

# Coordinated Response to Abuse in Substitute Care

## Project Background

When children and young adults live or receive services outside their family homes, there are often multiple entities inside and outside DHS who play a role in ensuring safety, but sometimes a lack of clarity about responsibilities and a lack of information sharing negatively impacted child and young adult safety. The goal of the Coordinated Response to Abuse project is to increase coordination and communication among those entities. This project was combined with implementation efforts for SB 243 (2017) and related legislation that increases safety standards and require internal and external information sharing when a report of abuse is received regarding most out-of-home care settings.

## Accomplishments Update

This document lists accomplishments as of December 2017, most of which will be reflected in new rules that will be released in January 2018 and opened for public comment shortly thereafter.

### **Increased alignment of policies, procedures, and terminology for entities within DHS responsible for responding to reports of child abuse**

- OAAPI and CPS (the two entities within DHS responsible for screening and investigating abuse) have committed to review all policies and procedures and align whenever it is in the interest of child and young adult safety to do so.
- This work is ongoing, but significant work has been done. In particular, OAAPI and CPS will use the same definitions to guide staff in making screening and investigation decisions starting January 1, 2018.

#### **How does this improve child safety?**

- Children and young adults should expect that, regardless of which DHS entity handles a report of abuse, the response will be the strongest response allowed by Oregon law. This work brings DHS closer to that goal.
- The process of alignment requires OAAPI and CPS to collaboratively engage in thoughtful conversations about what policies and procedures best serve children and young adults who may have been abused. This should result in better policies and procedures and support the Department's goal to put child and young adult safety at the center of the work.

### **Clarified roles and responsibilities**

- DHS leadership made decisions to clarify which types of reports go to OAAPI and which go to CPS.

#### **How does this improve child safety?**

- Clarification about where reports are routed reduces confusion for hotline staff and helps eliminate the issue contributing to reports being lost or the response being delayed, a barrier that which has been identified in audits.
- Clarity from leadership helps focus OAAPI and CPS staff on their area of expertise.

## **Increased information sharing and collaboration with internal and external people who share responsibility for safety**

- SB 243 and related legislation requires that personnel who have responsibility for the safety of a particular child or young adult or who have a role in the oversight of a particular substitute care settings are notified when reports of abuse are received. To comply, OAAPI and CPS have developed rules and procedures for notification and meaningful engagement with other internal and external parties for reports of abuse in most out-of-home care settings.
- Through decisive action by Child Welfare leadership, rules and procedures have been strengthened to ensure legal parties (attorneys, court appointed special advocates (CASA), parents or legal guardians, and the Citizen Review Board) have information they need to effectively carry out their roles in juvenile dependency case.

### **What do these increased communication efforts mean for child safety?**

- Everyone responsible for child safety has the information they need to make fully informed safety decisions.
- Notifying and engaging key parties whenever a report of abuse is received emphasizes that child safety is a Department-wide, cross-agency responsibility.
- Increased transparency, collaboration and engagement builds confidence in DHS's commitment to child safety and collaboration.

## **Increased transparency and provider support**

- To help the general public and our providers understand these changes, we are reviewing all DHS publicly available trainings, guides, and other information to make sure they are consistent and up to date. By early 2018, providers will have easy access to trainings, FAQ sheets, and other resources to help them provide the best care to children and young adults and comply with the law.

### **How does this support child safety?**

- DHS cannot ensure child and young adult safety without recruiting and retaining high-quality providers. Providers deserve to have open and frequent communication and resources from DHS so they are aware of current laws, policies, and expectations.

## **Contact**

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