

crb network news

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newsletter of the citizen review board

Photo: Fernando Silveira

Online training modules now part of volunteer orientation

As all of us at the Citizen Review Board know, 16 hours of orientation training are required for potential volunteers to become a CRB board member. For the last 30 years, this training has been delivered in-person over two days.

While feedback on the training has always been very positive, we consistently hear from volunteers that the days are very long, particularly when coupled with a lengthy travel time. To address this issue, the CRB has developed four hours of orientation training modules that prospective volunteers can complete online. The modules cover topics including the history of the CRB, federal and state law, CRB findings, questioning strategies, and board demeanor at reviews.

As of February, all prospective volunteers will be required to view the

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LGBTQ youth in Los Angeles foster care system face unique challenges and hardships, new study shows

Nearly one in five youths ages 12 to 21 in Los Angeles County's foster care system identify themselves as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or questioning), according to a recently-released landmark study.

The report also finds that LGBTQ youth in Los Angeles are twice as likely to report poor treatment in care, are more likely to live in group homes, and have had more foster care placements than their non-LGBTQ counterparts.

["Sexual and Gender Minority Youth in Los Angeles Foster Care: Assessing Disproportionality and Disparities"](#) was commissioned by the Los Angeles LGBT Center and co-

authored by UCLA's Williams Institute, and the Holarchy Consulting firm.

"We found LGBTQ youth in foster care share many similarities in experiences with non-LGBTQ youth, yet also face unique system barriers to placement in permanent homes, such as being placed in group homes and experiencing homelessness at higher rates," said Bianca D.M. Wilson of the Williams Institute in a press release.

Data for the study was collected through the Los Angeles Foster Youth Survey, which entailed telephone interviews with 786 randomly-sampled youth ages 12 to 21 living in foster care in Los Angeles County.

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Relief Nursery model boosts families through intervention

The Oregon Legislature enacted in 2011 Senate Bill 964, which required the Department of Human Services (DHS) and its county partners to implement Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families (SPRF) programs statewide.

(Read CRB Field Manager Suzanne Callahan's excellent article on SPRF in the [December 2014 CRB newsletter](#).)

SPRF requires DHS to enter into contracts with county and community partners to coordinate an array of specific services.

Other services and interventions are to be implemented as programs evolve, research develops and

funding becomes available. Many counties in Oregon were able to build upon existing collaborations within their communities using the **Relief Nursery** model.

A Relief Nursery is a nationally recognized model proven to strengthen families. It is a unique private/public venture with leadership from local businesses and other community partners. Relief Nurseries are non-profit child abuse and neglect-prevention programs proven to strengthen high-risk families and keep young children safe. Funded by a unique blend of public and private partnerships, Relief Nurseries, prevent the cycle of child abuse and neglect by early intervention that focuses on building successful and resilient children, strengthening parents, and preserving families. They help stop the cycle of child abuse and neglect with a blend of therapeutic early-childhood services and holistic family supports.

The Relief Nursery is not a standardized government funded program, such as Head Start and Early Head Start programs that serve low-income children and their families. The primary characteristics of Relief Nurseries are that programs demonstrate respect and flexibility in meeting a family's immediate needs as well as their long-term goals. There are therapeutic early-childhood classrooms for children ages 0 to 6 that are staffed by more than dou-

ble the state-required number of adults, with two teachers and two volunteers for each group of eight to 10 preschoolers or four to eight infants and toddlers. Interwoven services and partnerships between families, staff and other services are provided through nurturing home visiting and on site participation.

The Relief Nursery program is available to all children and families. Families who access the Relief Nursery may have one or more of the following needs: child development and parenting education; special education services for their child/ren; therapeutic support for their child/ren; positive goal setting and reaching those goals; addiction recovery; and everyday life skills and basic supports for the many stresses that may affect families, especially in communities of high poverty and low economic opportunities.

There is a statewide network of Relief Nurseries who operate through the **Oregon Association of Relief Nurseries**. Visit the OARN website by clicking [HERE](#).

In Coos County, the South Coast Family Harbor Relief Nursery evolved from the existing Family Nurturing Center and was developed concurrently with the local Early Learning Division Hub. One of the goals of the founders was to avoid duplication of existing county services while helping families with risk factors that could be effectively addressed through participation in a Relief Nursery program. Today, this program serves at-risk families with children ages 2-3 through their partnerships with a variety of regional and state education entities, health and development programs, school districts and non-profit organizations.

The Family Nurturing Center operates under the umbrella of the South Coast Family Harbor and offers services similar to those provided by the Relief Nursery. The difference is that families participating in the nurturing center program enter through a DHS referral. These could be families who are close to being reunited, families who have children in foster care and need assistance to bring them together, or families who are at risk of having their children placed in foster care.

The Family Nurturing Center is funded by federal monies saved by the state's reductions in the cost of foster care. Coos County was one of the first four counties in Oregon



Laurie Judd

CRB
Field Manager

Study: “LGBTQ foster youth some of most vulnerable in our community.”

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In the past, most of the research done on adolescent demographic characteristics and behavior was conducted via school-wide, state or national surveys; While many of these tools included questions about sexual orientation, there was no specific focus on foster care, the report authors said.

This “is the first population-based survey aimed at measuring sexual orientation and gender identity of youth in any foster care system,” according to the Williams Institute.

The study assessed the proportion of LGBTQ-identified youth in the care of the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services. About 1,400 of the 7,400 youth ages 12-21 in out-of-home care in Los Angeles in a given month – or 19% – identify as LGBTQ.

That’s almost twice the estimated percentage of youth living outside of foster care in the region who are LGBTQ, “making (the subgroup) significantly over-represented among LA foster youth. For example, U.S. population estimates of LGBT identification range from 3.4 to 7.75%,” according to the study.

The report shed light on some of the unique challenges to permanency and well being that LGBTQ youth face compared to non-LGBTQ youth. Among the key findings:

- **PLACEMENTS** – The statistical average number of placements for a LGBTQ youth was 2.85 compared to 2.43 for non-LGBTQ youth. Nearly 26% of LGBTQ youth surveyed were in group homes; only 10% of their non-LGBTQ counterparts lived in group homes.

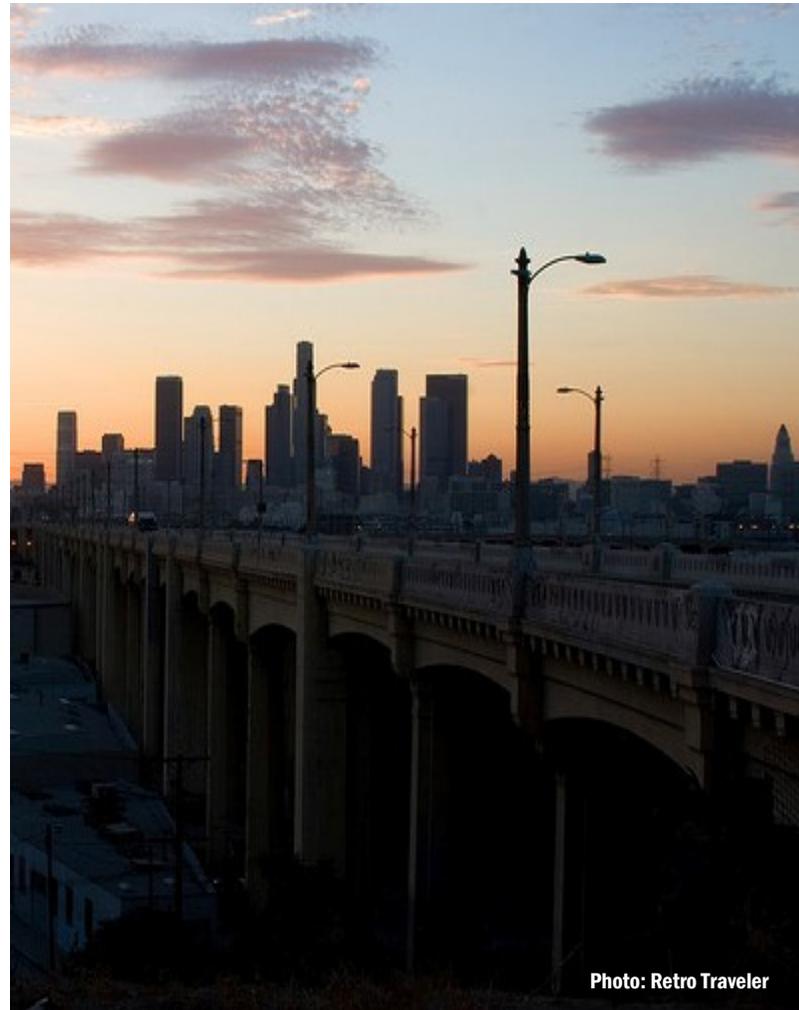
- **TREATMENT** – Asked about their treatment in foster care, 51% of LGBTQ youth reported they were treated “very well” in the system, while 13% said “not very well.” The figures were 61% and 5.8%, respectively, for non-LGBTQ youth who were surveyed.

- **HOMELESSNESS** – 21% of LGBTQ youth in foster care had been homeless at some point; the percentage was 13.9% for non-LGBTQ youth

- **HOSPITALIZATION** – 13.5% of LGBTQ youth reported being hospitalized overnight for emotional issues at some time during their stay in foster care. For non-LGBTQ, the percentage was just more than 4%.

The authors advocated for the creation of policies and procedures to integrate questions about sexual orientation, gender identity, and discriminatory experiences into existing demographic data collections, case review processes, and interview processes for case intake, service planning and transition. Sexuality and gender minority status competencies within the child welfare system workforce and among caregivers must also improve, the authors said.

Finally, more study is needed to examine details of LGBTQ youths’ lives as relates to conditions surrounding entry to care, permanency rates, and identifying resiliency factors



that allow some LGBTQ youth to thrive and transition out of foster care into permanency, the authors added.

Curt Shepard, the LGBT Center’s Director of Children, Youth and Family Services, said not properly serving LGBTQ youth in foster care from mistreatment and placement in multiple homes creates not only a social cost, but a monetary one – for medical and psychological care. Improving the experience and treatment of LGBTQ youth in child welfare could help reduce expenses such as higher rates paid for extensive group care stays, and curb instances of homelessness, psychological disorders and other issues experienced by some youth after they age out of foster care, Shepard said in a press release.

“The study validates the importance of our ongoing work to develop a new model of care for LGBTQ foster youth; they remain some of the most vulnerable, and forgotten, in our community,” said Lori L. Jean, CEO of the LGBT Center in a press release. “When finished, we hope this model will be replicated in cities around the country, because there’s no reason to believe the problems for LGBTQ foster youth are unique to Los Angeles.”

To view the full study, click [HERE](#).

Foster care trends, stats accessible via online state data set

How many children are in foster care in Oregon, or in your county? Is the number increasing or decreasing? What percentage of children have a plan of adoption? You can find this information and evaluate many other data fields, comparisons and trends with the Oregon Child Welfare Data Set (aka, Results Oriented Management or ROM).

[The Oregon Child Welfare Data Set](#) can be accessed on Oregon.gov and is a web application being administered by the Department of Human Services. The data is pulled from the OR-Kids system and updated weekly to the reporting system. The report history data dates back to children who were in care anytime after January 2006.

From the opening page you can select “reports” from the menu at the top. There is a “resources” selection that provides links to other data, a reference guide for using the site, and a glossary. A “help” selection is also available for definitions and for each page. The site is fairly user-friendly, but care must be taken to ensure that you understand what is being measured and how.

There are 11 different reports under the heading “Foster Care Reports.” They are:

- Count of Children in Foster Care by Placement Type
- Length of Stay



- Discharge Reason
- Removal Rate per 1,000
- Initial placement with relatives
- Children entering and exiting foster care
- Count of children in foster care (total served during period)
- Median length of stay at exit
- Removal reasons for children entering foster care
- Youth exiting foster care on/after turning 18
- Number of placement for children in foster care

There are two different reports under the heading “Federal Permanency Indicators.”

- Permanency in 24 months (of those entered care 24 months ago)
- No re-entry into custody (of those discharged 12 months ago)

Once you choose a report, there are three primary views at the top of the screen (for most reports): Trend Over Time, County Comparison and Other Comparison (gender, race, permanency goal, etc.). There are Toolboxes along the left side of the screen for selecting various functions, displays, filters and views. (Please note: not all views and filters are available for all reports.)

Specific reports can be printed out and/or saved as a favorite for easy reference.

The various tools and options combined with some thought and creativity can provide very interesting and useful information and queries. Is the statewide median length of stay in foster care increasing or decreasing over the past year? Is there a difference between races for median length of

See “Data,” p. 5

Modules: flexible for volunteers, more time for practical concept training

online training modules and complete the associated quizzes prior to attending the in-person orientation training, which has been reduced to 12 hours.

There are a number of benefits to this new format. Prospective volunteers will come to the in-person training already having some familiarity with the concepts that will be discussed. Online modules replace much of the lecture portion of the training, which allows the trainer and attendees to focus on application of the concepts during mock reviews. Finally, prospective volunteers can complete the online modules at their own pace in the comfort of their own home.

A special “Thank you” is owed to CRB Field Managers-Suzanne Callahan and Tina Qualls for putting in the work during the past year that made these online training modules possible.

The modules can be viewed on the CRB website or by clicking [HERE](#).

Current volunteers who view the modules and take the associated quizzes will earn credit toward their eight hours of annual training requirement. If you have any questions about the modules, please contact Christina Jagernauth, CRB Assistant Director, at Christina.Jagernauth@ojd.state.or.us or (503) 986-5941.

Relief Nursery: philosophy in Coos is wraparound care for families

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selected to implement SPRF. The Coos County Nurturing Center was developed, and services first offered, beginning in April 2013. The Nurturing Center was designed to provide Child Welfare with services that are effective in keeping children safely with their parents, reduce children's risk of future entry into the criminal justice and child welfare systems, lower the risk of intergenerational abuse, and decrease the associated costs to the economy.

The mission of the Nurturing Center is to support families in building on their strengths and developing the skills needed to remain, or move toward having, stable and attached families. The philosophy of this program is "wraparound" care for families. Families are encouraged to

assemble their own networks of relatives, friends, teachers, coaches, and social services in order to keep the family together, improve family life, and reduce their reliance on social services.

The Family Nurturing Center program in Coos County is based on the work of Stephen J. Bavolek, Ph.D, president of the North Carolina-based Family Development Resources (FDR). For the past 25 years, FDR and its Nurturing Parenting Programs have helped more than 1 million families worldwide raise healthy, caring children.

To learn more about these programs, visit www.nurturingparenting.com.

Data: exploring info can increase effectiveness of CRB reviews

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stay?

The data from October 2013 through September 2014 indicate that statewide, the median length of stay is about five months longer for African-American children compared to Caucasian children, though this is not true in all counties.

Reports can be filtered by gender and age group, and time periods can be adjusted. You can create comparisons by permanent plan, and contrast county and statewide data.

This allows for very broad or very specific data. For example, it is possible to review data on length of stay for Native American girls ages 3-5 with a plan of reunification in a specific county versus length of stay for all children in foster care statewide.

In addition to increasing understanding and awareness of key issues and trends in child welfare for system advocacy, data can help increase the effectiveness of individual CRB reviews. The chart to the right gives some examples of how data reports might be useful in determining strengths and needs with respect to various findings made by the CRB.

Take some time to explore and become familiar with the features of the Data Set. Consider bringing reports to your board for discussion and asking your field manager to bring the CRB Negative Findings report to compare with the relative strengths and needs in your county. For instance, you might find that even though you rarely make a negative finding on diligent efforts to place with a relative, your county has a relatively low percentage of children initially placed with relatives, or vice versa.

Finding 1 — efforts to prevent removal	Removal rate per 1,000 — Statewide average is about 4, but individual counties range from 1.5 to more than a third of the total. Removal reasons for children entering care — Statewide neglect has increased from 507 to 642 during the past four quarters of data.
Finding 2 — relative placement	Initial placement with relative — There is a wide range among counties on this statistic; statewide, it's about 30%.
Finding 3 — safety, health and well-being of children	Number of placements for children in foster care — In the third quarter of 2014, 12.24% of children had six or more placements statewide. Count of children in care by placement type — During the past year, almost 94% were in a family-like setting, 4.8% in group care and 1.1% were run-aways.

Keep in mind that even though the data is generated by DHS, it is impacted by factors outside of DHS such as socio-economic issues, Court of Appeals decisions, and other agencies. The data is a starting point and opportunity to develop improvements, build on strengths, collaborate, and monitor outcomes.

To explore the Oregon Child Welfare Data Set, click [HERE](#).

In the news

THE NORTHWEST

◆ Two bills were introduced at the beginning of the 2015 Oregon Legislature earlier this month that, if passed, would enhance the experience of youth living in foster care, according to an article in *The Oregonian newspaper*.

[The first bill](#) would require the Department of Human Services to ensure that a child has access to a least one extra-curricular activity at school or in his or her community. DHS and the foster provider would confer to determine which party would pay for participation, according to a draft of the bill.

Public and private funding is already available to cover the cost of the extra-curricular bill, State Rep. Alissa Keny – Guyer told *The Oregonian*.

[The other proposal](#) seeks to give foster youth access to savings accounts in their own names once they reach the age of 12, to help them learn financial

literacy and the importance of saving money. Both proposals were made by the **Oregon Youth Foster Connection**, a statewide program for foster children. The organization has put forth several bills during past legislative sessions that have passed.

The legislation would be beneficial both for the youths' personal growth and civic engagement as well as for providing a focus on policy changes that would impact children's lives, Keny –Guyer also said.

To read the full article, click [HERE](#).

◆ The University of Washington has developed an open-source parenting program that aims to help those parents of children in foster care become better caregivers to allow for families to be reunited and to reduce costs associated with children in foster care, the **UW Office of News and Information reports**.

The initiative, named STRIVE, was created specifically for parents of children in foster care. It was designed in collaboration with the Washington state Children's Administration, and entails 15 one-on-one coaching sessions for parents, showing them what to expect during court-ordered visits, problem solving, dealing with trauma and other issues. Debriefings and periodic check-ins between parents, their "coach," and social worker will follow.

"What we're trying to do is develop something that really takes into consideration the various struggles of the parents involved in child welfare," said Doug Klinman, an official with the Children's Administration who helped develop STRIVE.

"The more concrete tips, tools and strategies we can use to be better parents and better people, the more likely our children are to thrive," said Alise Hegle of the Children's Home Society of Washington in the article.

To learn more, click [HERE](#).

THE NATION

◆ Penn State is investing \$12 million in an endowment that will be used to combat child sex abuse, neglect, emotional and physical abuse in Pennsylvania, according to a **PSU press release**.

University officials will allocate proceeds from the endowment to the Network on Child Protection and Well-being, a consortium of faculty researchers, clinicians and advocates studying ways to reduce child abuse.

Funds will be used to provide seed-grant funding to Penn State faculty to promote research aimed at preventing, detecting and treating child abuse and neglect, with a focus on child sexual abuse.

Money will also be used to develop new academic majors designed to educate social science practitioners about child maltreatment.

"We can champion evidence-based initiatives and change the way policy invests in the detection, prevention and treatment of abuse," said Neil Sharkey, PSU vice president for research. To read the entire press release, click [HERE](#).

THE WORLD

◆ The number of times children ran away from foster care in England increased by one-third between 2013 and 2014, according to the British national newspaper, **The Guardian**.

Children and young people went missing from foster care 13,305 times between April 2013 and March 2014 — an increase of 36% or 900 children from the previous year, according to the U.K.'s Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills.

Almost 530 incidents were linked to sexual exploitation, although nearly 3,200 incidents were recorded as having happened for "reasons unknown."

"Many of these children will run away to see their family and friends and may be targeted by predators because they are isolated from their usual social network," said Lily Caprani of The Children's Society.

Of those who went missing, 54% vanished for less than 24 hours, a third went missing for between one to six days, and 13 were absent for longer than one week. To read the entire story, click [HERE](#).



Oregon Judicial Department Citizen Review Board



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April 17-18, 2015
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New Volunteers!

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Barbara Balz

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Fred Allen

HARNEY COUNTY

Jill Atwood

Tamara Johnston

Nikki Morgan