



TO: Oregon Youth Authority, Department of Human Services (Child Welfare and Self-Sufficiency),  
and Oregon Health Authority  
FROM: Oregon Alliance  
RE: COVID-19 Outbreak – Adequate Resources When Caring for Vulnerable Children  
DATE: March 10, 2020

Dear Director Allen, Director O’Leary, Director Gaston-Jones, and Director Haun

I’m writing on behalf of Oregon Alliance members to adequately fund system impacts regarding the COVID-19 outbreak and allow flexibility around licensure requirements.

Our members serve over 100,000 children, youth and their families across Oregon and provide a full range of services including BRS, PRTS, shelter programs and the state hospital for children. We are a critical part of the child care system, ensuring Oregon’s youth are protected and have the right level of services available to them.

As COVID-19 cases mount, Oregon Alliance members appreciate the state’s response to the current outbreak crisis. We thank you for your leadership on information-sharing and best policy practices recommendations.

As social service providers for children and youth, many of whom are the responsibility of the state, we are concerned about the implications of a number of policy recommendations that comes with the COVID-19 outbreak for congregate settings. Our concerns are probably not unique to our system of care, but they are keenly felt when providing services to Oregon’s most vulnerable children and youth.

Staffing is a critical issue. Staff turnover for these providers is now running upwards of 40—60% annually, and for some they have 100% turnover annually. Approximately 30% of direct-care staff positions are open and it takes approximately 2-3 months to recruit. There’s still a lot that’s unknown about the new coronavirus and what it will mean for the workplace to ensure children, youth and staff are safe and well. Given this, we are requesting:

- Weekly combined meeting with OYA, OHA, and DHS to share information, clear up any misinformation, provide updates, and respond to developments of this quickly evolving issue.
- Immediate Licensing flexibility such as limitation of visits, enhanced screening of visitors, room occupancy, treatment hours, etc.
- Guarantee that the appropriate state agency (OYA, DHS/CW and/or OHA) will be responsive, timely and accountable for relocating a child or youth if a program needed to temporarily close due to an outbreak and/or lack of staffing.
- Assistance with obtaining the necessary personal protective safety equipment and supplies.
- Funding for:
  - Temporarily pay staff who may not have the resources to be off without pay, and/or may have already used their Oregon Sick Leave and/or still may need to remain home. In most cases these are the lowest paid staff.



- Access to motel space in case there's a need for quarantine or if a program must close for youth who are unaffiliated with OYA or CW.
- Ensuring full contract revenue if a program is required to reduce capacity or temporarily close including programs directly contracted through Oregon's Coordinated Care Organizations.
- Incentives for staff who must work additional shifts due to lack of staffing.

Again, I want to thank you for your ongoing partnership and support. I look forward to working with you on how we can continue to provide quality services for children and youth during this challenging outbreak.

Royce Bowlin  
Executive Director  
Oregon Alliance/Oregon Child and Family Services Council