



Date: January 6th, 2021

To: The Honorable Kate Brown, Oregon Governor

From: Rebecca Jones Gaston, Director of Child Welfare  
Steve Allen, Director of Behavioral Health

Subject: Update on Children's Psychiatric Residential Treatment Services (PRTS) capacity

In a memo dated January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, ODHS and OHA recommended the development of an additional 47 beds at a PRTS level of care. This joint recommendation was reached in response to the directive of the Child Welfare Oversight Board from July 31, 2019. The agencies also agreed to further study the systemic needs that would adequately support children and youth in the child welfare system. Steps recommended for the study included:

- Engage PRTS providers, CCOs and commercial insurance carriers to identify future state options for Oregon recognizing collective resources and knowledge.
- Identify start-up funds needed to help offset one-time costs for developing additional capacity.
- Explore funding models to ensure capacity is available when needed.
- Develop programmatic and policy change recommendations that would encourage and support capacity development and operational sustainability.
- Track provider outcomes and ongoing system capacity needs.
- Review current services with an equity lens and make recommendations to ensure culturally specific service delivery is occurring.
- Coordinate with System of Care Advisory Council for an analysis of the current continuum of care and develop long-term recommendations for the appropriate settings needed in Oregon.

The following sections provide agency progress updates for the recommendations above.

### Public Health State of Emergency

The 2020 COVID crisis has impacted the ability of both agencies to fully realize capacity building projects and to complete all aspects of the study as listed above. The pandemic coupled with a devastating fire season has obstructed agency and provider capabilities to initiate new projects while work has been focused on maintaining operations.

Implementation of capacity building projects have been delayed due to the necessity to turn resource and budget allocation toward the public health emergency. The impacts to the system have been both financial and operational as the workforce has been stressed with illness, family stressors and stability. Despite the pivot, the agencies have made advances on identified steps.

## Progress Toward Capacity Building

### Capacity Changes

- In April of 2020, prior to the budget reductions, a 12-bed unit was funded and opened with Kairos in Southern Oregon to serve youth ages 12-18 at a PRTS level of care. This brought Kairos to a 21-bed residential capacity in southern Oregon.
  - A safety occurrence at Kairos New Beginnings West, a long running PRTS unit also operating at a 9-bed capacity, resulted in the temporary closure of that unit in August. Kairos is working to reopen that unit in the next 6-12 months.
- Jasper Mountain successfully completed fundraising and utilized capital investments to build a new 15-bed facility to serve youth ages 5-13 at a PRTS level of care. This facility opened in November 2020 and has noted more focused attention on serving children from rural Oregon communities. OHA and ODHS Child Welfare will collaborate and engage the provider and CCOs in developing working relationships to ensure timely access for youth in Oregon.

*Net Capacity Gain of 18 residential treatment beds in 2020.*

### Capacity Projects in Process

- OHA has submitted a Policy Option Package (POP) for the 2021-2023 session which was included in the Governor's Budget. The POP includes an investment of \$7.5 million. The investment has been requested to fund additional PRTS capacity projects that will continue progress toward the 47 additional beds identified in the 2020 memo. Additionally, the investment would provide ongoing funds to support sustainability and needed capacity infrastructure improvements for Oregon's intensive psychiatric treatment system. An RFP to expand the PRTS system is ready to post once this funding is allocated.
- In July 2020, OHA began a collaboration with Trillium Family Services on a conversion project. With a \$350,000 investment from the Community Mental Health Housing Fund, Trillium will convert and update a building on the Children's Farm Home Campus. This converted building will house a 6-bed treatment program for youth ages 5-11. The current estimate for opening this program is October 2021.
- OHA has been working with Community Counseling Solutions (CCS) in Eastern Oregon on a concept for a brand-new facility. CCS has completed work with county and city municipalities to identify land and has contracted an architecture firm to design a 14-bed facility that is expected to take 12-14 months to complete. CCS plans to offer both PRTS and Subacute care at this new facility. Funding for the initiation of this project will be supported with Community Mental Health Housing Fund dollars. To further support progress, the PRTS investment would fund the startup costs incurred while the project is in its demonstration time period awaiting CMS certification.

## Progress Toward Study Recommendations

### Future State Visioning

In March of 2020, OHA hosted a visioning event with Patti Dobrowolski<sup>1</sup> and national System of Care expert, Liz Manley, with Psychiatric Residential Providers, Acute Care providers, Oregon Department of Human Services and state Senator Sara Gelsler, to imagine the future state of the intensive service array. While this work has been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the group identified three key areas of focus:

#### 1. “Reframe”, “Re-rule”, “Rebrand” and “Respond” (4Rs)

In relation to psychiatric residential treatment services, the 4Rs concept focuses on:

- Infrastructure modernization - including building upgrades to work toward trauma informed spaces for treatment.
- Simplifying the administrative rules for intensive psychiatric treatment services
- Evolving PRTS toward System of Care values - moving toward becoming community-based, family-driven, youth-guided, and culturally and linguistically competent
- Simplifying and equalizing accessibility for utilization of PRTS.

#### 2. Braided Funding

A “Braided Funding” concept is focused on simplification. Simplifying the administrative burden would enhance the functionality of treatment programs supporting youth and families with complex needs. Clarifying ways resources can be combined and simplifying distribution would enhance the provider ability to focus on treatment and support of youth with complex needs and their families.

#### 3. Legislative system support

Senate Bill 1 (2019) created the System of Care Advisory Council. The visioning group determined to conceptualize next step legislative concepts aimed at further developing the statewide system of care offerings and simplifying the system.

This collaborative group will continue to develop a work plan in consultation with consumers and stakeholders statewide.

### Program and Policy

Capacity expansion for PRTS will not resolve all access to care issues for youth in child welfare custody. Continued joint work with agencies and stakeholders will be necessary to build sustainable practices for access to the right care, at the right time, for the right duration. OHA and ODHS have established a workgroup focused on work in this area.

Identified Workgroup Objectives:

- Analyze PRTS utilization for youth in state custody compared to total population to ensure equitable access.
- Focus on increasing access and equity for underserved populations, including youth in child welfare custody.
- Implement Interdisciplinary Assessment Programs to remove the barrier for children and families who have had difficulty getting assessed to determine the right level of care.
- Develop strategies to ensure appropriate access paths into and out of PRTS. Procedures need to be examined and implemented to increase timely, supported discharge for youth once they have completed a treatment episode.
- Standardize, clarify, and publish utilization management processes for PRTS referrals.
- Update Oregon Administrative Rule associated with PRTS.

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<sup>1</sup> [upyourcreativegenius.com](http://upyourcreativegenius.com)

- Explore alternative payment methods that would ensure safe placement during assessment for youth in Child Welfare custody who are in crisis.
- Collaborate on a 5-year workforce sustainability plan for Child Caring agencies that will address workforce challenges including: training, recruitment, and wage sustainability.

## Data

Data available to analyze PRTS capacity has been difficult to compile and has been inconsistent. There has not been a centralized data system focused on the children's system of care. From OHA's perspective, a cornerstone of the capacity work is clearing up the data pathways. OHA is working with the provider network, family and youth stakeholders, and the acute care line contractor to determine necessary adjustments and refine the data collection parameters moving forward. Focus will be aimed toward defining a set of goals and outcomes and developing a functional process for ongoing data collection.

The first steps OHA is taking are:

### Launching System of Care Data Dashboard (2021)

As a result of 2019's Senate Bill 1, OHA, ODHS, OYA, and the System of Care Advisory Council are collaborating to create the System of Care Data Dashboard. The dashboard will include:

- A system wide look at children and youth across Oregon who have complex needs and are multi-system involved.
- Utilization data for all levels of care.
- The ability to track number of youths with multi-system involvement and number of youths served by each agency.
- REAL-D (race, ethnicity, language and disability) data requirements.

### Defining a set of goals and outcomes.

- OHA is consulting with national children's System of Care expert to define targeted outcomes.
- OHA's COMPASS Modernization project will improve the data capabilities. The request for funding this project is included in the 2021 Behavioral Health Policy Options Package (POP). Funding to continue the COMPASS Modernization Project is necessary to support this work.

## Moving Forward

ODHS and OHA continue to collaborate to improve access to needed treatment services in the Children's System of Care. Despite the profound impact from the COVID health crisis, ODHS and OHA have worked together to make progress towards our shared goals and commitments. Moving forward over the next biennium, the agencies will prioritize the following:

- ◆ Improve simplicity of access
  - OHA will continue to lead a collaborative PRTS Project workgroup of state agency participants to identify and implement systemic changes that will result in increased access to care for children and youth with complex needs.
  - OHA and ODHS will regularly report on access to care for youth in Child Welfare custody. The report will provide a comparison of admission rates for youth in child welfare custody to total population in order to identify any access inequalities and barriers to timely access to needed care.
  - OHA has completed an RFP for PRTS capacity expansion that will be posted if the Policy Option Package is funded.

◆ Improve responsiveness

- OHA with ODHS, will convene consumers, representatives of communities of color, PRTS providers and other stakeholders to collaborate on intensive treatment system improvements.
- Workgroups will be built with intentional engagement with consumers, Tribes and communities of color to co-create more responsive care.
- Provide training and oversight to ensure Oregon's children and families are receiving timely, culturally and linguistically responsive care.

◆ Improve meaningful outcomes

- OHA and ODHS will continue working with the System of Care Advisory Council to define data measures that provide clear information on access and quality:
  - Formulate collection processes
  - Determine reporting structures
  - Identify and implement ways of improving effectiveness of treatment

OHA and ODHS will provide quarterly updates to the Children's Cabinet on progress toward these priorities.

Sincerely,



Rebecca Jones Gaston

&



Steve J. Allen