



2018 ANNUAL REPORT

CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD

Oregon's Foster Care Review Program



*Every Day Counts...
in the life of a child in foster care.*

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Leola McKenzie

When I became Director of CRB almost 10 years ago, it was a time of deep budget cuts to many state programs. CRB was no exception. By eliminating reviews of delinquency cases, consolidating boards, laying off staff, and transitioning to electronic case material, CRB reduced its biannual budget by approximately one million dollars.

It was a time of contraction for our program with ripple effects on our staff, volunteers, partners, and the children and families we are all here to support.

Fast forward to present day and I can't help but feel pride in what we've been able to accomplish together. We incorporated 4 hours of online training modules into our new volunteer orientation, held annual training conferences for volunteers and stakeholders, made our reviews more trauma informed, wrote a handbook on almost everything that could come up during a review, started coordinating Oregon's three federally required Citizen Review Panels, hosted a national Citizen Review Panel conference, created a specialized board for reviewing older youth in foster care, implemented a new computer system, developed a 5-year strategic plan, implemented best practices to better assess child safety during reviews, surveyed over 500 review participants on whether they felt heard by the board and whether the review appeared impartial and free from bias, implemented a new approach to reviews that focused inquiry on the major issues of cases, conducted an independent program-wide process and outcome evaluation, developed a system of continuous quality improvement, and started collecting aggregate data on the reasons boards are making negative findings. This is all in addition to the roughly 4,000 case reviews our volunteer board members conduct each year to assure children are safe, families are given the best chance to reunify, and children are provided the security that comes with timely permanency.

I like to share with people that CRB volunteers are witnesses to excellent case work. Each month, they review cases of children who are well-cared for in their foster homes. Where workers are arranging the services needed to heal a family, and parents are well on their way to reuniting with their children. They see youth prepared to age out of the system, and children who have found their forever family. There are wonderful things happening in our foster care system every day.

At the same time, there are things that should not be happening. We hear about some in the news—usually the kind that leave us reeling. Others, are more subtle. It's the child not referred to all recommended services, the worker not visiting the foster home as often as required, the mother and baby without enough visits to bond, or the father who is being ignored. Case work is hard. Workers must juggle conflicting priorities for their time and attention, and may come up against seemingly impassable system barriers.

Oregon is lucky to have citizen review as part of its array of checks and balances on the foster system. These current and former teachers, nurses, doctors, attorneys, apartment managers, accountants, project managers, researchers, mediators, ministers, veterans, city administrators, maintenance workers, librarians, reporters, hospitality workers, mothers, fathers, adoptive parents, former child welfare workers, former foster parents, and yes, even former foster kids are extra sets of eyes on cases to ensure the state is adequately serving children and families. And when it isn't, they call attention to the lapse through their findings and recommendations so resources can be redirected to fix it.

CRB volunteers are some of our child welfare system's most committed advocates. And as an adoptive parent of two children from that system, I'm so very grateful you are here!

WHO WE ARE

The Citizen Review Board (CRB) is a program within the Oregon Judicial Department that reviews the cases of children in foster care. The reviews are conducted by boards composed of volunteers from the community who are appointed by the Chief Justice of the Oregon Supreme Court. Currently, there are 63 boards in 33 of Oregon's 36 counties and 271 volunteers serving on them statewide. Each board can have up to five members and two alternate members.

Transparency and Public Oversight

CRB was established by the Oregon Legislature in 1985 in response to passage of the federal Adoption Assistance and Child Welfare Act of 1980. This Act sets numerous requirements for states to remain eligible for federal reimbursement of certain foster care related expenses including a requirement that the case of every child in foster care have a periodic review at least every six months. States have flexibility on who can conduct these reviews—judges can do them, child welfare agencies can have an internal review process, and/or states can adopt a citizen review process.

There are obvious advantages to a process involving citizen volunteers. They are independent, bring diverse backgrounds to the table, and usually have more time to devote to reviews. They offer a unique, common sense perspective to foster care cases, and a review

environment that is typically less formal than a court hearing, often resulting in more meaningful participation from youth, parents, and foster parents. Citizens bring transparency and public oversight to a system that is largely closed due to the confidential nature of the cases, and helps ensure that system does not stray from the values it was established to uphold.

In Oregon, CRB and the courts share responsibility for conducting periodic reviews. CRB typically conducts the first and second reviews (at 6 and 12 months respectively), the court conducts a permanency hearing at 14 months that also qualifies as a periodic review, and then the CRB and court alternate every six months thereafter until the child leaves foster care.

Case Reviews

Most boards meet monthly and can review up to 10 cases in a day. Legal parents or guardians, foster parents, youth age 14 years or older, attorneys for parents and children, court appointed special advocates, and child welfare workers are invited to each review. Other interested parties such as service providers, grandparents, and other extended family may also be invited. During reviews, boards are required to make a series of legal findings. Following reviews, those findings and any recommendations are compiled into a report that is filed with the court. The child welfare agency, legal parties to the case, and, with a few exceptions, others who attended the review also receive a copy.

Our Vision

Citizens will shape public policy and actively promote conditions to ensure that every child lives in a safe, secure, healthy, and permanent home, preserving families whenever possible.

Our Mission

We provide a citizen voice on the safety, stability, and supervision of children in foster care through impartial case review and advocacy.

We Value

A fair, impartial and inclusive review process.

Citizen input and advocacy.

Treating others with dignity and respect.

State accountability for the safety of children.

Appropriate and timely services for children and families.

A safe and nurturing family for every child.

Our Staff

CRB has 23 full-time and part-time employees. Thirteen are Field Managers responsible for coordinating local boards, staffing reviews, preparing the findings and recommendations documents, and representing the CRB on local child welfare improvement workgroups. The remaining employees include six clerical staff, a clerical staff supervisor, a volunteer coordinator/analyst, a review specialist, and an assistant director. Most staff work out of two offices in Salem and Portland. Nine work out of courthouses in Bend, Coos Bay, Eugene, Hillsboro, Klamath Falls, Medford, Pendleton, and Roseburg.

Our Volunteers

Volunteer board members have a role that is more challenging than most volunteer experiences. In addition to understanding the complex legal issues related to child protection, they must learn the intricate social and clinical considerations that determine what is in the child’s best interest.

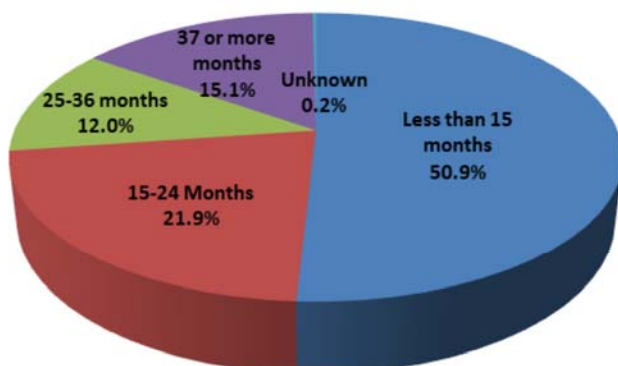
In 2018, volunteer board members collectively donated 33,599 hours of service to the state preparing for and conducting 4,437 reviews of 5,174 children in foster care. Additionally, these citizen volunteers completed 4,524 hours of continuing education on topics important to the cases they review. This is a cost benefit to Oregon of \$969,468.

The Children

In 2018, according to DHS’ Oregon Child Welfare Data Set, 11,492 Oregon children spent at least one day in foster care. This same year, CRB reviewed 5,174 of them. It is important to note that CRB does not begin reviewing a case until the child has been in foster care for six months, so those who exit care before then are not seen by CRB. Additionally, CRB does not review children who have been returned to a parent on a trial reunification placement. Therefore, CRB has a unique perspective because it reviews only the children and families with the very highest needs.

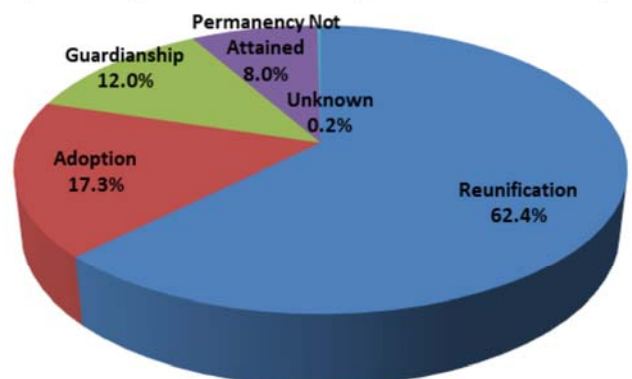
Demographics of Children Reviewed by CRB in 2018	
Age	
Under 5 Years	35%
5 – 9 Years	24%
10 – 14 Years	22%
15 – 18 Years	16%
19 – 21 Years	3%
Race/Ethnicity	
African American	3%
Asian/Pacific Islander	2%
Caucasian	75%
Hispanic	14%
Native American	4%
Unknown	2%

Children's Length of Time in Foster Care at Time of CRB Review
(for CRB reviews held in 2017)



Data from CRB’s Odyssey system.

Reason Children Left Care
(of children/youth who were discharged from foster care in 2018)



Data from DHS’ Oregon Child Welfare Data Set.

2018 AT A GLANCE

Process and Outcome Evaluation

In April 2017, CRB contracted with Pacific Research and Evaluation (PRE), an independent evaluation firm, to conduct a process and outcome evaluation of its program. PRE and a team of 18 volunteer board members and 17 CRB staff observed CRB reviews in 24 of Oregon's 36 counties. PRE also conducted statewide surveys of volunteer board members, child welfare workers, judges, attorneys, court appointed special advocates, tribes, and other stakeholders; as well as interviewed eleven judges by phone.

The final report, submitted in January 2018, identified both program strengths and areas for improvement. Among the strengths were:

- Judges value the work of CRB;
- Foster parents are twice as likely to attend a CRB review compared to a court hearing and, when they do attend, they actively participate; and
- CRB reviews are conducted fairly consistently across the state, particularly when it comes to issues pertaining to the health, well-being, and permanency of the child.

Areas for improvement included:

- Increasing discussion during CRB reviews on child safety and the appropriateness/stability of foster placements,
- Developing a better and more immediate feedback loop when DHS does not intend to implement CRB recommendations, and
- Opening lines of communication between volunteer board members and DHS line staff.

The evaluation also found that 97% of surveyed board members indicated that they learned a lot about the child welfare system from being a board member, and 37% shared that they had inspired another person to volunteer for an organization serving children and/or families or to become a foster parent. These results show that as CRB is working to ensure

state accountability for the safety and well-being of children, it also is increasing public knowledge of and engagement in the larger system that protects them.

Cultural Responsiveness Training

Every year, volunteer board members are required to complete eight hours of continuing education with one hour dedicated to cultural responsiveness. In January 2018, CRB's Cultural Responsiveness Committee unveiled a three-part training on implicit bias and decision-making. Implicit bias is an unconscious attitude or stereotype that affects our decisions. We all have them, and the best way to ensure that we control them (rather than they control us) is to become more aware of those we have and the situations that may trigger them.

The training asked all volunteer board members to complete three tasks by June 1, 2018:

- Select and complete a minimum of two online [Implicit Association Tests](#) (IATs) developed by researchers from Harvard, the University of Virginia, and the University of Washington;
- Listen to a National Public Radio [podcast](#) on implicit bias and police shootings; and
- Discuss your experience taking the IATs and listening to the podcast with your board.

The Cultural Responsiveness Committee also published an information sheet for volunteer board members and CRB staff during National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept. 15 - Oct. 15) with links to useful reports and guides on working with the Latino community.

These activities, along with many other cultural responsiveness trainings held by boards at the local level, and by the program during new volunteer orientation and the annual CRB conference, help the program pursue its goal of providing impartial, culturally responsive legal reviews where each participant has a voice that is heard.

Out of Home Care Assessments

With passage of Senate Bill 243 (2017), DHS received clarification that Oregon law requires the agency to notify CRB of out of home care assessments, and to provide CRB copies of those assessments. An out of home care assessment is an investigation into a report of abuse in a foster home. Oregon law also requires DHS to provide CRB copies of reports of abuse in foster homes that are closed at screening. Reports of abuse are closed at screening when the concern reported does not rise to the level of abuse or neglect per Oregon law and DHS policy.

In February 2018, DHS began notifying CRB by email whenever an out of home care assessment was opened, when it concluded, and the disposition of that assessment. CRB and DHS then collaborated to develop:

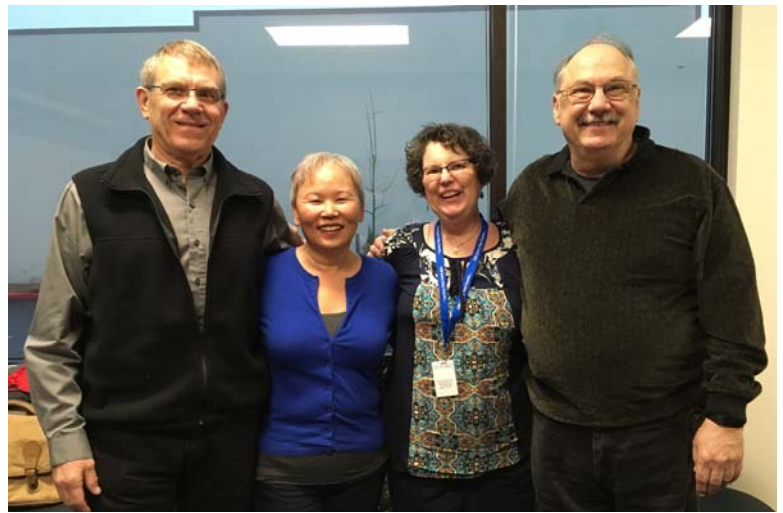
- Procedures for DHS to include out of home care assessments and closed at screening reports in the case material submitted to CRB for upcoming reviews, and
- Protocols for how volunteer board members should respond to these assessments/reports during CRB reviews.

Out of home care assessments and closed and screening reports are an important part of the case file. Because it is part of CRB's job to make findings about whether DHS is meeting the needs of children in its care, boards need to know about all experiences of those children, including whether anyone has alleged abuse in a foster home, and how DHS assessed safety.

Annual Conference

CRB held its annual Every Day Counts... Conference for CRB volunteers and stakeholders on May 4—5, 2018 at the Hilton in Eugene, Oregon. Two hundred and four people attended the event.

The conference included keynote addresses from Z. Ruby White Starr, a national leader and consultant in the field of preventing violence against women, and



Polk County Citizen Review Board 1

Dr. Jim Shames, Medical Director and Health Officer for Jackson County, Oregon. Dr. Shames provided an overview of the opioid crisis, evidence-based treatment practices, the role of relapses in the treatment process, and current efforts statewide to combat the opioid epidemic.

Attendees also participated in a plenary session on understanding and responding to out of home care assessments. Volunteer board members learned about the criteria used to initially screen whether a report meets the definition of child abuse or neglect; all the components and timelines of a comprehensive child protective services assessment that may follow; what it means when an assessment concludes with a disposition of Founded, Unfounded, or Unable to Determine; what happens next; and how boards can use this information during CRB reviews to make findings and recommendations about child safety.

The conference offered workshops on a variety of topics including preparing for an issue-focused review; the art and skill of effective boards; making negative findings in a trauma informed way; concurrent planning; required assessments and services to ensure the safety, health and well-being of children; and the difference between reasonable and active efforts.

Additionally, for the ninth year in a row, CRB held a basket raffle during the conference to support Camp to Belong, a nonprofit summer camp that reunites siblings separated by foster care. In 2018, the baskets filled with prizes and goodies donated from local boards across the state raised \$4,563, which is enough to send nine children to camp.

Continuous Quality Improvement

CRB provides local citizen oversight as a check and balance to the foster system. While there can be differences between boards based on the uniqueness of communities, there are certain standards that must be applied consistently for CRB to have a statewide impact. In its 5-year strategic plan, CRB identified implementation of a system of continuous quality improvement (CQI) as an action item to improve consistency across boards.

In 2018, CRB began development of the CQI process. Program staff and the Advisory Committee chose to base it on the observations of CRB reviews conducted during the process and outcome evaluation of CRB. Each Field Manager will be paired with a volunteer board member to observe a day of CRB reviews not in their regularly assigned county, and complete a data collection instrument. The observations will be scheduled so that all 63 boards statewide are observed over a period of 4 years, and results will be compiled and reported quarterly. Implementation of the CQI process will start in July 2019.

Case Notes Sheet Update

Prior to CRB reviews, volunteer board members read through hundreds of pages of case material provided by DHS to familiarize themselves with the families and status of cases. They are trained to take notes as they prepare on a form called the CRB Case Notes Sheet. In 2018, CRB staff and the Advisory Committee undertook an effort to update this form with more prompts to look for specific information. The new prompts mirror the topics evaluators will be looking for and rating in the continuous quality improvement process. After seeking review and comment from volunteer board members statewide, the updated Case Notes Sheet was rolled-out in December 2018.

Tracking Findings

State and federal law require CRB to make 10 findings during reviews. These findings relate to the sufficiency of services DHS is providing to the child and family, the parents' progress in services, and the appropriateness of the permanency plan. CRB has

been tracking the frequency of negative findings made by boards for some time. While this data is interesting, it has limited utility because the reasons for those negative findings are not tracked. In late 2018, with input from staff and the Advisory Committee, CRB updated its findings data collection instrument with reason categories. After testing, additional edits, and feedback from DHS, CRB finalized the instrument and plans to begin using it in May 2019. Negative findings and the reasons behind them will be reported quarterly to board members, DHS, and other stakeholders.

CAPTA Citizen Review Panels

Federal law requires each state to have three citizen review panels that select and research a systemic issue within child welfare and make recommendations to improve related child welfare policies and practices. For the 2018-19 fiscal year, Oregon's three panels in Baker, Linn, and Multnomah counties were composed of foster youth, parents, CRB volunteers and staff, court appointed special advocates, and child welfare managers. During four 1-hour meetings, each panel selected an area of focus, developed a data collection plan, interviewed subject matter experts, reviewed collected data, and drafted recommendations. Baker County focused on worker engagement of parent clients, Linn County focused on timeliness of mental health services for children in foster care, and Multnomah County focused on meeting ASFA timelines. A report of the panels' findings and recommendations is due to the state child welfare director on May 15. DHS then has 6 months to respond in writing whether or how they will incorporate the recommendations into their improvement efforts.

SPOTLIGHT ON SAFETY

In January 2018, Oregon's Secretary of State (SOS) released an audit of DHS Child Welfare that found management had been slow and indecisive in responding to the growing foster care crisis. It outlined 24 recommendations to address management challenges, foster parent recruitment and retention, and child welfare staffing. DHS supported the recommendations, and committed to actively moving forward in all identified areas.

Promising Initiatives

Recruiting and Retaining Child Welfare Staff

The SOS audit found that child welfare field offices are severely understaffed. Statewide, field office staffing is short approximately 770 staff, which puts current staffing levels at 35% below the level needed to address current caseloads. This understaffing creates an untenable working environment for caseworkers, and data shows that many caseworkers are leaving within 18 months of being hired. DHS has also struggled to find qualified applicants to apply for the positions that are available.

The Governor's 2017-2019 budget included funding for an additional 109 child welfare positions that included caseworkers; mentors to support and guide new workers through their first year of employment; and case aides to help workers complete their paperwork, freeing up time to focus on engaging children and families. The new positions are intended to both alleviate pressure on staffing levels and help DHS retain its trained staff.

Centralized Child Abuse Hotline

In 2016, Public Knowledge, LLC conducted an audit of Oregon's foster system, and recommended, among other things, that DHS centralize abuse and neglect report hotline operations to ensure that reports are handled in a consistent way across the state. At the time, there were 15 hotlines statewide, each with varying interpretations of rules and procedures.



In 2018, DHS began a gradual transition to a centralized hotline based in Portland that operates around the clock every day of the year. They hired screeners who spoke English, Spanish, Russian, Vietnamese, Somali, and Arabic. The goal is to have all calls going to the centralized hotline by April 2019.

Reducing the Backlog of CPS Assessments

On April 22, 2018, DHS had 9,777 overdue Child Protective Services (CPS) assessment across the state. To address this backlog, DHS implemented an abbreviated assessment process when there is sufficient information to determine the alleged victim is safe and the allegation is unfounded. DHS also developed an overdue assessment protocol, and is sending a team of 10-12 child safety experts to one district at a time to engage in blitzes to clear overdue assessments and model excellent practice. By December 2018, overdue assessments were reduced to 6,364.

More Transparency Around Out of Home Care Assessments

When a report of abuse is made against a foster parent, it is screened by the child abuse hotline and a determination is made for the case to be investigated or closed at screening. The SOS audit found cases that were closed at screening had almost no follow up or review, despite the fact that when abuse is confirmed

in a foster home there were often warning signs much earlier in the case.

DHS requires reviews for all reports of abuse in foster homes, but the audit found that communication breakdowns between DHS staff meant that the agency didn't know if these reviews were happening or if DHS staff was following up with families when there were warning signs. To address this, DHS developed an oversight and accountability protocol to ensure that the reviews of reported abuse in foster homes are happening according to policy and that even when a report of alleged abuse or neglect in a foster home is closed at screening, there is still an internal review at the child welfare branch so that staff can communicate and support services can be offered to the foster family.

For those reports of alleged abuse or neglect in a foster home that rise to the level of needing further investigation, DHS prepares an out of home care assessment report (OHCA). These reports detail the scope of the investigation as well as the conclusion of whether abuse or neglect has occurred in the foster home and the recommended next steps. In 2018, CRB worked with DHS to have these OHCA's included in the case materials CRB board members receive for case reviews. CRB board members were trained how to evaluate these OHCA's and how to make necessary findings and recommendations to ensure the safety of children in foster care.

Settlement on Hoteling Children

On September 27, 2016, attorneys on behalf of children in foster care, along with the CASA program, filed a lawsuit in federal court against the State of Oregon, calling for the end of the practice of "hoteling" children who were in the custody of DHS. DHS Child Welfare had been temporarily housing children in hotels and DHS offices when an appropriate placement could not be identified for the children. According to a SOS audit, DHS placed 189 children in hotels between September 2016 and July 2017. Many of the children had been diagnosed with behavioral and psychiatric conditions. Often the children spent the day in a DHS office, missed school that day and then returned to the hotel at night.

The parties settled the lawsuit in February 2018. The settlement requires DHS to gradually reduce the number of children who are placed in hotels. From July 1, 2019 to December 31, 2019, DHS may temporarily house no more than 45 children in hotels, and from January 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020, the limit is 23 children. After July 1, 2020, the limit for each six-month period will be 12 children, or a maximum of 24 children yearly.

Parent Child Representation Program

The Office of Public Defense Services (OPDS) initiated the Parent Child Representation Program (PCRP) in August 2014. The program was based on a similar program in the State of Washington which has been shown to reduce the rate of placement of children in foster care and to reduce the time to achieve permanency for children in foster care. Significant components of PCRP include A) a reduction of caseloads for attorneys to 80 cases; B) use of social workers/case managers in 10-15% of cases; C) increased accountability, including lawyers tracking their time and case activities; and D) use of an attorney program manager who provides support, oversight and training.

Oregon initially piloted PCRP in two counties, Linn and Yamhill, and Columbia County was added in January 2016. Because of the improved outcomes for children and families and proven reduced costs of foster care for the state, Coos and Lincoln counties were added in 2018.

According to findings by OPDS, in the counties where the pilot program has been implemented, fewer children are entering foster care, and children are being reunified with their parents quicker and more often. Because of the data-driven analysis of PCRP, the American Bar Association testified before the Governor's Task Force on Dependency Representation that it strongly supported Oregon's efforts to enhance the legal representation of parents and children.

SPOTLIGHT ON PERMANENCY

Introduction

Permanency is a legally established relationship of emotional attachment between a child and caregiver that permanently binds that child to family and culture. It is intended to last a lifetime. For children in foster care, reunification with a parent is the preferred type of permanency. When this cannot happen safely or timely, other forms of permanency are pursued—adoption, guardianship, placement with a fit and willing relative, or another planned permanent living arrangement (in that order).



Promising Initiatives

Re-Imagining Dependency Courts

In 2016, Oregon was one of four states selected by the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to pilot a Reimagining Dependency Courts Project to develop and implement court policies and practices that reduce the number of children in foster care and improve permanency outcomes. Part of this effort was to develop and implement a differential case management model for dependency cases that was piloted in four Oregon circuit courts – Clackamas, Deschutes, Lane, and Polk.

The model uses a case assignment tool to assign dependency cases to either a standard, intensive, or

expedited review track. Specialized review tracks were also developed for cases with permanency plans of adoption, guardianship, placement with a fit and willing relative, and another planned permanent living arrangement.

In the fall of 2018, NCSC and the Oregon Judicial Department partnered on a process and early outcome evaluation of the pilot project. The evaluation focused on fidelity to the model, and included court observations, focus groups, and a file review. In addition, NCSC analyzed data on the timing of court hearings and CRB reviews; the factors driving case assignments; and the time needed for children to reach permanency, both before and after the start of the project.

The evaluation found that the pilot courts implemented the model with fidelity, with cases being assigned to the recommended track 94% of the time and the majority of court and CRB reviews occurring within 30 days of their target date. The evaluation also found preliminary evidence that the project is leading to children exiting foster care more quickly, but did not find evidence to validate the factors that are used in the case assignment tool.

The evaluation findings will inform discussion on changes to the project, and will guide preparations for a full outcome evaluation in early 2020.

Juvenile Court Strategic Planning

In 2017, legislation passed in Oregon that contained a budget note requiring the Department of Human Services, Department of Justice, Oregon Judicial Department, and Public Defense Services Commission to collaborate on development of strategies to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Oregon’s juvenile dependency system.

The Juvenile Court Improvement Program (JCIP) developed two statewide surveys to collect information from stakeholders and juvenile court improvement teams on strengths and areas of improvement needed in local dependency systems.

The JCIP Advisory Committee used the results to develop four statewide improvement priorities:

1. Effective settlement conferences,
2. Consistent time for shelter hearings with adequate time for parents to meet with their attorney,
3. Clear written policies that prioritize juvenile dependency cases on court dockets, and
4. Improve timeliness to permanency for children by finalizing adoptions within one year of the child becoming legally free.

Oregon Circuit Court Presiding Judges and Trial Court Administrators were then required to identify one of the priorities and put in place an implementation strategy by the end of 2018. Judges were provided materials and information related to each of the priorities at the 2018 Through the Eyes of a Child Conference, and time was set aside for local teams to plan at the 2018 Model Court Summit. JCIP staff also provided support to local juvenile court improvement teams as needed.

Adoption Tracking

Data shows that timeliness of adoption is particularly problematic in Oregon. Over 50% of children in foster care who become legally free do not have their adoption finalized within twelve months. In 2017, JCIP and DHS developed a joint work plan to address this.

DHS created an adoption tracking sheet that would report all completed tasks in an adoption process, the date they were completed, and any tasks that remain. Procedures were developed to have DHS submit the tracking sheet for all Court and CRB reviews, and training was provided at the 2017 Model Court Summit to teach partners how to read the document.

In 2018, DHS improved the readability of the adoption tracking sheet by turning it into a standardized form generated from OR-Kids. A training on how to read the new form was provided to CRB volunteers at the 2019 Every Day Counts Conference.

Legal Representation for DHS

In 2015, the Oregon Legislative Assembly established an 18-member Task Force on Legal Representation in Childhood Dependency to recommend models for legal representation in juvenile court proceedings that will improve outcomes for children and parents. The task force completed their work in July 2016 and found, among other things, that inconsistent state and agency representation models, a lack of uniform practice, and complicated financial models pose a challenge to timely and effective case planning and case management. To address this finding, the task force recommended full legal representation for DHS in dependency cases. The 2017 Oregon Legislative Assembly allocated funding for 35 permanent full-time positions within the Department of Justice (DOJ) to phase in full representation of DHS in dependency proceedings by July 2019.

SPOTLIGHT ON WELL-BEING

Recent years have brought increased focus on the well-being needs of children in foster care. Child well-being can be difficult to assess as it includes objective measures like physical health and academic success as well as more subjective indicators like self-esteem and connectedness. Well-being goes beyond safety and permanency as it looks at all the other things that bring quality to children’s lives.

Promising Initiatives

OFYC Policy Recommendations

In 2018, 35 current and former foster youth from across the state participated in the 2018 Oregon Foster Youth Connection (OFYC) [Policy Conference](#) to build community with other foster youth and develop solutions for Oregon’s foster care system. The resulting policy recommendations tackled issues of preventing houselessness, supporting youth in care who are 18-21, and quality of foster homes and providers. On July 24, 2018, members of OFYC presented the recommendations to an audience of lawmakers, DHS, service providers, and community members. From there, OFYC selected its [legislative concept](#)—to fully fund the Independent Living Program—to take to the Oregon Legislature in 2019

Caregiver Training Redesign

In August 2017, DHS formed a workgroup to redesign its training program for new foster parents. Over the following year-and-a-half, this workgroup reviewed other state trainings, surveyed foster parents and child welfare staff, and created a list of core competencies for foster parents to be used as a foundation for updating the curriculum.

The workgroup presented its recommendations to Child Welfare leadership in December 2018, and the Foster Care unit was tasked with implementing them. DHS plans to convert half of its training for new foster parents to an online format, and has contracted Portland State University to develop a curriculum model.



Every Child

[Every Child](#) is a statewide initiative to create easy “on ramps” for people to help children in foster care and support the caseworkers who serve them. The initiative is currently operating in 17 counties and hopes to be in every Oregon county by 2022.

Every Child is run by a local non-profit in each county. Some of the on ramps that it coordinates include creating welcome boxes for children entering foster care, launch boxes for youth aging out of foster care, office buddies for children awaiting placement, transportation to visits, service projects (visit room makeovers, cloths closets, etc.), foster parent night out events, and efforts to express gratitude to DHS staff who’ve committed their lives to caring for children and families in crisis.

Foster Homes of Healing

[Foster Homes of Healing](#) is a coalition of ten organizations from across the state that are dedicated to improving foster care in Oregon through legislative action. Currently, the coalition is advocating 4 policy proposals: 1) Support every Oregon foster family by implementing KEEP, an evidence-based peer support and skills development program, statewide; 2) Increase therapeutic foster care; 3) Reduce caseload/hire casework staff; and 4) Partner with community organizations to support every family and child.

CRB STATEWIDE STATISTICS 2018 CALENDAR YEAR

COUNTY	CRB REVIEWS	*CHILDREN REVIEWED	BOARD DAYS	AVERAGE MINUTES PER CRB REVIEW	**NUMBER OF VOLUNTEERS
Baker	35	36	11	34	6
Benton	46	53	6	36	5
Clackamas	275	274	36	34	11
Clatsop	69	63	12	35	4
Columbia	121	116	16	35	6
Coos	176	197	25	38	8
Crook/Jefferson	70	95	12	34	5
Curry	38	37	6	39	4
Deschutes	188	177	25	32	10
Douglas	281	371	39	37	17
Grant/Harney	30	39	6	38	3
Hood River	21	29	6	38	4
Jackson	373	472	54	37	21
Josephine	176	211	27	39	9
Klamath	177	208	34	33	13
Lake	25	35	4	35	3
Lane	847	936	109	31	51
Lincoln	127	141	24	41	5
Linn	138	165	25	35	9
Malheur	111	145	17	31	4
Marion	385	490	61	37	14
Multnomah	58	71	23	42	8
Polk	103	102	13	34	8
Tillamook	19	26	6	37	4
Umatilla/Morrow	125	138	24	33	8
Union/Wallowa	21	27	10	36	3
Wasco	44	53	12	34	7
Washington	299	393	48	39	14
Yamhill	59	74	12	39	5
STATEWIDE	4,437	5,174	703	35	271

*Children reviewed multiple times in the same year are only counted once.

**Active volunteer count on 6/3/2019.

Citizen Review Board
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