



Presentation to the House Committee  
on Early Childhood and Human Services

# Oregon Department of Human Services Overview

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# Our history

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1971

The Oregon Legislature creates the **Oregon Department of Human Resources**, an agency providing a spectrum of human services to individuals, families and communities.



Over the years, **new agencies** are established to take on parts of ODHR's original functions:

- Oregon Department of Corrections
- Oregon Employment Department
- Oregon Youth Authority
- Oregon Housing and Community Services



2001

The Legislature reorganizes the department and changes its name to the **Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS)**.



2011

The Legislature transfers many of the department's health-related functions to the newly created **Oregon Health Authority**. ODHS/OHS Shared Services continue to support both agencies.

# Why we do our work

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Everyone deserves the opportunity to **reach their full potential** and contribute to our communities. Maximizing people's potential helps our communities thrive and benefits our entire state.



But reaching our potential is like going through a series of locked doors – if we don't have **the keys we need**, we won't be able to open the door to that potential.



The keys include access to health care, education, affordable housing, nutritious food, financial resources and other **social determinants of health**.



ODHS works with partners and Tribal Nations to make these keys available to everyone in Oregon so that people, families and communities can **unlock the doors and thrive**.

# Meet “Cora”

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**“I wish I had that support sooner.”**

Cora was struggling with issues that raised concerns about her children’s safety. Eventually ODHS Child Protective Services had to place her two young children in foster care. **Cora wanted to keep her family connected, but she needed help before she could get her life on track.**

Luckily, a space with the Iron Tribe Network opened up, which provided Cora with housing and other supports to help her transition to a more stable life; she accessed additional supports through drug court and ODHS Self-Sufficiency Programs. With a team of supporters finally in her corner, **Cora was able to recover and make the changes needed to get her children back.**

Today, Cora is part of a parent mentoring program that helps others move toward reunification with their children.

# ODHS today

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ODHS employs **more people** than any other executive agency and serves **communities and Tribal Nations** all around the state.



We serve more than **1.5 million people** – or one in three Oregon residents – through our five major programs and the ONE eligibility system.



Over **90 percent** of our \$17.1 billion dollar budget\* goes **directly to Oregon communities** in the form of payments to clients, providers and direct service staff.



Our staff of more than 10,000 work in nearly every Oregon community, **helping people and local economies thrive.**

# Our organizational structure

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## ODHS Leadership

### Direct Services

#### Five major programs:

- Aging and People with Disabilities (APD)
- Child Welfare
- Developmental Disabilities Services (ODDS)
- Self-Sufficiency Programs (SSP)
- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

### Support Functions

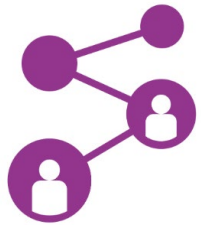
#### Central Services including:

- Oregon Eligibility Partnership
- Equity and Multicultural Services
- Tribal Affairs
- Office of Resilience and Emergency Mgmt.
- Budget
- Human Resources

#### ODHS/OHA Shared Services

# Program highlights

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More than  
**89,500 people**  
accessed information  
and referral services  
through APD's  
Aging and Disability  
Resource  
Connection.\*



The Child Welfare  
division provided  
in-home services to  
**6,304  
children**.\*



Each year,  
SSP makes  
**2,500 to 3,000  
contacts with  
youth**  
who are experiencing  
homelessness.\*



**3,894 youth**  
ages 14-24 and  
**7,691 adults**  
ages 25+  
participated in  
Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
services.\*



**32,580  
people**  
served through  
Developmental  
Disabilities  
Services.\*\*

\*2021 data  
\*\*As of April 2022

# How our programs impact Oregon communities



People with disabilities can **participate more fully** in jobs and community.



Children are better fed, helping them be **ready to learn at school**.

## Strong and Thriving Communities




People can pay their bills and **focus on their families' well-being** instead of on financial stress.




**Older adults are healthier** and better able to share their culture, abilities and skills with our communities.




# Lessons learned through crises: The pandemic and wildfires



Oregon's communities of color do not have the **support they need during emergencies**.\*



Oregon's **culturally and linguistically appropriate emergency response** systems are deeply lacking.\*



88 percent of community interview respondents said they had received **inadequate or no help navigating our services**.\*\*

**Disconnected programs and services** create barriers for the people they're designed to serve.\*\*

**High turnover** in our workforce translate into service barriers for impacted communities.\*\*

Our programs need to offer **greater flexibility** to families and communities in order to reduce disparities.

[\\*Preparing Oregon's Communities of Color for Disasters, United Way of the Columbia-Willamette, 2022](#)

\*\*ODHS strategic planning, initial gap and barrier analysis, 2022

# Advancing a culture shift in human services

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We are committed to **improving customer service** by putting people and families at the center.



## People trapped by regulation

Agencies determine what's best for the community and people.

People are left to navigate complex, bureaucratic systems on their own.

Regulations are at the center of decisions and services are one-size-fits-all.



## People free to pursue goals

People and community are the experts in their own lives.

Staff guide people through paperwork, go to clients, do the legwork to find supports.

People are at the center of decisions and services are tailored to the needs of individuals and families.

# Informed by the lessons:

## Our three agencywide focus areas

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### Strengthening our foundations

- Prioritizing customer service
- Upgrades to eligibility systems
- Preparing for the end of the Public Health Emergency



### Preparing for and responding to emergencies

- Continuing our feeding and sheltering missions
- Using data to make our response more effective
- Preparing for a Cascadia event and other disasters



### Creating the future of human services

- Strategic planning
- Identifying and bridging gaps between systems so we can serve people holistically
- Combining data across agencies
- Building community engagement infrastructure
- Building community-based capacity

# Key challenge ahead: Unraveling the Public Health Emergency

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Elements of the federal **Public Health Emergency** (PHE) are set to expire on April 11, 2023, triggering an **end to some expanded benefits and services** for Oregon schoolchildren, families and adults.

- Medicaid Long-term Services and Supports (LTSS)
- Oregon Health Plan participants who no longer financially qualify may lose their medical benefits.
- SNAP Emergency Assistance, Pandemic Electronic Benefits Transfer (P-EBT) and Summer P-EBT.
- Staff workloads will significantly increase.



# Workforce and technology: Key challenges and opportunities

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What's happening	What we can do about it
<b>Workforce crisis</b> 	Fair compensation and a safe, supportive work environment
<b>Tight budgetary boxes and dated workload models</b> 	Build budgetary flexibility and workload models with modern business practices and accountability measures
<b>Aging technology</b> 	Move critical applications, particularly payment systems, off the legacy mainframe

# Equity and systems: Key challenges and opportunities

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## What's happening

## What we can do about it

**Inadequate array of culturally and linguistically services and supports**



Invest in local staff and organizations and continue our workforce diversification initiatives

**Siloed programs and funding streams**



Serve children and families together

**Disconnected systems**

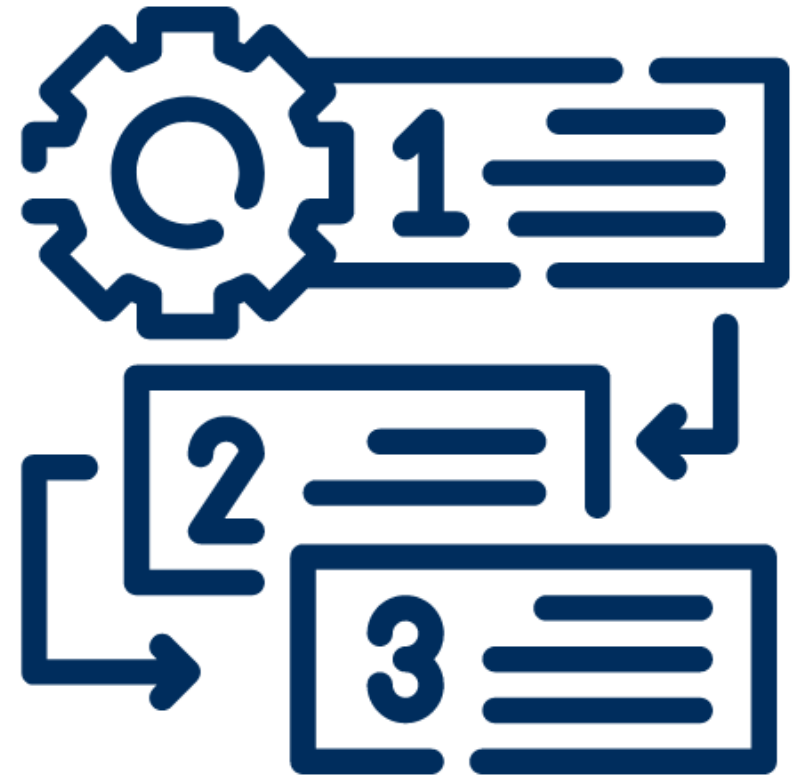


Share data and plan collaboratively across programs, agencies and partners.

# Advancing the Governor's priorities

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- Increased accountability
- Prioritizing customer service
- Make things work as efficiently as possible
- Provide tools and not barriers
- Improved access to services when people need them



# Meet Rachel

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**“I feel really good about my job. I think it rocks.”**

Rachel loves working with children. In 2021, she landed her dream job as a teacher’s assistant at Cadence Academy Preschool in Portland.

**With support from Tabitha Williams, an employment specialist at Trellis, Inc., Rachel planned her career course** and completed a 4-year degree before joining the Cadence team. She has since excelled at Cadence, where she assists teachers with students of all pre-school ages.

**“To find a job that accepts people with disabilities, that is huge,”** Rachel said, and she wants employers to know that people with Down syndrome have a lot to contribute to the workforce.





Questions?

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