



CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON  
THIRD JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
MARION COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
P.O. BOX 12869  
SALEM, OR 97309-0869

CHERYL A. PELLEGRINI  
Circuit Court Judge  
PHONE: (503) 566-2974  
FAX: (503) 584-4816

February 4, 2020

Chair Sanchez, Vice Chairs Bynum and Sprenger, and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

I am the Presiding Juvenile Judge of Judicial District 3, Marion County, and write in support of House Bill 4040. Marion County has had a family treatment court for a number of years, as well as TOT, an informal program for pregnant women whose child(ren) are already involved with DHS Child Welfare. HB4040 would provide a stable source of funding for our program, which is currently grant-funded through the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) and competes for funding with all other state adult and juvenile treatment court programs.

***Why Family Treatment Courts?*** Some would say that Family Treatment Courts should be what all dependency courts are. But they are not – high case volume and complexity, limited judicial resources, and child welfare workers who for a variety of reasons lack the ability to actively manage their caseloads result in the children of drug/substance affected parents spending far too long in foster care while parents struggle to meet the demands of their case plan. These are people who often lack extended family support, stable housing and a steady income. For many, substance use is a symptom of some larger issue - an undiagnosed or untreated mental health condition. Working with these families takes time, attention and a coordinated system of service providers. Family Treatment Courts provide a framework for that system.

Borrowing from the components of nationally recognized adult drug court programs, Family Treatment Courts incorporate evidence-based practices (the 10 key components) in a team approach to work with participants in developing individual case plans to address substance use and mental health issues, secure safe and stable housing, assistance with finding jobs, obtaining a GED and cultivating family supports.

The hallmarks of Family Treatment Courts are collaboration and accountability through active case management. Treatment providers and child welfare case managers work with parents in identifying and removing barriers to long-term sobriety and stability. Frequent and active judicial oversight provides a measure of accountability for parents as well as service providers. In traditional dependency cases, families often must wait months for their next court review. Parents in Marion County's Family Treatment Court meet with the judge and full treatment court team three times a month, and the treatment team meets weekly. This facilitates progress through active problem-solving and a coordinated strategy to recognize and respond to a parent's progress or challenges.

***Who are the Members of a Family Treatment Court?*** Marion County's Treatment Court

Team includes the judge, program coordinator, two dedicated DHS case workers, and representatives for alcohol/drug treatment and mental health service agencies, housing resources, an attorney for parents, and a DHS self-sufficiency program manager. We also have parent mentors and are working to develop a Treatment Court alumni peer mentor program.

***Why fund Family Treatment Courts?*** Because they work. Children are returned home more quickly and are less likely to be re-removed due to relapse or sudden homelessness. Parents succeed in staying clean and meaningfully address their mental health issues. They are more skilled at parenting, more attuned to the needs of their children. They cultivate a new social circle of people who are invested in their success. Parents obtain their GED's, get full time jobs, and plan for college. Children get the parent(s) they deserve and the chance to thrive at home. Families chart their own course. It is not back into the child welfare system.

In our experience, children of parents who graduate from Marion County's Treatment Court program rarely, if ever, re-enter the child welfare system. In the three years I have presided over our Treatment Court, *no graduate has become re-involved with DHS*. This is a tangible measure of the program's success.

Family Treatment Court programs require significant resources, both in terms of time and money. As I mentioned earlier, Marion County's program is grant funded through the CJC, and we're grateful for their support. But grant funding means that the Program Coordinator spends considerable time tracking expenses, reporting, and preparing grant applications – time that could be dedicated to serving a greater number of families. Grant funding makes expansion difficult, because the amount we receive is uncertain from one budget cycle to the next. Additionally, we compete with all other specialty court programs statewide for funding. HB4040 would allow us to increase participation in the program to 30 families. We currently serve approximately 18-22 families at any given time.

In addition to stabilizing Marion County's Family Treatment Court, HB4040 would allow OJD to leverage our experience in order to accelerate the creation of the new programs. The Bill also provides funding for an element critical to the continued success of Family Treatment Courts - program monitoring and evaluation.

I urge you to support House Bill 4040. I thank you for your consideration and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Cheryl A. Pellegrini

Presiding Juvenile Judge of Judicial District 3, Marion County