

News Release

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Oregon Department of Human Services statement regarding Secretary of State child welfare system audit

Salem, OR – Today the Oregon Secretary of State released an audit report of the Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division. The report concludes that effective preventive services can support child and family wellbeing by helping keep children at home safely.

“We appreciate the report and its acknowledgement that the work of supporting Oregon’s children and families is a community effort that depends on effective partnerships and preventive services,” said Rebecca Jones Gaston, director of the Oregon Child Welfare Program. “DHS Child Welfare is developing a Child Welfare Vision for Transformation. With contributions from partners, families and youth, our goal is to achieve true transformation built on core values and a belief that children do best growing up in a family. Our vision is for all children to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and grow up in the care of a nurturing family and community.”

DHS Child Welfare will achieve this Vision for Transformation through effective partnerships and shared responsibility within the child welfare system, including both the Oregon Health Authority and community partners. DHS Child Welfare and its partners are committed to providing services that support child and family wellbeing, prevent abuse and neglect of children, and reduce the use of foster care.

DHS Child Welfare will also:

1. Ensure that when foster care is needed, it will be family-based, short-term and culturally responsive. Foster care should be designed to better stabilize families, rather than just serving as a placement for a child.
2. Establish that children will be placed in the care of family, friends, and neighbors whenever possible, and help children maintain connections to their cultures, communities, and Tribes.

3. Support our workforce and provide the resources, training, coaching, and services needed to support our children, families and communities.

DHS agrees with nine of the ten recommendations and partially agrees with one. Work is already underway to implement five of the 10 recommendations.

As of June 30, 2020 no Oregon children are placed in out-of-state treatment facilities, down from a high of 88 children placed out-of-state in March 2019.

Children in foster care in Oregon fell to 6,692 in June 2020, the lowest number in at least four years.

In May 2020 there were 4,983 screened reports of abuse or neglect that were documented and either closed at screening or assigned for assessment.

Report child abuse to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline by calling 1-855-503-SAFE (7233).

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