



Oregon Alliance to End Violence Against Women

Domestic Violence Specialists in Child Welfare Offices

SUPPORT FOR FULL FUNDING TO IMPLEMENT CO-LOCATED ADVOCATES IN DHS BUDGET (SB 5529)

Background:

Where domestic violence is present in the home, it must be identified and addressed before a child welfare case can be resolved. Providing support to adult victims of domestic violence and holding batterers accountable for the violence is necessary to enhance safety for both child and adult victims. Coordination between domestic violence experts and caseworkers is a vital part of helping families avoid foster care and achieve safety and self-sufficiency.

Problem:

- 1) DHS statewide statistics show that domestic violence is a safety threat in 25-32% of child abuse cases in Oregon.
- 2) Research shows that there is a correlation between domestic violence and child fatalities, and that domestic violence is an indicator of severe child abuse.
- 3) DHS caseworkers do not have expert training in domestic violence and are often challenged in responding to the intense needs of these clients.

Solution:

- 1) Placement of domestic violence specialists in child welfare offices is a best practices model to help with child abuse cases involving domestic violence. The specialists will provide in-depth safety planning, education, advocacy and on-going support to adult domestic violence victims, and support & consultation to Child Welfare workers creating case plans involving victims and perpetrators.
- 2) This program was partially funded in the 2011 legislature, and full funding is necessary to implement the program across the state.

Facts:

- Providing safety services to the adult victim of domestic violence makes it more likely that children can be safe at home.
- In pilot projects where domestic violence specialists were present, child welfare caseworkers reported that:
 - Victim parents had better access to services, were more likely to successfully deal with their experience of violence, and were better able to create safety plans for their children; and
 - Caseworkers were better able to keep children safely with their parent, rather than placing them in foster care.
- Location of domestic violence specialists in child welfare offices is a nationally recognized best practice for addressing the needs of children in violent homes.