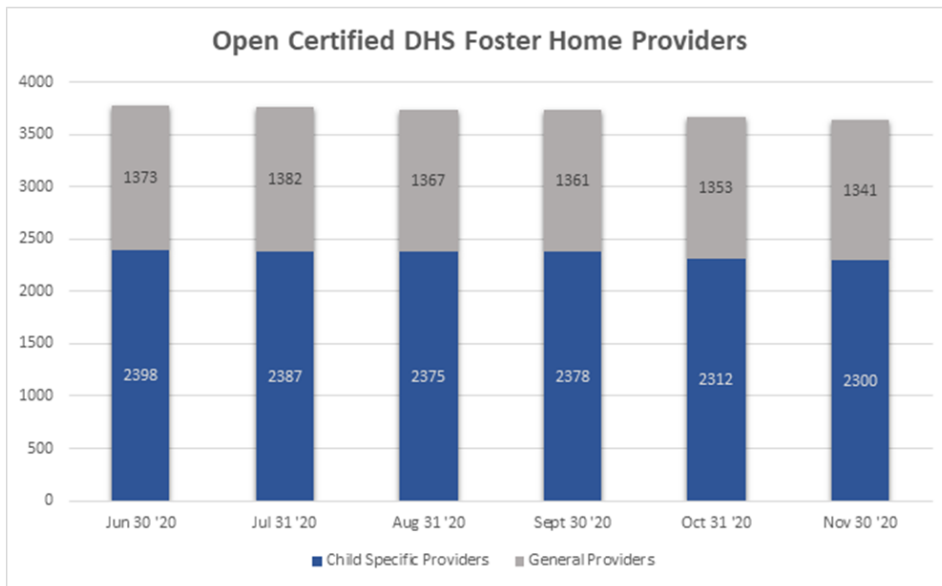
Since June, we have reduced the number of children in care by 411, while seeing a decrease of general foster care families by 32.

## Additional Highlights

- Assessments (overdue and current) in November, were at their combined highest (9245) since the pandemic began.
- The recurrence of abuse rate was 10.5% in November, down slightly from 10.7% in October.
- Child Welfare still receives the bulk of the ODHS public records requests (64% in November). Average days to close is 9.98 days (down from last month's 11.01 days), which is under the 15-day required response.
- In November, the Child Fatality Review and Prevention Program participated in the National Partnership for Child Safety Virtual Convening hosted by Casey Family Programs. This offered connections around safety science and safety culture, as well as peer to peer sharing of innovations, implementation successes and lessons learned by partner jurisdictions.

## Additional Highlights

- Child Welfare has continued **collaboration with SEIU** to maintain communication during COVID-19 via the management and facilitation of bi-monthly meetings.
- As we continue to analyze and explore strategies for recruitment and retention in our workforce, SSS1 Caseworker Separations data now **allows us to break down that resignation data even further**. In November, of the 11 total separations from the SSS1 role, 0 employees indicated their reason for resignation was dissatisfaction of their job. Reasons include advancement opportunities, relocation needs, resignation, or pursuing higher education.
- Prevention initiatives led by the Child Fatality and Prevention Review Program continue, including weekly 90 minute facilitated Question Persuade Refer (QPR) Suicide Prevention Training for Child Welfare Casework professionals. These facilitated trainings will be offered weekly through September 2021.



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

## Guiding Principle 2:

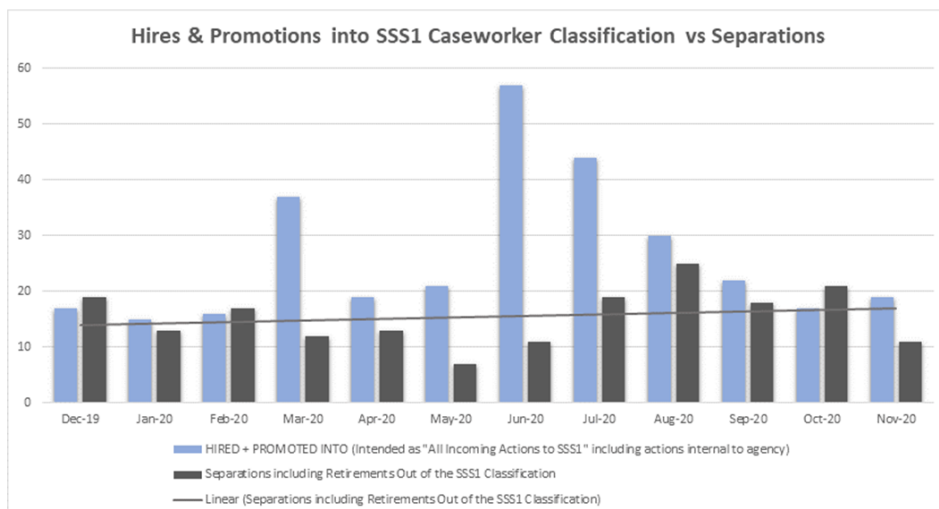
### Enhancing Our Staff and Infrastructure

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

### Social Service Specialist (SSS1) Staffing - November

This is a trendline picture of the SSS1 workforce, which includes every type of caseworker position, indicating the number of separations continues to decrease over time. In November, 19 caseworkers were hired. SSS1 staffing remains steady, with a vacancy rate around 8%, and hiring and onboarding is continuing predominantly virtually.

\*Starting in the March 2020 Report, SSS1 staffing numbers are reflective of all SSS1 caseworkers. Separations include retirements and promotions **out** of SSS1 classification. **Data pulled 12/8**



## Guiding Principle 3:

### Utilizing Data with Continuous Quality Improvement Systems (CQI)

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

#### Child Fatality Prevention and Review Program

During the month of November, the Child Fatality Prevention and Review Program (CFPRP) participated in the virtual National Transformational Collaborative Outcomes Management Conference and presented on the implementation of safety science in Oregon's critical incident reviews. When a critical incident is reviewed, the team seeks to understand the circumstances surrounding the death of the child, as well as the history of the family, the community, Child Welfare and other family-serving systems by using an innovative application of safety science and safety culture. The conference was an opportunity to share about the work and progress made over the last two years.

The CFPRP continues to receive technical assistance from the Center for Innovation in Population Health at the University of Kentucky including recent work on building out a database for managing Safe Systems Improvement Tool data. This database, called REDCap, will support the use of aggregate data related to child fatalities to inform quality system improvement recommendations for Oregon's Child Welfare system.

## In Coming Months



The Foster Family Inquiry module has been under construction since early 2020 and will begin to roll out its new process in late January. This new module will provide enhanced functionality and increase Child Welfare staff's ability to engage with critical Foster Family recruitment data.



The Child Fatality Review and Prevention Program has recently joined with ODHS Human Resources to participate in an Innovation and Implementation Learning Community (I2LC) through the National Partnership for Child Safety. The I2LC is made up of multiple jurisdictions from across the country and will focus on learning about and testing innovative approaches to advance safety culture and anti-racism efforts in child welfare.

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The [Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation](#) is the spirit of what we believe the child welfare system should be in Oregon.

It declares that it is our core belief and our primary objective that all children deserve to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and to grow up in the care of a loving family and community. It centers equity in all that we do, acknowledges that the child welfare system has done significant harm to communities of color, Tribal Nations and other marginalized communities, and commits to ensuring that no person's race, nationality, gender identity, sexual orientation nor disability is a predeterminant to outcomes.

Centered on three guiding principles, the [Vision for Transformation](#) is the roadmap and compass for the Oregon Child Welfare Division to transform itself and the greater child welfare system into one that supports and preserves families. These guiding principles are:

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

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For questions or feedback about this report, please contact: [ChildWelfareDirector@dhsosha.state.or.us](mailto:ChildWelfareDirector@dhsosha.state.or.us)