



CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT ACT

CITIZEN REVIEW PANELS 2025-26 FISCAL YEAR



CITIZEN REVIEW BOARDS

Baker County (1 board)
Benton County (1 board)
Clackamas County (3 boards)
Clatsop County (1 board)
Columbia County (1 board)
Coos/Curry Counties (1 board)
Crook/Jefferson Counties (1 board)
Deschutes County (2 boards)
Douglas County (4 boards)
Harney/Grant Counties (1 board)
Hood River County (1 board)
Jackson County (4 boards)
Josephine County (2 boards)
Klamath County (2 boards)
Lake County (1 board)
Lane County (9 boards)
Lincoln County (1 board)
Linn County (2 boards)
Malheur County (1 board)
Marion County (5 boards)
Multnomah County (2 boards)
Polk County (1 board)
Tillamook County (1 board)
Umatilla/Morrow Counties (2 boards)
Union/Wallowa Counties (1 board)
Wasco County (1 board)
Washington County (2 boards)
Yamhill County (1 board)

INTRODUCTION:

In 1996, an amendment to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) mandated that each state establish citizen review panels composed of volunteers to review state child welfare policies, procedures, and practices. Panels must report findings and recommendations to the state child welfare agency annually. The agency must then respond in writing to the recommendations. Both the report and response are included in the Title IV-B Annual Progress and Services Report (ASPR) the agency prepares for the federal government.

As Oregon's Foster Care Review Program, the Citizen Review Board (CRB), has coordinated these panels since 2012. Projects have included input from CRB volunteers and staff, Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), and members of local multidisciplinary and Model Court teams.

The Citizen Review Board (CRB) has been conducting reviews of children in foster care since 1985. Established by statute within the Oregon Judicial Department, under the direction of the Oregon Supreme Court, the CRB operates independently of the state's foster care system to provide an objective assessment of each case. In Oregon, the CRB and the courts share responsibility for conducting these periodic reviews. As part of a dual mandate, CRB serves as an advocate for system improvement and assists the state in ensuring compliance with the 6-month periodic review requirement. This function is part of what allows Oregon to receive Title IV-E federal funding for foster care and adoption/guardianship payments.

Today, CRB has 55 boards in 33 of Oregon's 36 counties and approximately 237 citizen volunteer board members serving statewide. In 2025, we added 34 new volunteer board members.

The CRB also operates three dedicated Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) boards in partnership with tribal communities and our state ICWA courts in Klamath, Marion, and Multnomah Counties.

Most boards meet monthly, a small number meet every other month, and one meets quarterly. In 2025, boards collectively conducted 2,117 reviews involving 2,605 children and young adults in foster care.

CRB PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: TRAINING

In addition to providing training for new board members and offering ongoing education opportunities, the CRB program also serves as a valued partner in developing curriculum and training for local agencies. Accomplishments within the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year include:

- **Orientation Trainings (OTs):** Online trainings are held every other month for Prospective Volunteer Board Members. This is a 2-day training with approximately 10 hours of Independent Study, including online modules completed as a prerequisite to training. 20.0 Access to Justice CLE credits have been approved for attorney Prospective Volunteer Board Members who complete OT.
- **Ongoing Collaboration with Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde:** CRB has begun offering our OT to train board members serving in Grand Ronde's tribal court system at no cost. In 2025, 3 Grand Ronde CRB board members participated in this training.
- **Cohort Roundtables:** These interactive sessions offer training, dialogue, and community-building for new board members with fewer than two years of experience. Held 3 times per year, the first cohorts launched in March 2026.
- **CRB 101 for Resource Parents:** This training introduces resource parents to the CRB process, what to expect, and how to advocate for the needs of the child in their care. It counts toward resource parent certification and is now available on-demand through the ODHS training portal.
- **CRB 101 for CASA:** This on-demand training for CASAs is available on Oregon CASA Network's training portal and includes a new statewide CASA report template for CRB reviews.
- **Willamette Law School Partnership:** The CRB collaborated with Willamette Law School to develop materials for the juvenile law course and to offer law students interested in Oregon's dependency system to observe CRB reviews and participate in CRB trainings.
- **CRB 102 for Caseworkers:** Interview sessions were filmed, edited, and provided to ODHS for their use. The agency plans to continue collaborating with CRB to develop an on-demand CRB 102 training in Workday. This training is intended for caseworkers who have already completed the CRB 101 module through their required Portland State University onboarding. The new module will offer "tips from seasoned or former caseworkers" to help staff have a successful CRB experience.
- **CASA/CRB Conference (2025):** This event was our largest joint initiative to date in collaboration with Oregon's Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program. Sessions were led by system-experienced professionals, including judges, attorneys, youth, parents, foster/adoptive caregivers, and volunteers. Training focused on legal issues, mental health, substance use recovery, developmental disabilities, domestic violence, and the needs of older youth in care. This event was also open to community partners and was approved for 18.5 CLE credits for attorneys.
- **CRB Conversations:** These lunchtime trainings are offered every other month. Our January - June 2026 trainings include:
 - **System Alumni Series: Youth In Care** – This session featured interviews with Oregon youth in care, explored their experiences in the dependency court system, and resulted in creating a dependency system guide for older youth.
 - **Making "No" Findings** – This session trains CRB staff on how to deliver negative findings during live reviews and determine when such decisions are necessary.
 - **Evaluating In-Home Plans** – This session provides training from ODHS Central Office on how to read, assess, and recommend improvements for in-home plans.

AREA OF FOCUS: In-home cases

OVERVIEW:

Over the past three years, the Citizen Review Board (CRB) program has implemented a comprehensive [Strategic Plan](#) (2022–2025) centered on four goals:

1. Increase recognition of the impact that citizen input and advocacy have on the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of children in care.
2. Improve the safety and stability of foster care placements.
3. Improve access to mental and behavioral health services for Oregon's most vulnerable children and families.
4. Improve outcomes for teens and young adults in foster care.

Goal 2 focuses specifically on enhancing the safety and stability of foster care placements.

Objectives include:

- a. Strengthening CRB inquiry related to placement, safety, suitability, support, and transitions.
- b. Reinstating CRB reviews of children placed at home under trial reunification.

STRATEGIC PLAN ACTIVITIES:

Safety and stability of foster care placements includes the stabilization of in-home placements. In alignment with Objective 2b, the CRB:

- Conducted a comprehensive analysis of periodic review compliance.
- Obtained a legal opinion authorizing reinstatement of reviews for children in trial reunification.
- Secured revisions to Supreme Court Operating Rules.
- Updated the ODHS/CRB Memorandum of Understanding.
- Coordinated implementation with courts, ODHS Child Welfare, and community partners.
- Modified business processes and provided internal and external training.
- Adapted review structures and created technical assistance guides for in-home plan reviews.
- Promoted stabilization strategies through local and statewide Model Court plans.

PURPOSE FOR REINSTATING REVIEWS:

The CRB reinstated reviews of trial reunification placements for several reasons:

• Compliance with Federal/State Requirements:

As Oregon's Foster Care Review Program, the CRB shares responsibility with the court for ensuring compliance with the six-month periodic review requirement. Under federal definitions, children coded as being in trial reunification, often termed "trial home visit", remain legally in substitute care. This coding preserves funding and ensures federal requirements are met.

The decision to stop cancelling reviews for children returning home on trial reunification was intended to prevent confusion among all parties, keep siblings aligned on review timelines, and reduce pressure on the court to convene a hearing within the statutory timeframes.

• Enhanced Oversight and Supportive Transition:

CRB staff and board members have long expressed concern for child safety after children return home. From 2012 and 2024, CRB reviews for in-home cases occurred only if children were removed again from parental care. Although most reunifications are successful and an opportunity to celebrate progress, subsequent removals can be deeply traumatic. Increased oversight can be a preventative measure. By taking a supportive approach, our reviews can play a critical role in stabilizing placements and helping ensure children can safely remain at home.

• Alignment with Juvenile Court Programs and Statewide Model Court Efforts:

This initiative aligns with statewide juvenile court priorities. The 2025 Model Court Summit, hosted by the Juvenile Court Improvement Program (JCIP), focused on safety and stabilization of in-home plans and prevention of re-entry. The recommended statewide Model Court Team Project builds on initiatives developed by local model court teams, using strategies informed substantially by feedback and outcomes from CRB reviews.

TRAINING:

Training materials were developed collaboratively with ODHS Child Welfare, a regional permanency consultant, a parent mentor, CRB staff and CRB trainers. Introductory statements were added to emphasize that the CRB does not conduct case planning or make placement decisions. Review discussions were intentionally narrowed to reduce the potential for triggering or divisive conversations for parents. Findings are evaluated differently when children are already home; boards do not review jurisdiction, efforts prior to removal, relative search, or concurrent planning. Reviews focus on child safety, health, and wellbeing, and efforts to support the in-home plan.

TIMELINE and IMPLEMENTATION:

The CRB adopted a staggered implementation approach. In January 2024, reviews for children in trial reunification on in-home plans resumed, beginning with children returned home within 30 days of the scheduled review (Phase 1). Once a review was scheduled, it was not cancelled. In several counties, the scope has since expanded to include children who returned home within 60 days of review and sibling groups split between in-home and substitute care placements.

In 2026, the CRB will move toward full implementation within the standard review rotation (Phase 2). If a Permanency Hearing or Full Judicial Review is not scheduled within the required timelines, the case will be scheduled for CRB review. Phase 2 will continue to be implemented on a county-by-county basis, depending on local capacity and CRB/court coordination.

As of June 2026, counties moving to Phase 2 include: Coos, Curry, Douglas, Hood River, Jackson, Josephine, Lincoln, Umatilla/Morrow, Wasco, and Washington.

DATA:

Oregon Courts and CRB do a good job of keeping cases in compliance with periodic review requirements. An analysis conducted by CRB showed 92% of cases met the periodic review requirement in the 2021 calendar year. However, of the cases that fell out of compliance, 40% involved a child who was in a trial reunification placement at the time a review was due.

Prompting further analysis, the CRB then conducted an internal data collection of cases and determined that 17% of trial reunification placements disrupted in 2023. This review relied on escalated shelter hearings recorded in our case management system (Odyssey) as well as placement changes reported by ODHS.

Until 2025, there was no direct mechanism for extracting such data. However, successful trial home visit closure is now an internal measure collected by ODHS/Child Welfare. (CS FC-1054)

TRIAL HOME VISIT CLOSURE OUTCOMES FOR STATEWIDE BY CALENDAR YEAR:

	2022	2023	2024	2025	TOTAL
Trial Home Visits	1487	1379	1333	1282	5481
Successful THV	1191	1174	1071	1053	4489
Unsuccessful THV	296	205	262	229	992
Percent Successful	80.1%	85.1%	80.3%	82.1%	81.9%
Percent Unsuccessful	19.9%	14.9%	19.7%	17.9%	18.1%

“Reunification isn’t the finish line — it’s the handoff to community.”

-Lisa O’Connor, Family Nurturing Center

CASE ANALYSIS FINDINGS:

Case level reviews identified several contributing factors to placement disruptions, including:

- Ongoing safety plan revisions that were insufficient to control identified safety threats.
- Rushed reunification resulting in placement instability.
- Legal pressures to reunify.
- Premature returns when no appropriate alternative placements were available, particularly for children with elevated safety or service needs.
- Loss of transitional housing due to relapses or rule violations.
- Gaps or delays in services.
- Breakdown of safety-related supports needed to control threats to child safety.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To strengthen the safety and stabilization of in-home (trial reunification) placements, the CRB recommends that **ODHS Child Welfare ensure full compliance with policy as outlined in OARs 413-040-0017, 413-040-0024, 413-080-0054, and 413-080-0055.**

1. Establish clear internal expectations for reunification decisions, including:
 - a. Supervisor staffing and approval.
 - b. Enhanced transition planning with provider.
 - c. Input and support from resource parents.
 - d. Adequate notification to parties of intent to return, in writing.
 - e. Improved parental engagement and understanding of conditions for return and expected outcomes.
2. Support enhanced and gradual increase in family time to reduce abrupt transitions.
3. Comply with face-to-face contact requirements prior to and the day following return.
4. Conduct face-to-face contact at a level and frequency appropriate for the family's needs, exceeding minimum requirements when necessary.
5. Develop and review ongoing safety plans (CF 1149) every 30 days and revise as needed.
6. Ensure caseworkers understand expectations for providing updated information and timely notifications to the court and CRB during trial home visits.

In addition, the Citizen Review Board (CRB) recommends that ODHS Child Welfare direct intentional focus toward the following actions:

1. **Convene a Family Decision Meeting** prior to reunification to support transition planning with ample notice (*10-14 days, when feasible*) to CASA and all legal parties to allow for meaningful participation.
2. **Develop ongoing safety plans in collaboration** with parents and safety service providers (SSPs). Safety plans should be individualized, adequate to control safety threats, and the least intrusive option possible.
3. **Ensure continuity of key services** throughout the transition home, including behavioral health supports, parent mentoring, and safety related services necessary to maintain child safety and family stability.
4. **Encourage development of sustainable community supports** during and after reunification including ongoing involvement from the resource parent, and connection to community organizations that address the family's cultural, relational and long-term needs.
5. **Develop a structured communication plan** among ODHS, parents/families, safety service providers, housing partners, and treatment providers to maintain shared awareness of ongoing safety concerns, resource gaps, and emerging stressors before they escalate into safety threats.
6. **Monitor indicators of child well-being** after reunification and modify the in-home safety plan as necessary. Respond promptly to early indicators of risk, such as missed contacts, disengagement from services, or concerning reports from safety service providers.
7. **Hold a placement prevention meeting** prior to disrupting an in-home plan, except in circumstances where present danger is identified and immediate protective action is required.
8. **Provide the current ongoing safety plan** to the court and CRB for scheduled reviews including:
 - a. As part of CRB's Request for Case Information (RCI).
 - b. For full judicial reviews and/or placement change notifications when children are placed with a parent.

Appendix A



REVIEWS OF CHILDREN ON TRIAL REUNIFICATION

When children are on an in-home plan, findings will have a different analysis. Not all findings apply. Here are some possible questions and considerations. As a general rule, the CRB's role is not to case plan or to make placement decisions.

1. Has ODHS ensured that appropriate services are in place to safeguard the safety, health and well-being of the child?

Invite parents and/or child/youth (if present) to speak first.

Boards may still inquire about the following:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| -Placement | - Family Time/Visitation |
| -Supervision (including caseworker contact) | - Education/Development |
| -Mental Health/Therapeutic Supports | - Social/Cultural |
| -Physical Health/Medical | - Transition Planning (age 14+) |

- Ask parents for an overall update about the children and how the transition has gone.
- Who all resides in the home? Are there other adults assisting with childcare? If so, ask ODHS have they all been approved?
- Has ODHS made monthly face to face contact in the home? Was a safety check of the home performed prior to reunification?
- Ask ODHS, CASA and safety service providers (if applicable) - What are your observations during home visits?
- What services are being provided to each child/youth? (note consistency and/or interruptions)
- Were parents informed of upcoming appointments for the children prior to return?
- Has the agency provided opportunity for family time with extended family members, siblings, and other parent(s)?
- Ask if the children need any additional supports.

2. Has ODHS taken appropriate steps to ensure that 1) the substitute care provider is following the reasonable and prudent parent standard, and 2) the child has/have regular, ongoing opportunities to engage in age appropriate or developmentally appropriate activities.

Not Applicable.

3. Has ODHS made diligent efforts to place the child with a relative or a person who has a caregiver relationship?

Not Applicable. In this context, Finding 3 will not be made.

4. Has ODHS made reasonable efforts to provide services to make it possible for the child to safely return home and to finalize the permanency plan of reunification?

(Active efforts if ICWA applies.)

The focus is support to the family and preventative services.

- What has ODHS provided/offered to each parent?
- Were services/referrals timely?
- What does the in-home ongoing safety plan entail?
- Is the agency providing adequate support to maintain the in-home plan, including ongoing safety checks and home visits?
- Ask ALL attorneys and parents if any additional assistance is needed to support reunification.
- Has the agency continued to make reasonable efforts and engage the noncustodial parent(s) - including Action Agreements or Letters of Expectation?

5. Has ODHS made reasonable efforts in accordance with the case plan to place the child in a timely manner and to complete the steps necessary to finalize the permanent placement.

Not Applicable.

6. Is the parent making sufficient progress to make it possible for the child to safely return home within a reasonable time?

"YES" finding likely for custodial parent.

- Ask parents about ongoing involvement in services (including their recovery program, if applicable).
- Do parents feel they have an adequate support system?
- Consider the parents' ability to abide by the conditions of the in-home safety plan.
- Reviews of reunified families are an opportunity to highlight successes and to praise parents for their progress. Note only any serious concerns; otherwise, stay focused on ways to support the family.
- Boards should inquire about the circumstances of ALL parents.

7. Has ODHS made sufficient efforts in developing the concurrent permanency plan?

Not Applicable. In this context, Finding 7 will be not be made.

8. Is ODHS in compliance with the case plan and court orders?

- Has ODHS complied with court orders and followed policy requirements of an in-home plan? (413-040-0017; 413-080-0055)
- Has ODHS complied with face to face requirements? (413-040-0013, 413-040-0024)
This includes: separate contact with the child and parent 5 days prior to return; in-home contact the day following return; a minimum of monthly contact with the parent and children; and ongoing contact with each safety service provider.
- Did ODHS comply with prior CRB recommendations (if-applicable)?

9. Is the permanency plan the most appropriate plan for the child?

"YES" finding likely.

10. Is there a continuing need for placement?

Not Applicable. In this context, Finding 10 will not be made.

(optional): What is the likely date for case closure?

Additional Findings: The CRB report will document next Permanency Hearing date and the 6-month timeline from the date trial reunification began. The board should commend parents as-appropriate.

Recommendations: Include services, supports and/or any additional oversight (i.e., FDM, judicial review) needed. If there are any safety concerns noted, recommend ODHS monitor and revise the in-home safety plan.

Appendix B



TRIAL REUNIFICATION: DEFINITIONS AND POLICIES

Trial reunification: A child has been in a foster care placement under continuing state agency supervision and is returned to the primary caregiver the child was removed from, for a limited and specified period. The child must be considered reunified with parent at the point at which the trial reunification reaches six months or no later than the last day of a court ordered extension.

Conditions for return: A written statement of the specific behaviors, conditions, or circumstances that must exist within a child's home before a child can safely return and remain in the home with an in-home ongoing safety plan.

Expected outcome: An observable, sustained change in a parent or guardian's behavior, condition, or circumstance that, when accomplished, will increase a parent or guardian's protective capacity and reduce or eliminate an identified safety threat, and which, when accomplished, will no longer require Child Welfare intervention to manage a child's safety.

Timelines: Trial reunifications are not included in the 15/22-month date. 45 C.F.R. §1356.21 (i)(C). A trial home visit may not exceed six months in duration unless a court orders an extension.

413-040-0017: Requirements for return and reunification

ODHS recommends return of a child after reviewing impending danger safety threats identified in the CPS assessment that required an out of home placement ongoing safety plan to verify: a) conditions for return have been met; b) impending safety threats can be managed with an ongoing safety plan; c) parents are willing to accept responsibility for the care of the child with an ongoing safety plan; d) parents are willing/able to continue participating in the case plan services; e) service providers working with the family, and other involved persons, including attorneys and CASA have been informed, in writing, of the intent to return; f) there are no safety concerns raised in ODHS review of criminal history and child protective services for anyone residing in the home (excluding transitional housing and residential treatment facilities).

In-home plans require supervisor approval. An in-home ongoing safety plan must document the planned contacts by ODHS caseworker and safety service providers when the child is returned. ODHS must revise, as necessary, and confirm the sufficiency of an in-home ongoing safety plan that will manage safety threats as they uniquely occur within a particular family prior to the actual return.

413-040-0024: Face to Face requirements prior to and day following the return.

ODHS is required to: a) make face to face contact with the child (outside the presence of a parent), at least once during the five days prior to the return; b) conduct an in-home visit with the parent(s), at least once during the five days prior to the return of the child; c) visit the child in the home the day following the return.

OAR 413-040-0013 and 413-080-0055: Monitoring an in-home ongoing safety plan

ODHS must maintain monthly face to face with the parent. However, parent(s) may benefit from more frequent contact that is tailored to their needs: in person, by phone, or in writing by text, email, or letter. Parent preference is given priority when determining the location and time of face to face contact.

ODHS must maintain monthly face to face contact with the child under 413-080-0054; including face to face contact with the child in the home.

ODHS must maintain contact with the non-custodial parent, except as provided under 413-080-0054 (2).

ODHS must maintain contact with each participant/safety service provider in the ongoing safety plan (does not need to be face to face).

ODHS must continue to monitor and assess any changes in protective capacity, including parental willingness and cooperation; participation in the actions and requirements of the ongoing safety plan and whether safety threats to the child are still being managed.

Through contact with participants in the ongoing safety plan, ODHS must ensure safety providers are engaged with parents and fulfilling responsibilities; the level of interaction is still appropriate, and the services are least intrusive to assure child safety. If there are observable or new safety threats, ODHS must comply with 413-080-0051 to determine if an increase in the level of safety intervention is required and if the in-home plan needs revision. ODHS must continue to assess the in-home safety plan to determine whether to reduce or increase the level of intervention.

413-040-0032: Requirements for closing the in-home plan/closing the case

When assessing whether the in-home safety plan can be closed, ODHS must determine whether the parent has demonstrated capacity to sustain safety of the child based upon: a) observations of the child and parent in the home; b) expert evaluations/service provider reports; c) reports from participants in the in-home plan; d) the extent the parent has achieved expected outcomes; e) through consultation with other individuals participating with the parent to sustain child safety.

ODHS must document the determination that the in-home plan can be closed and the facts supporting the ability of the parent to sustain safety. The ODHS supervisor must review and concur. The case closes when the court dismisses legal custody.



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