



Presentation to the House Committee
on Early Childhood and Human Services

Child Welfare Division

Program Overview and Agency Bills

Aprille Flint-Gerner, MSW, Child Welfare Director

Lacey Andreson, MSW, Child Welfare Deputy Director

Oregon Department of Human Services

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Agenda

- I. **Child Welfare Division overview**
- II. Key agency bills
- III. Questions

Child Welfare Division



Child Welfare Vision for Transformation

All children deserve to experience safe, stable, healthy lives and grow up in the care of their loving family and community

- Focus on racial equity and anti-racism
- Created through collaborative discussions with our workforce, community partners and Oregon Tribes

The spirit of what we believe the child welfare system can and should be in Oregon.



The Vision's three guiding principles

1. Supporting families and promoting prevention



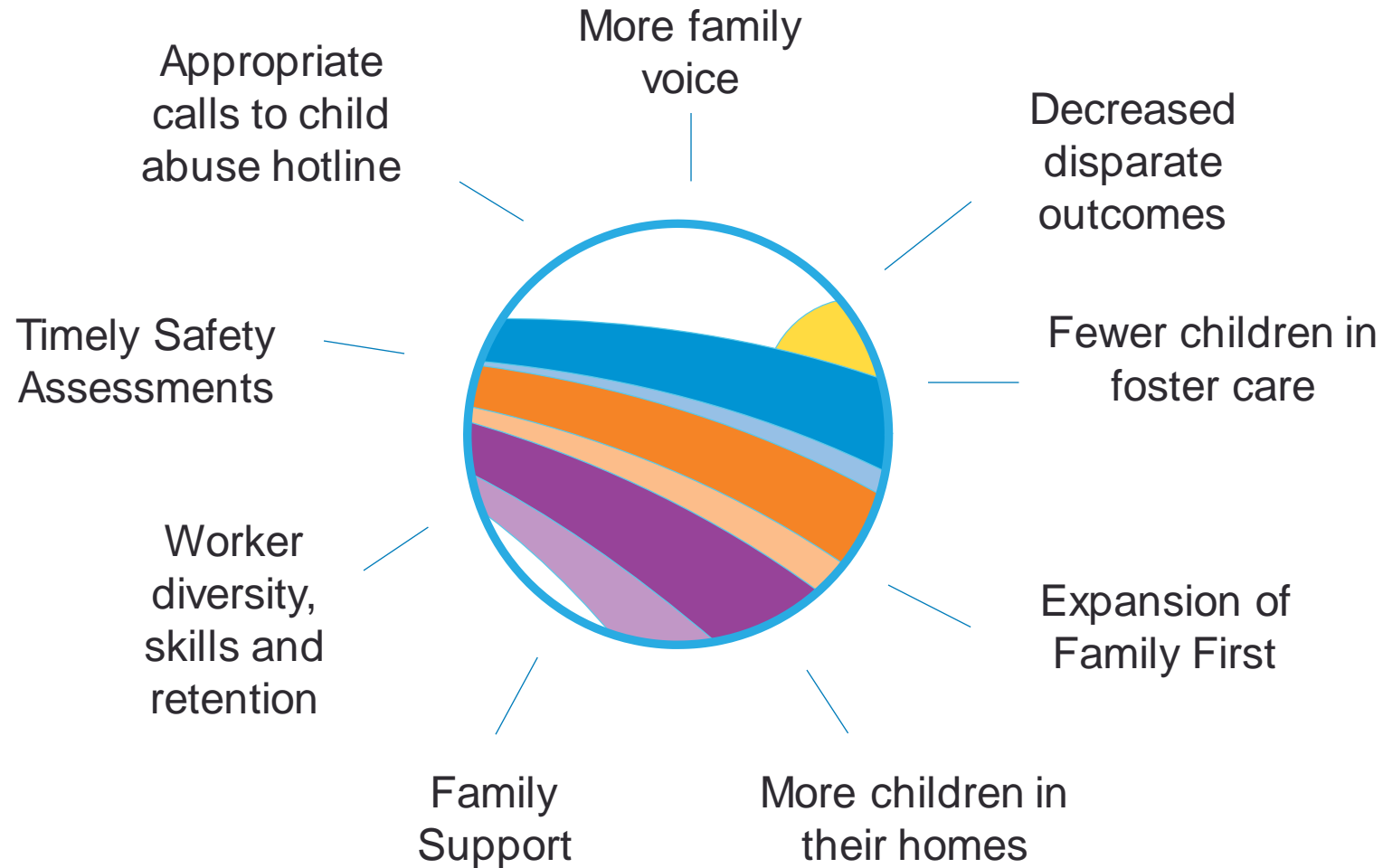
2. Enhancing our staff and infrastructure



3. Enhancing the structure of our system by using data with continuous quality improvement

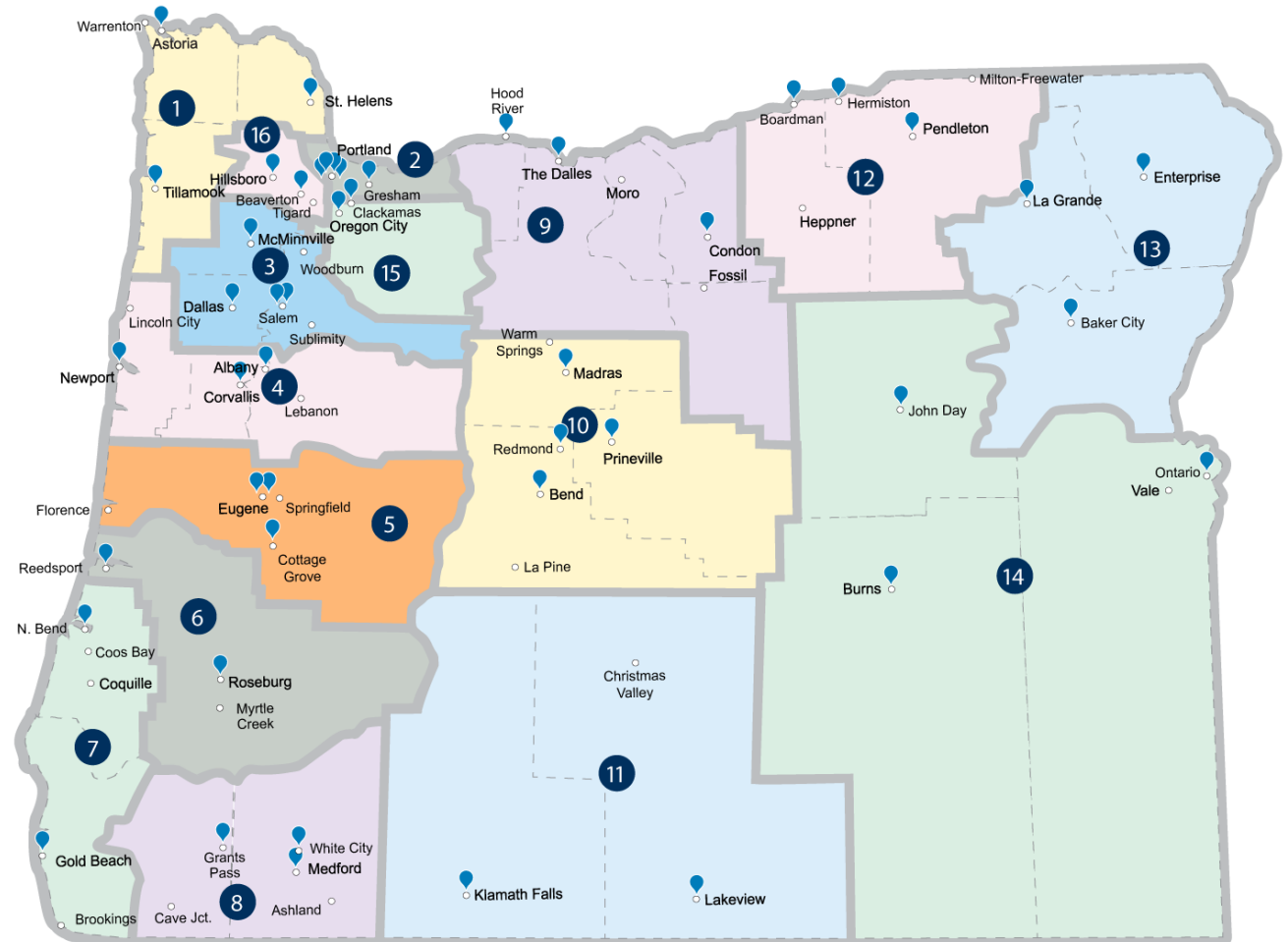


Vision for Transformation impacts and outcomes



Where we serve

- **3,403 positions** from the 2021-23 Legislatively Approved Budget
- **74 offices** including central, district, branch, satellite, and family time locations



Child Welfare Division areas of work

Community-facing

- Oregon Child Abuse Hotline
- Child Safety
- Permanency
- Youth Transitions
- Treatment Services
- Foster Care
- Fatality Prevention and Review
- Resource Parent Retention & Recruitment
- Health and Wellness



Operations and policy

- Interstate Compact for Placement of Children
- Federal and State Policy and Revenue
- Business Operations
- Contracts
- OR-Kids

Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH)

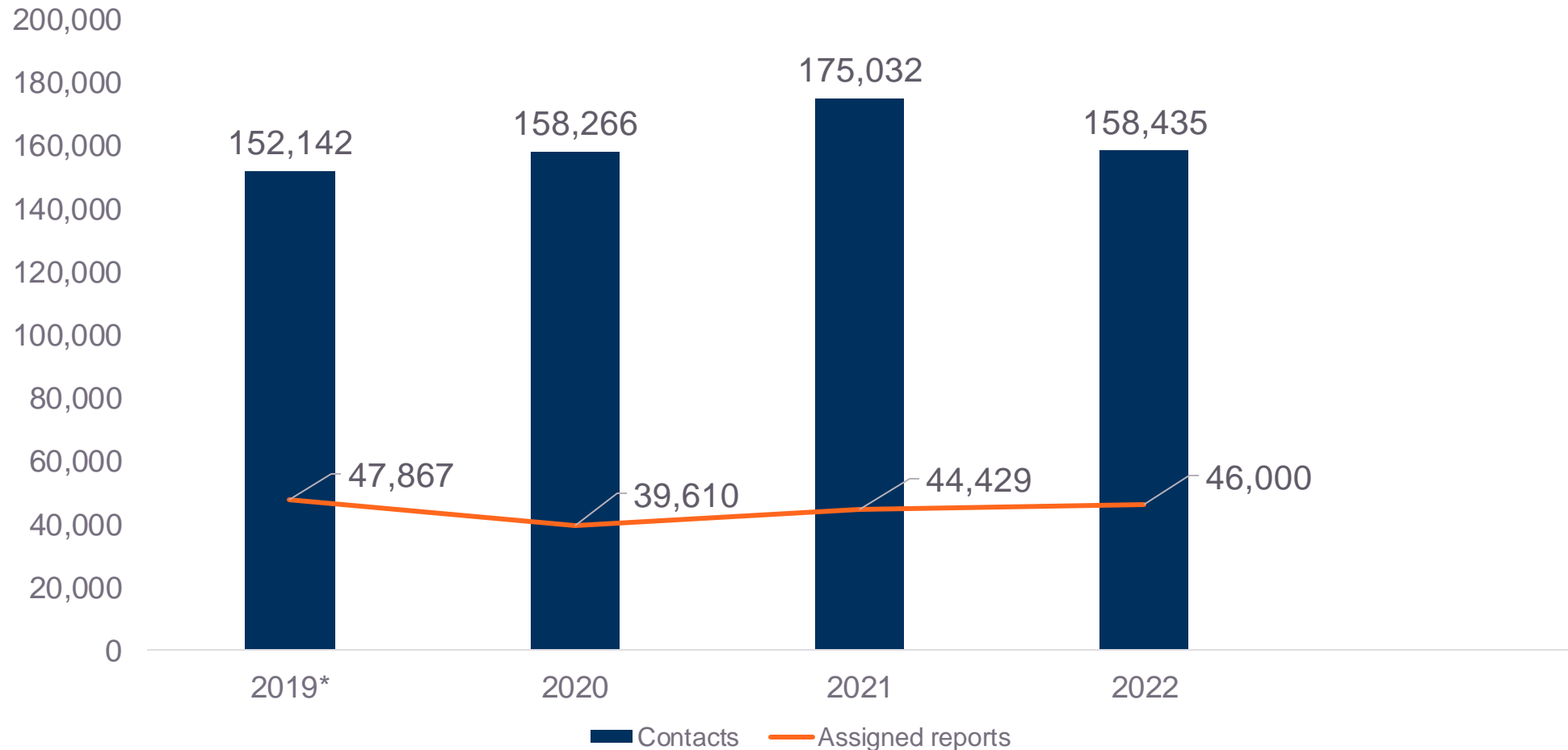
A 24-hour reporting system available to the public

Priorities:

- Safety
- Consistency
- Customer Service



ORCAH contacts and assigned screening reports by year: 2019* to 2022



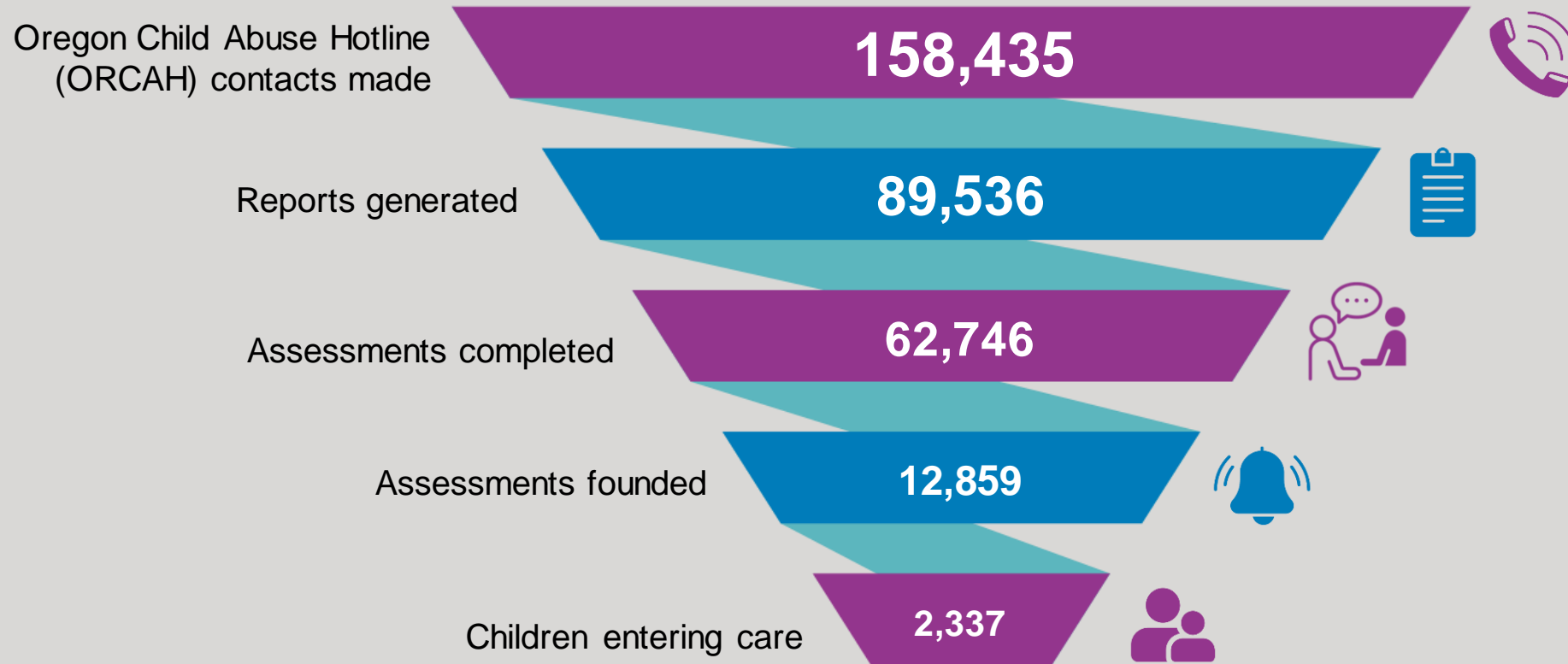
*Contact data is not available for the months preceding the full centralization of the Oregon Child Abuse Hotline. 2019 Contact data is only available for April-December 2019. Screening Report data is available, and shown, for the full year

Child Safety

Protecting children
and supporting families



Child Protective Services by the numbers: 2022

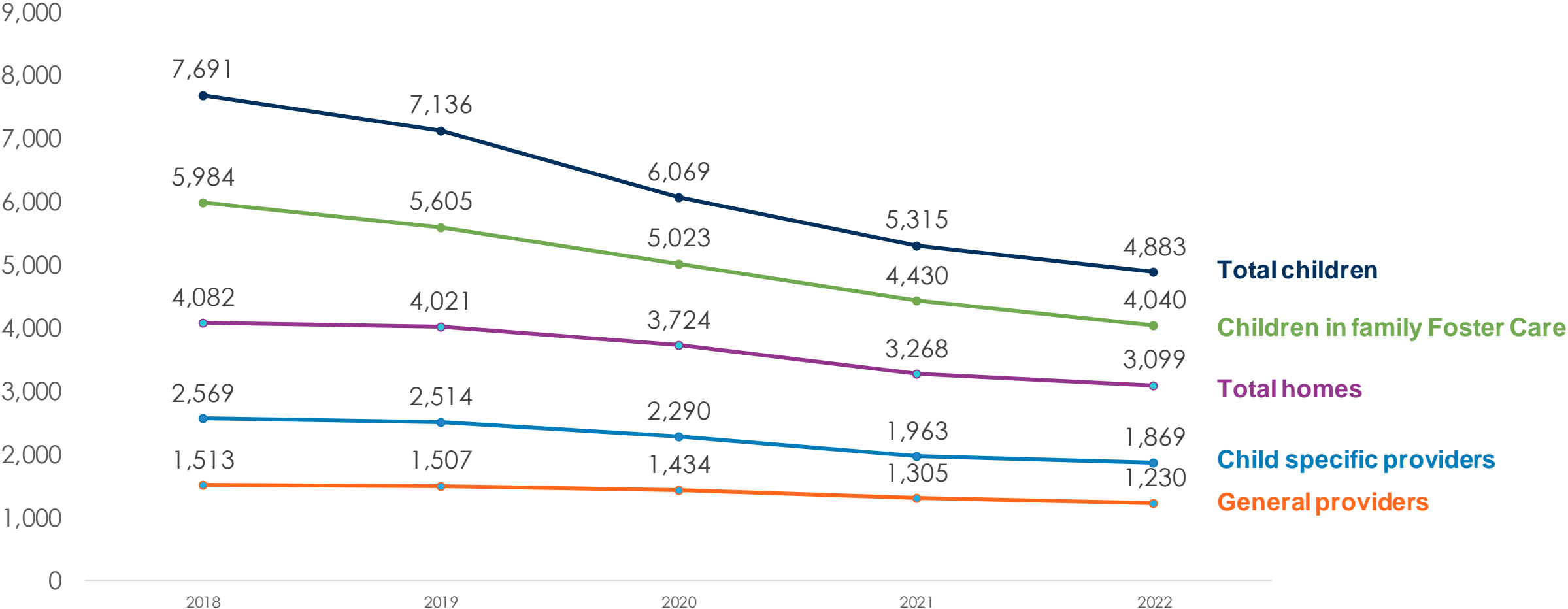


Foster Care Program

Retaining, recruiting,
certifying and supporting
resource families



Number and type of resource families in relation to the number of children in care

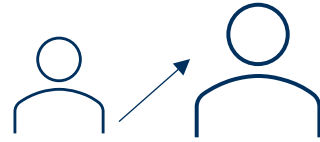
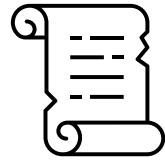


Permanency Program

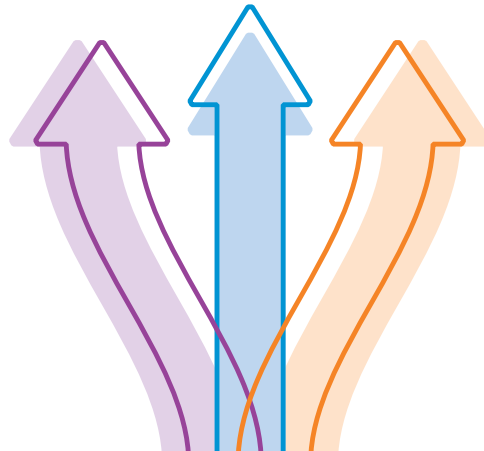
Working to achieve timely permanency for children and families



Permanency



Adoption | Guardianship | Youth Transition Services



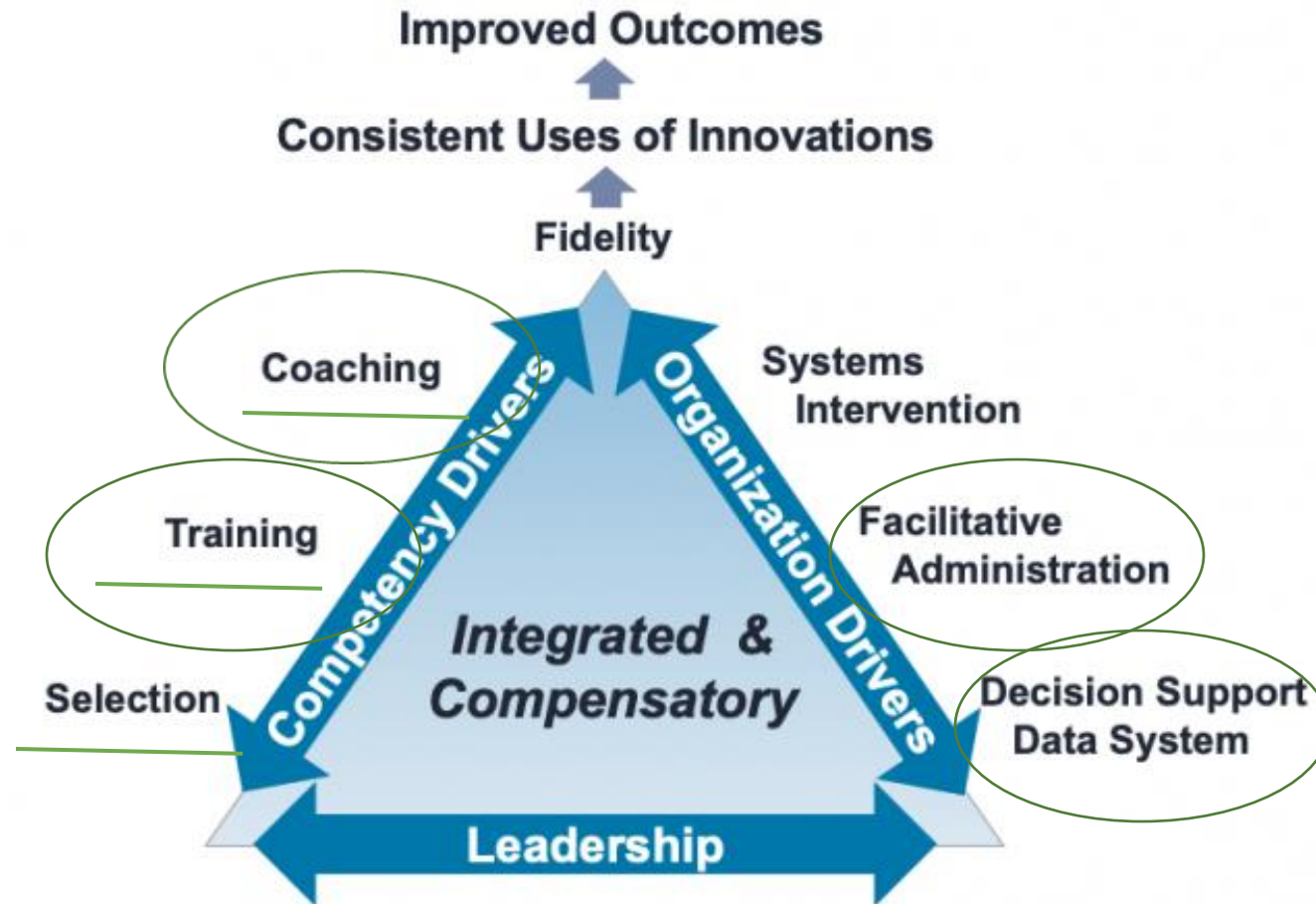
Engagement | Adoption and Guardianship Assistance | Facilitation

System Transformation

- Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI)
- Equity, Training, and Workforce Development
- Implementation drivers



System transformation



2021-23 accomplishments



 **93.7%**
of ORCAH calls answered
in **less than five minutes**

 **17%**
decrease in open safety
assessments


 Improvement of timely
case plans





 Hiring and promotions
continue to outpace
separations for
caseworkers

 Working with
Caseload Ratio
Standards

 Development and
implementation of
Respite Program



 Creation of data
tools: Federal
Performance
Dashboard and
Caseload dashboard

 Launch of CQI and
data team

Agenda

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Child Welfare Division



Senate Bill 202:

Voluntary placement agreements

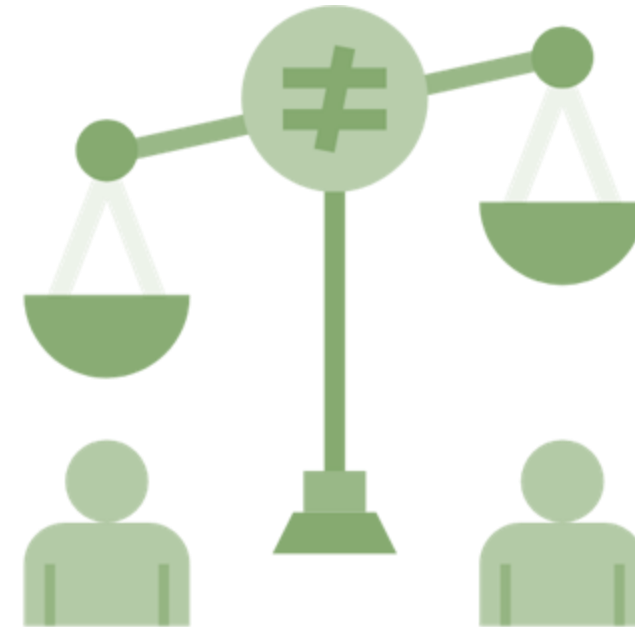
Rights equity for young adults in care

- Young adults in foster care deserve the same rights as other young adults.



Risk: Disparity in rights for young adults in care

- Young adults ages 18 to 21 must remain wards of the court in order to receive services in foster care, including services offered through ILP, but remaining a ward of the court means that a young adult has limited rights. For example, wards of the court cannot:
 - Sign for their own driver's license
 - Travel out of state without court permission
 - Choose to get married
 - Join the armed forces
- Their parents also continue to have authority to receive all legally discovered documents.



Solution:

Allow additional voluntary placement agreements

- Young adults must remain in care to receive the benefits of extended support in a resource home or to receive an independent living subsidy.
- For many of these young adults it makes sense to receive these benefits by remaining in care through a **voluntary placement agreement**.
- In Oregon, statute prevents voluntary placement agreement from extending beyond age 18. ODHS is requesting that [ORS 418.312](#) be amended to allow young adults to remain in foster care up to age 21, allowing older youth to participate in programs and access services like the ILP while still ensuring their appropriate rights as adults.

Senate Bill 209: Statutory protection of SOGIE information

Supporting the well-being of children in care

- All children deserve to grow up in safe and supportive family structures that affirm their identities.
- When we make sure that children in ODHS' care receive culturally appropriate, affirming services, we support their well-being now and over the long-term.



Risks: Issues of safety and accuracy

- Under the existing law, a judge can allow the disclosure of the sexual orientation and gender identity/expression (SOGIE) information of children in ODHS' care.
- The possibility of having their SOGIE information disclosed can **undermine a child's sense of emotional and physical safety.**
- The potential for disclosure may be contributing to **data inaccuracy** in Oregon: Based on national data, we would expect to see much higher rates of children in care identifying as LGBTQIA2S+.
- Without accurate SOGIE data, ODHS is hindered in its ability to secure **appropriate services and affirming placements for youth who identify as LGBTQIA2S+.**

Solution: Limiting SOGIE information disclosure

- **SB 209** would allow ODHS to keep SOGIE information confidential for children in custody.
- This information would not be subject to ODHS' discovery obligations in a juvenile dependency or termination of parental rights (TPR) proceeding.
- By supporting the collection of accurate SOGIE data, the bill would strengthening ODHS' ability to serve children and families through **data-informed decisions**.



Senate Bill 208:

Termination of guardianship

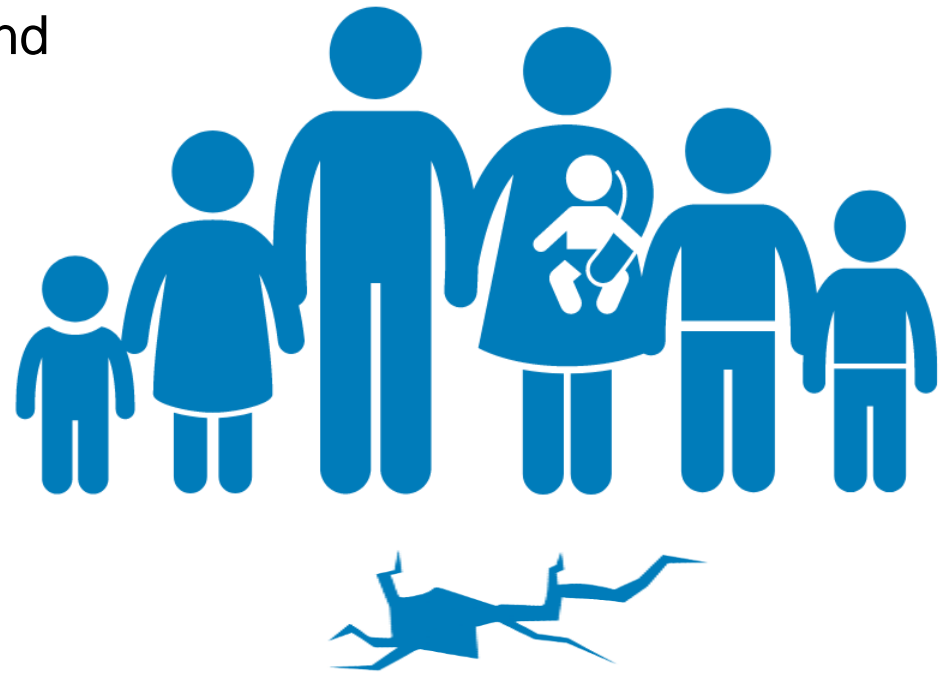
Supporting stable placements for children

- Stability in a child's family situation is important for their **well-being and sense of safety.**
- One way we can support stable placements for children is by ensuring that Oregon law clearly defines the conditions under which juvenile courts can end legal guardianships.



Risk: Undermining children's placement stability

- A guardianship can be ended by a juvenile court under [ORS 419B.368](#). However, a [2019 court case](#) established that a guardianship can also come to an end once the court no longer has jurisdiction over the child.
- For example, if a court gains jurisdiction over a child due to safety threats at home, its jurisdiction may end once those safety threats no longer exist.
- This creates the potential for **a child to be uprooted from a stable guardianship arrangement** even when it's in their best interest to remain in their guardian's care.



Solution: Clarify the law to prevent unwarranted placement disruptions

- Senate Bill 208 would change Oregon Revised Statutes to clarify that when a durable or permanent guardianship is established, it can only be terminated if the court vacates it under [ORS 419B.368](#) or the child becomes 21 years of age.
- This would also mean that the guardianship can only be vacated if the court determines it's in the child's best interest, the parent is presently able and willing to adequately care for them, and the circumstances that gave rise to the child's removal from the home have been ameliorated.



Senate Bill 210: Mandatory child abuse reporting

Ensuring statutory alignment

- ODHS employees are **mandatory reporters of child abuse** under [ORS 419B.010](#).
- Under [ORS 411.320](#), the records of applicants for or recipients of public benefits are confidential except for purposes related to the administration of those programs.



Risk:

Agency liability and conflicting statutory requirements

- Together, ORS 419B.010 and 411.320 result in contradictory requirements for ODHS employees who are required to report abuse yet also to hold confidentiality.
- Conflicts in statute create the risk of personal and agency liability while supporting subjectivity in the application and practice of mandatory reporting among staff.



Solution:

Exception to confidentiality for abuse reporting

- To resolve the contradictions, SB 210 establishes that **child abuse reporting is an exception to the confidentiality laws** protecting public assistance client files.
- ODHS would maintain an exclusion for instances in which domestic violence is present and survivor confidentiality is permitted.



Senate Bill 231: Electronic reporting of child abuse

Improving systems to increase child safety

- **Oregon Child Abuse Hotline (ORCAH)** launched in April 2019 as a telephone-only reporting system.
- ORCAH has matured since its launch and now seeks to include an **electronic reporting option**, a move being made in a growing number of states.

Risks: Delayed or duplicated reports of abuse

- Existing statute accounts for a telephone hotline but does not clearly recognize an electronic reporting option.
- Current statute could be interpreted to mean that a mandatory reporter has not fulfilled requirements under the law in cases where they submit an electronic report without a corresponding phone call to the hotline.
- Mandatory reporters in Oregon have repeatedly requested an electronic option – particularly teachers, who may need to make reports during class time and require a faster and more discreet method.



ORCAH
continues to receive
high call volumes
(158,435 in 2022).

Less than half of
all calls are about
abuse or neglect.

Solution: Statutory recognition of electronic reporting

- ODHS recommends a modification to [ORS 419B.015](#) that would make the law explicitly support the use of electronic reports from mandatory reporters.
- This LC would not change the availability of reporting by phone.
- This concept would also remove the “designee” portion of the law which discusses a role that no longer exists given the hotline and electronic reporting ability.





Questions?
