

News Release

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Supporting families to prevent child abuse moves forward in Oregon

(Salem) – This year’s [Child Abuse Prevention Month](#) theme, Doing Things Differently: Moving from the Challenge to the Change, emphasizes the importance of innovative prevention-based approaches to supporting children and families. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) is committed to advancing programs that address poverty and other challenges families face that could put children at risk.

As [Governor Tina Kotek’s proclamation](#) states, “Child abuse is a preventable public health issue and Oregon’s children and families deserve intentional, sustainable investments in their health and wellbeing.”

Prevention-based approaches link families in Oregon to voluntary assistance programs from community organizations and ODHS such as food benefits, cash assistance and services for domestic violence survivors. The goal of prevention is to keep children safe by providing support that stabilizes families and prevents unnecessary child welfare involvement.

To expand the agency’s child abuse prevention efforts, ODHS is working with the Doris Duke Foundation to establish the [Opt-in for Families initiative in Oregon which will be supported by a \\$9 million investment by the foundation](#). The grant will help develop and test a pilot program serving families who have been the subject of reports to the ODHS Child Abuse Hotline but whose circumstances are not considered child abuse as defined in Oregon statute. Opt-in for Families will refer these families to voluntary programs for economic and other supports, evaluating their effectiveness in improving child safety and family stability. Similar programs that support families’ economic stability are being piloted in Klamath Falls and are being introduced throughout the state.

As a result of these and other efforts, the number of children in foster care in Klamath County has dropped by 60 percent with a 72 percent drop in Tribal children in the system.

April also marks the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline's (ORCAH) fifth anniversary. ODHS centralized ORCAH in 2019 to change the former model of localized child abuse reporting, multiple hotline numbers and lack of operational coordination to an updated model based on national best practices. The new model has improved child safety, screening consistency and coordination with law enforcement, as well as employee retention.

With centralization of the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline, wait times to report abuse reduced by an average of one minute, 59 seconds, down from the 2022 average wait time of two minutes, 42 seconds. The hotline team answered 6 percent more calls compared with 2022. Timely answering of calls ensures rapid response and Child Protective Services assessment to ensure child safety. Other key improvements related to child safety are detailed in the recent 2023 [ORCAH annual report](#).

In addition to centralizing the hotline, ODHS initiatives to prevent and address child abuse include family coaching programs and improved tracking of caseload ratios to ensure caseworkers have adequate time to connect families to prevention-related services. For more information on 2023 work to support children in families in Oregon, see the [Oregon Child Welfare Assessment Findings Report](#) published by Public Knowledge.

Oregon needs everyone to contribute to preventing child abuse. Children and families are stronger when communities come together to support them before they reach crisis.

“As individuals and as a community, we play a part in preventing child abuse. We encourage everyone to make a commitment this month to learn new ways to strengthen child and family well-being,” ODHS Child Welfare Director Aprille Flint-Gerner said. “Together, we can make a difference.”

In recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month, ODHS asks everyone in Oregon to be aware of help available to families to meet their basic needs which is critical in preventing conditions that can result in child abuse. This includes sharing information about food banks, unemployment benefits, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) availability, and educational resources. ODHS values its collaboration with community organizations to prevent child abuse and ensure families in Oregon know about the resources available to help them.

If you suspect a child is being abused, please contact the Oregon Child Abuse

Hotline by calling 1-855-503-SAFE (7233). The Oregon Child Abuse Hotline receives calls 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.

More information for resources and support:

- To learn more about food resources including SNAP visit [NeedFood.Oregon.gov](https://www.needfood.org).
- [211info.org](https://www.211info.org) (also by dialing 211) offers connection to local and regional resources for food banks, housing assistance, and mental health services.
- Lines for Life, a nonprofit dedicated to substance abuse and suicide prevention: call or text 988.
- Friends and neighbors can help break the social isolation some parents may experience or encourage parents to seek support when needed by calling the Oregon parent helpline: 971-221-5180.
- Oregon Child Abuse Solutions: <https://oregoncas.org>
- Prevent Child Abuse Oregon: <https://preventchildabuseoregon.org>
- Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries: <https://www.oregonreliefnurseries.org>

Other resources

- [ODHS Family Preservation information](#)
- [Summary of 2023 Child Welfare accomplishments](#)
- [Announcement of Doris Duke Foundation grant](#)

About the Oregon Department of Human Services

The mission of ODHS is to help Oregonians in their own communities achieve well-being and independence through opportunities that protect, empower, respect choice and preserve dignity.

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