



# Oregon Child Abuse Solutions

Protect. Heal. Lead.

March 30, 2021

4300 NE Fremont St., Suite 220  
Portland, OR 97213

The Honorable Lieber  
The Honorable Nosse

Joint Committee on Ways and Means, Human Services, Members

RE: Invest in DHS Child Welfare

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions is the statewide network of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), the entities that provide forensic interviews, medical exams, family advocacy, mental health treatment and other services to children and families when child abuse is suspected. There are over 20 OCAS members that offer these services to children in every county, working in partnership with law enforcement, schools, DHS caseworkers, prosecutors, and others. While each CAC responds to the unique needs of its community, all CACs receive referrals from law enforcement and child welfare professionals.

The Department of Human Services, Child Welfare Division is a crucial partner of ours. Caseworkers observe forensic interviews, use medical recommendations in case planning, and partner by serving on multidisciplinary teams in each county. Oftentimes, particularly in rural areas, visiting a CAC is one of a caseworker's first on-the-job training experiences. Even our Oregon Child Forensic Interview Training (OCFIT), a program traveling statewide, serves more caseworkers than any other category of participants. High quality, well-trained, and retained caseworkers make a huge difference in the lives of many of Oregon's children.

When caseloads are high or caseworkers turnover, referral to our CACs decline. This means, investigation and prosecution is less effective and most tragically, children are denied services that reduce unnecessary re-traumatization in the system. In their time of highest need, children should be consistently supported with highly effective, expert care that is often first accessed through dedicated and skilled caseworkers.

In an Oregon fighting to recover from COVID-19, reduce addictions, housing instability, chronic physical and mental health diagnoses, criminality, economic instability, teen suicide, unintended pregnancy, etc., we urge you to address the root cause of these issues—trauma from child abuse and neglect. Measured in the adverse childhood experiences (ACES) study, child maltreatment has been tied to each of these outcomes. Make no mistake, these cruel outcomes are often spurred by abuse and sustained through untreated trauma.

Additionally, these issues impact all Oregonians.

Creating a prosperous Oregon with more hope and less heartache will rely on the investments and decisions made for our young residents today.

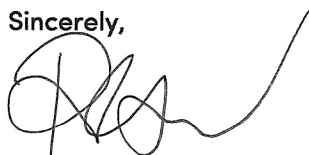


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Toward this vision, we encourage the Legislature to maintain investments made in the 2019 Session, and approve an even more robust allocation for DHS Child Welfare in the next biennium in an effort to increase caseworker training and retention, and to decrease caseload burden. Every child impacted by abuse deserves the opportunity to enter adulthood safe, healing, and hopeful. Increased investments for families and youth that need the services of child welfare will get us closer to this goal.

Sincerely,



Becky Jones  
Executive Director  
Oregon Child Abuse Solutions