

# News Release

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## **Oregon taps national leader to serve as Child Welfare director**

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Salem, OR – Rebecca Jones Gaston will serve as the new director of the Child Welfare program, the Oregon Department of Human Services announced today.

Jones Gaston is executive director of the Social Services Administration at the Maryland Department of Human Services. In her current role, Jones Gaston oversees programs that ensure children and vulnerable adults are protected from abuse and neglect through 24 offices. Jones Gaston will join Oregon's Department of Human Services Nov. 4.

"Rebecca has extensive experience in child welfare systems across the country and, as part of that work, she has encountered many of the same challenges we face in Oregon," said Fariborz Pakseresht, DHS Director. "I am so pleased she is coming on board, and I am confident she is the right person to continue to transform our Child Welfare system into one focused on prevention, safety and improving outcomes for children and families."

Jones Gaston has worked in the field of human services and child welfare for more than 22 years as a social worker, advocate, therapist, consultant, and administrator. She previously was a director with Casey Family Programs, providing technical assistance to child welfare agencies throughout the United States. From 2003 to 2007, she served as the National Campaign Director for AdoptUsKids, a major campaign aimed at increasing the numbers of foster and adoptive families developed in collaboration with the National Ad Council and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau.

In Maryland, Jones Gaston has successfully implemented new programs to help the department better support vulnerable populations, with a focus on collaboration and diversity and support for staff during the change process. Jones Gaston's accomplishments in Maryland include:

- Provided strategic vision and guidance for transforming Maryland's social service system through an innovation waiver and the upcoming implementation of the Family First Prevention Services Act of 2018.
- Increased the capacity of the workforce to use data in decision making.

- Led the development of an Integrated Practice Model to guide practice and policy for child welfare and adult services.
- Led the reduction of out of state placements of youth in foster care from 68 to 18 youth over the past 3.5 years and created a vetting and monitoring process to ensure optimum placements for children and youth.

“I look forward to leading implementation of the many changes already under way in Oregon to build a child welfare system that best serves our most vulnerable children and families,” said Jones Gaston.

Jones Gaston holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from Georgetown University and a master’s degree in Social Work from the University of Pennsylvania.

Jones Gaston replaces former Child Welfare Director Marilyn Jones, who retired.

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