

February 28, 2023

Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety Testimony in Support of SB 5514 and DOJ POP 309

Co-Chairs Sen. Sollman and Rep. Evans and Members of the Joint Subcommittee on Public Safety,

On behalf of Oregon Child Abuse Solutions, we are pleased to submit testimony in support of DOJ POP 309.

Oregon Child Abuse Solutions (OCAS) is the statewide chapter of Children's Advocacy Centers and our mission is to transform Oregon's child abuse response by strengthening CACs, training first responders, supporting MDTs, and leading statewide initiatives to ensure that all children receive quality, healing-centered care.

Oregon law (ORS 418.780) requires that all children have access to a skilled, competent and medically sound Medical Assessment completed at a Child Advocacy Center (CAC) regardless of ability to pay, yet ongoing state funding makes up only 17% of CAC budgets. One time funding, while helpful, poses challenges to meeting the greatest resource need of CACs, staff. On-going funding allows for program planning, development and execution.

The purpose of providing ongoing funding to Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) is to help ensure that children across the state who may have been abused have access to child abuse medical assessments and related services critical to ensuring their health and wellbeing. Currently, CACs are only able to serve 55% of the children referred and have reported that the complexity and severity of the cases they see has increased significantly since covid restrictions have been lifted and children are coming into contact with mandatory reporters for the first time since the beginning of COVID. Now, more than ever, access to CAC professionals is crucial.

CACs provide medically and forensically sound medical examinations and forensic interviews requiring the services of professionals with highly specialized training. CACs collect evidence of abuse, act as hubs for coordinating child abuse multidisciplinary response, and offer trauma-informed therapy and referrals critical to helping children and families recover from abuse. Without access to these services, child abuse multidisciplinary intervention teams including DHS child welfare workers and law

enforcement officers do not have access to the expertise and resources essential to investigate and respond to child abuse.

This package requests General Fund for permanent funding for the support of Children's Advocacy Centers. Administrative support for this work is included in DOJ – Policy Option Package # 115. The funds will be administered by CVSSD through grants to Oregon CACs. CVSSD allocates funding by formula to each CAC. The formula consists of an \$80,000 per year base and an additional amount determined by the population of the county/counties served by the Children's Advocacy Center. Funds were paid prospectively on an annual basis. The first payment when Grantee's Children's Advocacy Center Fund Application was moved to Grant Awarded status in CVSSD E-Grants.

Please support this allocation of \$6,000,000 through the General Fund to support CACs in Oregon. With this support and resource administered through the Oregon Department of Justice, CACs will be better aligned to meet the growing needs of children and their families when child abuse has impacted the most vulnerable in our midst.

Sincerely,
Shelly Smith
Shelly Smith
Executive Director