

OREGON CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE ANNUAL REPORT

2024

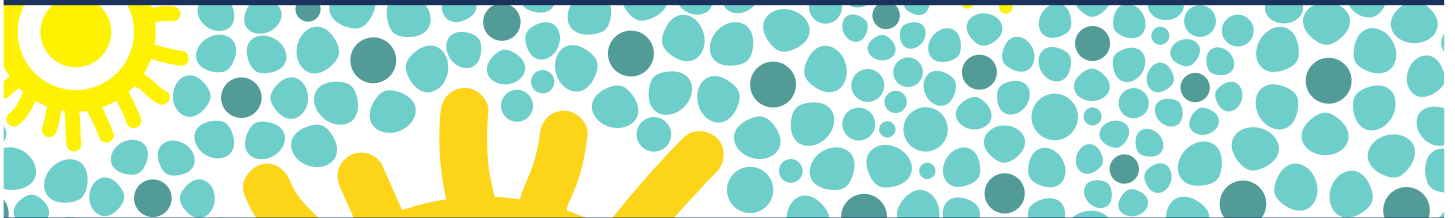


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Manager's Message



The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) serves as the front door to Oregon's Child Welfare System. Our mission is twofold. While our primary function is to receive reports of child abuse and maintain an unwavering commitment to child safety, consistency, and customer service, we are also examining our role in prevention and how best to provide essential support to children and families in need.

We know that often, a call to ORCAH is an indication that a family may need help. ORCAH receives a high number of contacts that are neither reports of child abuse nor require Child Welfare intervention. As the front door of Child Welfare, ORCAH can leverage and invest in prevention of child abuse as a part of a service continuum rather than primarily an assessment to consider family separation.

The trauma caused by family separation is a significant hindrance to building trust needed for effective collaboration between the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS), community and families. When more opportunities exist for Child Welfare to advocate, support and participate in community directed development and assistance, more opportunities will exist to engage community without furthering trauma and fear. By elevating public understanding and awareness of child abuse and work with families prior to incidents of abuse, ODHS can help direct resources to families most affected by risk factors like poverty, mental illness and substance use disorder. This can proactively promote wellness for all families, respond to families' specific needs and mitigate risk factors for child abuse, creating community safety nets that have lasting impact.

While 2024 was a year of continued focus on stabilization of our operations, ORCAH worked to better align our outcomes to the broader efforts across ODHS. These efforts include building Oregon Child Welfare's [Vision for Transformation](#) into all operations to better serve children and families across Oregon. We aim to better and more equitably serve children and families, keeping families together and stable whenever possible.

Our annual report acknowledges and celebrates the accomplishments of our dedicated team. We have diligently carried out the Vision for Transformation, guided by the following principles:

- Supporting families and promoting prevention.
- Enhancing our staff and infrastructure.

Manager's Message

- Enhancing the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement.

As we reflect on the past year, we remain committed to our mission and look forward to further advancing child welfare in Oregon.

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Guiding principle 1: Supporting families and promoting prevention

Oregon's Child Welfare transformation is built on trauma-informed, family and community-centered and culturally responsive programs and services focused on engagement, equity, safety, well-being, and prevention.

Structured Decision Making® (SDM), Screening and Response Time Tool

Since 2020, Oregon Child Welfare has been partnering with Evident Change to develop and implement the Structured Decision Making (SDM) model. The SDM is a decision support system informed by research, policy and best practices. The SDM Screening and Response Time tool evaluates whether a report constitutes an allegation of abuse that must be assigned for child protective services response and, if so, how quickly the department should respond. It provides screeners with definitions and examples of how Child Welfare, community partners and those with lived Child Welfare experience interpret Oregon Revised Statute 419B.005 and 418.257. The tool supports equitable screening practice and encourages screeners, Child Welfare staff and the community to consider bias when making and understanding screening decisions. Oregon implemented the tool August 2022.

The goals of SDM at screening include:

1. **Increase consistency:** While centralization increased screening consistency, there is room for improvement. The SDM tool provides a clear path to decision-making that is based on Oregon Revised Statute and Oregon Administrative Rule.
2. **Safely improve efficiency:** Due to the clear path to decision-making, the SDM tool is expected to reduce the time it takes to make screening and response timeline decisions.
3. **Shared knowledge of screening decisions:** SDM provides transparency regarding screening decisions to Child Welfare workers outside of ORCAH, which is expected to increase their understanding of and confidence in ORCAH decision-making.
4. **Equity/address disparity:** The increased consistency and objective application of abuse allegations is expected to decrease racial disparity in screening decisions.

Since implementation of the tool, both internal and external partners provided suggestions for improvement. In the spring of 2024, six workgroups were formed to analyze the feedback and make recommendations. Participants included those with diverse perspectives, including those with lived Child Welfare experience, Tribal staff, medical providers, school representatives, Oregon

Department of Justice, legislative liaisons, Office of Training, Investigation and Safety staff, OR-Kids business analysts, Child Welfare policy analysts, the Portland State University training specialist and more. Each workgroup was tasked with an area of focus. A draft of the new SDM tool is under review by multiple bodies. Implementation of the revised tool is anticipated in early 2026.

Doris Duke Foundation Selection: Opt-In for Families Initiative Updates

In 2023, the Doris Duke Foundation selected Oregon and three other states to be part of a three-year, \$33 million, Opt-In for Families Initiative to evaluate and build upon an approach to serving children and families. This approach combines anti-poverty programs with community models to ensure child safety, keep families together and prevent unnecessary child welfare involvement. This initiative will provide ODHS and its community partners with technical assistance to continue the work of connecting families at risk of child welfare involvement due to lack of resources with needed concrete and community supports.

In 2024, ODHS began the partnership with the Doris Duke Foundation and its technical assistance organizations. Opt-in for Families provides technical assistance for Oregon to connect families at-risk of child welfare involvement with community-based services and economic supports as a method of prevention. Oregon was selected based on its readiness to improve and evaluate programs and practices in place. ORCAH is partnering directly with the Harvard Kennedy School Government Performance Lab and Chapin Hall for process improvement and evaluation.

Other related projects are improving the ORCAH referral process. For 30 years, the Portland Children's Levy has funded services for families who were the subject of a hotline report that was closed at screening. With support from Opt-in for Families, ORCAH has improved the referral process. In Klamath and Lake counties, families who are the subject of hotline calls that are closed at screening may be referred to family coaches from the ODHS Self-Sufficiency Program.

ORCAH CORE Prevention Team & Closed at Screening (CAS) Referral Changes

In April of 2024, ORCAH and partners from the Opt-In for Families Initiative mapped the business process for prevention referrals when a report to ORCAH was closed at screening. This effort outlined needed changes to support the work that the initiative hoped to achieve.

In June of 2024, ORCAH convened a Prevention CORE Team made of up ORCAH staff, the Child

Fatality Prevention and Review Program, and Screening Program to review and modify ORCAH business process protocol. By fall 2024, a new protocol was created along with outreach to Lifeworks NW in Portland, three county based Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSB) Committees and updated referral forms.

At the end of 2024, a new referral process began in which screeners, supervisors, and business staff no longer make referrals to Lifeworks NW and PSB Committees. This task was assigned to the Prevention Referral Screener who will execute the business protocol starting in 2025.

Legislative Work

During the short session of 2024, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 4086 which directs ODHS to commission two studies, both to be conducted by facilitators who specialize in public policy, in consultation with advisory committees. One study is regarding the scope of child abuse investigations in Oregon and the other regarding the statewide response to children who exhibit complex sexual behavior. The facilitators will submit a report on their findings and recommendations to the interim committees on child welfare by September 15, 2025. These committees include individuals with lived experience and professionals or representatives of organizations involved with children. ORCAH is participating in this process in two ways. Representatives from the Screening Program sit on the ODHS core group that advises the ODHS sponsors of each committee and one of ORCAH's program managers is a child welfare subject matter expert on the committee regarding the scope of child abuse investigations. Both committees began in the fall of 2024.

Practice Changes

Oregon Revised Statute was amended January 1, 2024, to protect a child's written or verbal statement about their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression (SOGIE). The law applies to any child's statement, not just children who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or gender expansive, queer and/or questioning, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit (LGBTQIA2S+). With this change in practice, screeners are required to determine whether a child's SOGIE information requires redaction prior to the report being disclosed to partners outside of ODHS, or whether an exception allowing the disclosure is permitted. This shift honors children's rights to their own information and under what safety related conditions it can be disclosed without their consent.

Guiding principle 2: Enhancing staff and infrastructure

Oregon's Child Welfare transformation depends on a diverse, supported, skilled, respected and engaged workforce that reflects and embraces the communities we serve.

ORCAH Committees

- **Equity and Inclusion:** ORCAH refers to their ODHS-sponsored Equity and Inclusion Committee (EIC) as IDEA, which stands for Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility. IDEA seeks to address systemic issues that have disproportionately led to inequity within Child Welfare. The group creates actionable items to increase equity and safety for all races, genders, sexual orientations, socioeconomic statuses, and people with disabilities for ORCAH and Child Welfare staff and the Oregonians we serve.

IDEA meets two times per month so that every employee at ORCAH can attend, regardless of their schedule. This year, IDEA also began sponsoring a media club once per month. In 2024, two employees shared the group facilitation and were supported by a program manager. Discussion topics included disability pride and accessibility, mental health, global diversity awareness, Indian Child Welfare, and houselessness. IDEA participants also provided their input on at least two screening trainings developed for 2024. IDEA sponsored a successful donation collection for families impacted by fires in the Columbia River Gorge area. Three IDEA members attended the annual EIC conference in 2024. IDEA allocated their EIC budget to welcome Emily Purry of Purry Consultants to train all ORCAH staff in Disability 101.

- **Safety and Wellness:** To ensure all ORCAH employees leave work each day grounded in knowing they are physically and emotionally supported. We believe employees working together can achieve a safe, healthful workplace.
- **Trauma-Informed ORCAH (TIO):** Over the last year Trauma-Informed ORCAH (TIO) took a holistic approach to increasing individual and collective health of ORCAH employees by researching, planning, and implementing trauma informed content. This group updated and enhanced the Trauma-Informed ORCAH OWL page and Teams page to provide Trauma informed resources and trainings for ORCAH staff. The TIO group acted in an administrative capacity to recruit, select and maintain the Peer Support Group Program. Additionally, the group created programs and social opportunities for connection and learning, including creating a book club and a social picnic. The group provided resources for wellbeing and grief during a difficult time for ORCAH, including peer to peer support, providing Community

Resiliency Model training, and Trauma-Informed Oregon training resources.

ORCAH began offering Peer Support Groups in December of 2023 and has offered three monthly 1-hour groups covering all shifts of ORCAH Staff. ORCAH's peer support groups provide staff with a safe, comfortable, and educational environment, that will equip as well as work to minimize the emotional traumatic load for those working at ORCAH. Peer Support Groups provide education, in a mutually supportive environment, while building relationships within the ORCAH staff. Here peers can reset, and deactivate, building on preexisting skills to regulate themselves so that they can continue to do their jobs with excellence without it being a detriment to themselves or their mental health. Groups are open to all non-management class staff including Business Staff and Social Service Specialist 1 and 2. Groups are facilitated by two represented staff who have been trained and supported in their role to lead the groups.

- **Labor Management:** Explores workforce and operational strengths and challenges by problem solving and action planning for improvements, by supporting stability and workforce retention.

Operational Strategies

ORCAH's operational strategies include a series of performance accountability standards to meet performance goals. First implemented in January of 2022, these standards drastically improved ORCAH's ability to reduce call wait times and disperse workload equitably. These improvements continued throughout 2024 while call volume increased.

Every six months, a committee of supervisors and staff review current and historical data to identify improvement opportunities and adjust strategies as needed. These adjustments prioritize maintaining service levels and meeting the needs of the workforce.

In June 2024, the committee met to review the operational strategies resulting in the following updates to focus areas:

- Increased call taking and call shadowing during academy and post academy. Additionally, training increased the LEA report practice for new screeners.
- Aggregated change updates for everyone- that streamlined our weekly leadership email. Additionally, we cleaned up our screener tips and the frequency of these being updated for staff.
- We made changes to our live call review and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process which included a quality assurance dashboard with data available for supervisors and

screeners to access.

- We underwent an ORCAH-wide shift change based on data and evaluation of operational need.

ORCAH Hiring and Staff Retention

ORCAH retention rates continue to improve with average turnover of just 1.85 percent as compared to 2.2 percent in 2023 and 3 percent in 2022. Over the course of the year, we focused on right-sizing our operational structure to better align staffing levels with budgeted positions. As a result, we onboarded five business staff and only had a singular hiring cohort of ten screeners in May of 2024.

ORCAH Training Program

The ORCAH Training Program consists of one supervisor, one learning and development specialist, and six coaching and training specialists (CTS). This team works together with Screening Program and office managers to facilitate an internal training program that includes a Screening Training Academy for new screeners, a business staff training academy for new business support employees, and ongoing training and coaching opportunities for staff throughout the year.

Screening Training Academy (STA)

Each Screening Training Academy consists of 80 hours of training, composed of 12 screening practice modules and 13 technical training modules, along with presentations from ORCAH's Continuous Quality Improvement unit and our partners at CARES NW and Oregon Tribal Affairs Unit. Prior to the Screening Training Academy, new screeners complete an onboarding process, and after, complete post-academy coaching directed by ORCAH's hiring and training supervisor and team of coaching and training specialists. In total, the training process for new screeners is completed within 10 to 12 weeks. In 2024, the ORCAH training team trained one cohort of ten new screeners.

Business Support Training Academy (BSTA)

Through Business Staff Training Academy (BSTA), office managers and lead workers have trained five business staff, totaling 50 hours of training through two Cohorts. In 2023, BSTA transitioned from in person training to hybrid training, training newly hired staff in person and virtually. Newly hired business staff are in training for approximately 9–12 weeks. Upon completion of BSTA business staff are added to various work systems and programs that are used to complete daily business support tasks.

Mandatory Reporter Training and Education

Strategic efforts were made to engage community voices to update tools and resources for mandatory reporting education in 2024. Not only was the goal to bring awareness of child abuse, but how communities have a role in the safety of Oregon's children. Oregon, along with most states, has a significant over reporting problem that disproportionately impacts children and families of color. Through education, reporters have informed understanding of what is, and is not, child abuse. To further this educational effort, Child Welfare contracted with Oregon State University's Professional and Continuing Education Program (PACE) to host the updated Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse in Oregon training course. The 45-60-minute interactive training supports learners in identifying types and signs of abuse, understanding of how biases impact reporting, know when mandated reporters are obligated to make a report, and know how to make a report. The training will launch statewide in early 2025 and creates one source for accurate and updated information about child abuse reporting and family supporting. The platform will allow for data tracking which will help support strategic community outreach by Child Welfare. Additional resources, such as the Child Abuse Reporting Guide were edited based on focus group feedback from educators. When in person training was requested by groups, trained facilitators statewide responded to this need. In 2024, 1,053 mandatory reporters were trained on their role and responsibilities.

Mandatory Reporter Train the Trainer

When groups and communities request in-person mandatory reporter training, specially trained Child Welfare and Child Advocacy Center staff deliver this education and opportunity for connection. All facilitators complete an eight-hour course designed to increase their knowledge of reporting and screening, rules and procedures, and build on skills of facilitation. In 2024, 50 staff statewide were trained to deliver the mandated reporter education course.

ORCAH Continuing Education, Training and Coaching

ORCAH's training team provided or supported three in person, day-long trainings for ORCAH staff in 2024.

- **Context of culture:** All screeners, supervisors and program leadership participated in full day training to create a shared understanding of what "culture" is in the context of screening child abuse means. It included learning about why cultural information is gathered about families and how biased thinking impacts reporting and screening. The interactive training brought awareness and aimed to reduce the prevalence of biased information collection and

documentation within the screening report.

- **Disability 101 and Screening Training Academy Refresh:** All ORCAH staff received a half day training provided by Emily Purry of Purry Consulting. In many organizations, one in three employees with a disability report that their disability has had a negative impact on how they are viewed by team members. It is common for employees to feel awkward around coworkers with disabilities and they may have no idea how to adapt or change their behavior. This training intended to help participants develop self-awareness about how they perceive disabilities and help them learn how to serve as an ally within the workplace. Topics discussed included ableism, microaggressions, and intersectionality as it applies to disabilities.
- **American Indian/Alaska Native ancestry search:** Federal and state laws exist to protect sovereign Tribes, and screening has a role in understanding when a child or their family may have Tribal ancestry and when a Tribe must be notified. A spirit of equity and partnership is actionable when screeners understand how to locate Tribal ancestry within the OR-Kids system. Screeners and supervisors improved search practices toward the goal of improving the accuracy and timeliness of notification to Tribes.

ORCAH Documentation Guide

In 2024, there were several updates being made to the OR-Kids system, Oregon's Child Welfare Information System, which would improve the functionality within the ORCAH Documentation Guide (ODG). ODG had a single release which enabled users to see all pending reports. Previously, only pending reports with existing OR-Kids records were visible but with the release all pending reports that include created records or Client Index only records display for the user to review.

A few highlights on improvements from 2024:

- **Participant on Pending report icon:** Enabled users to see when a person is already matched on another pending report.
- **Associated Screening reports update:** Enabled users to directly access the five most recent screening reports on which a participant has been matched.
- **History Review stepper update:** Displays screening reports that do not include existing OR-Kids person records. Includes all reports on which a created record or Client Index only record was matched.

Law Enforcement Data Systems (LEDS)

ORCAH Leds Enforcement Data Systems (LEDS) Operators have been completing LEDS criminal history checks for Child Welfare to assist staff in making decisions about safety, specifically related to child protective services (CPS) since 2019. In 2021, ORCAH LEDS Operators became the sole entity for processing criminal history checks. ORCAH LEDS Operators have been available 24/7/365 to provide criminal history information for requests for CPS assignments/alleged perpetrators, safety service providers, respite, reunification, emergency certification, childcare for child in care and visitation for child in care. In 2024, 28 ORCAH LEDS Operators processed approximately 53,059 criminal history checks.



Guiding principle 3: Strengthening the structure of our system by using data and continuous quality improvement

Oregon's Child Welfare transformation is built on data-informed practice and supported by continuous quality improvement with modernized information technology systems and tools.

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)

ORCAH hosts a robust CQI program, responsible for:

- Hosting bi-annual meetings of the ORCAH CQI Committee
- ORCAH's quality assurance (QA) reviews of screening reports and QA reviews of calls
- Managing ORCAH's feedback email box and making any resulting screening report corrections
- Quality assurance reviews of screening reports related to Critical Incident Review Teams
- Participation in Child and Family Service Reviews, which measures and evaluates screening report timeliness to assignment and to notification to Tribal Nations (when a report is documented for a family who may have Native heritage)
- Participation in the Structured Decision Making (SDM) evaluation plan
- Production of the Weekly Work data book
- Quarterly reports

In 2024, ORCAH hosted the ORCAH CQI Committee composed of ORCAH staff, Child Welfare staff and community collaborators twice. The committee reviews ORCAH's data regarding Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and makes recommendations for improvement opportunities. Improvement opportunities noted in 2024 included continuing efforts that had been underway since Fall 2023 to improve performance in accurate native ancestry searches and timely notifications to Tribes when indicated.

ORCAH Performance Goals and Key Performance Indicators

ORCAH's three foundational goals are safety, consistency, and customer service.

- **Safety** refers to the extent to which ORCAH is contributing to the Child Welfare mission of ensuring child safety in a manner that promotes equitable service delivery.
- **Consistency** refers to ORCAH's ability to provide consistent, equitable decision making that

aligns with statute and policy, as well as call handling and documentation that is predictable.

- **Customer service** refers to meeting the needs of the children and families of Oregon by timely answering calls with a trauma-informed approach that considers cultural context.

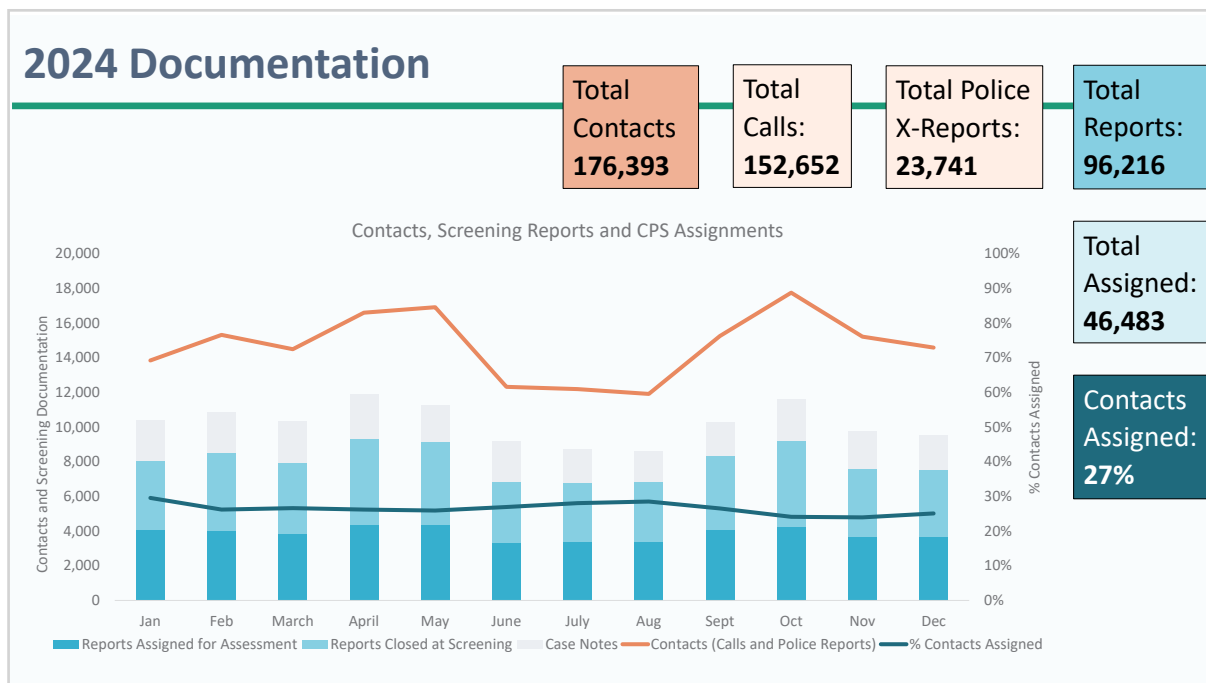
Key performance indicators are measurable values that demonstrate how effectively an organization is meeting its performance goals. ORCAH's key performance measures are:

- Contact service level
- Timely referral of assigned reports to Child Protective Services (CPS)
- Timely approval of closed at screening (CAS) reports
- Accurate screening decisions
- Sufficient information gathering and documentation
- Consistent screening decisions
- Equity in screening practice and decisions

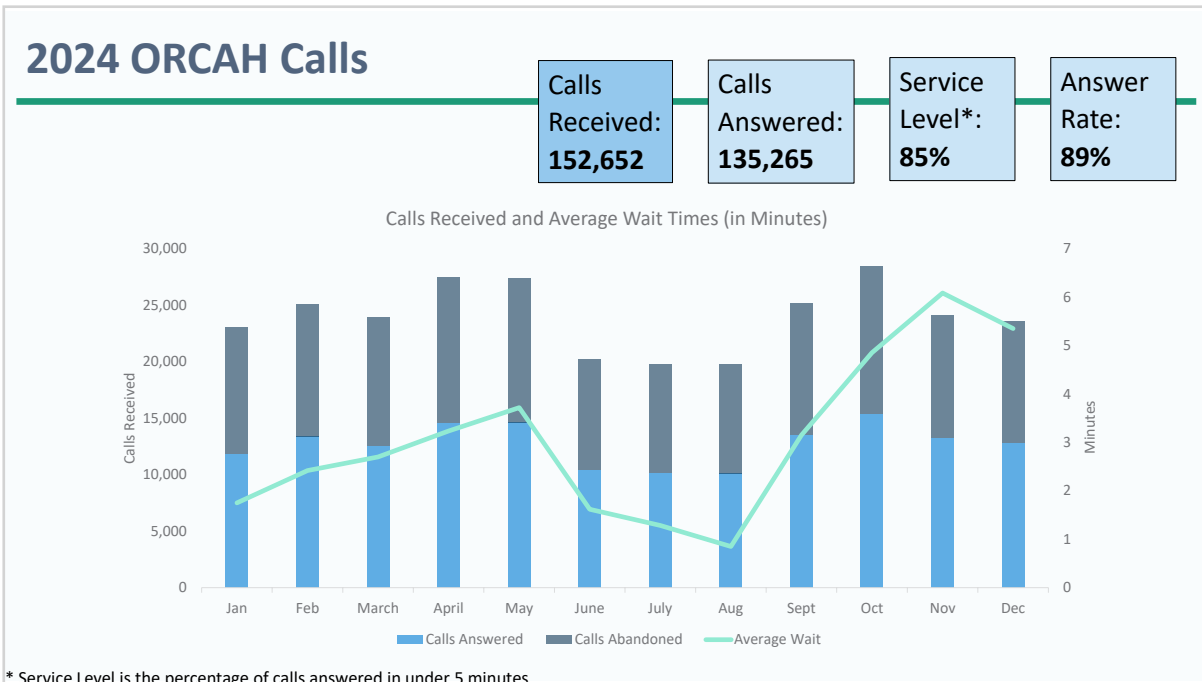


Data that relates to KPI: Contact Service Level

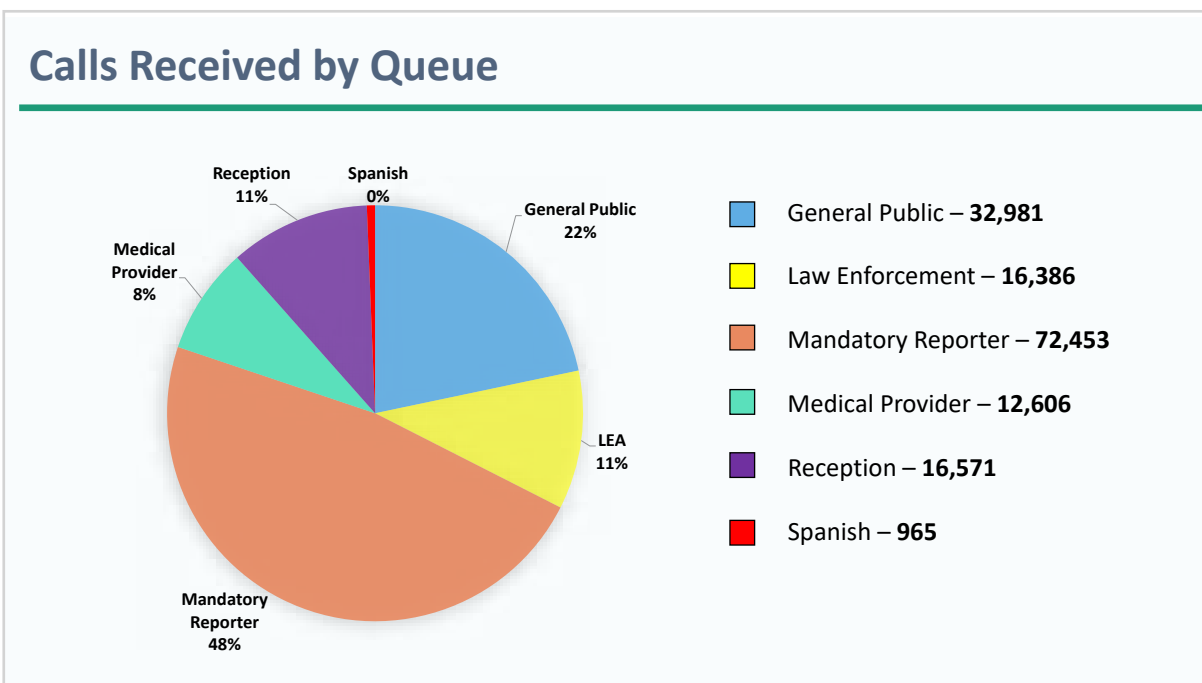
ORCAH receives calls and cross-reported police reports, together known as contacts. Not all contacts result in a documented screening report as they may be duplicative, unrelated to an allegation of abuse or concern for child safety, or an inquiry or request for services. Contacts requiring documentation are captured as either a screening report (abuse allegation that is assigned or condition, circumstance, or behavior that poses a risk to a child but is not an allegation and is closed at screening) or as a case note (information on an open child welfare case).



- Total Contacts includes all calls received and law enforcement cross reports (email) handled.
- Total Documentation includes all screening reports and case notes entered
- Total Reports includes any screening report completed by ORCAH, regardless of screening decision.
- Total Assigned includes all screening reports resulting in a screening decision of assign and sent to Child Protective Services for assessment.
- Contacts Assigned is an approximation. ORCAH is not able to track one call to one report. Many calls may result in no reports documented or in two or more reports being documented.



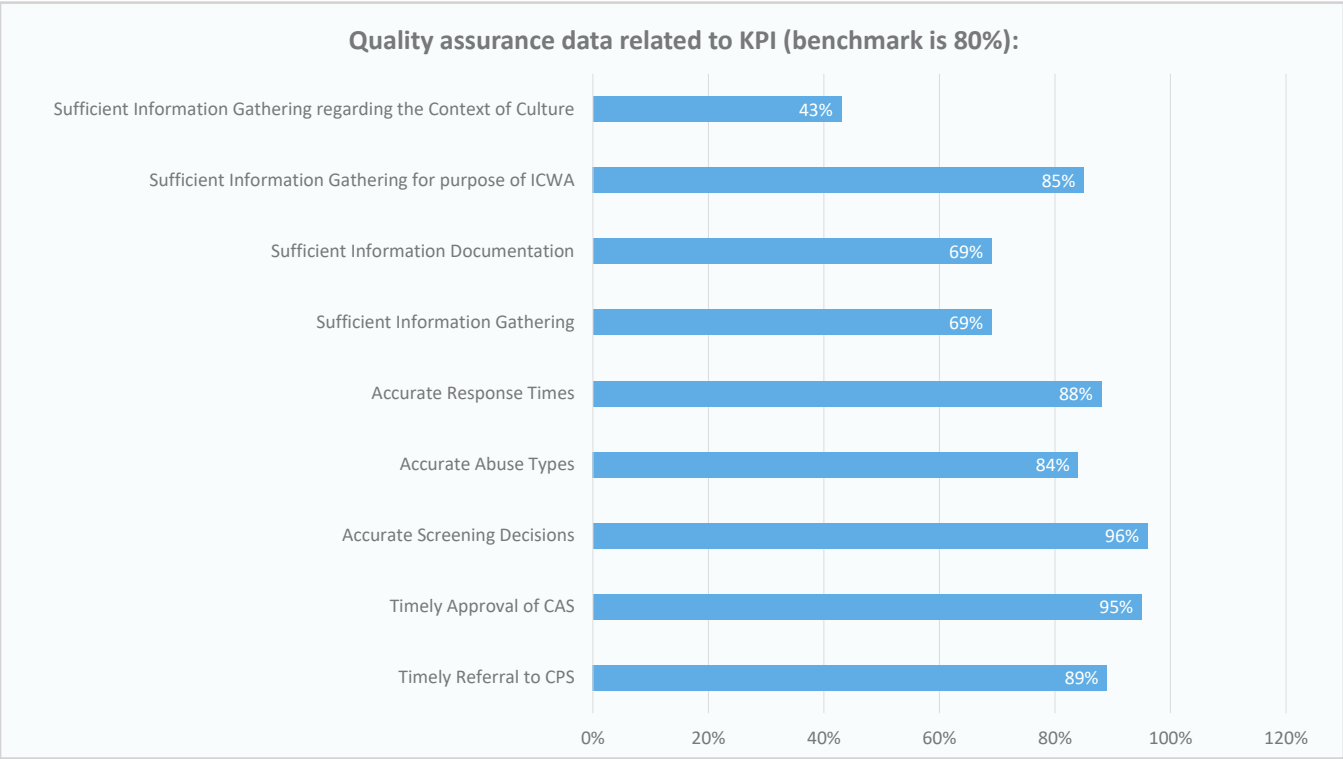
ORCAH answered 132,265 calls in 2024 and received 152,652 which was an increase of 10,856 from 2023. Calls Abandoned includes any caller who selected a queue and arrived in that queue before hanging up or having the call terminated by a system error.



ORCAH has six call queues. In 2024, Mandatory Reporter and Medical Provider calls totaled 56% of total calls received at ORCAH.

Data that relates to KPI: Timely referral to CPS, timely approval of closed at screening (CAS) reports, accurate screening decisions, sufficient information gathering/documentation, and equity in screening practice and decisions:

ORCAH conducted quality assurance reviews of 1,568 screening reports and 1,483 calls in 2024. The benchmark for the measures that relate to KPI is 80%:



Closing

2025 is a year of change for the Child Welfare Division as the Oregon Department of Human Services undergoes an organizational realignment to better serve our communities. However, our focus at ORCAH remains unchanged as we continue our mission to receive reports of child abuse and provide excellent customer service with equitable and consistent decision-making to ensure safety for Oregon's children and families.

Centralization of Oregon's child abuse reporting system started in 2016 and has now been officially completed. As a result, the ORCAH Annual Report series that started in 2018 will end with this 2024 report. For future annual updates and data, please review [Oregon Child Welfare Data and Reports](#).



