

**Parrott Creek Child & Family Services**  
**Public Testimony to Senate Interim Committee on Human Services**  
**January 13, 2020**

Chair Gelser, Vice-Chair Heard, members of the committee, thank you for inviting me to appear before you today. My name is Simon Fulford and I am the Executive Director of Parrott Creek Child & Family Services

**Background**

For 51 years Parrott Creek has supported our most vulnerable community members - children and families caught up in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems – with programs and services based on a practice of unconditional positive regard. Today our programs span the continuum of care from early intervention and community support through to outpatient treatment and intensive residential programs. Our approach is to address the various social, economic and health factors that cause trauma to individuals and communities and that lead to reduced access to resources, supports and opportunities. We combine evidence based and trauma-informed treatment models with restorative justice and mindfulness to help individuals become aware of past and current behaviors, and develop tools and skills to make their lives, and the lives of their families and communities, healthy, happy and hopeful. We serve about 800 children and families each year.

**Partnering with DHS**

Parrott Creek has been a long-standing partner with the Oregon Department of Human Services. Last June we started discussing with DHS their needs around caring for youth in the child welfare system - with a particular focus on those currently being placed out of state - and whether both our programmatic expertise and physical infrastructure could be put to good use. Over the course of several months we designed a six-bed BRS Intensive Rehabilitation Service on our residential campus just outside Oregon City. After undertaking some wonderful renovations to make the setting as home-like as possible – generously funded by DHS – we welcomed our very first young person into the program on November 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Our Treatment & Support**

Our treatment modalities and interventions are strength-based, trauma informed, and relationally based. They include the following:

- generalized individual therapy
- trauma informed emotional regulation skills
- individualized Oregon certified sex offender therapy
- mindfulness-centered individualized, group work, and activity-based treatment
- recreational and creative activities such as basketball, soccer, baseball and arts projects as well as community outings
- age appropriate educational opportunities and vocational exploration
- family therapy when applicable (this can also include future placement in foster care)

Youth also benefit from access to our 80 acres of forest, creek and wetland natural environment.

**Out of State Youth**

With a capacity for six youth, we currently have three in the program having had one leave due to his physical assaults on others. To date we have had 17 referrals from DHS overall, four who were placed out of state and 13 who were in-state. We accepted two of the four out-of-state referrals into our program.

Of those two, both came from Mountain Home. One is a 17-year-old who has been in the child welfare system since they were 2 years old and was at Mountain home for almost 3 1/2 years. This youth has a history of multiple physical and psycho emotional diagnoses and was our first intake into the program. The other youth from Mountain Home is just turned 16 last week and has been in and out of the child

welfare system since he was 6 years. He was in Mountain Home for almost 2 years, went back in the community but had a relapse, and was back at Mountain Home for 18 months prior to Parrott Creek.

One youth referred to us from Mountain Home who was very close to graduating from there. He was going to be relocating near the Idaho/Oregon border so it did not make sense to bring him into our program in Clackamas County only to be moved shortly thereafter.

### **When & Why We Don't Accept Youth**

Of the 10 referrals that we have rejected so far, six of them have been rejected because of their pre-adjudication status. That means that those youth are going through a court process where they could potentially be charged with a crime. Because of this, they are not able to discuss with our therapist or any staff the potentially sexually harming behaviors that they have been referred to New Era House for treatment and support.

If we were to accept those youth we would be putting the youth, our staff, and the rest of the young people in a position of possible legal jeopardy. Staff and other youth could be called to court to testify thus creating a non-therapeutic, legally compromised environment. Through discussion and partnership we believe that DHS now understands the intricacies of these referrals and when they are or aren't appropriate for our service. This highlights the complexities around the treatment and care of children and teens who may have sexually harmed others.

Three of the other rejections were based upon the severity of impulsive behaviors that would make it impossible for us to maintain a safe, therapeutic environment. Examples might be extremely aggressive physical acting out or impulsive sexualized touching of other youth and adults. Because we currently cannot provide youth with individual bedrooms this is one of our most critical assessment criteria.

### **Our Limitations**

We are very aware of the limitations we have in the types of treatment and support that we can provide to youth:

- we are not staffed with on-site psychiatric care and are therefore not a subacute psychiatric setting
- we do not have quiet rooms nor was our program designed to utilize physical restraints on a regular basis (although we are trained in physical restraints) and are therefore not an appropriate setting for youth who require these interventions
- we have a dormitory style bedroom setting which means youth do not have the benefit of individual bedrooms

### **How to better serve Oregon's Youth**

I'll end with a few thoughts/suggestions on how we could, collectively, be better serving Oregon's most vulnerable children and teens:

- ✓ Increase funding for Behavior Rehabilitation Services to improve staff salaries and allow the nonprofit sector to attract and retain skilled staff in Oregon's extremely tight labor market. Quite simply, it pays more to make you a \$5 latte than to care for foster children!
- ✓ Linked to staff retention is staff training support. We need to invest more in developing the specific skills required by the Family First Act and other legislation while retaining these experience and dedicated staff in the sector over the long term
- ✓ Continue to amend and innovate contract and service models with existing general funds to allow community providers to respond to the needs of children and families instead of fitting those needs in to the narrow parameters of inflexible contract terms
- ✓ Oregon's community infrastructure is aging and inadequate. Parrott Creek has been lucky to secure State support to renovate our buildings along trauma-informed design and service principles. Many of our colleagues need much the same.

I would be very happy to take any questions you may have. Thank you.