

*Letter received by Rep. Sara Gelser*

Our [child] has struggled with mental health issues and depression since she was very small. She's had two acute hospitalizations and is currently in a residential mental health center [two hours away from our home]. She's talked about wanting to die since she was eight and has attempted to kill her self.

We were on the Healthy Kids program and are on the Oregon Health Plan now. Trying to get help for her has been so heartbreaking. In November we were desperate for help. We took her to the ER where they threatened to restrain her to the bed. When the county crisis worker got there, two hours after us, she had screamed herself to sleep. The worker looked at us and her and said "Things seemed to have calmed down." He gave us a number and sent us home.

There were more hurdles before getting her a bed in [city two hours away]. It took weeks. My younger [child] had to stay with my parents. My husband had to quit his job and we stayed with [our child] every minute 24 hours a day. She got increasingly suicidal and violent. I was floored at the lack of help. The crisis workers were telling us this is a process, take her to the ER if needed, call the police, it takes time. On one of our worst days I had my phone right next to me waiting to hear from the county. This was the same day a young person in [our community] tragically killed herself. The worker called us right before 5:00 and told us she's sorry she didn't get back to us but there had been a suicide in the community and it was a crisis. All I could feel was fear for my own child and anger that someone successfully killing themselves is what was finally a crisis.

I would love the chance to help bring awareness to the issue and to help change the system. I want to respect my [my child's] privacy but would like the chance to help people have a greater awareness. I understand why Oregon has the suicide rate it does and its not the rain.