



Oregon Child Abuse Solutions

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April 14, 2021

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

Re: OCAS APRA Request

Co Chairs Steiner Hayward, Johnson and Rayfield
Members of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions is the statewide network of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs), the entities that provide child abuse medical exams, forensic interviews, family advocacy, mental health treatment and other services to children when child abuse is reported or suspected. There are over 20 CACs providing these services to children in every county in Oregon. Children's Advocacy Centers provide these services in collaboration with Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) caseworkers, law enforcement, district attorneys, schools and other community partners. We are thankful to be before the Committee today to respectfully request one-time funding of \$16.6M in APRA dollars—primarily for capital construction projects— which we believe will significantly increase access to these critical services.

Children's Advocacy Centers receive inadequate funding from the state (only 18%) to provide these statutorily mandated services. Issues caused by chronic underfunding, such as long wait times and inability to see all kids who are referred for services, have been exasperated by the COVID-19 pandemic, as CACs report that it is more expensive to provide care, and that cases seen are much more severe. Due to current inadequate funding levels and high immediate needs, most CACs fundraise for needed staff positions and are unable to make strategic, long-term investments that will permanently expand services for children for the long term – like, the purchase of a new building or space expansion of an existing building.

Due to the sensitive and confidential nature of the work done by Children's Advocacy Centers, waiting rooms are private and CACs must limit the number of families seen in one area at any one time—even pre-COVID-19. This is to protect the identities of the children and families impacted by crime such as child sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, drug endangerment, and witness to domestic violence or even homicide. As such, maintaining confidentiality and a safe, private space is essential to minimizing trauma for these families.

One time funding for new or expanded buildings will allow for more children to be served at once, which will decrease wait times and increase access—a total game changer for the communities that CACs serve. Today, Children's Advocacy Centers are only able to serve about 55% of children who are referred to them, due largely to inadequate funding/space.

Oregon Child Abuse Solution’s request:

We are thankful for the opportunity to present our request for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, and we are extraordinarily thankful to the many Legislators who included this request in with their own. Below you will find a breakdown with the details of our request, which totals \$16.6M and includes largely capital construction projects and one-time equipment costs like telemedicine technology.

Buildings; space renovations; space expansion projects	\$13,011,600
Staff capacity; personnel	\$2,128,000
Technology; Security	\$624, 883
Additional requests	\$847,500
Total (all CACs)	\$16,611,983

A one-time investment of 13M in space renovations/new buildings for 11 CACs will immediately increase access to these critical services. OCAS also requests 2.1M in one-time personnel support which will offset Victims of Crime Act funding cuts at the federal level, and allow CACs impacted by the pandemic to make previously planned hires they are confident can be sustained following this support and should the legislature increase its ongoing investment in these services. Lastly, CACs have technology and security one-time costs of \$624,883 which will allow 6 CACs to make needed security, cloud and video storage improvements and will give all CACs the ability to store forensic interviews securely and track cases across counties and jurisdictions. This investment will standardize and ensure security of confidential information related to cases.

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions is requesting a total of 16.6M in ARPA funding to dramatically expand access to Children’s Advocacy Center services, like child abuse medical assessments, forensic interviews, and mental health treatment of child victims of abuse or witnesses to crime. We believe these one-time investments will bolster Oregon’s recovery and improve response for children and families who need it most at this time. Importantly, quality and coordinated response to crime right now could have dramatic positive impacts to public safety for years to come. This one-time ARPA funding would dramatically improve our CAC system, resulting in rewards for the many other systems we collaborate with like child welfare, law enforcement, and schools. Without this funding, CACs will continue to work hard to expand access to services; however, with CACs so focused on the immediate staffing needs to respond to increasing referrals, unfortunately strategic, long-term investments may be years off.

Thank you for your service and consideration,

Becky Jones, Executive Director

Expanding access to culturally-responsive, trauma-informed child abuse investigations

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions request for American Rescue Plan Act Funds

Buildings and space/access expansion projects	Amani Center	909,600	Amani Center has seen huge increases in the need for services in Columbia county serving 175 children in 2017, 246 in 2018, and 350 in 2019. The current building only allows one family access at a time which limits our ability to meet the need in our community. CAC services require security and confidentiality so expansion is necessary for more access. Funding this building expansion and renovation project will double our capacity, allowing two families to be served at a time and adding an additional space for immediate crisis response available at the same time as well.
	CAC of Jackson County	100,000	Our buildings are paid for but are in need of repair and potential expansion to provide a safe environment to provide services to children. We need siding replaced and painted, sidewalk repairs, the roof needs re-shingling and the gutters and signage need to be replaced. We are often prioritizing services are available prior to projects like these so this funding go a long way in fixing what needs it and allowing us to keep our focus on kids.
	CAC of Lincoln County	650,000	The current CAC location is unable to serve all the children needed. This funding will update existing structure, expand the parking lot, and develop a new detached building, purposely detached to better serve confidentiality needs of sexual assault cases. This will allow our CAC to see 50% more children, dramatically increasing access.
	CARES Northwest	5,000,000	CARES Northwest needs \$5M to purchase and establish the Washington County Family Peace Center, where CARES and the Family Justice Center would co-locate. Washington County refers the most children to CACs than any other county (over 800 per year), yet does not have it's own location. This causes barriers for families to access these services and also requires a lot of time for multidisciplinary team partners to travel and attend visits to CARES. We're hoping a space in Washington County will solve these issues and also expand our services to more children and families.
	Children's Center	80,000	Children's Center currently leases a space for therapy and it will not be renewed, so we will need to renovate the basement of our building to make it appropriate for families and children to visit and feel that they are in a safe and comfortable place. This funding will help us avoid disruptions in care and continue to provide excellent treatment for children in our trauma-focused behavioral therapy program.
	Columbia Gorge CAC	1,500,000	SafeSpace serves five counties and needs a 4,000 square foot building to add space for medical and therapeutic services. The needs in these counties are very high and there is a lack of specialized medical care and trauma-focused mental health treatment. SafeSpace would like to close this gap through operating a larger CAC. The current space they occupy is only 1,300 sq. feet and has been sold. Without space expansion, adding mental health and more medical care is not possible.
	Douglas CARES	2,250,000	Douglas CARES needs to secure a building and complete renovations to increase appointments/availability for families.
	Josephine County CAC	1,230,000	In our current building we do not have space to meet the current and future needs of of our community. At present, our facility is unable to house all staff members and cannot accommodate an on-site medical exam room, evaluation/assessment rooms, or in house mental health treatment. We need a new building and I've included \$30,000 to equip a medical exam room to provide on-site forensic exams. Due to our current inadequate space our medical exams are conducted at a local pediatric office that does not have up-to-date non-invasive equipment for performing child sexual assault examinations. Securing a space will help avoid this preventable trauma.
	KIDS Center	600,000	Our current building can only serve two families at one time and to meet the need this project will allow for serving three families simultaneously. The needs for children here in Bend are great and expansion is key to serving more families.
	Liberty House	42,000	Liberty House is seeking funding to repair and repave a parking lot and to replace an outdated HVAC system. This will both improve access to our facility and will provide a more comfortable space for children and families to occupy when visiting our CAC.
	Wally's House	500,000	Wally's House has very limited space and we are asking for funding to add an addition to our CAC. This would include two additional spaces to see children, new security fences and gates, and expanding our observation room which often needs to accommodate four or more people and is only 4.5' X 11'.
	OCAS	150,000	Currently many families in need of services are unable or unwilling to travel from their small towns and rural communities to a CAC. We request funding for two mobile CAC units that will be managed and housed in strategic locations in the state and will be able to provide outreach, medical, and forensic experts to families who are far from services. This will help us close gaps due to location and at times due to turnover of essential staff across the state. For example, all Lincoln county children must travel for medical services right now due to losing their medical provider and the trips are 3-6 hours roundtrip. This means families may not access services to help them get assessment and follow-up care.
Total:		13,011,600	
Personnel	ABC House	459,000	The number of interview requests has grown 25% in the past five years. Fewer multidisciplinary team partners wish to be trained to do their own interviews so our staff are responsible for a much greater proportion of those referred. We need a second full-time forensic interviewer so we can serve more children. The number of medical exams increased by 55% between 2019-2020 and now thanks to more facility space, we can accommodate more children at the CAC. We need a second full-time medical assistant. We are also asking for 30K of funding for diversity, equity, and inclusion training and consultation and vicarious trauma and self-care resources and programming.
	CAC of Jackson County	300,000	We invest thousands of dollars in training our staff in evidence-based, trauma-informed treatment services but have difficulty retaining them because we cannot pay what for profit or government can. We need funding to retain our staff, particularly during this time and in this field which is full of heartbreak and trauma. We also need to expand our mental health and medical program and need more program administrative support. Our community does not have other resources like ours and we need to be able to better meet the needs of all the children who need the services. For these reasons we need to hire for mental health, medical capacity and increased administrative support for all of our programs.

	Children's Center	50,000	Our CAC is specialized in helping children who are engaging in sexualized behavior, however we do not have the needed funding to do outreach to schools, child care providers, and other direct service providers who may be unaware of our expertise. We would like to hire a staff member to engage in outreach through a pilot program geared toward helping with identifying and working with children and youth with inappropriate sexualized behaviors.
	Columbia Gorge CAC	95,000	SafeSpace currently contracts for medical services and does not have a medical director on staff, this funding would cover one year of a half-time medical director and would help us expand services so that more children will receive services at the CAC and not at the local emergency room. We are also requesting \$25,000 for telemedicine to expand services. We serve three rural counties and two frontier counties and using telemedicine would increase the number of children we can see from these counties with both mental health and medical services.
	Douglas CARES	250,000	Our community has high needs for mental health therapy that is trauma-focused. We do not come close to meeting the needs across our large county. We are seeking funding for therapists and additional skills trainers to help work with families in home while the therapist engages with the child impacted by abuse. These services would greatly improve access to our specialized care and help us reach out and broaden our access.
	Josephine County CAC	60,000	We are working with our local coordinated care organization to establish space and staff to conduct on-site medical exams at a new facility. We seek funding for a 0.5 FTE sexual assault nurse examiner. The ongoing salary will be largely covered by exam and assessment fees once we have a new building and the space to provide medical, dental, and mental health assessments.
	Kids FIRST	289,000	The demand for our services has continued to increase and with the reduction in fundraising and expected grant cuts we've had to put off hiring the additional staff we need this year. We secured the new building we needed right before the pandemic and would use this funding to hire for an additional forensic interviewer and a nurse practitioner to have full capacity in our space to serve families.
	Liberty House	300,000	Preventing child abuse provides huge returns for our state, both socially and financially. However, opportunities for prevention have diminished since the pandemic. We provide as much prevention as is possible with current staffing levels and have even launched an important initiative called iRespect and Protect which helps families foster positive self-worth, promote healthy online choices, and encourage safe relationships. We need \$100,000 to fund our child abuse prevention activities. There are over 10,000 reports of child abuse in the counties we serve yearly and we see only 12% of those in need. We must expand access to our services and hire a specialty trained pediatrician to get closer to meeting the need.
	Wally's House	75,000	Our community does not have enough mental health therapists specifically trained in trauma-forensic cognitive behavioral therapy or other evidence based models to work with our clients, children in foster care, or their families. We need funding that will allow us to hire a therapist that we can train in evidence-based models to serve these populations.
	OCAS	250,000	During COVID, forensic interviewers and medical providers are seeing increasingly severe and complex cases. We have expanded our programming to provide a year-long training program with monthly lectures, statewide peer reviews, and two annual conferences. We are connecting with CAC medical providers many times each month to understand the major concerns they are coming across. We need funding for additional staff to meet the critical needs of our medical providers during this period, including organizing information and response about drug endangered children across the state, working with them to create and implement a training for pediatricians on how to spot the signs of abuse and refer, and ensuring they have a system set up for quick, helpful feedback when crises arise. Additionally, the number of children presenting with acute sexual assault has risen in many areas making the need for a sexual assault nurse examiner for pediatrics Oregon certification very clear. Additional staff would help us implement a thorough solution for children presenting to emergency rooms with acute sexual assault in areas across the state. Lastly, our CACs have reported cases where a child has a severe injury and there is a history of medical care prior. We intend to use additional funding to create training for external providers in abuse response including pediatricians, family physicians, paramedics, and emergency room personnel so these providers are equipped to identify abuse early and refer to a CAC, avoiding more severe injury or fatality.
	Total:	2,128,000	
Technology and Security	Amani Center	16,683	Most of our county's rural communities remain remote and underserved. A challenge to investigations and providing services has been limited multidisciplinary team participation and response. We can facilitate more effective countywide multidisciplinary meetings that encourage response through the purchase of technology like a computer, office furniture, and remote work equipment that will make confidential multidisciplinary team meetings more accessible. Due to the nature of our services, we must also maintain accurate security mechanisms and control over who enters the building and when. We need funds to outfit our physical space with security system equipment to maintain the safety of digital data and the people and property on our premises.
	CAC of Jackson County	80,000	We have VHS recorded forensic interviews that are deteriorating and years of client and administrative paper file records. We need to convert to a new system to ensure our records are converted electronically and in a more secure cloud-based storage.
	Children's Center	30,000	Our interviewers and medical providers are currently hand-transcribing all of their interviews and assessments, resulting in time lost that could be used to assess more children. We would like to invest in an interview transcription program that will record our sessions and help us to better prepare reports for our partners. This funding will also give our staff more time to see children who need services.
	Liberty House	208,200	Our space is limited and we must add one more forensic interview suite and all of our current equipment is outdated and unable to handle the demand of conducting nearly 500 child interviews in 2020 alone. We need \$150,000 to fund forensic interview equipment, which includes specialized video/audio recording equipment for three interview suites. This is needed to ensure we can successfully meet the demands that are increasing. Additionally, we need to migrate our expired servers to a cloud-based system and gain access to corresponding IT support for one year.
	Lighthouse for Kids	40,000	Our current recording equipment and system is over 15 years old and is starting to fail. New funding would permit our CAC to digitally record all interviews and store them securely. This funding would also be able to move our physical files into cloud-based storage system that is HIPPA compliant. These investments will protect the safety and security of the children and families that access the Center.

	Wally's House	50,000	We are currently unable to track our cases in a cloud-based format that will allow us to link with other centers and share our cases county to county and track accurate statistics. We would like to onboard the Collaborate program for our cases.
	OCAS	200,000	CACs have varying ways they track cases and this leads to different data that is gathered and lack of a standardized approach to case tracking, review, and data collection. We would like to purchase a case tracking system for all CACs which will cost much less than they'd each pay alone and would fix issues with non-standardized approaches. Storage of sensitive videos is a consistent concern in our Network. Videos in some places are burned onto disks and stored manually and given to partners who need to review them. This leaves risks for information that is confidential to get into the wrong hands. Purchasing Vidanyx cloud video recording and storage software for the state would help all of our CACs securely share and restrict access to confidential videos, protecting the privacy and identities of child victims across the state. This software is also less costly when provided in bulk.
Total:		624,883	
Additional Request	CARES Northwest	800,000	Across the nation, child abuse remains a pervasive challenge for communities. One of the most crucial interventions for children who may have experienced maltreatment is a comprehensive forensic medical assessment performed by a child abuse subspecialty pediatrician. The lack of available providers in rural and remote communities, however, creates a significant disparity for victims. This absence of appropriate care in very remote communities creates stress and barriers and can force child abuse victims to travel long distances for medical assessments or even to forgo assessments, particularly for low-income families without access to reliable transportation. We need \$800,000 to establish state-of-the-art telemedicine technology, empowering Oregon CAC's to respond to concerns of child abuse in Clatsop, Jackson, Lincoln, and Hood River counties. CARES Northwest will employ a child abuse subspecialty pediatrician to serve as the telemedicine specialist, providing caring and comprehensive care close to patients' homes, in child-friendly environments. We anticipate this funding would allow us to establish a pilot program that would serve over 525 children over 3 years.
	Douglas CARES	36,000	Accessibility to our services across our county has been a challenge. We seek funding to add lease vehicles in order to have transportation by staff to client homes, trainings, court, partner agencies, and meetings.
	Josephine County	11,500	This funding would help us with sexual abuse prevention training materials and funding for community outreach for our services and our capital campaign.
Total:		847,500	
Total of all requests by CACs:		16,611,983	