

Oregon Department of Human Services Child Welfare Progress Report



February 2021 in Child Welfare

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In January, we celebrated the official start of implementation of the Oregon Indian Child Welfare Act (ORICWA). ORICWA implementation goals center around relationships, workforce development, data, improvement, culture and equity. Child Welfare Division collaboration with Tribal Nations is key in ensuring Tribal children and families are served equitably and in a culturally appropriate way.

Prevention continues to be our focus. This includes creating infrastructure for the Family Preservation and Prevention Program, establishing an effective respite care program, continual reduction of the use of temporary lodging, and serving Oregon's children and families in-state. We know none of this work can be done successfully without engaging and promoting our dedicated staff. Therefore, we have and will continue to prioritize training, workforce development and equity throughout all levels of the Child Welfare Division.

This year, we plan to actively implement strategies that reflect this growth in community support. As the Child Welfare Division operationalizes the Vision for Transformation, we will be finding ways to share information about strategies, implementation, and provide avenues for input and feedback.

January Highlights

- Read the [Vision for Transformation](#)
- Hired and trained **30 Child Welfare** caseworkers. Overall, the division's caseworker staffing is at 91.52% 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**.
- Children in foster care remain on a downward trend (6,125) **lowest number in 15 years and continuing over the past few years**.
- **The recurrence of maltreatment rate was 10% in January**. While this number does not fluctuate much, it is notably the lowest since March 2017.

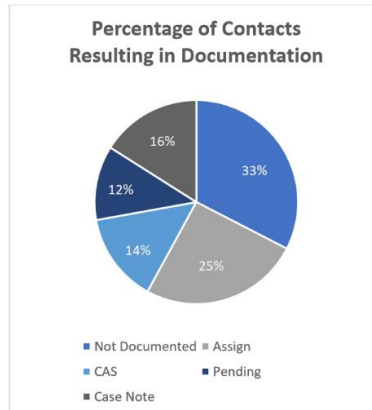
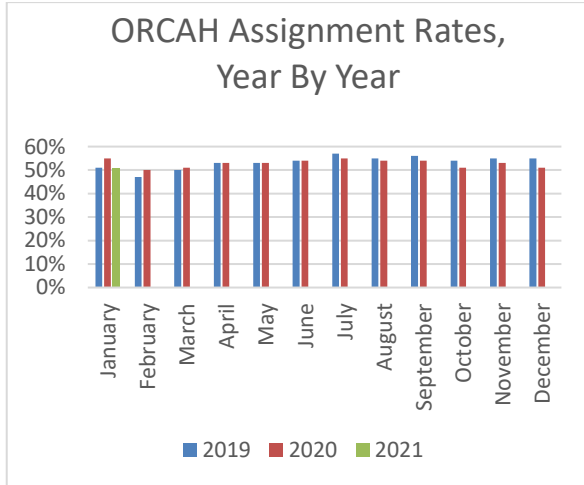
Guiding Principle 1:

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.

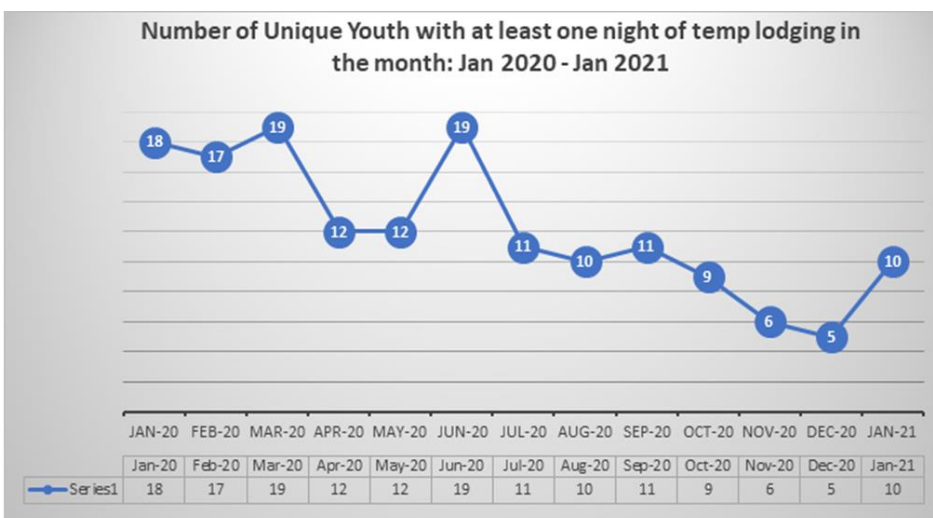
ORCAH Call Data

In January, ORCAH had a total of 12,448 contacts, an increase from December's total of 11,818 contacts. This total number of contacts includes calls requesting community resources and police reports not regarding child abuse or concerns requiring documentation. Of all the concerns that are screened in, these can fall into a case note, closed at screening (CAS) or assigned for investigation. For data purposes, ORCAH utilizes continuous quality improvement and looks at contacts which are documented concerns and screened in. Below, the graph on Assignment Rates refer to the contacts that are screened in, and the graph on the left refers to the total of all contacts ORCAH receives.



Temporary Lodging Usage

In January we saw an increase in the need for temporary lodging for a small number of children and have maintained training, active efforts around capacity building, and collaborative problem solving with other agencies to find lasting solutions.

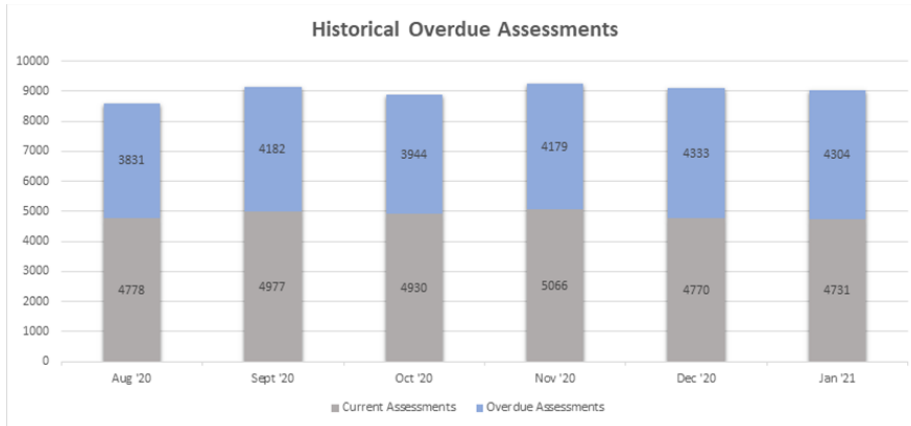


Additional Highlights

- **Average** wait times at the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) increased in January with an **average of 5.15 minutes**, as gradual call volumes continue to increase.
- ORCAH has implemented continuous quality improvement to understand and serve callers over the past year. **This data reflects that about 33% of calls to the hotline are not reporting suspected abuse** (case notes, general questions regarding resources, etc). Starting in this month's report, using CQI data, we will be using call assignment rate graphs, rather than total contacts, to show comparison between months.
- The unique number of children in temporary lodging was **10** in January.
- **In January, 51 KEEP** (foster family/kinship caregiver skills enhancement) groups were in progress statewide, with 1,421 individuals enrolled, including three culturally-specific KEEP groups offered for Native American youth. The first **ASL sign language KEEP group** graduated in January.

Assessments

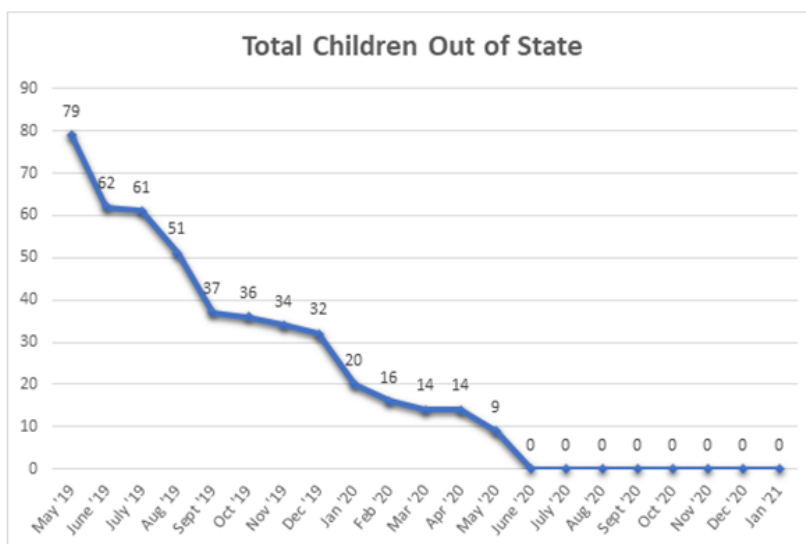
Assessments have remained stable with gradual increases. During the Spring and Fall, historically we see the highest numbers of calls. The ratio between current of overdue assessments is lower than prior to March 2020.



Children in Foster Care and Foster Homes Available

We are continuing to see the number of children in care on a downward trend over the past few years and are continuing reunifications and in-home services despite challenges from the pandemic.

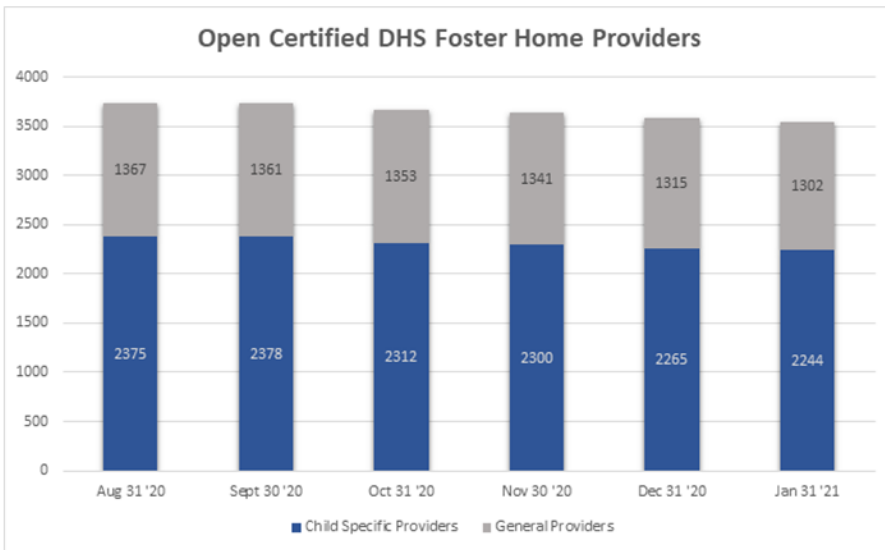
There have been no Oregon children or youth in out of state placements since the end of June 2020.



In January, our partner Every Child published their annual data, showing that the interest in foster care and adoption has increased through the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 1,163 new foster families have come through Every Child's efforts in partnership with ODHS since the official partnership began. In 2020, there was a 27% increase in new foster family and adoption inquiries compared with 2019 (32% of which were from individuals who identify as people of color).

Additional Highlights

- Assessments are increasing gradually, and overdue assessments are maintaining a **lower ratio than prior to March 2020**.
- The **recurrence of abuse rate was 10.0%** in January. The national standard is 9.1%.
- Child Welfare still receives the bulk of the ODHS public records requests (63% in January). Average days to close is **5.92** days (from last month's 10.10 days), which is under the 15-day required response. In January 2020, for comparison, there were approximately 150 more public records Child Welfare requests, thus showing a decrease in records requests.
- The 16 Foster Champions across the state continue to create strong programmatic connections in their work. Two highlights include Douglas County, where they partnered with the **local educational services district to offer 4 one-hour blocks of tutoring 2x per week**. In Morrow County, partners overhauled the family visit room in the local ODHS office to be more home-like.



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

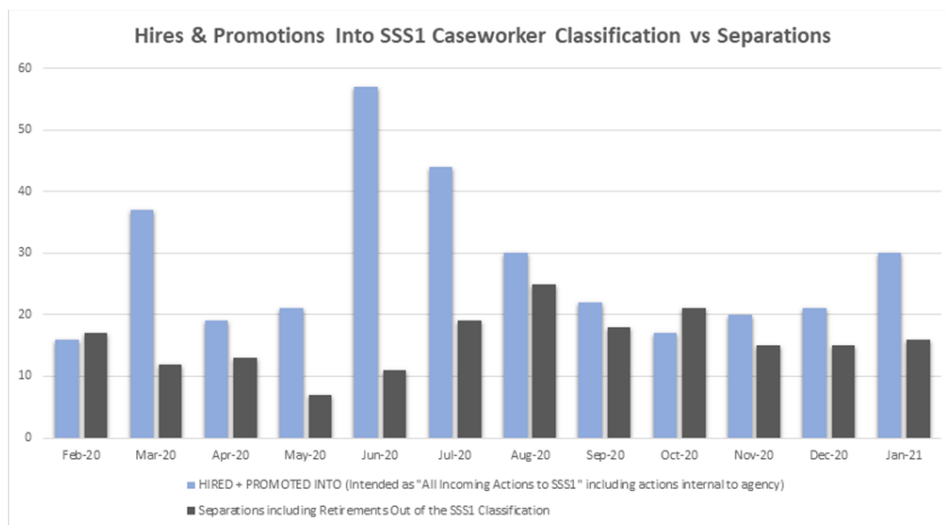
Guiding Principle 2: Enhancing Our Staff and Infrastructure

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

Social Service Specialist (SSS1) Staffing - January

This picture of the SSS1 workforce, which includes every type of caseworker position, indicating the number of hires continues to remain steady. In January, 30 caseworkers were hired. SSS1 staffing has a vacancy rate of a little more than 8%. Hiring and onboarding continue to be done 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 2/8**



Additional Highlights

- To build upon recruitment and retention strategies in our workforce, SSS1 Caseworker Separations data now **allows us to break down that resignation data even further**. In January, of the 17 total separations from the SSS1 role, only one employee indicated dissatisfaction with the job as a reason for resignation.
- The Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)** model was rolled out last July to address Child Welfare workforce experiencing stress. This is a short-term intervention to alleviate the reactions from traumatic and distressing experiences. CISM is **offered through individual and group sessions twice monthly**, as well as offered for as-needed immediate sessions.
- Child Welfare has continued **collaboration with SEIU** to maintain communication during COVID-19 via the management and facilitation of weekly meetings.

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 Team

Recruitment began for two new positions (Comprehensive Addictions and Recovery Act) coordinators to join our team. These positions will work to further engage the medical and substance use treatment community in the statewide implementation of this federal act. This work goes hand in hand with the infant fatality prevention work that is underway with the Safe Sleep Initiative and further review of case practice surrounding infants.

The Suicide Prevention training QPR (Question Persuade Refer) continues to be led by this program with a weekly facilitated session for child welfare staff. Twenty-three sessions have been facilitated thus far and these weekly sessions will continue through September 2021. Department-certified foster parents have been offered to attend facilitated sessions with a larger training plan coming soon for that program.

In Coming Months



Prevention and Family Preservation work is beginning in the first quarter of 2021 to provide infrastructure and guidance for all Child Welfare offices to have the capacity to serve families, who may have otherwise had children enter into care, to be connected with in-home services with the appropriate safety plans in place.



The Equity, Training and Workforce Development team will be developing a workplan of strategies identified from valuable staff feedback and the Butler Institute's staff survey of caseworkers and supervisors in December. More to come in the coming months.

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*