



# CIRCUIT COURT OF OREGON

FIFTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT  
CLACKAMAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE  
OREGON CITY, OR 97045

**KATHIE F. STEELE**  
PRESIDING CIRCUIT COURT JUDGE

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March 19, 2021

Chair Anna Williams  
Vice-Chair Gary Leif  
Vice-Chair Ricki Ruiz  
Committee Members  
Oregon House Committee on Human Services

Oregon State Capital  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

RE: HB 3366 – Relating to Family Treatment Courts

Dear Chair Williams, Vice-Chairs Leif and Ruiz, and Members of the Committee:

We write to convey our Judicial District's strong support of House Bill 3366 and to share why creation of a Family Treatment Court program would greatly benefit children and families in Clackamas County. A Family Treatment Court in our county could serve over 45 families in Clackamas County providing wrap-around care for parents on the road to recovery and children at risk due to substance abuse and addiction at home. These services will be supported with intensive judicial involvement and oversight of their case by our experienced treatment court judges and staff, and we are prepared to make that investment with your support.

### ***The Need in our Judicial District***

Family Treatment Court programs help ensure that parents whose untreated substance use disorders have created concerns for their children's safety receive treatment, counseling, accountability (through regular court appearances), and other essential supports so they can begin and sustain recovery. We expect a Clackamas Family Treatment Court would serve 45 families per year.

In Clackamas County, approximately 500 children spend at least a day in foster care each year. A very high percentage of these cases involve parents in active addiction. That is particularly true for children who stay in care over a year or who return to care more than once. Based on my experience working with DHS-involved families in dependency proceedings (foster care cases) and our drug court program, we think that by operating a Family Treatment Court program here we could reduce, and in some cases even eliminate, the time kids spend in foster care. A Family Treatment Court program would help parents experiencing addiction begin recovery and parent safely. It would enable children to stay with their parents and avoid the trauma of foster care.



***A Different Response for Families Struggling with Substance Abuse Disorder***

The Family Treatment Court model provides a meaningful alternative to the traditional case management in child welfare cases. Family Treatment Courts are for parents who require treatment for a substance abuse disorder and who are involved with the child welfare system because of alleged child abuse or neglect. This specialty court program combines intensive judicial monitoring with multidisciplinary interventions. By offering treatment, accountability, and supportive opportunities for safe reunification, these programs decrease the amount of time children are in foster care and reduce trauma to both parent and child.

The hallmarks of Family Treatment Courts are collaboration and accountability. Parents engaged in Family Treatment Courts will have all the treatment providers associated with their case working together to holistically treat the challenges the families are facing through weekly case management meetings with all stakeholder's present. Parents will have their services tailored to their individual needs and family circumstances. The Family Treatment Court builds upon the best qualities of each piece of the system through a model founded upon communication, community effort, and creative problem-solving.

Another vital part of Family Treatment Courts is the frequency of case management meetings and check-ins with the judge overseeing the case. No longer will a family have to wait weeks or longer to voice a barrier they are facing because they will receive weekly, continuous support and feedback; no time is wasted. For a child who is in foster care, or a parent whose child is in foster care, everyday counts.

Here is the link to a 2019 report from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals that describes the model and its effectiveness: [https://www.nadcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Family-Treatment-Court-Best-Practice-Standards\\_Final2.pdf](https://www.nadcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Family-Treatment-Court-Best-Practice-Standards_Final2.pdf)

***Delivering Results, Healing Parents, Protecting Kids***

Family Treatment Courts deliver measurable, positive results. Children are less likely to be placed in foster care, parents are more likely to be successful in treatment, and the promise of recovery is real.

We believe creation of a Family Treatment Court program in Clackamas County would greatly benefit vulnerable families in our community. We urge you to support House Bill 3366. We thank you for your consideration and welcome any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Kathie Steele  
Presiding Judge  
Clackamas County Circuit Court



Debbie Spradley  
Trial Court Administrator  
Clackamas County Circuit Court