

# CRB Reviews:

## What to Expect A Guide for Parents



### What is the CRB?

The CRB (Citizen Review Board) is a court program that is required by law to review foster care cases. The CRB is **not** a part of ODHS (Oregon Department of Human Services) Child Welfare. Instead, the CRB helps to assess whether ODHS is making reasonable efforts, parents are making progress, and children's needs are being met.

### Who are the CRB board members?

CRB reviews are led by a team of volunteers from your county. Our volunteers come from backgrounds related to law, psychology, child development, education, medicine, addiction recovery, and more. Many volunteers have personal experience related to foster care. All volunteers undergo extensive and ongoing training.

The CRB brings transparency and public oversight to foster care cases and provides a place for parties to be heard. CRB volunteers care first and foremost about the well-being of families involved in the child welfare system. They also value the contributions of resource parents, ODHS workers, CASAs, judges, attorneys, teachers, therapists, healthcare workers, and others in the child welfare system. Most importantly, they believe that every child deserves to be safe. Although CRB volunteers are responsible for asking sometimes difficult questions, delving into details of each case, and making decisions that not everyone will agree with, these values are the reason and inspiration behind everything they do.

### Who will be at the CRB review?

Because attendance at CRB reviews is not mandatory for anyone but ODHS, and there is no RSVP required, no one knows exactly who will attend each review. However, there are usually between 5-10 people at CRB reviews (depending on how many people are involved in the case). CRB reviews are not open to the public and cannot be recorded.

The CRB invites legal parties and resource parents to CRB reviews. Legal parties are parents and their attorneys, children and their attorneys, ODHS (the caseworker), CASA, and the Tribe (if applicable). ODHS may also request that CRB invite other people involved in the case such as grandparents, mentors, service providers, etc. The CRB does not send notices to children younger than 14 years old but sends them to their parents, attorney, resource parents, and CASA instead.

### What will happen at the CRB review?

The CRB's role is to collect information, provide oversight through their findings and recommendations, give an opportunity for parties to be heard, and shed light on important issues in the case. CRB reviews are not planning meetings, and they are not court hearings. The board has no authority to change a child's

permanency plan or placement. Instead, the board will go over some legal information, ask questions of the parties at the review, and make recommendations based on that information.

### **Participation**

You can attend a CRB review in person (if that option is offered in your county), online on video, or by phone. If you are unable to attend, you may also submit input via email or letter; this information will be shared with all attendees. Your attorney may also speak on your behalf. Your input is extremely valuable. Attending the CRB review also provides opportunity for you to get further updates about the case.

### **Structure of a CRB Review**

At every review, the CRB starts by reading an opening statement that includes the ground rules for the day. Next, the board briefly goes over basic information of the case. There are 10 questions that the law requires the board to answer in each CRB review. Please see the guide on the back of your notice letter to read these 10 questions, which are called “findings.” The board answers these questions by reading documents provided to them before the review and asking questions at the review. The board members will ask you some questions depending on what information is needed. You will not be asked for your input on *every* topic due to time constraints, and you are never required to answer any questions (you are welcome to attend just to listen and get an update on the case if you like), but the board will give you a chance to provide input in each review. At the end, the board reads a brief closing statement.

The reviews are held in a “question and answer” style, where a CRB volunteer asks attendees questions, and those people answer with any information they would like to provide. There is almost always a time when the board asks if anyone else has anything to add. That is a good time to speak up if there is an important issue that you feel has not yet been addressed.

**Disruptive Participants** We understand that it is sometimes difficult to remain calm when such big, important issues are discussed. Because we value creating a space for safe communication, if anyone at a CRB review cannot follow the CRB volunteers’ instructions, becomes abusive, or continually interrupts the review, they may lose their ability to contribute further information. If that happens, the CRB field manager may mute their line so they can continue to participate by listening, or may excuse them from the review.

### **After the Review**

The information that is collected at the review is included in a document, called a “Findings and Recommendations” report, which is mailed to all legal parties and the judge. Please contact your attorney for a copy of the report after the review. The judge uses this information in upcoming court hearings, and ODHS carries out recommendations that the board makes (unless they respond in writing within 17 days that they do not intend to do so).

### **More Information**

For more information on what to expect, please speak to your caseworker or contact your local CRB field manager. The field manager’s contact information is included on the mailed legal notice you received for your review.

**We are grateful for your participation and look forward to meeting you.**