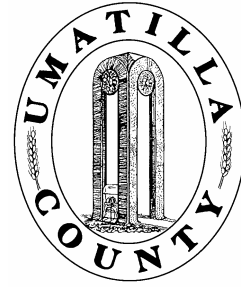


Umatilla County

Department of Health and Human Services



Bobby Spencer
CARE Specialist
541-379-5807
FAX 541-278-6388
bobby.spencer@umatillacounty.gov

3/21/2025

Good Morning Committee Members,

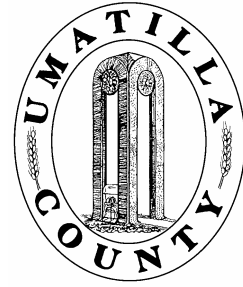
My name is Bobby Spencer, I am a CARE Specialist with Umatilla County CARE Program. I have been employed with Umatilla County for the last twenty years. I began my career with Umatilla County Juvenile Department (then called Youth Services) as a Juvenile Probation Counselor. Thirteen years ago, I was given the opportunity to move into the CARE Program as the second CARE specialist with my now supervisor Jenni Galloway to expand the program to cover several more towns and schools throughout Umatilla County.

As I am sure you will hear, the CARE Program assists families and youth to connect with social services. While this is the basis of what we do, we often do so much more. In my capacity as a CARE Specialist I have had the privilege of assisting families with everything from small mundane matters such as, making appointments for counseling and well-child checks, gathering documents for energy and housing appointments, and transporting to appointments of all types, but also with more intense services such as attending Child Protective Services interviews so that children would have a familiar face for comfort, attending school meetings to assist families feeling heard in their concerns while also supporting schools in their policy and procedure, and attending Guardian Care interviews with youth being forensically interviewed after abuse. In addition to supporting families, we also support schools through stabilizing families, connecting students with outside support for physical and emotional health, and promoting attendance by addressing truancy concerns and removing barriers for school attendance. School attendance has always been a direct focus for the CARE Program. Addressing truancy directly with schools, families, and students in a partnership promotes youth returning to school and attending regularly.

I have recently been assisting a Native American family new to Umatilla County. The housing situation they moved into did not work out and the family, a grandmother and her two grandchildren, became homeless after only a few months. I assisted the grandmother in filling out applications with Community Action Program of Eastern and Central Oregon (CAPECO) which holds our homeless funds as well as the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). I brought her to numerous appointments with each agency. Attending all appointments with her allowed me to understand exactly the requirements for each program, assist her in gathering all the needed information and documents for each program, as well as relaying information back to the agencies. Working together we were able to secure funds from a private donor, CTUIR emergency funds, Yellowhawk (CTUIR Medical and Mental Health Provider), and the CARE Program to have the family stay in a hotel and a trailer for most of November and December. She was able to

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find a home and CAPECO was able to pay her deposit and rent by the end of December. In coordinating with the school and the Department of Human Services, we were able to provide the family with gifts over Christmas as well. While I was assisting in coordinating with the agencies, I was also in communication with both an elementary and middle school the children were attending. Keeping school personnel informed while we worked through the stressful situations of homelessness were instrumental in supporting the children in their day to day of attending class and assisting with their emotional and mental health. I am still in communication with each of these agencies to continue to support the family in stability, securing mental and physical health appointments, and completing all of the tasks assigned by the various agencies to fulfill their funding requirements.

This is a short snapshot of the work and support the CARE Program is able to provide to families throughout Umatilla County. Over the years, I have seen the CARE Program provide an effusive amount of support, navigation, and assistance to so many families that may have fallen through the cracks otherwise. We are one of the few agencies that does not have a myriad of requirements to qualify for assistance. If a person has a child school age or younger in their care and reside in Umatilla County, we are able to work with the family. I have worked with grandparents, foster care parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, and even families simply having a non-relative child reside with them when biological parent care was not available or appropriate.

The simplicity of our program is astounding. We are able to meet a family exactly where they are, doing home visits, office visits, and school visits. I have assessed families at McDonalds, the public library, parks, and even in my car during the parents thirty-minute lunch break. We do an initial assessment to determine needs while also providing open ended questions that allow connections to form naturally with the family.

In closing, I would like to say that the CARE Program has become my life's work and I thank you for taking the time to read this and your consideration to provide state support for this program. If you have further questions, please contact me at 541-379-5807 or bobby.spencer@umatillacounty.gov.

Thank you,

Bobby Spencer
CARE Specialist
Umatilla County