



## **Yes on SB 632: *Equipping foster parents with the tools they need to create homes of healing***

Based in Eugene, the Oregon Social Learning Center Community Programs (OCP) provides empirically-validated behavioral services to the children and families of Oregon. Much of this work focuses on supporting families involved with foster care placements, and OCP currently certifies about 50 foster homes in Lane County. There is consensus in the professional community that supporting young people and their caregivers contributes to building strong communities in the future.

### **The value of supporting foster parents can be seen in the data for Oregon:**

- A recent report from Children First notes that **1.5%** of Oregon children are in foster care. This is considerably higher than the national average (**0.9%**).
- Oregon, as a state, ranks **26<sup>th</sup>** when looking at rates of placement (in)stability in foster care and **47<sup>th</sup>** in terms of children 9 and older with a long-term plan of emancipation or long-term care.

Thus, not only does **Oregon place more children in foster care than the National average, but these placements are less stable**, and Oregonians have a higher proportion of youth who are not intending to return to a non-foster home.

**The instability of placements, in turn, comes at a cost;** Rubin et al. (2003) surveyed 1635 youth in foster care and found that **placement instability was correlated with greater mental health service use with the top 10% of mental health service users accounting for 83% of the mental health service costs.** As foster children move from home to home, they lose track of peers and the pro-social skills that are learned from friends; they don't learn how to develop trusting relationships with adults; and end up with diagnoses such as Attachment and Behavioral Disorders.

**Families who are trying to foster children need more support.** According to a Casey Foster Family training workbook almost half of foster parents quit within a year of their first placement, and **20-25% of foster parents quit each year**, with another quarter express uncertainty about continuing. If the purpose of the child welfare system is protect children, then we do not want to harm either them or the families who care for them by exposing them to further trauma. Foster parenting can be a very different skill than parenting of children who have a long-term relationship with their caregiver. OCP has developed multiple programs with empirical support locally to help foster families:

- **KEEP** – Keeping Foster parents trained and supported – is a 16-week group which builds community and coaches foster parents on specialized techniques.
- **MTFC** – Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care – supports treatment parents in taking 1-2 youth with higher levels of concern and wraps support around the youth and family 24/7.

Randomized trials of MTFC and KEEP have found that participation can reduce child behavior problems, decrease foster parents' reported stress, increase positive parenting in the foster home, and increase rates of youth returning to a stable family placement. Given the advances in technology, these proven programs can be extended to all Oregon families, and may be most important to rural communities with more limited treatment options.

**With the passage of SB 632 we could fund similar programs to equip foster parents with the tools they need to create homes of healing for Oregon Foster Youth.**

