

News Release

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ODHS Joins National Partnership to Reduce and Prevent Child Maltreatment and Fatalities

Child welfare leaders are shifting the field to be more proactive, aiming to prevent tragedies

(Salem, Ore.) – Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) this week announced their involvement in a national effort to strengthen families, identify and protect children at risk, and save the lives of children.

In early 2020, the ODHS Child Welfare Division began receiving technical assistance from the University of Kentucky Center for Innovation in Population Health to apply safety science to ODHS Child Welfare child fatality reviews (often called “critical incidents”). Safety science provides a framework for Child Welfare to better understand the complexities of the work and supports professionals to process, share, and learn from child fatalities to prevent additional tragedies.

This week, in collaboration with 26 other state, county and tribal child and family serving agencies [the National Partnership for Child Safety](#) (NPCS) was announced. The partnership is supported by Casey Family Programs. Aligned with the ODHS Child Welfare Vision for Transformation, the NPCS helps Oregon move towards a more preventative child and family well-being system. NPCS members will share key information and obtain peer-to-peer support with the goal of improving child safety and preventing child maltreatment and fatalities.

“While a child fatality is tragic and rare, the factors that led to the death may not be unique. With a safety science approach, we can create a culture of learning that helps us better understand how and why decisions are made and offer recommendations. This will build a stronger system focused on supporting families,” says Child Welfare Director Rebecca Jones Gaston.

The safety science approach connects Child Welfare agencies with community partners and hopes to build support for families before crises occur. It also includes supporting staff. In Oregon, some examples of this are reflected in recent [safe sleep education tools](#), providing one-on-one and group sessions for staff who have experienced a traumatic incident and agency-wide suicide prevention training.

To request an interview with a spokesperson for the National Partnership for Child Safety, please contact Jennifer Devlin at 703-966-3241 or jenniferdevlin7@gmail.com.

About the ODHS Child Welfare Division

The Oregon Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division is committed to transforming itself to better support the individual needs of families and to best serve Oregon's children and young people. 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.

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