



Program Description

Family ties matter. At times like these, it's never been more clear how much our children benefit from strong, safe, and nurturing family connections. And the future of our state depends on a contributing, diverse and capable citizenry. To this end, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is pleased to announce the award of "Family Connections Oregon", a three-year grant for \$500,000 per year designed to strengthen connections for all children in care. This grant from the US Children's Bureau will be implemented by DHS through the Child Welfare Partnership with Portland State University's School of Social Work.

The **Vision** of Family Connections Oregon is that every child who comes to the attention of child welfare be connected, healed, and safe within the context of lifelong family and cultural ties.

Oregon's Child Welfare System has been a national leader reflecting family values in many important practice innovations. For example, Oregon was a leader in developing Family Team Meeting practice, and one of the first states to pass legislation requiring family team meetings be considered for children in state custody. In addition, over the past five years child welfare community partners in several counties have implemented Family Find, an innovative approach to seek out and engage healthy extended family connections for children in care.

Though these and many other models have been available when grant or special initiative funds existed to support them, they have not been routinely available for every child in care. With this grant, DHS hopes to assure sustainability and consistent availability of these services in two ways – by building evidence, and addressing infrastructure.

The **Goal** of Family Connections Oregon is to demonstrate the effectiveness of combined family find and family team meetings while addressing infrastructure barriers and installing supports for implementation and sustainability statewide.

At the case level, Family Connections Oregon will support a combination of family find and family team meetings for families early in their encounter with the agency in three distinct Oregon counties (Douglas, Lane, and Multnomah/African American families). The Child Welfare Partnership will provide staff development, consultation and evaluation for the project, as well as convening local and statewide task force groups.

At the systems level, the statewide task force will identify barriers and identify solutions to successfully implement the fiscal strategies, workforce strategies, and caseworker skills needed for statewide sustainable practice. Together we will work to make sure every child in the care of the state of Oregon is returned as soon as possible to safe and loving families.

For more information, please contact Family Connections Oregon at:

Katharine Cahn, PhD, MSW

Center for Improvement of Child and Family Services
School of Social Work at Portland State University

cahnk@pdx.edu

Laurie Price

Innovations, DHS Child Welfare

laurie.price@dhs.or.us



Vision, Goal, and Objectives

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Objectives of Family Connections Oregon:

1. Empirically informed approach to systems change for full implementation and sustainability of a combined model of family find and family team meetings throughout the State of Oregon.
2. Implementation of combined models in demonstration sites 1) Lane County (medium sized); 2) Douglas County (rural); and 3) Multnomah County/focus on African American families (urban). Each county will have a local advisory committee to help position the model within community, court, and agency providers; and will convey barriers to state task force. Lessons learned from each county will be 'fed up' to the Infrastructure Task force.
3. Research and Evaluation to inform practice locally and nationally. Research findings will be provided in feedback loops to decision makers, not held back until the end of the project.
4. Dissemination that makes a difference. Project findings and success stories shared with media, legislative allies, and field staff; also incorporated into training and coursework.
5. Project Management that reflects the values of family connections. Including statewide task force, with strong family voice and leadership; local collaborative advisory committees with family voice as well as provider and agency voice; and project managed by a child welfare training and research partnership that has a history of success.