



ORCAH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2020

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MANAGER'S MESSAGE

I hope this newsletter finds you all well, healthy and safe.

Every April, Child Abuse Prevention Month is an opportunity to learn about the signs of child abuse and how to prevent it. The latest statistics available (2018) indicate that Oregon Child Welfare generated 84,233 screening reports, an increase of 4.4 percent from the prior year. Public and private officials required by law to report suspected child abuse made up 79.8 percent of the reports of abuse received by Child Welfare. Of these reports, there were 8,167 confirmed victims of child abuse in Oregon. This abuse often takes place in the home at the hands of a person the child knows well. Although any form of abuse may be found separately, they often occur together.

The pandemic has impacted all of us, personally and professionally. The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) are learning how to navigate the quickly evolving public health situation with COVID-19 and how best to serve children and families during this time. The “village” of support required to raise a child is limited as we adjust to our new normal of reduced outside contact. We depend on our education community, child care providers, mental health and healthcare providers, families and people in the community to keep children safe and to be the eyes on the children of Oregon.

The [COVID-19 Family Wellbeing Assessment](#) is a conversation guide provided by DHS for education staff and community partners to use when interacting with children and caregivers during COVID-19. The statutory requirement for mandatory reporters to report concerns of child abuse are unchanged; however, our ability to identify those concerns has. When it is not possible to see children and caregivers in person, phone calls or quick interactions may be the only opportunity to assess whether children are safe. Responses to questions, the tone of an interaction or an inability to contact a child or caregiver may reveal stressors or circumstances that would cause concern for the child or family.

ORCAH is operating 24/7/365 and screeners are available to respond to reports of child abuse while our communities work to bring resources and services to families across the state. Please review the [Child Abuse Reporting Guide](#) for more information about what you should be prepared to share with ORCAH when you call. Below you will find information on how to recognize when a child is unsafe. We are also in the process of updating the mandatory reporter video and “What you can do about child abuse” guide and will share when finalized. Please forward this newsletter on to your network in our collaborative efforts to increase awareness during these critical times.

Just a year ago, on April 4th, 2019, we merged the last regional child abuse hotline and became a statewide, 24/7/365 operation known as ORCAH. Oregon started this journey in 2016; operationalized ORCAH in 2018; transitioned fifteen regional hotlines all the while building and training an entire workforce of 190 staff today. So many people, internal and external; partners and contractors have gotten us to where we are. ORCAH’s successes are a result of all of us and our contributors, so thank you for your patience and resilience, your commitment and faith, your feedback and engagement. While this anniversary occurs in the midst of a pandemic, we want to acknowledge this important milestone as we work together in ensuring safety of Oregon’s children.

You are not alone. We face these challenging times together. I encourage you all to find simple ways to keep calm, stay wise and be kind to yourself and others. Take care, Kristen

KRISTEN KHAMNOHACK
ORCAH & SCREENING MANAGER



In 2008, **Prevent Child Abuse America** introduced the pinwheel as the new national symbol for child abuse prevention through **Pinwheels for Prevention®**. What their research showed, and what their experiences since then have borne out, is that people respond to the pinwheel. By its very nature, the pinwheel connotes whimsy and childlike notions. It has come to serve as the physical embodiment, or reminder, of the great childhoods we want for all children. For more information, check out their website: <https://preventchildabuse.org/resource/pinwheels-for-prevention/>.



ORCAH Updates

SAFETY - CONSISTENCY - CUSTOMER SERVICE

ORCAH is an essential operation and the work we do is critical to ensuring the safety of Oregon's children. With the help of many internal and external partners, we are able to continue responding to reports of child abuse with the use of technology and system alignment within our continuity of operations plan. 99% of the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline staff have successfully transitioned to teleworking during the pandemic and the Governor's Stay Home Order. This was achieved with the incredible collaboration from the Department of Human Services (DHS) Director's Office, the ORCAH leadership team, the Office of Information Systems (OIS) and our contracted business partner IBM, Unify. Screeners and supervisors were provided with the necessary equipment and resources to continue the work they were formerly doing at our facility. Due to this pandemic, ORCAH now has a well-developed and tested emergency plan for managing contact volume from remote locations.

The ORCAH leadership team and technology partners continue to work to quickly resolve connection issues that arise from systems and network strain. ORCAH Feedback email box has received reports that some callers have experienced difficulty connecting to a screener through the hotline. Fortunately, most callers are having an improved experience when contacting the hotline, as lower call volume has resulted in significantly shorter wait times.

Our ORCAH community of staff continues to grow! Our retention rate has been very good, and we have only said goodbye to a few team members since we started hiring in the summer of 2018. ORCAH is a data informed operation and was granted permission to hire additional staff and continues to fill vacancies based on workload. In addition to the eight new screeners who started with us on March 30, we are in the process of hiring fourteen more screeners, three supervisors, and one screening program consultant. Thirteen more screeners will be full time and two will be part time. Two of the new supervisors represent entirely new units, increasing our ability to meet call volume demand at peak times of the day/week. Applications are being reviewed, interviews are occurring, and offers are being made as we write this newsletter. We continue to be amazed by the quality of applicants for all levels and are so reassured about our ability to continue improving the quality of service ORCAH provides.

Our newest team members will be trained and ready to serve by fall. As social distancing is likely to continue, all training plans have been revamped to accommodate remote training provision. The training unit and program consultants have tested the Adobe Connect platform and will be presenting an abbreviated, online training for the new screeners to prepare them to receive calls. The training unit is exploring technical options to engage the new hires in live call opportunities while shadowing experienced screeners as they interview callers and document their reports. With coordination of various software programs, new screeners can remotely view the experienced screener's monitor while simultaneously monitoring the call the screener handles. With a little ingenuity and access to technology, the training team and consultants will have the new screeners prepared without delay!

Continuous Quality Improvement & Data Reporting

The Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) unit's focus is to support ORCAH toward continuous performance improvement. The unit uses Quality Assurance reviews of screening reports to provide recommendations to ORCAH leadership. These reviews allow ORCAH to focus coaching and training for screeners. The CQI team also manages incoming emails from the Feedback email box to ensure high quality customer service and timely responsiveness to both internal and external partners. Please continue to provide your feedback or ask questions by sending an email to: Feedback.OregonChildAbuseHotline@dhsosha.state.or.us.

ORCAH receives calls and police reports regarding a variety of things, not all of which have to do with reports of child abuse or concerns for children. These calls are sometimes documented as case notes as they contain information on open cases. Others are not documented at all. Approximately 45% of the calls and police reports received result in a screening report being documented and of those documented screening reports, approximately 55% are referred to Child Protective Services (CPS) for assessment. Those that are not assigned are Closed at Screening as they do not meet criteria for CPS response. The data below provides a snapshot of the volume of calls, police reports and CPS referrals over the last 3 months.

	Total Contacts 	Calls 	Police Reports 	Avg. Wait time (minute: second) 	Referred to CPS 
January	19,114	16,246	2868	11:24	4346
February	18,038	15,401	2637	10:00	3918
March	14,216	11,489	2727	6:15	3205

Reminders:

Report child abuse to the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline by calling **1-855-503-SAFE (7233)**. ORCAH receives calls 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. This toll-free number allows you to **report abuse of any child or adult** to the Oregon Department of Human Services. You can also report child abuse by calling your local law enforcement agency.

For **non-abuse calls involving Child Welfare questions or information**, please contact the local Child Welfare office in your area: <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/offices/pages/child-welfare.aspx>

For **local and regional resources and services**, 211info.org (also by dialing 211) offers information regarding unemployment, food banks, housing assistance, mental health services, child care and educational resources.

ORCAH Kudos & Recognition

Here's what people are saying about ORCAH staff who work every day to ensure child safety. In each issue, we honor just some of our staff exemplifying a high level of safety, consistency and customer service. If you know an ORCAH team member who should be recognized for their great work, please contact their supervisor or e-mail us at:

Feedback.OregonChildAbuseHotline@dhsosha.state.or.us

Alyson Wall, Office Specialist 2

"Thanks for always being willing to help and for doing such an amazing work and wizardry with data!"

Lucy Kase, Screener

"Thank you for being here. You are appreciated and I am glad you are on my team!"

Kristy Wells-Owen, Screener

"Maintained her composure and her professionalism and conveyed compassion while speaking with a challenging caller on night shift. Way to go!"

All ORCAH:

"I want to give a kudos to all the managers for helping us all through this crazy time! Thank you all for the continued support as we all learn and grow together. I also want to give a shout out to the overnight Managers (Paula, Sophie, and Mike) it is very challenging at nighttime when Openscape goes down or when Citrix goes down and they have no backup to help. They are rocking it! And so is everyone! Hope everyone is staying safe and enjoying working from home."

Special recognition in honor of Administrative Day (April 22nd):

We want to send a sincere thank you to our three office managers and business support staff! Your hard work does not go unnoticed.

We are incredibly lucky to have the three best office managers in the state! Carla Simmons, Libby Richard and Brandy Koll each bring such unique skill, knowledge and value to ORCAH by keeping us organized, efficient and our operation running smoothly! Between the many desk shuffles; ordering and setting up all our equipment and phones; helping us to keep our positions, hiring and Workday changes organized; and taking such good care of all of us by answering all our questions and meeting our ever-increasing needs. We can't say enough about how grateful we are for each of you getting us to where we are today!

Our business staff have taken on quite a lot since we started in August of 2018! This includes increasing their administrative tasks; managing email boxes that keep our work flowing; answering our calls received through reception queue; helping us to be paperless; and ensuring the safety of our field staff by running LEDS. Thank you so much for resilience with our ever-changing environment!

"No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens the burden of another." - *Unknown*

ORCAH Employee Spotlight



*In each issue of the ORCAH Newsletter we feature an ORCAH employee whose achievements and practice epitomize the best of service in child welfare. This month, we recognize Office Specialist 2, **Sheila Zavala**, who has worked as an ORCAH receptionist since November 2019.*

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR JOB?

The most challenging for me was the initial transition into my position. Learning and getting to know everyone.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR JOB?

It's very rewarding knowing that I can serve and contribute towards helping the community every day. I feel no matter the task given its essential towards someone's life or wellbeing.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST INTERESTING PART OF YOUR JOB?

The most interesting for me is- I get to be part of a department that is constantly evolving. With that said that I get to obtain new knowledge and skills.

Q: HOW DO YOU WORK DAILY TO ENSURE CHILD SAFETY?

Staying connected to the protocols and reaching out as needed.

Q: WHAT IS YOUR TOP TIP FOR ENSURING CONSISTENCY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE?

Maintaining a positive mindset, that way you can always give your best to ensure consistency and customer service.

Q: WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO AT ORCAH?

Being able to be part of something that helps contribute towards the safety of the children and working with a great team!

Q: HOW DO YOU ENJOY YOUR TIME AWAY FROM WORK?

I enjoy spending quality time with my children and having journeys together (we love to run away to the gorge, I really love that we read together or just have movie nights), it's a beautiful fulfillment for me daily to see the smiles on their faces and the laughter we have together.

Q: TELL US ONE FUN FACT ABOUT YOU:

I love trying new adventures!



Partner Profile

*In each issue of the ORCAH Newsletter we feature a valuable community partner who works with ORCAH to promote safety, consistency and customer service. For this spring issue, the spotlight is on **Jenny Gilmore-Robinson**. Jenny is the Executive Director of ABC House, the Child Abuse Intervention Center Serving Benton & Linn Counties. As part of her executive role, Jenny supports the child abuse assessment team who serve vulnerable children in the community through forensic child abuse assessments and mental health services.*

Having previously worked both as a court appointed children's lawyer for high risk family cases in Multnomah County and as part of a child abuse multidisciplinary team in SE Asia, Jenny is knowledgeable about the diverse roles when serving children and families and how they intersect with child safety.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART OF YOUR WORK?

I really enjoy making my staff and colleagues' work easier, so they are better equipped to serve children. All our child welfare partners are working so hard. They are dedicated professionals tackling seemingly unsurmountable challenges. Any time I can help remove barriers (processes, legislative, funding, training, etc.) this is when my work is the most meaningful.

Q: WHAT IS THE MOST CHALLENGING PART OF YOUR WORK?

I recognize we are living in an age where child abuse is still a taboo subject. It is frightening and disheartening when we know so much goes unreported. One of the challenges I face is helping my community recognize abuse is a reality, even when they don't see it. Vicarious trauma is a reality for those who serve children and families who have been victimized. Continually hearing disclosures of abuse over time is necessarily going to have an impact on a person's overall wellbeing. This is incredibly difficult work and supports are essential for our staff and multidisciplinary team partners so they can stay healthy and remain present for abused children. Lastly, funding a non-profit agency is an ongoing challenge. ABC House is responsible for its own financial sustainability, yet the services we provide are a state-mandated community service without sufficient funding. It is a never-ending task to keep funds coming in so our work can continue.

Q: HOW DO YOU WORK WITH ORCAH TO ENSURE CHILD SAFETY?

Often new information comes to light during a child's forensic interview, medical exam or counseling session. We even get disclosures at times during our youth prevention trainings in schools. All this information has to be reported to ORCAH. Primarily, ABC House works with CPS workers who respond to the reports of abuse assigned. We see ourselves as a partner and a resource to support the CPS process and the workers themselves. They work so hard, and no single agency should have the sole burden of investigating and responding to child abuse alone. I find a multidisciplinary approach is collaborative and respects everyone's area of expertise.

Q: WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH ORCAH?

In Linn and Benton counties we had great relationships with our local screeners prior to ORCAH, and now we've had to let go of the local familiarity and credibility built over time.

Even so, I know that moving to centralized screening will keep kids safer through a systematic, consistent response. It has been helpful during the transition to be invited to give feedback and to be heard when we give it. When we have raised concerns, ORCAH was responsive and did their best to problem-solve.

Q: WHAT DO OTHER MANDATORY REPORTERS NEED TO KNOW WHEN REPORTING TO THE ORCAH?

Mandatory reporting saves children’s lives. Yes, it can be really hard to report at times. I understand the concern that reporting may affect the reporter’s future relationship and contact with the child or family, and the anxiety about being mistaken. But kids are counting on mandatory reporters to make that call. These trying times are a perfect example of how much of a safety net mandatory reporter provide for children – and what happens when we don’t have that safety net. For me, being a mandatory reporter helps because it removes any internal debate I have about reporting. Awkward or not, I don’t have a choice; if I have a reasonable suspicion of abuse, I report.

Q: WHAT DO YOU LOOK FORWARD TO ABOUT ORCAH?

We are definitely looking forward to decreased wait times! It is easier to let go of the old, familiar ways of doing things when newer processes are running more smoothly. Even though there have been bumps, I know we’re on the right track with centralized screening. The response to abuse reports should not vary by location and I think we can all agree that children, regardless of where they live, deserve a consistent, effective response.



Did you know?

All Oregonians are impacted by COVID-19, especially vulnerable children. Child abuse occurs in every culture, class, and community. As families are isolated, impacted by loss of employment and income, and experiencing health fears, these conditions are adding additional stress to many families. Abuse is still happening, however reports to the hotline have significantly decreased. Your help is critical to ensure Oregon's children are safe.

The first step is to **RECOGNIZE**. Child Welfare has developed the follow tips to help you be better equipped to recognize possible abuse:

- **Physical signs** present on the child include
Injuries to atypical places on the body like the neck, ears buttocks or genitals; unexplained injuries; poor height or weight growth; and necessary medical/dental/mental health needs unmet. Children can also show sudden changes in behavior, such as overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn.
- Behavioral **signs or statements made by the child** such as
Running away, stealing food or complaining of hunger; being unsupervised before they can safely care for themselves; or appearing afraid of a parent/caregiver. Also, losing skills already developed (such as potty-training regression), making threats of suicide, or making statements about abuse.
- Behavioral **signs or statements made by the parent or caregiver** to include
Disregard for the child's feelings or needs; seeing the child as bad; describing the child in sexual terms; and offering conflicting or unconvincing explanation for injuries or events. The parent may make threats or use punishment that seem extreme or unrealistic given the child's age or development.

You have the power to Listen, Observe, and Report. Additional prevention resources and education can be accessed through Oregon Child Abuse Solutions at: <https://oregoncas.org/> or Prevent Child Abuse Oregon at: <https://preventchildabuseoregon.org/>