



OREGON
Alliance
of Children's Programs

HB 2233 – SUPPORT
Hearing

16 March 2015
House Human Services & Housing Committee

Dear Chair Keny-Guyer and Committee Members,

I am Janet Arenz, Executive Director of the Oregon Alliance of Children's Programs. We are a statewide nonprofit organization representing 44 providers, who deliver \$223 million in services to over 100,000 children each year. Additionally, these providers employ 5500 individuals, with \$152 million in annual payroll.

Attached is a list of our membership.

Providers not only do very important work, they also have a mission to ensure that children are not further traumatized or maltreated in their programs.

To that end, we believe in a higher standard for safety and professionalism in our work.

We were part of an important DHS work group that, in 2007, began organizing itself for development of OARs to create those safety standards and reporting requirements for providers regarding incidents of potential abuse or neglect.

The three elements in the current Office of Adult Abuse Prevention and Investigations (OAAPI) we are asking for today via HB 2233, we also requested throughout the 2007-2008 rule-making process.

Now that we have several years of operations under the current rules, it is appropriate to revisit them for effectiveness in abuse and neglect prevention as well as provider impact.

In three cases in the last 2 years, providers have been subject to protracted investigations, have had one or all of the children removed from their program, and have suffered financially to the point that the Board of Directors determined their only option was to close the program or the organization. In one case, the investigation process went on so long that a decision to close had to be made by the Board, even before a final determination on the investigation was issued.

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We are asking for three simple solutions to these issues:

- Limit the amount of time for investigations from 6 weeks plus extensions, to 45 calendar days.

Providers are required to take several steps to ensure an unencumbered investigation can be conducted. However, these steps are not without fiscal and procedural hardships. Providers may be out of compliance with contract and service requirements for a period, can be short-staffed, have to pay administrative leave and over-time, reassign staff, produce administrative support for investigators and make files and employees available for the investigation. Long investigations create undue and unfair hardships on providers and employees.

- Create an “Administrative Finding” option.

This would be an additional option for provider accountability.

This option could be used for circumstances when an incident has occurred that would be a low level infraction but could have potentially been harmful to a child. Examples would be inappropriate and unprofessional conduct (raising your voice with a child, or name calling), an error in procedures for de-escalating a child’s conduct, failure to supervise a child 24/7 or a deviation from a treatment plan. It could potentially be used instead of an “Inconclusive” finding, which carries as much or more stigma to it as a “Founded” finding.

- Reimburse providers with a partial payment when children are removed, or when intake is closed.

Providers have very narrow fiscal margins. These partial payments can help avoid the loss of programs and treatment capacity for children, before a determination has been made or a corrective action completed. Payments are routinely made in other arenas, with the assumption that there should be no penalty levied without a final investigation determination. Reducing or eliminating revenue by essentially suspending a program is unfair.

We are trying to re-establish an ongoing, collaborative relationship with OAAPI. The previous administration had a welcoming approach for providers, and we had regular meetings to solve problems and bring clarity to the processes and team up together to assure child safety. We would like very much to work with OAAPI on these issues in the same manner.

Thank you for your support on this bill.
Janet Arenz

