



OFFICE OF DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES

## Developmental Disabilities Worker Guide

## Office of Developmental Disabilities Services

<b>Title:</b>	Understanding and Working with Child Welfare		
		<b>Version:</b>	<b>Effective Date:</b> 5/8/2024

### Purpose:

The purpose of this guide is to provide Case Management Entities with information to improve understanding of Child Welfare and collaboration with Child Welfare to support families. Child Welfare is tasked with investigating reported allegations of abuse to children under the age of 18 who reside in Oregon family homes or Child Welfare certified resource homes. Child Welfare caseworkers often work in emergency situations which require quick decision-making to ensure that a child is safe in their home. Should a Child Welfare caseworker determine that a child is not safe in a home, a plan must be made to remediate the safety concerns. This requires close collaboration with families and other supports families might have such as Developmental Disabilities programs.

### CHILD WELFARE STAFF

The following is a general outline of the titles and roles of Child Welfare staff at the local branch level. These are the staff that a Services Coordinator or Personal Agent is most likely to interact with when supporting a child or family who is involved in Child Welfare services. There are additional staff at the state level who may be included in meetings when special circumstances arise.

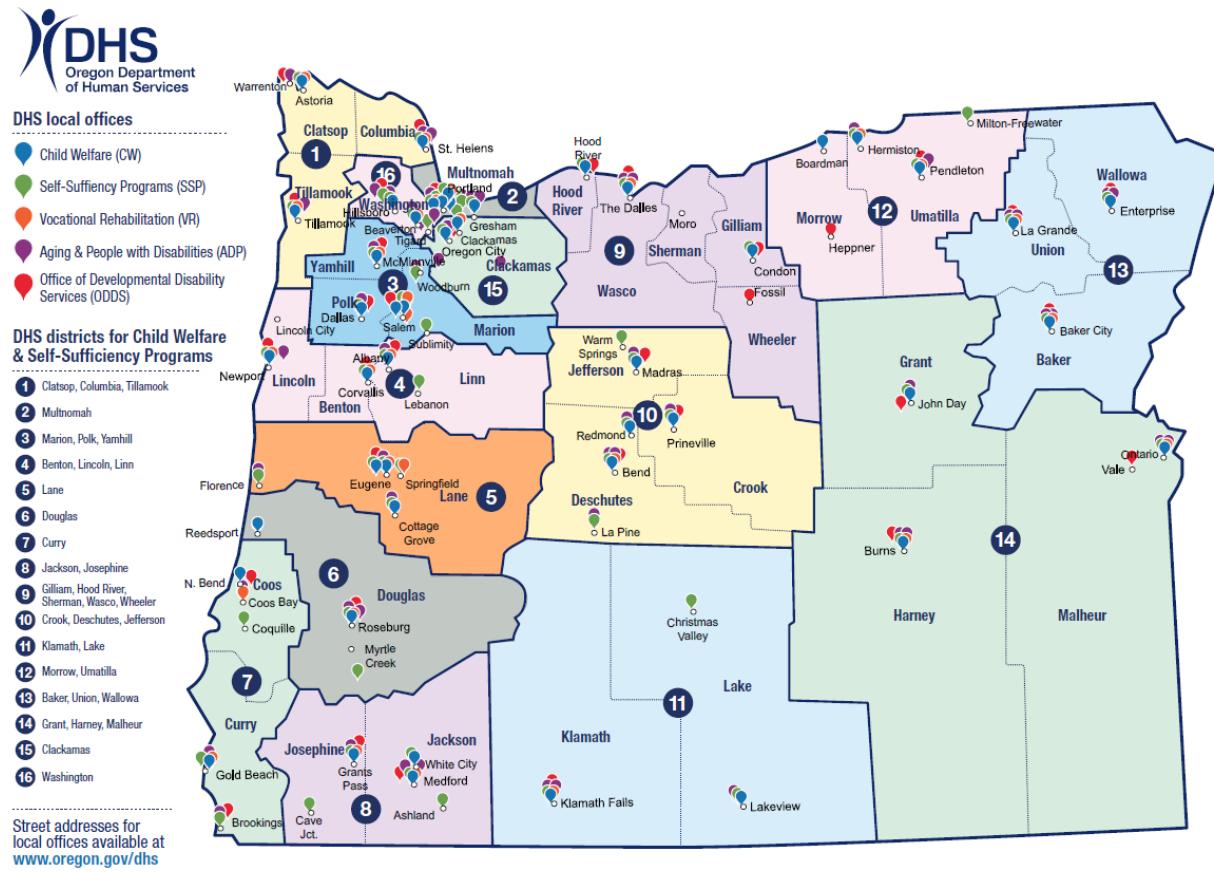
Staff Title	Role
Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) Screener	-Receives reports of concern from the community and gathers additional information

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Determines whether a report rises to a level of assignment</li> <li>-Assigns reports of concern to corresponding branches for assessment</li> <li>-Screeners work at a statewide level through the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline, not locally.</li> </ul>
Child Protective Services Caseworker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Is responsible for assessing assigned reports of suspected abuse or neglect</li> <li>-Responsible for determining whether a child is safe</li> <li>- Will be primary point of contact during an assessment</li> </ul>
Permanency Caseworker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for carrying the case after a child is determined unsafe.</li> <li>- Will be the primary point of contact after assessment is complete AND a case is opened.</li> <li>- Attends court hearings and provides updates to the court.</li> <li>- Offers direct support to families.</li> </ul>
Certifier/Adoption Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Responsible for certifying and monitoring child welfare resource homes.</li> <li>- Responsible for facilitating the adoption process if this becomes the best permanent option for a child.</li> </ul>
Coaching and Training Specialists (CATS)	Experienced staff assigned to support new caseworkers, provide training to all caseworkers and may attend home visits and court hearings.
Case Aids	Staff who support caseworkers with visits, transportation, reports, filing and note taking.
Visitation Center Staff	<p><u>Front desk staff</u></p> <p>Directs calls and connects to the appropriate staff members. May be responsible for scheduling visits for families and children.</p>

	<p><u>Family Time Coordinator</u>            Staff who supervise visits between children and parents.</p>
Child Protective Services Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides supervision for Child Protective Services caseworkers.</li> <li>-May be an additional point of contact if needed.</li> </ul>
Permanency Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides supervision for Permanency caseworkers.</li> <li>-May be an additional point of contact if needed.</li> </ul>
Certification Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides supervision for resource home certifiers.</li> <li>-May be an additional point of contact if needed.</li> </ul>
Visitation Center Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Provides supervision for visitation center staff.</li> <li>-May be an additional point of contact if needed.</li> </ul>
Program Manager	Provides management and oversight for the whole child welfare program in a district.

# CHILD WELFARE DISTRICT MAP

Child Welfare programs are divided into districts. A district may consist of more than one county and each district will have branches in various communities or geographic areas within those counties. This map shows local Oregon Department of Human Services offices, including Child Welfare, by districts.



## The Reporting Process

### OREGON CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE

Anyone who has concerns that abuse or neglect against a child is occurring can make a report to the **Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH) at 1-855-503-SAFE (7233)**. A screener at the hotline answers the call, gathers any additional information needed and, with supervisor

support, determines whether a report rises to the level of an assignment for an assessment. If the report rises to the level of an assessment, the report will be assigned to a Child Protective Services caseworker in the appropriate district to complete a comprehensive assessment. If the report does not rise to the level of an assessment, it will be documented and closed.

### **ASSIGNMENT TIMELINES**

The response time for a Child Protective Services caseworker to respond to a report of concern is based on the assigned level of response time at screening. Caseworkers do not decide response timelines though there may be special considerations for response times based on safety concerns. The levels of response times are:

- Closed at Screening (for reports that are not assigned)
- Within 24 hours
- Within 72 hours
- Within 10 business days

## **The Child Protective Services Assessment**

### **Who is Involved?**

Once a report of concern has been assigned to a Child Protective Services caseworker, that caseworker has 60 days to complete a comprehensive safety assessment. This includes contacting all appropriate parties, gathering relevant information, and making a safety determination. A 30-day extension may be granted if additional time is needed to gather relevant information. It's important to remember that timelines can also be impacted by the specific circumstance of each assessment. If a child is determined to be unsafe, a caseworker may need to quickly create a safety plan for that child. Law enforcement may also be involved if there are concerns for criminal activity and/or child safety. An open assessment is not an open case. A case may be opened if an assessment results in safety concerns for a child.

### **Contact and collaboration during the assessment**

Child Protective Services works in a fast-paced, crisis environment and decisions often need to be made quickly. Responding to requests for contact and information in a timely manner is vital in collaboration efforts to support the family in a crisis. If a parent or child are accessing DD services, a Child Welfare caseworker may contact their case manager to gather relevant information and collaborate on how to best engage with the family. The intent of this is to work together to help keep the family unified and supported. Safety planning may be a part of collaboration. Safety planning is tailored to the needs of each family and may require different

supports to meet the safety standards required for Child Welfare. When participating in safety planning it's important for case managers to include their supervisor and ODDS liaison staff so planning is clear and does not create conflicts of interest for providers or staff.

## **Outcomes**

During an assessment, the Child Protective Services Caseworker must make a determination regarding the child's safety called a disposition. There are three possible dispositions:

- **FOUNDED:** There is reasonable cause to believe abuse or neglect has occurred
- **UNFOUNDED:** There is no evidence that abuse or neglect has occurred
- **UNABLE TO DETERMINE:** There is some indication abuse occurred but there is not enough information to conclude that there is reasonable cause to believe the abuse occurred.

Due to the unique and complex nature of each assessment, the disposition does not automatically determine what will happen in a specific case. Concerns for safety will be addressed via appropriate safety plans for each child and family. An assessment will close after 60 days (90 days with extension) if no safety planning is needed. Typically, Child Welfare is not required to notify case managers of a closing assessment. If safety concerns are present a case may be opened to address these concerns. Please note that if a case does not open and no other arrangements are made to continue Child Welfare monitoring, the family will not continue to be monitored by Child Welfare. Child Welfare may become involved with a family again if additional reports of concern are received and rise to the level of an assessment.

## **An Open Child Welfare Case**

If a child safety concern needs to be addressed, Child Welfare may open a case with a family. Often an open case will require Child Welfare to file a petition for custody of a child with the courts. A child may be placed outside of the home in a resource home, or they may remain in the home with the parent if appropriate safety requirements can be met. A child's placement will vary by family and depends on the unique circumstances of that family. The purpose of an open case is to provide families with the necessary supports to manage safety concerns and safely parent their children. These supports come in various forms and may include the child being placed out of the home, connections to resources and appropriate services, and supports to safely parent. A case manager may be asked to be a part of the family's team when planning for these supports. If this occurs the case manager should include their supervisor and ODDS liaison staff as needed. There may be specific situations in which court involvement is not needed but Child Welfare remains involved to support a family for a limited amount of time.

## **Who is Involved?**

Once a case is opened, the Child Protective Services caseworker will transfer the case to a Permanency caseworker (also often called an Ongoing caseworker). The Permanency caseworker will be the primary point of contact for families and any agencies working with families during the life of the case. It's important to know that when a case is opened, with Child Welfare being granted legal custody of a child, the designated Child Welfare staff member has final authority to authorize services for that child while the case remains open. This staff member is usually the Permanency caseworker but may also be another designated staff member as needed.

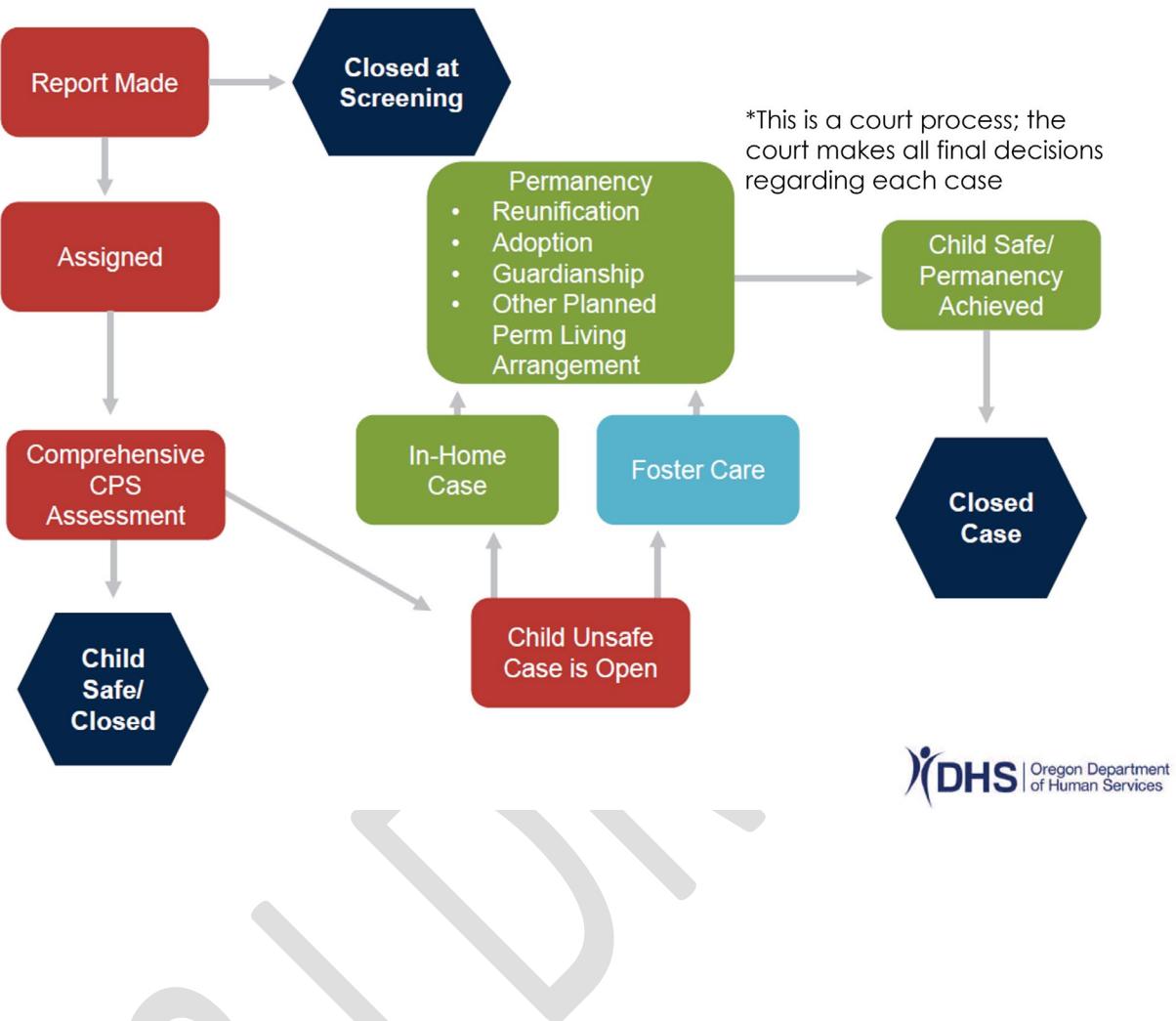
The Permanency caseworker will provide the parent with a case plan that outlines the safety concerns and outlines the services available to them to address those concerns. As the case progresses, the Permanency caseworker will be the person who can answer questions about what's next in a case, what services are needed or changing and any questions about parents' rights, responsibilities and expectations.

When courts are involved, parents and children will be assigned attorneys to represent them. It is very important that parents with an open Child Welfare case remain in close contact with their attorney to make sure they are meeting requirements set by the court and have their legal concerns heard. Children may also be assigned Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) to help bring the child's voice into the courtroom.

If a child is placed into Child Welfare certified resource care, a Child Welfare certifier will also be involved. Child Welfare certifiers are responsible for certifying resource (previously known as foster) homes and maintaining those certifications. This requires close contact with resource families which often makes Child Welfare certifiers very knowledgeable partners in helping support children who are in foster care.

## **Open Case Timelines**

The amount of time a Child Welfare case stays open varies widely based on the needs of the children and families in each case. The goal is to safely return a child to a parent/ guardian when possible. In each case the safety issues, family dynamics and children's needs can impact timelines and services and may impact where the child resides at the close of a case. Court hearings occur regularly to monitor cases and help ensure timely reunification when possible or permanent placement for a child if reunification is not an option. Hearings may be more frequent depending on the needs of each family and requests by the court. It's important to know that court processes may be different in each county. Collaborating and communicating closely with the Permanency caseworker is best practice in helping to support families through a child welfare case. The following is a simplified visual representation of what happens when a report of concern is received and how that can progress through an assessment and, if needed, an open Child Welfare case.



## Communication

Establishing good communication with Child Welfare staff can be the key to strong supports for a child and family. The primary point of contact should be the caseworker. Communication about an individual's known support needs, available services and developing needs is helpful to meet the needs of the child and family. Releases of Information (ROIs) should be completed if required to allow clear, ongoing communication with the appropriate consent of individuals. Service coordinators are often notified by Child Protective Services caseworkers when an assessment opens involving a child or parent who is eligible for DD services though this may not always occur. It is also possible that a parent will ask for their service coordinator to be contacted during a Child Welfare assessment or open case. In these situations, service coordinators can expect to be asked about a family's engagement in services, a family or child's needs and possible resources available to that family through DD services. This information can help a caseworker assess safety, create a safety plan with a family or provide additional supports to a child or family.

## **Temporary Lodging**

### **What is it?**

Temporary Lodging (TL) is a crisis situation in which appropriate placement is not available for a child in Child Welfare custody. It's important to note that Child Welfare tries diligently to limit children entering Temporary Lodging. There are legal requirements for Child Welfare to quickly and thoroughly collaborate with community partners to help find appropriate placements for children.

### **Who is involved?**

A Temporary Lodging staffing can involve a variety of different providers and community partners that support a child. This chart provides a general outline of who may attend. There may be more people attending than those listed here depending on the complexity of the case and needs of the child:

<u>Child Welfare:</u> -Caseworker -Supervisor -Certifier -Regional Residential Consultants – Behavioral Rehabilitation Services referrals	<u>Community Developmental Disability Program:</u> -Service Coordinator -Supervisor -Designated Referral Coordinator/Certifier	<u>Community partners:</u> -CCO/ICC -Mental Health -Juvenile Delinquency -WRAP	<u>Other:</u> -Tribe -Attorney -Court Appointed Special Advocate
<u>Child Welfare others to consider:</u> -Program Manager -Medical Liaison	<u>Office of Developmental Disabilities Services:</u> -IDD/CW Cross Systems Coordinator or liaison staff	<u>Others to consider:</u> -Parent partners -Skills trainers -Parents -Relatives/Kith -The child	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Independent Living Program Liaison</li> <li>-ART Team</li> <li>-DV Advocates</li> </ul>			
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### **What to Expect**

Meetings related to Temporary Lodging for a child should be a high priority and Service Coordinators and Designated Referral Coordinator should plan on attending. If a Service Coordinator is not available, a manager or the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Services Cross Systems Coordinator should be notified immediately to ensure that a representative attends Temporary Lodging meetings.

The purpose of Temporary Lodging meetings is to review important information about the child, discuss any concerns and collaborate with agencies who support the child to help find an appropriate long-term placement for the child. Service Coordinators are in a unique position to provide useful input in this process and are critically important participants. The ODDS Cross Systems Coordinator is a good resource during these high-pressure meetings. The Temporary Lodging Worker Guide is also a useful resource to understand the process and expectation around Temporary Lodging. See references for a link to that guide.

### **PLACEMENTS**

When Child Welfare determines that a child cannot safely remain in their home, the child may be placed outside of the home. The most common placements are described below.

#### **DD Foster Home**

A child who is eligible for DD services may be placed in a DD certified foster home to best meet their basic and developmental needs. Relatives cannot be certified as DD foster care providers for a child. However, relatives can be certified resource parents through Child Welfare. It is important to speak with the Child Welfare caseworker or certifier to understand funding limitation and expectations if a relative chooses this option as Child Welfare would provide the funding.

#### **Child Welfare Resource Homes**

A child may be placed directly with a Child Welfare certified resource family (formerly known as a foster family) that best meets their needs. The certified resource family can be anyone from the community but family members and others who have a relationship with a child or family may also apply to be a placement. It's important to know that some resource families can be quickly certified under a temporary certification and others may require more time depending on the unique circumstances of the individuals involved. Temporary certification is not full certification but does provide the family the opportunity to meet the requirements of full certification within 6 months. Both temporary and full certifications require background checks for the adult individuals in the home, home inspections to meet safety standards and completion of the required documentation. Completing an application to be a resource family does not guarantee approval. There are some situations that disqualify a person from being certified as a resource parent. It's critical to work closely and communicate with the resource home certifiers. Certifiers often have unique insight on what is happening in a resource home and what additional supports may be needed for a child who is placed in a resource home.

If a child is placed with a Child Welfare certified resource family, it's important for parents and service coordinators to know that a safety plan is in place. This safety plan will outline how often and under what circumstances a parent may have contact with their child. It is very common for visits to occur in a supervised Child Welfare visitation center and not in the resource home. Parents should ask their Child Welfare caseworker how visitation occurs and what the expectations are around contact with a resource family.

### **Higher Levels of Care**

Children with additional support needs and/or higher mental health and behavioral needs may require higher levels of care than what can be offered in a Child Welfare resource family. Some of the most commonly explored options include DD foster homes, Behavioral Rehabilitation Services (BRS) placement, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Services (PRTS) and Stabilization and Crisis Unit (SACU) placement. For children in Child Welfare custody, these systems require a third-party review and approval to refer a child. In some settings the access or delivery of DD services for a child may be impacted. Each program has a unique set of circumstances, expectations, and transition processes that look different for each individual child. This makes it very important to maintain close, frequent contact with Child Welfare for planning and step-down placement options.

A common misconception about these types of placements is that Child Welfare has easy access to these placements for children. This is not the case. A child is not granted immediate access to these types of placements simply because they are in Child Welfare custody. Placement of a child in a higher level of care setting can be a lengthy, demanding process often requiring close collaboration and frequent meetings with a variety of community partners. The child's permanency caseworker is the primary point of contact during this process.

## **Family Support Services**

A parent or legal guardian may request family support services through Child Welfare by calling the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline. Family support services are voluntary, have specific criteria that must be met, and require ongoing and close cooperation by parents and families. This request will generate a family support service assessment. This means a caseworker will come out and meet with the family and gather information to determine whether the family qualifies for services. Family support services are based on the child's need to access services. If safety concerns are present the family may be assessed by a Child Protective Services caseworker instead to address those concerns. It's important to note that child safety is constantly assessed when a caseworker is working with the family. Child safety concerns cannot be ignored and may result in a change of plan for a family that could result in court involvement.

### **Voluntary Placement Agreements**

Voluntary Placement Agreements are a type of family support service in which the family collaborates with Child Welfare to help find an appropriate placement to meet a child's specific needs that cannot be currently met in the home. This type of agreement is voluntary, and the court system is not involved. The child is not immediately removed from the home. A Voluntary Placement Agreement allows for Child Welfare to be involved in planning for a child's needs in close collaboration with the family. **It's important to note that this type of agreement does not open any new placements or avenues for a child to be placed immediately.** The intent of a Voluntary Placement Agreement is for the child to receive goal-oriented, short-term services to meet their significant needs to allow the child to return to the parent or guardian's home.

### **Former Foster Children**

Under the category of Family Support Services, there are also a range of services available to former foster children up to age 21. They may call the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline to request these services. These services are voluntary and require ongoing involvement by the youth for the best outcomes.

### **RESOURCES**

- **Temporary Lodging Worker Guide**

### **CONTACT**

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