

Oregon Child Welfare

Specialized Hair Care Process Guide

Inspired by initiatives in D2 to provide equitable services and care to children we serve. We are committed to ensuring that all children and youth in our care have access to the resources and support they need to maintain their cultural identity and well-being through culturally responsive hair and skin care.



Purpose:

While the original purpose of this guidance was to address Black and African American hair care needs, we acknowledge the importance of supporting all children and young people in care with their diverse hair and skin care needs, reflective of their cultural identities.



This guidance is our ongoing commitment to taking action to ensure that all children and youth in our care have access to the resources and support they need to maintain their cultural identity and well-being through culturally responsive hair and skin care.

ODHS Child Welfare knows that hair and skin care routines are an important part of development for all children. Supporting specialized hair and skin care needs can occur at many points of service within Child Welfare. This includes and is not limited to:

- During the (CPS) assessment period, to help prevent youth from entering foster care.
- Youth involved in the Independent Living Program.
- When children are in-home with parents. In-home support can be an educational starting place for parents in meeting the needs of their children.
- When youth are in residential and proctor home settings.
- In times of temporary lodging.
- During placements with relative or non-relative resource parents.

Monthly Allotment:

A monthly allotment of up to \$250 is available for each child or youth with specialized hair care needs.

Approval:

Managers and program managers must approve funding requests. Program managers have the authority to approve exceptions of these resources. Only program managers can approve an exception.

Who Qualifies

Young people qualify when they have hair and skin care needs that require specialized practices, products, and techniques, often due to cultural, ethnic, or religious factors. This aligns with the Oregon Foster Children's Bill of Rights, which affirms the right of children and youth in foster care to have access to hygiene needs that are necessary for their gender, age, individual health, and ethnic needs.



Stewardship and Planning:

We encourage everyone to plan proactively and communicate openly regarding hair styles and associated costs. While supporting a variety of styles and costs, consider the appropriateness of the styles for the child or youth's age group, along with the maintenance costs.

The cost of hair care can vary. Be aware and mindful of the fluctuating costs by geography and hair styles. Many hair salons charge a basic price and then add extra costs for things like washing and deep conditioning. So, make sure to ask about all the costs before you start.

Connection to Culture and Identity:

Hair means a lot to people. It's part of who they are. We want kids and teens to feel good about trying different hairstyles and to be proud of their hair. No one should feel embarrassed or judged. For families, taking care of hair together is a special time. It takes patience, time, and creativity. It helps people feel connected and good about themselves. Hair is linked to how people feel about themselves, their culture, and if they feel like they belong.

Many Cultures have special ways of doing hair that have a lot of meaning. For example:

- Specific braiding patterns that mean tribal affiliation or social status
- Use of traditional plant-based hair treatments, specific oils and moisturizers
- Importance of long hair for some cultures, and the spiritual significance it holds

- "Wash day" rituals
- Protective styling (braids, twists, etc.)
- Practices to protect hair from sun and damage
- Hair covering practices for example, the wearing of a hijab is a religious practice for many Muslim women and girls. It involves specific headscarves and under caps.
- Hair cutting practices, for example, haircuts can signify transitions or milestones in a child's life. In some cultures, a first haircut is a special ceremony marking the child's entry into a new phase. A specific way of cutting a baby's hair might be believed to offer protection or bring blessings.



"Our hair is considered sacred and significant to who we are as an individual, family, and community (Sister Sky)."



"Don't let society dictate what beauty means. It doesn't come from showing off your body. It's from your heart-Kind, selfless and caring one (Mufti Ismail Menk)."

"To me, beauty is inclusion, every size, every color, that's the world I live in (Prabal Gurung)."



Hair care is a journey, not a destination.

Everyone can help young people take care of their own hair. We should let them decide how they want their hair to look. It's okay for them to try new styles, and we should tell them that making mistakes is normal when learning. If they have problems, we can help them figure things out.

Good hair care is important for feeling good and staying clean.

Some young people don't have family to help them with their hair. If that happens, we can help them find someone in their community who

understands their hair type and culture. This helps them feel better about themselves and stay connected to their roots.

Cultivating and Preserving Cultural Bonds:

We can support families, children and youth in maintaining autonomy over their hair care routines and choices. To help, we need to talk to young people and their families.

We need to learn what they already know and what they need help with. Hair care can be a way to connect and be kind. Here are some questions we can ask:

- How do you take care of your child's skin and hair, and how often?
- What products do you use?
- Do you or your child have a favorite hairstyle?
- Has anyone in your family helped with hair or skin care before?
- Are there family members who could help in the future?

Remember, learning about hair care takes time.

This guidance underscores the commitment to empowering children and youth in care by addressing their specialized hair care needs, by acknowledging the cultural significance of hair and providing the necessary support. We contribute to the overall well-being and sense of self and belonging for youth and families we serve.



Resources:

- Equity OWL Page: [Specialized Hair Care](#)
- [Specialized Hair Care Protocol](#)
- [Employee Resource Groups](#)
- [ORPARC Hooray for Hair Care](#)
- [Talking about Culture and Identity](#)

For any questions, please reach out to the Child Welfare Equity Team at

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