



Child Welfare: Safe and Equitable Foster Care Reduction

■ Oregon Safety Model ■ Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families ■ Differential Response

Oregonians agree children have the best opportunities when they remain safely at home with their own families. Children are also safer and families are stronger when communities, families and DHS work in partnership to identify and address issues early. Differential Response (DR) is a family-centered approach which focuses on protecting children to ensure a successful future. DR is a redesign of the child welfare system's front end that allows more than one path for intervention with families with a screened in report of abuse or neglect.

There are three parts to Oregon's approach to implementation of DR:

- 1) Continued focus on practice fidelity to the Oregon Safety Model (OSM);
- 2) Strengthening, Preserving and Reunifying Families (SPRF) services; and
- 3) Staged implementation of Oregon's DR model

1. OSM: Most families child welfare encounters are or can safely care for their children at home. When a child cannot remain safely at home, the state intervenes to ensure child safety which may include a spectrum of intervention from safety planning with a child still in the home to placing a child into foster care. Oregon embarked on a refresh of OSM in 2013 to improve upon and strengthen safety decision making throughout the life of the case. The OSM provides a systematic safety intervention approach and is the responsibility of all staff at every level.

The OSM fidelity work:

- Improves staff competency by ensuring line supervisors fully understand the OSM concepts and coach their casework staff to practice the model with fidelity;
- Provides consistency in practice and decision making beginning at CPS assessment;
- Furthers the agency's work to reduce disproportionality in foster care and emphasize family centered practice;
- Distinctly defines safety threats and families with moderate to high needs;
- Clarifies the specific information needed to make safety decisions;
- Clearly outlines factors to consider when making decisions involving safety and risk; and
- Identifies skills and tools to support this practice.

2. SPRF – Essential Services: Another step is to assess and adjust as needed an array of services for families through collaboration between DHS and local community partners. These services envisioned as part of the SPRF law (ORS 418.575-418.598) specifically addresses needs of children and families who come to the attention of child welfare through a screened in report of abuse or neglect. These services are designed to address gaps in the service array in communities, and are aimed at maintaining children safely in the home and reducing trauma, reducing the length of stay in foster care, improving permanency outcomes for children and addressing re-abuse of children. SPRF services have been in place in every county in the state since December 2014.

November 30, 2016

The department completed the implementation of Performance-Based Contracts for SPRF program contracts statewide in 2015. Generally, Performance-Based Contracting means results-oriented contracting that focuses on the outputs, quality, or outcomes that may tie at least a portion of a contractor's payment, contract extensions, or contract renewals to the achievement of specific, measurable performance standards and requirements. In Oregon, the first step has been focusing on defining outcomes, capturing baseline measurements and collaborative continuous improvement with our contracted providers. The emphasis has been on outcome based contracting versus pay for performance. This work is foundational for our overall ability to report on outcomes associated with the SPRF program.

Results from reports submitted by contractors from December 2015 through November 2016:

- 1) Achieved 67%
- 2) Partially Achieved 13%
- 3) Not Achieved 20%

3. Staged Implementation of Oregon's DR model: Oregon chose a staged implementation of DR because the department wanted to ensure OSM, SPRF and the DR model was adequately supported across the state. DR began in Lane, Klamath and Lake Counties in May of 2014. DR is now in place in 12 counties which equates to approximately half of the staff in the state practicing DR. A pause in expansion efforts was instituted May of 2016, in the midst of preparing the next four counties, which included Multnomah. It was expected that DR would be statewide by the end of 2017, however, since the pause of expansion that date will need to be revised. DHS has contracted with an external evaluator to do a sophisticated analysis of the data using meaningful comparison groups to help us evaluate the success of DR. They have provided an interim process report in 2015, will provide an interim outcome report 2016 and a final report by the end of 2017.

A staged implementation has also provided a route for families involved with child welfare to connect to their community through an array of services. The families receive a comprehensive child safety assessment by child welfare staff. However, just as every family is unique, the department's approach needs to be flexible. Oregon's DR model includes the specific screening criteria to determine the best response to assess families and increase our success in keeping children safely parented at home while the family receives services. Families can more successfully resolve issues when they are part of the solution and where they partner with child welfare and their community in problem solving and identifying services and supports needed.

All three parts of the DR implementation are needed to achieve the best outcomes for families:

- More children will be kept safely at home and in their communities using OSM;
- The community and Oregon DHS will work in partnership with a shared responsibility for keeping children safely at home and in their communities;
- Families will partner with Oregon DHS to realize their full potential and develop solutions;
- Fewer children will re-enter the child welfare system;
- Disproportionality will be reduced among children of color, and;
- Stronger relationships between private agencies, community groups and Oregon DHS.

For more information please visit the Differential Response website:

<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/CHILDREN/DIFFERENTIAL-RESPONSE/pages/index.aspx>

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