

Good afternoon,

My name is Natalie Bratton and I am a board member of the family network Creating Opportunities in Salem, Oregon.

I am writing to request that the Developmental Services Budget for Regional Family Networks is protected during this unprecedented time.

Creating Opportunities is the Regional Family Network in Marion, Polk, and Yamhill counties and supports over 1,800 families and community members through the area. I became a member of the Board of Directors of Creating Opportunities so I could make a meaningful difference in the lives of children and families affected by disabilities.

As the sister of a person affected by a disability, I have seen first hand the difference that Creating Opportunities makes. Creating Opportunities offers a wide array of supports to families, often for free, that may not come from anywhere else. This family network not only supports the person that has a disability, but also gives essential resources to families in desperate need of a helping hand. My brother has attended the Celebrating Achievements gala event each year and was so proud to receive his awards. Events such as the Celebrating Achievements gala provide much needed special social events that are fun and also offer a place that is free from judgement and a place we can feel safe going to. We know that our needs will be kept in mind, and we know we can be ourselves at Creating Opportunities events.

Attached are the Creating Opportunities Annual Report, which succinctly reviews the achievements of the organization this year, and the Oregon Consortium of Family Networks Fact Sheet, which shows the value of investing in family networks.

Regional Family Networks are a vital and unique resource to communities. We help to bring community resources to families to better serve families, and make sure that all children in need of service have access to these resources, even if they don't qualify for formal service systems.

Thank you for your consideration,

Natalie Bratton
Board Member
Creating Opportunities



We are efficient and effective. **OCFN represents 12,250 families and 1,800 community partners** across 20 counties for an investment of \$1.3 million per biennium. Continue this investment in the resilience of families and their children's future.

In times of crisis, everyone needs their peers. Without a structure to connect families with children with disabilities to each other, they struggle to find one another. OCFN has been essential in helping families and communities work together to build a future where all people live full lives, use services effectively, and support each other.

How is OCFN leveraging peer support during this crisis?



Maintaining connections between families virtually while supporting partners remotely



Responding to state systems' need to understand the experience of families



Identifying gaps in resources and leveraged community partners to address them



Connecting families directly with information, resources and coping strategies that work



Helping families avoid crisis through connection, training and advocacy

"I just needed another mom, to know I wasn't alone in this." - OCFN founding member

Our data* tells us:

4 out of 5

Community partners feel better able to engage families with disability

82% of families

"Believe my child will work at a paying job"

86% of families

"Believe my network makes my family's life better"

3 out of 4

Families now feel able to focus on their child's strengths

What have families been saying about OCFN?

"OCFN strengthens my family to build connections and supports we need to raise our children at home."

"Family networks build community capacity to support and welcome people and families who experience disability."

"OCFN has helped us refine natural supports to live a whole life and reduce the need for paid services during COVID-19."

Maintaining our current funding of \$1.3M will allow us to continue this vital work in 20 Oregon counties.

For more information, contact Carrie Salehiamin at carries@ocdd.org or visit www.ocdd.org/supporting-families/

*Data Source: 2018 OCFN Periodic Progress Reports & Survey Results



2019 Annual Update

1,804 Regional Family Network Members
1,368 Facebook Likes



Connecting Families

Regional Family Network Event Highlights

Family Paint Studio Party • Valentine's Day Party • Celebrating Achievements Awards Gala
Sensory Friendly Carousel • Mom's Day at Oregon Garden • Summer Swap • Miniature Golf
Sharing the Weight Blanket Party • Pumpkin Patch with WVDSA & ASO
Parents Night Under the Stars • Parents Night at the Planetarium • New Year Prep Party



Strengthening Families

Family Training Event Highlights

- **Alternatives to Guardianship** with The Arc Oregon Guardianship Advocacy & Planning Services
- **Behavior Supports in Salem Keizer Schools** with Salem Keizer School District
- **Building Independence in the Classroom & Community** with Salem Keizer School District
- **Create a Color Life for Your Family**
- **Creating Leaders Parent Leadership Class of 2019**
- **Diagnosis Discussions** with Providence Swindells Resource Center
- **Discussions with a Doctor**
- **Finding Balance for Parents: Self Care and Relaxation Strategies**
- **Finding Hope in Moments of Crisis** with Kathy Schnebly of Natural Discoveries
- **How to Start a Social Club** with Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities
- **Maximizing Developmental Disabilities Services** with Polk County DD Services and Yamhill DD Services
- **Raising a Self-Advocate** with Oregon Self-Advocacy Coalition
- **RESPECT Healthy Boundaries** by Providence Swindells and Autism Society of Oregon
- **Safe & Secure Symposium** with The Arc Oregon, Autism Society of Oregon, Providence Swindells, Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center, Willamette Valley Down Syndrome Association, Natural Discoveries, and Oregon Family Support Network
- **Sensory Strategies for Home** with Providence Swindells and Willamette Valley Down Syndrome Association
- **Showcase Your Student's Strengths** with Dallas School District
- **Strengthening Marriage While Nurturing Your Child with Special Needs Workshop**
- **The Power of Personal Profiles**
- **The Power of Words and How they Impact Children** with Dallas School District
- **Transition to Adulthood** by FACT Oregon with Salem Keizer School District
- **Transition to High School** by FACT Oregon with Salem Keizer School District
- **What to do if Bullying Happens** with Salem Keizer School District
- **Your Journey Begins** with Salem Health, Natural Discoveries and Marion Polk Early Learning Hub



2019 Annual Update

December 30, 2019 • Page 2



Strengthening Communities

Community Building Highlights

- Presentation to Marion County Youth & Family Crisis Services
- Presentation to Oregon Family Workforce Association
- Presentation to Mental Health Clinicians
- Presented Custom Disability Awareness Training to 17 Local Librarians



Building Collaboration

Systems Advocacy Highlights

- **Marion-Polk Family Resources, Support & Training (FRST) Group Coordination**
- **Special Education Advisory Committee Leadership for Salem-Keizer Schools and Dallas School District**
- **Oregon's Developmental Disabilities Services Vision Advisory Group**
- **Community Service Integration Team Meeting Participation**
- **Provided Dozens of Local Families Individual Support, Consultation and Advocacy Assistance**



Contracted Program Coordination

- **Regional Family Network** - Marion, Polk & Yamhill Counties
Contracted by the Oregon Department of Human Services, Office of Developmental Disability Services and the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities to strengthen families and communities.
- **Employer Resource Connection** - Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Marion, Polk, Yamhill, Linn, Benton & Lane
Contracted by the Oregon Home Care Commission to offer resources to those who employ PSWs.
- **GO Project** – Statewide
Contracted by the Oregon Developmental Disabilities Coalition to support legislative advocacy.
- **Alliance for Early Intervention** - Statewide
Contracted by the Oregon Council on Developmental Disabilities to promote advocacy for EI/ECSE services.



Contact Information

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