

News Release

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Contact: Sunny Petit, ODHS Press Secretary: sunny.petit@dhsoha.state.or.us,
503-716-2871 (cell)

Funding reform in foster care helps shift focus to prevention

(Salem, OR)- The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Child Welfare Division Family First [Prevention Services plan](#), also referred to as Title IV-E, was approved today by the Federal Children’s Bureau and allows the state to provide more supports and services to children and families before foster care becomes necessary. The Oregon five-year plan outlines how the state will support families in crisis, by offering evidence-based programs for mental health, addiction and recovery, resources for pregnant and parenting teens, and residential treatment requirements.

The plan is aligned with the [Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation](#), which underscores that families in need of support should be served whole and together, when safely possible.

“We believe our communities are more healthy when families are able to safely stay together,” said Child Welfare Director Rebecca Jones Gaston. “All children deserve to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and grow up in the care of a loving family and community. This plan offers us a fundamental tool in achieving our vision for transformation of Oregon’s child welfare system.”

The Family First Prevention Services Act was co-sponsored by Senator Ron Wyden and Senator Orrin Hatch and signed into law on February 9, 2018. It is the first major federal modernization of child welfare in 30 years. Oregon’s plan creates the basic operational foundation for the state’s prevention of foster care by allowing cost reimbursement for evidence-based services provided outside of foster care. Oregon is currently increasing its ability to offer these services and intends to amend the state plan as culturally-responsive services are approved by the federal government’s clearinghouse on evidence-based practices.

“We appreciate the Children’s Bureau’s support of the transformation of Oregon’s Child Welfare System to a child well-being system under Director Jones Gaston’s leadership. We are excited and grateful for this opportunity,” remarked ODHS Director Fariborz Pakseresht.

In 2020, two foundational parts of the Family First Act were implemented in Oregon, the implementation of Oregon’s Kinship Navigator program, which connects relative caregivers for children in foster care with supports, and new regulations for Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs), which are residential treatment facilities for children in foster care.

The Family First workgroups have been intentional about including diverse voices since the passage of the act in 2018. The Implementation Team and workgroups, tasked with providing input and feedback on a variety of focal points (e.g., continuous quality improvement, policy and practice, and service array), reflect and include young people formerly in care, families touched by the system, providers, juvenile court, resource (foster) parents, Tribal Nations, and community members, along with cross-agency collaboration with ODHS and Oregon Health Authority staff.

“In order to serve Oregonians in a holistic way, we want all voices and perspectives at the table where we are making programmatic and policy decisions. This makes our plan responsive and an honest reflection of our community needs and wants as we build a stronger system,” expressed Director Jones Gaston.

This is a crucial first step toward Oregon’s goal of transforming to a prevention-oriented system. The initial phase of implementation that this plan describes includes modifications to the current system of service delivery and inclusion of new evidence-based prevention services as part of standard practice. Future steps toward transformation including structural changes to the service delivery system and additional improvement toward a comprehensive prevention service array. As Oregon begins its journey of transformation, the implementation of Family First will be an integral landmark on the road to ending racial disproportionality, utilizing values-based practice and intentional engagement, strengthening communities, serving children and families together in their

homes, and utilizing data to improve best practice.

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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. Read the [Child Welfare Division Vision for Transformation](#) to learn more.

