

News Release

Date: June 22, 2022

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ODHS statement regarding proposed rule impacting child abuse investigations

(Salem) – Recently the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Office of Training, Investigations and Safety (OTIS) [proposed changes to Administrative Rule 407-044-0310](#), regarding OTIS investigations into allegations of abuse at child-caring agencies, schools, daycares or by a third party.

ODHS is committed to transparency and recognizes the role transparency plays in identifying and preventing the abuse of children.

“Unfortunately, our previous statements and communication about this proposed rule change were inaccurate,” said ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht. “This caused confusion about our intentions and many have expressed concern during the public comment period for this proposed rule change. We apologize for the confusion our previous communications have caused and we want to make certain that everyone understands this proposed rule change and why we have proposed it.”

Current ODHS practice related to OTIS investigations of child abuse

Currently ODHS maintains confidentiality of records related to open OTIS investigations. This protects the integrity of open investigations.

Records related to completed OTIS investigations are available through public records requests.

Impact of the proposed rule change

The proposed rule does not change current ODHS practice.

The proposed rule change formalizes current ODHS practice by prohibiting the disclosure of records related to an open investigation of child abuse conducted by OTIS.

This proposed rule change will not impact the disclosure of completed OTIS investigations and completed investigations will continue to be available through public records requests.

Intent of the proposed rule change

ODHS' intent behind this proposed rule is to provide clarity and transparency to the public that records related to open OTIS investigations cannot be disclosed until an investigation is completed. This rule change may prevent a potential loss of federal funding due to the current lack of clarity on protecting confidential information while an OTIS investigation is still open.

Status of the proposed rule change

ODHS is committed to seeking and considering feedback from all interested members of the public about this proposed rule change. The public comment period for this proposed rule change as been extended to July 11 at 5 p.m. The public can share their concerns or feedback on this proposed rule change in writing by emailing Michelle.h.pfeiffer@dhsoha.state.or.us.

Once the public comment period has ended ODHS will thoroughly consider all public comment submitted, and will share this feedback with the Oregon Legislature. ODHS' intention is to ensure that it is following their direction and intent when in regards to the transparency of OTIS investigations.

About the Oregon Department of Human Services

The mission of the Oregon Department of Human Services is to help Oregonians in their own communities achieve wellbeing and independence through opportunities that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity.

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