



## Legislative Testimony

### OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

April 11, 2019

The Honorable Jackie Winters, Co-Chair  
The Honorable Carla Piluso, Co-Chair  
Ways and Means Subcommittee on Public Safety

#### **Re: 2019 Second-Chance Act Needs of Incarcerated Parents and their Minor Children**

Co-Chair Winters, Co-Chair Piluso, and members of the committee, I am Heidi Steward, Assistant Director of the Correctional Services Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to request authority for the department's submission of a federal grant application to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) in the amount of \$750,000.

#### **OJJDP Grant Information:**

This grant is focused on promoting and expanding services in detention and correctional facilities for incarcerated individuals and their children younger than the age of 18. It will provide funding to implement positive family engagement strategies to address the needs of incarcerated parents and their minor children such as: increasing and enhancing communication while maintaining safe facilities; providing transitional re-entry services that incorporate a focus on parental responsibility; and supporting the delivery of community-based services to meet the needs of minor children with an incarcerated parent.

OJJDP expects to make up to six awards not to exceed \$750,000. DOC is applying for one of those awards and hopes to receive \$750,000 for a 36-month period of performance to begin October 1, 2019.

#### **Proposed DOC Grant Pilot Program:**

If sufficient funds are awarded, DOC intends to pilot a cooperative Children of Incarcerated Parents (CIP) program to support the CIP Bill of Rights and DOC's work in creating stronger families and reducing recidivism. DOC and the Department of Human Services Child Welfare Division (DHS) would collaborate on this project to identify means by which to improve lines of communication between agencies. This would better equip incarcerated parents with open child welfare cases to satisfy their DHS requirements. We anticipate DHS providing monthly initial identification resources at DOC's Intake Center, and DOC adding Family Advocate positions in one or two men's facilities. The men's Family Advocate positions would be modeled after the successful Family Advocate position at our women's facility. We anticipate funding these FTE limited-duration positions with the grant funds.

As part of the pilot program, we anticipate contracting with a community-based CIP organization to provide support and mentoring services to program participants' children in Clackamas County. The contractor would develop an institution parenting resource library and peer mentoring program that can be replicated in other institutions. In addition, the contractor would develop best-practices "toolkits" to equip staff, incarcerated parents, and children and their family or guardians to better understand and navigate both DOC and DHS requirements and processes. The kits would stress the significant benefits to CIPs in establishing and maintaining contact with their incarcerated parent.

**Conclusion:**

Creating and providing resources for building and maintaining positive family connections during a parent's incarceration supports DOC's mission, vision, and values as well as our efforts to incorporate the CIP Bill of Rights [SB 241](#) (2017) into our operations.

We believe the on-site presence of DHS, the addition of Family Advocates for men, and the development and use of staff and family toolkits and DOC parenting resources will prove to be an effective combination. These resources will provide the men in custody with the tools they need to positively and effectively meet their parental responsibilities; meet the children's basic need for a supportive and positive connection with their parent; and more effectively meet DOC's mission, vision, and core values.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

*Submitted by:*

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