

Ensuring Safety in Foster Care: Understanding & Responding to Out of Home Care Assessments

Presented By

Ronika Ferguson- DHS-CW Safety Program Consultant

Janna Owens-DHS-CW Foster Care Coordinator

Objectives

- ▶ Recent evaluations of Oregon's Child Welfare System: What are they and what is DHS doing about it?
- ▶ What is an Out of Home Care Assessment (OHCA)?
- ▶ Understand the impacts of OHCA on Foster Providers, Children, and Families.
- ▶ Apply information shared around Out of Home Care Assessments into the CRB review practice and procedure.



Recent evaluations of Oregon's Child Welfare system:

Public Knowledge Report
Secretary of State Audit
Child and Family Services Review(CFSR)

Recent legislation:

Senate Bill 1515 (2017)
Senate Bill 243 (2018)



**Recent Legislative changes
that impact Departmental
Response**

2016: Senate Bill 1515

2017: Senate Bill 243

These reviews continue to shape the forward movement of the department in ensuring safety in the lives of the children and families we serve

Another important intergovernmental stakeholder partnership that helps ensure safety in foster care is **YOU!**

Using your clicker select 1) Yes 2) No

How many of you have ever had an experience where your actions or intentions were in question and you didn't feel you had any control?



How many of you have ever had an experience where your actions or intentions were in question and you didn't feel you had any control?

1. Yes
2. No



What is an Out of Home Care assessment?

The 307b is the completed Out Of Home Care assessment that may become part of CRB material at the conclusion of the assessment

Reports of Child Abuse:

For all Children:

is there a report of abuse or neglect?

-Is there access?

-is it a foster home or licensed care setting?

24 hour or 5day response?

For children in DHS Care:

Children AND young adults

Expanded abuse types

How many of you have ever made a child abuse report?

A. Yes

B. No






Allegations of abuse for children and young adults in care

- Abandonment
- Financial exploitation
- Involuntary seclusion
- Neglect
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Verbal abuse
- Wrongful use of restraint

What is an Out of home care assessment?

- 
- Interviews of children, caregivers, professionals, collaterals, witnesses
 - Assessment of home environment
 - Comprehensive assessment of safety
 - Initial staffing & post staffing
 - Required notifications of assessment assignment and closure


Roles of DHS Staff during assessment:

- ▶ **Ongoing caseworker** for alleged victim child- maintains role as primary caseworker
- ▶ **Foster home Certifier-** assigned for foster home oversight-continues to support foster parent
- ▶ **Assigned CPS worker** for Out of Home Care Assessment-responsible for assessing allegations of child abuse, and making safety determination during assessment

How many of you have been told during a CRB review by a DHS caseworker that there is an open OHCA and they can't share any information with the board?

1. Yes
2. No





What if abuse is happening in care?

- ▶ If children are determined to be unsafe, DHS will intervene to manage safety. Can be temporary safety plan, removal from foster home.
- ▶ Abuse or neglect may occur, but children might still be "safe" by DHS rules. Next steps will be developed by child's caseworker and certifier.



When OHCA is complete:

- ▶ **DISPOSITIONS:**
 - ▶ Unfounded/Unsubstantiated
 - ▶ Unable to Determine
 - ▶ Founded/Substantiated
- ▶ **ACTIVITIES:**
 - ▶ Internal DHS staffing to share findings
 - ▶ Notifications to required parties of disposition

Some Opinions from Foster parent on out of home care assessments

Alone

"The state doesn't have our back when there is an allegation made against us."

Not heard

"DHS jumps to conclusions about what has occurred in the home and fails to listen to what we (foster parents) have to say."

Stressful

"The process is too long, too stressful and don't feel it is appropriate when you have a long standing good relationship with the department."

High-level overview of efforts to ensure safety throughout the life of the case...

Case plans

Face-to-face contact by child's caseworker

Face-to-face contacts in DHS-CW certified foster homes by certifier

Certification and Safety Review committee

- Provides a formal review structure for Foster and/or Adoptive Families, prospective or certified, by the Department when an issue of concern, allegations, or rule violation occurs.
- This review provides a foundation for increased communication among staff and multiple program areas.
- It is intended to assist in the documentation and coordination of follow-up action by the Department.

Additional Safety and Well-Being Efforts


- Placement Support Plan
- Supervision Plan
- Inactive Referral
- Education
- Support Groups
- Mentor Foster Parent

Average Daily Foster Care Population in 2017:

- An average of 7,831 children were in foster care on a daily basis. Of these:
- An average of 5,773 children were in family foster care. Of those, 48.3 percent (about 2,787 children) were placed with relatives.
- An average of 775 children were on trial home visit.
- An average of 311 children and young adults were served in treatment foster care through Child Welfare Behavioral Rehabilitation Services programs or Oregon Health Authority psychiatric treatment settings.
- The remaining 972 children were in other types of foster care placements such as developmental disability placements, pre-adoptive placements, and independent living.

Rates of Abuse in Foster Care

- During FFY 2017, 166 children in foster care were victims of abuse where the provider was the perpetrator.
- Placement Type:
 - Pre-Adoptive 3
 - Behavioral Rehabilitation Services 15
 - DD Group Home 8
 - Foster Care 89
 - Relative Foster Care 42



Ways for you as board members to engage Foster Parents, relative caregivers and youth in a trauma informed manner during a CRB.