

Presentation to the 2023 Joint Ways and
Means Subcommittee on Human Services

Family Preservation

Aprille Flint-Gerner, Interim Director, Child Welfare Division

Lacey Andresen, Deputy Director, Child Welfare Division

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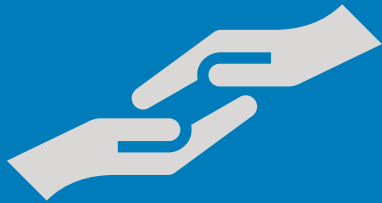
Meet Autumn



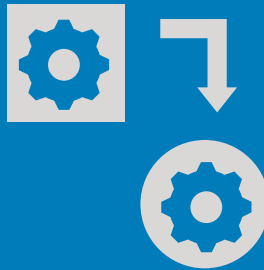
Autumn is coming up on six months of sobriety and is so happy to be able to be here for her children, to help them succeed in life together.

Today's conversation – Family Preservation

Keeping Families Together



Transforming the System



Continuing the Momentum



Keeping Families Together









Vision for Transformation



Our Vision is based on a belief that children do best growing up in their family and on values related to honoring and supporting cultural wisdom, building community resilience and voice, and ensuring the self-determination of our communities of color. The goal is absolute transformation.

The myth of 'child rescue'

-  Children being separated from their parents, extended family, tribe or community
-  Punitive
-  Child Welfare knows best

-  Children and young people have better outcomes when they remain safely in their homes and communities
-  About relationships
-  Communities have the wisdom they need

Family Separation in the US

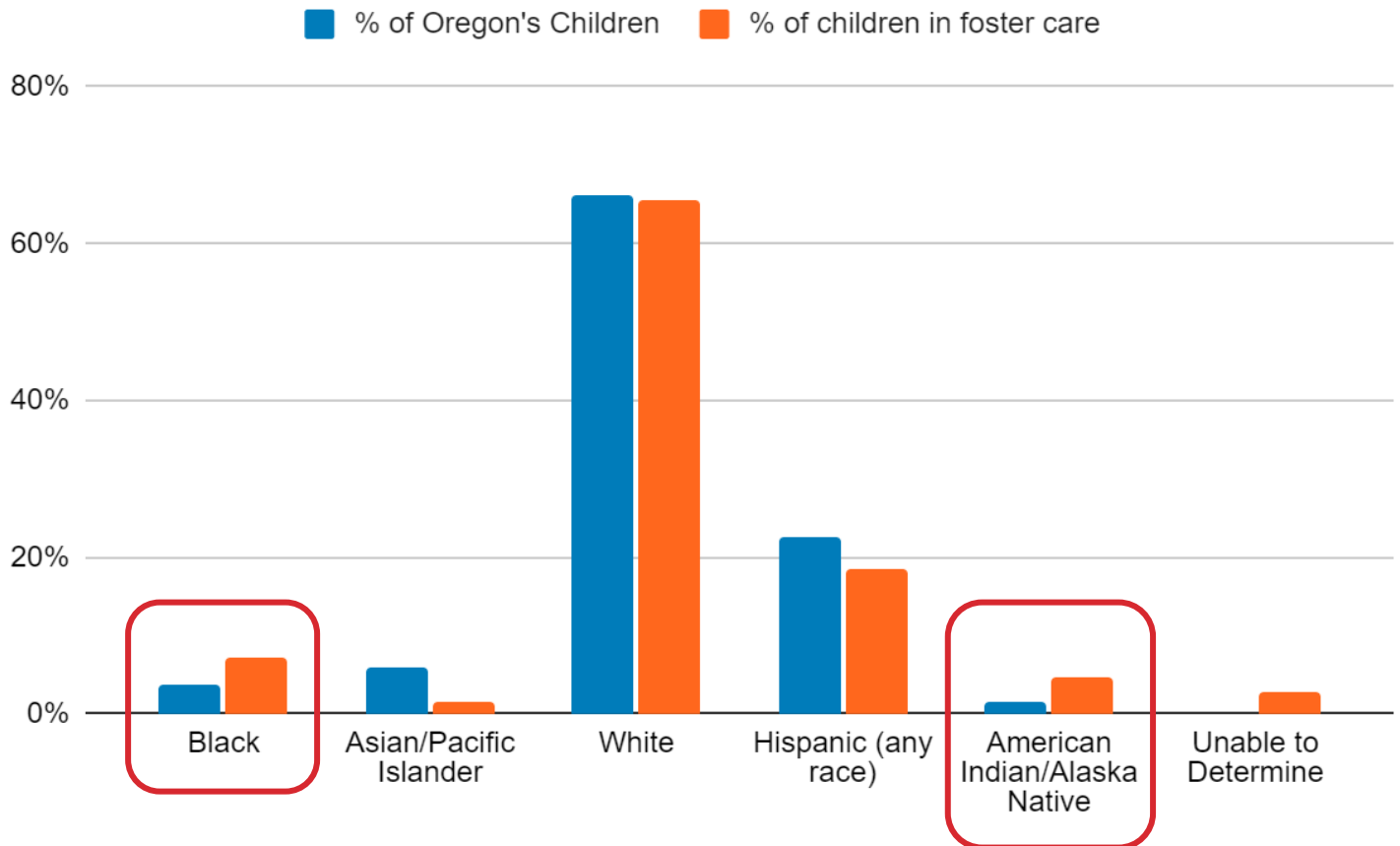
Throughout the history of the United States the forcible separation of children from their families has been used to oppress communities, particularly communities of color, be it through slavery, boarding schools, the Indian Adoption Act, or mass incarceration.



Racial & Ethnic Disparities We See Today

- In Oregon, African American and Native American children are overrepresented in foster care.
- Nationally, **more than 1 in 2 (53%)** of all Black children experience a Child Protective Service investigation by age 18.

Percent of Oregon's Children in Foster Care by Race



Research: Placing children in foster care isn't working

- Poverty is often mistaken for neglect, resulting in increased rates of child abuse reports and unnecessary foster care
- Can cause further trauma
- Racial, ethnic and tribal disproportionality and disparities for children of color exist
- Children and young people can have better outcomes when they remain safely in their homes while receiving services and keep ties with their family, friends, schools and communities



What we know now



“When I started working for Child Welfare in 1994, I thought I was saving children by placing them in foster care. I believed foster care was the answer to protecting them from their “abusive and neglectful” biological families. After all these years, I now realize the harm our agency has caused, and the harm I caused as a worker with that mentality. I have now come to believe, after reading research, learning, and seeing impacts of our work, **children really do best with their biological families whenever possible.**”

-Kim Keller, Child Welfare Permanency Program Manager

Transforming the System



What is Family Preservation?



An approach to equitably serving families and children in their homes and communities, instead of foster care.

Why it matters



The first time CPS came to her home, it was during one of her children's birthday parties in their family home. She was heartbroken when her family was separated, her occasional substance use quickly became out of control. **She recalls how depressing the silent home was with her kids gone.** Things quickly spiraled from living in her car to living on the streets.
– Interview with a Parent involved with Child Welfare

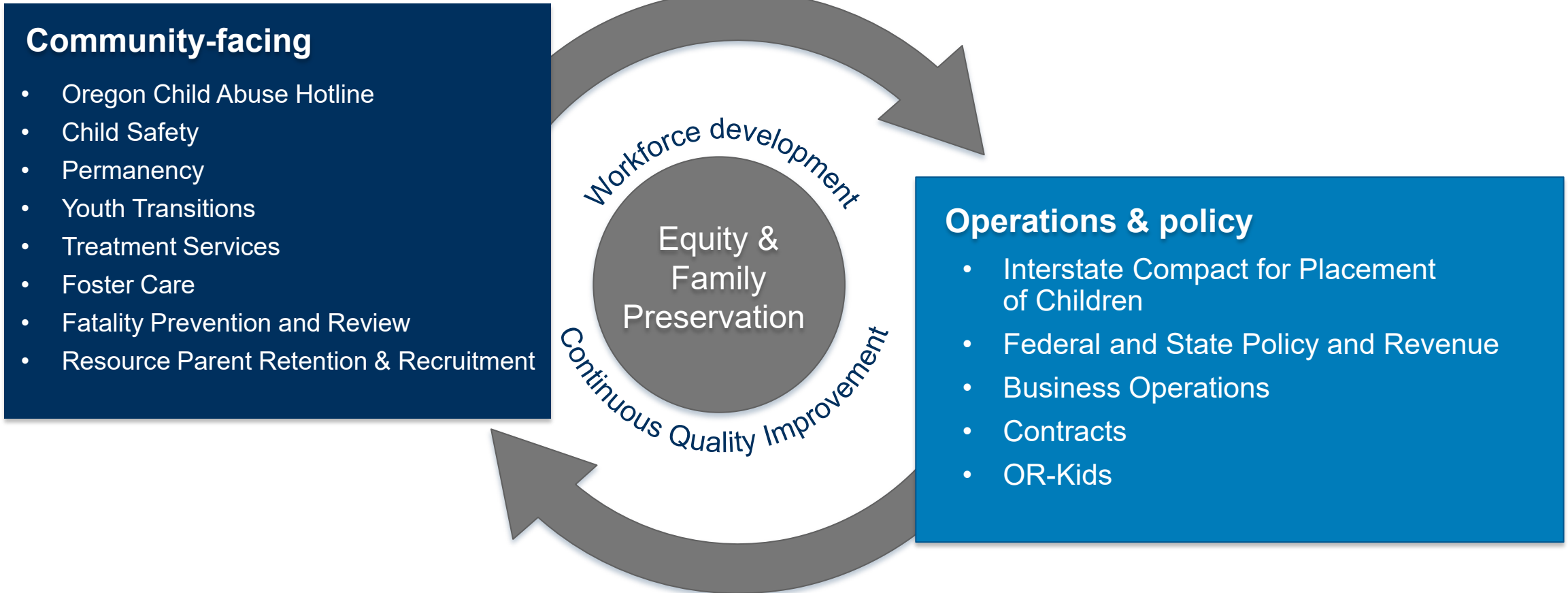
“Had my sons and I been **offered treatment together as a prevention** service, my family would not have been torn apart and my oldest son would not have left our lives for 7 years causing an irreparable tear in our family unit that exists today - in my children's 20's.”
– Sara Clement, Peer Parent Mentor Supervisor, Clackamas County

Why it matters

When children grow up in foster care, they are more likely to experience:

- Reduced networks of support
- Social exclusion
- Poor educational outcomes
- Unemployment
- Homelessness
- Financial difficulties
- Behavior problems
- Mental illness
- Substance use disorders
- Criminal justice system involvement

Child Welfare Division Areas of Work



Federal Funding Shift Toward Prevention

Federal Title IV-E Funding

Title IV-E Waiver

Family First Prevention
Services Act

Family First Prevention Services Act

- Signed into law in 2018
- Landmark legislation sponsored by Senator Wyden
- Dramatically alters federal funding for child welfare
- Title IV-E funds can be used for evidence-based prevention services
- Provides the legislative foundation for states to:
 - Reorient their child welfare systems around prevention and family
 - Increase quality family-based placements for children and youth who enter foster care
 - Right size congregate care to create an effective continuum to meet needs

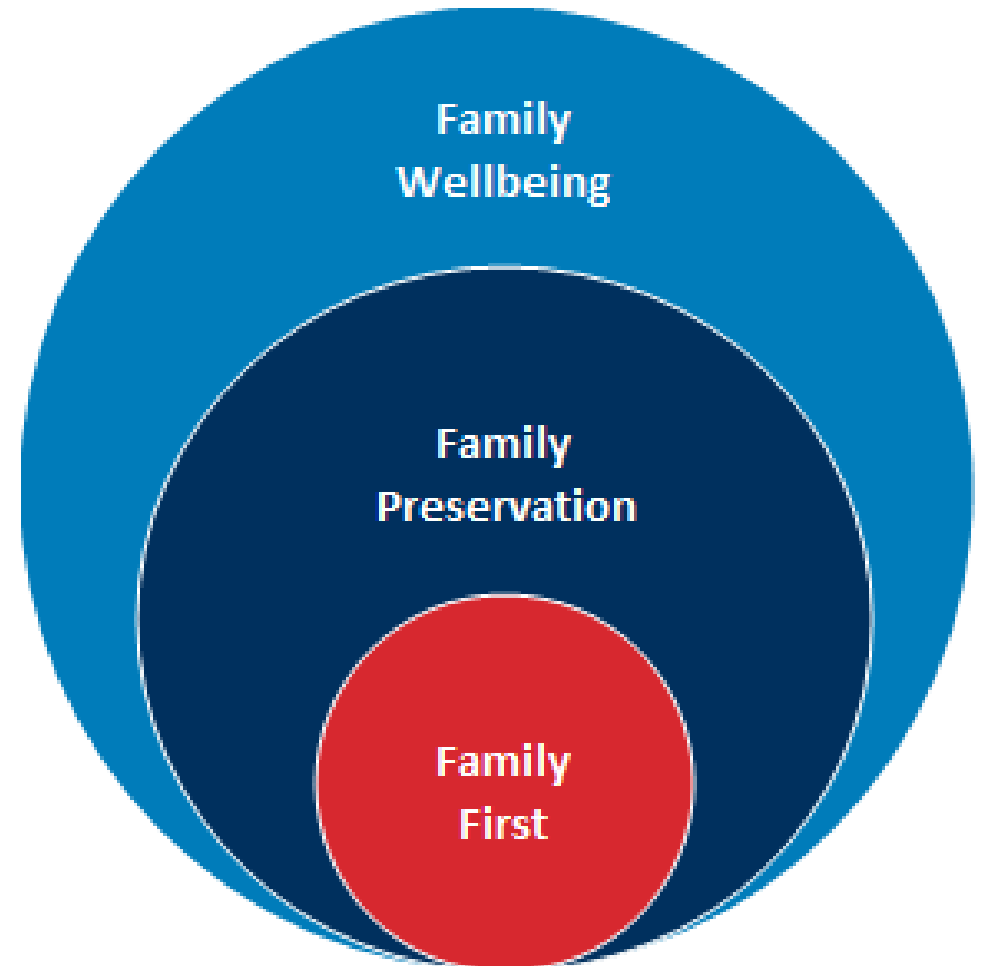
Laying the foundation for Family Preservation

Use Title IV-E funds for prevention services for families of children at risk of placement in foster care and pregnant or parenting foster youth.

- Funds for kinship navigator programs to support kin caregivers with or without involvement in the child welfare system.

Prevention plan:

- Functional Family Therapy
- Parent Child Interaction Therapy
- Parents As Teachers
- Motivational Interviewing

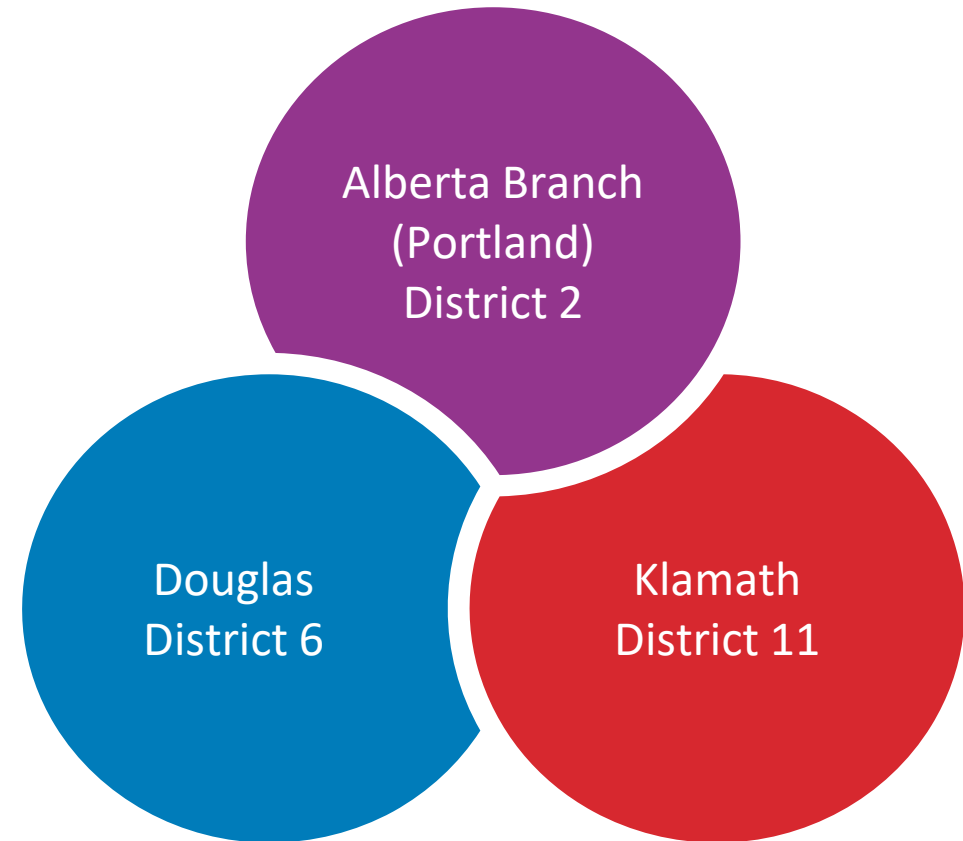


Strengthening, Preserving & Reunifying Families (SPRF) Program

- Created reduce the trauma to children who are removed from their families of origin by providing front-end interventions to maintain children in their homes and back-end services to support reunification
- Services provided are:
 - Culturally competent
 - Evidence-based or evidence informed
 - Client-centered
 - Family focused
- When the Title IV-E Waiver ended, the Oregon Legislature continued funding for the program

Three Family Preservation demonstration sites

Child Welfare and Self Sufficiency staff are working together with community partners to support families and provide them with resources to meet their needs and allow their children to remain safely at home with them.



Focus on family engagement

- Developing shared values around family preservation
- Co-designing the approach with families and communities
- Working with families on both economic and change support
- Facilitating Family Meetings early and often
- Making decisions that are transparent and inclusive
- Providing staff with more tools, resources and support to keep families together

Investments in changing our practice

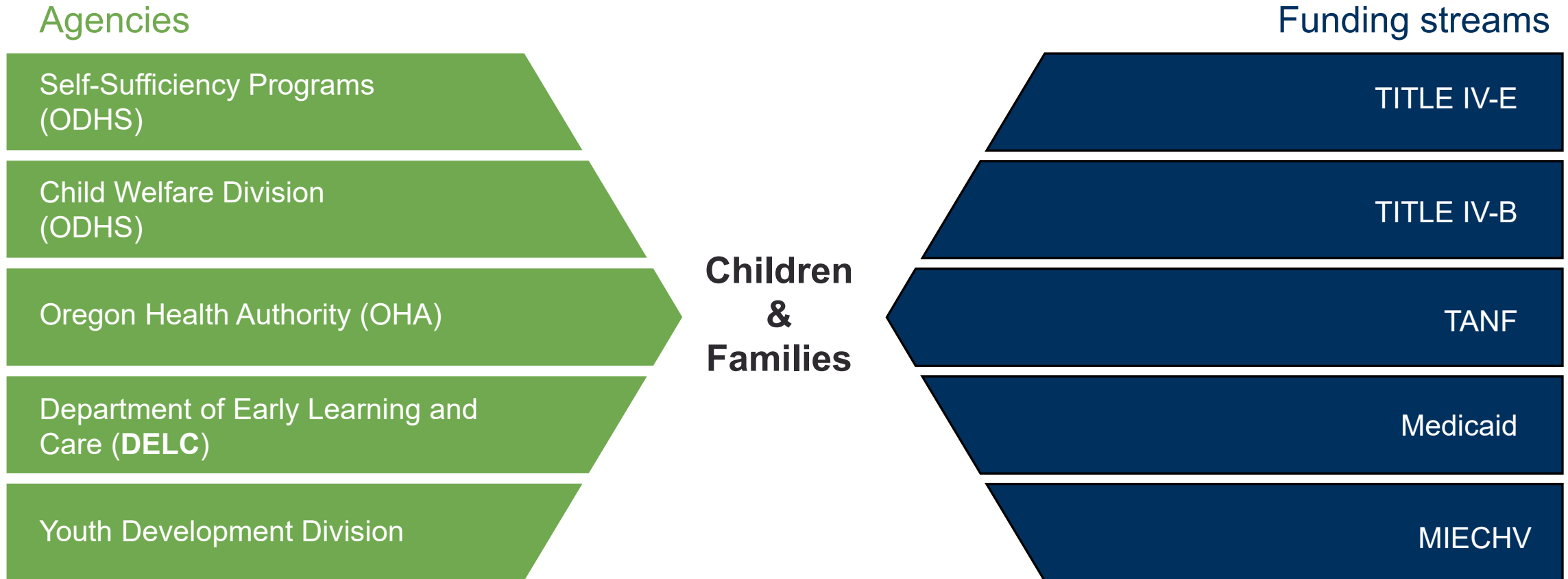
Investments in Practice Change:

- Policy Option Package 2021-2023 – Designing the Family Preservation Practice Model

Investments in Community Based Prevention Services:

- Family First Prevention Services Act – Federally Approved Evidence Based Practices
- Senate Bill 1/Senate Bill 4 – Community Specific and Culturally Specific Services

Aligning agencies and funding



Connection Between Concrete Economic Supports & Child Welfare Involvement

The Hard News:

- Family income is the greatest predictor of maltreatment & child welfare entry
- Families living below the poverty line are over 40x more likely to enter child welfare than families with median incomes.
- Difficulty finding childcare was a stronger predictor of maternal neglect than almost any other factor (including mental health, severity of drug use, history of abuse as a child & use of public assistance)
- A \$1.00 increase in the price of gas is associated with an additional 642 maltreatment referrals per 100,000 children

The Good News:

- Receiving any concrete support reduced the odds of a subsequent maltreatment report by nearly 17%
- Children of families involved with child welfare receiving a supportive housing program (housing voucher + case management) experienced:
 - Fewer removals
 - Lower prevalence of substantiated maltreatment
 - Increased reunification

Focusing on concrete supports

- **We start with the assumption that all families want the best for their children and that if they were able to provide the best for their children, they would.** (e.g., gas cards, rent, bills, SNAP, WIC, connections to childcare & early childhood education).
- **When a family identifies a need, meet that need** – so they can then focus on change.
- Think about how we **identify and address poverty-related neglect** differently than current practice.



We're not doing this alone



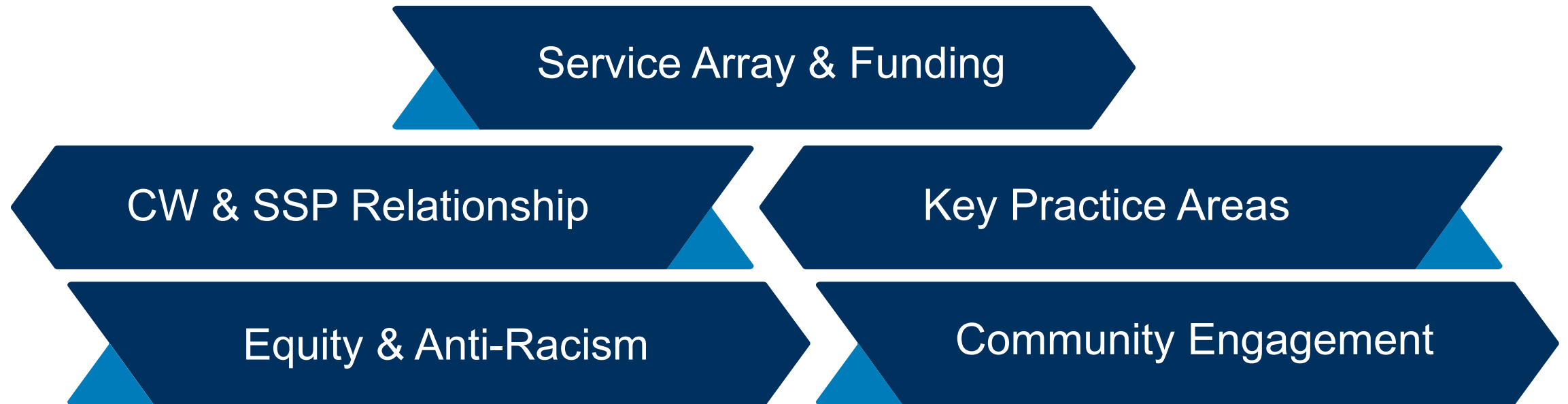
Examples:

Morrison Parent Mentor Program

Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries

Oregon Attorney General's Sexual Assault Task Force (SATF)

Foundational components



Family Preservation Desired Outcomes

- Decrease foster care
- Decrease re-abuse
- Decrease system dependence
- Increase healing from trauma
- Increase community capacity to support families
- Increase culturally specific services
- Increase creativity to meet families' needs
- Increase partnerships with families & communities



Continuing the Momentum



Closing



“A relationship of love and trust between parents and their children has been built through their entire life. No system, agency, program, or resource family will know a child like their own parents.”

- Justin Powers, Peer Parent Mentor



Questions?
