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## Child Abuse Hotline annual report highlights first year of operations

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(Salem, Ore.) – Since it launched in August 2018, the statewide Oregon Child Abuse Hotline has made significant progress in protecting Oregon’s children by implementing a system that ensures the best possible safety decisions, that calls are handled consistently, and callers are respected and responded to in a timely manner. Dropped call rates have decreased, average call waits have gotten shorter, and 98,404 calls reporting concerns of child safety were screened by hotline staff.

This data is available in the recently released [Oregon Child Abuse Hotline Annual Report](#).

“As the Hotline reflects on progress made during its first year, we also acknowledge that there is still much room for improvement,” said DHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht. “We will continue to use data, customer feedback, predictive analytics, and training to better serve and protect the children in our communities.”

The statewide hotline resulted from the centralization of 15 previously independent, regional hotlines in order to improve consistency in how rule and procedure were applied, including screening reports of child abuse. When someone calls the Hotline, a screener gathers sufficient information to assess whether the allegation meets the criteria of suspected abuse and whether there is imminent danger to the safety of the child. Calls can remain anonymous.

Over the last year, DHS partnered with Action for Child Protection, Portland State University, and other community partners to develop a 56-hour training for DHS screeners. This training, along with the centralization, has increased screening consistency, decreased the potential for bias, and integrated robust and intentional data in the Hotline’s efforts to keep children safe. Along with predictive analytics and access to past reports from multiple sources, screeners now have more information in assessing safety for children at their fingertips.

The management consulting firm hired to assist DHS through Governor Brown’s Executive Order on Child Welfare performed significant work to track and analyze hotline call data to improve screening outcomes. The Hotline will also soon be adding an additional queue for more general child welfare questions, so that screeners can focus on calls that require immediate attention.

Screeners also can now receive reports of child abuse and neglect in multiple languages. By adding an additional queue for Spanish speakers to speak with Spanish speaking screeners this summer, more children are now represented and protected.

Other highlights of the hotline’s first year include the final hiring and training phase of 18 staff expected in November and newly created advanced screener training modules on Tribal Engagement, Commercial Sexual Exploitation, Substance Abuse Disorder, and Domestic Violence.

While great progress has been made, the Hotline is still facing challenges. For example, in September as children returned to school and interfaced with more mandatory reporters, the Hotline saw average wait times increase to approximately 7 minutes. Still, even with the spike in September, more than 60 percent of the calls were answered within 2 minutes. The maximum wait time in September was 100 minutes, an outlier in the month's average data, and an issue DHS is addressing.

Report child abuse to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline by calling 1-855-503-SAFE (7233). This toll-free number allows you to report abuse of any child or adult to the Oregon Department of Human Services, 24 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year. You can also report child abuse by calling a local police department, county sheriff, county juvenile department, or Oregon State Police.

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