



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Department of Human Services

Office of the Director

500 Summer St. NE, E-15

Salem, OR 97301

Voice: 503-945-5600

Fax: 503-581-6198

February 20, 2020

The Honorable Representative Keny-Guyer, Chair
The Honorable Representative Ron Noble, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Representative Anna Williams, Vice-Chair
House Committee on Human Services and Housing
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-4048



Re: Adoption Backlog and Rights of Clients, Foster Parents, and Foster Youth

Please accept this in response to questions that came up during the February 17th public hearing and February 20th work session on SB 1518.

Request: Representative Helt requested information on the reason for the high volume of backlogged adoptions.

Response: An emphasis on providing front end services and prioritization of prevention and safety needs has resulted in the backlog of pending adoptions in the DHS Child Welfare Program (CW). Several plans to reduce or eliminate the backlog are currently in place and are already producing results.

Two positions at the DHS Central Office have been developed to provide ongoing support to the field to identify pending cases and provide technical assistance in expediting finalization of adoptions.

While the work is being done to eliminate the backlog, an analysis of the current process for adoption finalization is being completed by DHS in partnership with Casey Family Program. The analysis will identify barriers and duplicative practices in the field that can be eliminated or mitigated, and inform best practices that can be replicated consistently across the state. This is being done to ensure the department has the most efficient systems in place to prevent this issue from developing again. Early analysis has helped to identify points that caseworkers may be able to utilize the assistance of child welfare paralegals to reduce workload to allow time for finalization of adoption paperwork.

“Assisting People to Become Independent, Healthy and Safe”

There will always be children and youth in DHS custody who are free for adoption, and the outlined efforts will help inform the CW Child Permanency Program about what a reasonable number is and manage to that on an ongoing basis.

Request: Vice-Chair Williams requested information on the rights of youth in care and notification requirements.

Response: For DHS's Child Welfare Program rights are governed both in statute and rule depending on the individual's relationship to DHS. Foster parent rights are outlined in statute under [ORS 418.648](#) and foster youth rights are outlined in [ORS 418.200 – ORS 418.202](#). Both statutes are further expanded in Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) [413-010-0000 to 413-010-0750](#).

OAR [413-010-0180](#) is specific to “Rights of Children and Young Adults in the Legal Custody of the Department” and specifies notice of the rights for youth. Notice requirements are also found in policy and contained in the [Child Welfare Procedure Manual](#) in Chapter 5 Section 35: Rights of Children and Youth in Foster Care. Additionally DHS has developed [CF 0262](#) a poster, which “must be accessible to children and youth in substitute care at all foster homes and child caring agencies.”

Further outlined in Chapter 5 Section 35: “The caseworker must provide youth age 14 years and older with the Oregon Foster Children’s Bill of Rights signature page, [DHS 9016](#) and obtain a signature from the youth acknowledging the caseworker reviewed their rights with them per federal law. The youth gets a signed copy, and the caseworker must add a copy to the youth’s hard and electronic case file.”

For additional information please contact:
Tristan Fernandez, DHS Legislative Coordinator at
Tristan.Fernandez@dhsosha.state.or.us

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