

# Strengthening Oregon's response to child abuse

## LEGISLATIVE CONCEPT



Oregon can improve our collective response to children who are possible victims of child abuse and neglect.

### *We can do more.*

- Create stable funding streams for child abuse cases and close the service gap for victims of abuse
- Bring Oregon into compliance with Karly's Law
- Improve Oregon's response to victims of child abuse by centering equity, inclusiveness and diversity in investments to meet immediate needs

In the 2024 Legislative Session, we can make changes to immediately improve our response for victims of child abuse and neglect.



### **Create a permanent fund from the legislature (\$7M)**

- Increase the legislature's direct investment from \$6M to \$7M per biennium, using a funding mechanism that creates permanency for sessions to come, and therefore, predictability for Child Advocacy Centers.

This funding stream is proven to have support from the Legislature – In 2021, the legislature invested \$6M in CACs to increase access to critical services.

In 2023, the DOJ requested \$6M (General Fund) for Child Advocacy Centers. The funding passed with bipartisan support.



### **Create a one-time competitive grant fund for CACs (\$27M)**

There is an opportunity to support innovation and effective best practices in child abuse response through the development of a competitive grant program housed within the Oregon Department of Justice.

- DOJ will establish rules for the grant application process:
  - Preference given to CACs in underserved communities and CAC deserts
  - Preference given for Behavioral and Mental Health services provided for confirmed victims of abuse.
  - Preference given to marginalized and high-risk children living in rural and underserved areas who have a harder time accessing intervention and medical services for child abuse. Children in communities of color and low-income communities are more likely to be victims of child abuse, and more likely to be left behind by the system.

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- Preference given to CACs that serve and are growing to serve more children from historically marginalized and underserved communities
- CACs must directly apply for competitive grants
- Funds can be used to expand access to DMPs
- Must improve responses times in intervening with children at moment of critical incident to receive funds.
- Focus for grants must be on expanding services and increasing number of children served.
- Preference for services provided to drug endangered and trafficked children. Funds to provide for C.A.C.'s to become acknowledged through the National Childrens Alliance.

The goal of the grant program is to fill the gaps CACs are experiencing and address the immediate crisis at hand. The one-time grant program allows the Legislature time to work with advocates, providers, agencies and law enforcement to create long-term, equitable, inclusive, evidence-based, sustainable solutions.



### **Direct DOJ to create a workgroup after session that considers best practices for referral and to study barriers to children receiving services and report to legislature**

- Direct DOJ to study best practices of MDTs and the referral process and report to the legislature by September 2024:
  - Complete and report on a comprehensive audit of Oregon's compliance with Karly's Law
    - ID compliance rate for medical assessments conducted within 48 hours
    - Compile demographic data of children served
    - ID barriers to compliance
    - Propose solutions to ensure compliance
    - Publish compliance rate on a quarterly basis
  - Study optimal funding rate for Child Advocacy Centers
  - Identify and propose solutions and ways to expand access to MDTs outside of regular office hours
  - Identify barriers to referral and solutions to increase referrals to child advocacy centers and close referral gap

Asking for a study is the best way to accomplish several key goals – working toward a long-term solution and proposing legislation with bipartisan and bicameral support. By limiting the scope of the study and avoiding a task force, we can limit bureaucratic barriers, keep costs low and get answers fast. Oregon's children cannot wait.