



Oregon

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February 23, 2015

The Honorable Senator Devlin, Co-Chair
The Honorable Representative Buckley, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
900 Court Street NE
H-178 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301-4048

RE: DHS Report on SB 5529 - Plan to Allocate or Reallocate New Vacant Child Welfare Positions

Dear Co-Chairs:

Nature of the Report

The Department of Human Services (DHS) was asked to report to the Joint Committee on Ways and Means in 2015 on SB 5529. The note reads as follows:

“The Department of Human Services shall report to the Interim Joint Committee on Ways in Means in August 2013 on its plan to allocate or reallocate new and vacant Child Welfare positions to target activities that have been understaffed in recent biennia while continuing to protect children to the fullest extent possible. Focus areas should include implementation of the differential response model, family finding efforts and efforts to ensure that children move from foster care to permanency as quickly as possible. The report should be by DHS Child Welfare district, display both current and augmented positions by role, and describe how the positions will help the agency meet desired outcomes. The Department will also report to the Joint committee on Ways and Means during the 2015 Legislative Session regarding progress toward program outcomes.

DHS seeks to continuously improve how to help those served achieve safety, health and independence in their own communities through opportunities that protect,

“Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe”

empower, respect choice and preserve dignity. For Child Welfare, this means the safety and permanency of all children served by keeping them safe at home, or in their communities; providing stronger preventive and family reunification services; decreasing disproportionality of children in foster care; and strengthening partnerships between child welfare agencies and community-based organizations.”

The preliminary report detailing the allocation of positions was submitted September 2013. This report is addressing the progress toward program outcomes.

Agency Action

The staff allocated, during the 2013-2015 session are 18 month positions that the department began hiring in January 2014. The hiring of the positions and training of these new caseworkers was completed in November 2014 which resulted in staffing levels of approximately 86 percent of workload need. The classroom training required before a caseworker is allowed to carry a case is 6 weeks long. After this training, it is approximately 6 months before a worker is capable of carrying a full caseload. In 2014, classroom training sessions were increased as well as the size of the classes increased in order to ensure the new staff was promptly trained.

The impact of this addition to our workforce will be more clearly seen in the coming year. As the Social Service Specialists (SSS1) began to carry cases, we have seen an increase in face-to-face contact with children and the timely completion of assessments. In 2014, we saw an increase of 19 percent face-to-face contacts with children in foster care and a 21 percent increase in face-to-face visits with children at home. There was a 6 percent increase in timely completion of assessments.

In 2014, the number of exits from foster care exceeded the number of entries and the department experienced an 8.4 percent reduction in the number of children experiencing foster care. During that time, the re-abuse rate remained steady at below 5 percent. In May 2014, Lane, Klamath and Lake Counties implemented Differential Response. Washington, Linn, Benton and Lincoln Counties are scheduled to implement in April 2015 and a statewide schedule of implementation has been developed which has statewide implementation finishing in 2017. Strengthening, preserving and reunifying family services has been implemented in every county resulting in more than an additional 130 contracted services statewide.

The department increased the number of finalized adoptions in both 2013 and 2014, resulting in more timely permanency for children. In 2013, there were 817 finalized adoptions and preliminary results indicate there were 839 finalizations in 2014.

The Child Welfare Data Book 2013 can be found at <http://www.oregon.gov/dhs/abuse/pages/publications/children/index.aspx> and is incorporated as a part of this report. In Spring of 2015, the Child Welfare Data Book 2014 will be available and will again report the annual metrics for the Child Welfare Program. That document will further supplement the information in this report.

Action Requested

The Department of Human Services requests that the Joint Committee on Ways and Means acknowledge receipt of this report.

Legislation Affected

None.

If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Lois Day, 503-945-6627 or lois.day@dhsosha.state.or.us

Sincerely,



Eric L. Moore
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Enclosure

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