

1. Overview

Oregon's child welfare system is focused on child safety and the urgency of planning to meet the individual child's needs for permanency and well-being. Case planning includes identifying specific services needed to meet each child's needs. A caseworker considers all the information gathered during both the child safety and protective capacity assessments to develop a focused, systematic, time-limited plan to meet the child's needs in partnership with the family, other key persons, agencies and systems involved with the child.

Case management of services to children is a complex task, but has many benefits:

- Thoughtful case management is critical to address the safety and well-being of a child. This is especially true when selecting a substitute caregiver appropriate to the child's needs.
- Case management models a method of problem solving that may be used by a child and his or her family.
- Case management helps a child understand the decisions that result in family reunification or another permanent plan.
- Case management improves communication between the caseworker, substitute caregiver, families, the supervisor, peers, other providers and the courts.

The caseworker always considers a child's safety, permanency and well-being in the decision-making process.

Delivery of services to children is critical in achieving positive outcomes for Oregon's children. Successful intervention in the lives of abused and neglected children requires concurrent involvement of many different systems – the child and family, child welfare, the court, education, medical and mental health professionals, attorneys, CASAs, and other local agencies that serve children and families.

The caseworker, other child welfare staff and service providers provide services to children. Service providers include the child's substitute caregiver, school, medical and mental health professionals, and other community agencies. Federal law, state statute and administrative rule provide the framework for providing and monitoring specific services for a child. These include the least restrictive appropriate placement that is in the child's best interests, frequent caseworker contact, frequent family visitation, sibling contact, appropriate education, physical and mental health care, addressing the child's identified needs, and providing services to support the transition to adulthood. Services are provided with sensitivity to a child's culture and ethnicity. A caseworker is responsible for coordinating the systematic delivery of services to provide meaningful intervention and support, rather than to increase a child's isolation or sense of victimization. Well-planned and coordinated service delivery increases the likelihood of achieving positive outcomes.

These procedures are written for all children and young adults served by child welfare staff. Each procedure describes the unique actions required when DHS has legal custody of the child, any special actions required for young adults 18 through 20 years who remain in child welfare's legal custody, and expectations for monitoring the child's needs when the family retains legal custody of the child. Procedures that have unique activities when a child is placed through a Voluntary Placement Agreement or Voluntary Custody Agreement also are included.

