Protect Our Children

Movement-Building for Child Sexual Abuse Prevention: Protect Our Children Ripple Effects in Rural Oregon

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UNIVERSITY OF OREGON College of Education
CENTER FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT
1244 Walnut St., Eugene OR 97403 541-346-7484

THE Ford Family FOUNDATION

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A Developmental Evaluation Partnership

Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN)
University of Oregon

Jeff Todahl | Simone Piper | Steph Luther
Jaclyn Bogner | Reid Thompson Cañas | Kaleigh Bronson-Cook

The Ford Family Foundation
Keavy Cook | Mary Ratliff

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Contact: Jeff Todahl, jtodahl@uoregon.edu
Simone Piper, simones@uoregon.edu

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> *"This is a statewide movement to advocate for the most vulnerable children."*
>
> **KEAVY COOK**
> Director, Children, Youth and Families
> The Ford Family Foundation

Introduction

Protect Our Children is a concerted effort to reduce child sexual abuse in Oregon by educating adults about the nature of the problem and the specific actions they can take to prevent it. Protect Our Children includes an Oregon and Siskiyou County, California prevention network, comprised of a core group of 19 rurally-based delivery sites convened by The Ford Family Foundation. The Foundation serves as the Protect Our Children coordinating body and provides an array of support, including funding to participating sites, technical assistance, community-building, peer mentoring, co-learning opportunities, and trainings[1].

A 7-year cumulative impact report (Todahl et al., 2022) overwhelmingly found that a) participants value Stewards of Children, Protect Our Children's core curriculum, b) knowledge about child sexual abuse increases, c) pro-prevention attitudes are positively impacted, and d) participants take many more prevention actions relative to randomly selected Oregonians with no Protect Our Children experience – and that these changes generally last at least 18-months post-training.

Additionally, leaders reported positive changes within their organizations, expansion of mission statements to include prevention with broad Board of Directors-level support, and emerging shifts in social taboos around openly discussing child sexual abuse and other forms of trauma. Site Directors, trainers, and other leaders overwhelmingly pointed to the 'rippling' impact of Protect Our Children in their communities – impacts that went well beyond individual level changes in knowledge, attitudes, and protective behaviors.

Given these observations, the evaluation team conducted 'Ripple Effect Mapping' (REM) interviews to assess and more fully understand the cascading impact of Protect Our Children on community, community networks, and prevention systems. The REM evaluation investigated the net impact of Protect Our Children on participating organizations in Oregon communities, and within and across networks. Evaluators also asked what contributed to these cascading impacts, what can be learned from those factors, and what does this suggest for statewide prevention efforts moving forward?

Ripple Effect Mapping interviews asked this overall question:

To what extent has Protect Our Children had broad systemic impact in communities, above and beyond changes in child sexual abuse prevention knowledge, attitudes, and actions among individual Oregonians?

1 A detailed description of the co-learning network, led by The Ford Family Foundation, is detailed in the 7-year cumulative report.

Methods Overview

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM) focus group interviews with project sites occurred in October and November 2021 and follow-up surveys in May and June 2022. The purpose in using REM was to assess ways in which Protect Our Children may have influenced Oregon communities and community networks, particularly in unanticipated or unexpected ways. Seventeen participants from five project sites shared their insights during one of five 4.5-hour virtual REM sessions. Additionally, 32 Protect Our Children leaders completed a survey that was developed based on original focus group conversations. Survey data are also presented in this report.

REM focus groups were comprised of a series of guiding questions related to the following categories: 1) Events & Norms, 2) Social Connections, and 3) Policy. Questions asked of participants in these categories included, for example: a) How has Protect Our Children impacted traditions and everyday ways of thinking and behaving in your community? b) Has Protect Our Children created new networks and relationships in your community? If so, please explain. And c) Has Protect Our Children had an impact on policy, procedures, and laws in organizations, groups, or government in your community? A full list of the questions and the survey developed as a part of this evaluation are included in the appendix.

REM sessions were audio recorded and transcribed in preparation for analysis. Four analysis team members carefully reviewed the transcripts and identified a coding structure. Additionally, during our initial phase of the analysis, we developed a REM survey to gain additional insight from all project partners, past and present. The survey included 22 closed-ended items born of ideas that emerged from the REM sessions. In one open-ended item, partners were also asked to describe the three most important Protect Our Children impacts in their community.

Findings

Several topics and ideas were discussed consistently across the sessions and were later confirmed with the follow-up survey. The three themes included 1) changes in organizational identity and practices, 2) community-level changes in norms, behaviors, and attitudes, and 3) mobilization, including the emergence and formation of a child sexual abuse statewide prevention system. Each theme included several subthemes:

Organizational Identity and Practices

- Expanded role in the community
- Policy changes and capacity building
- Changes to built environment

Norms, Behaviors, and Attitudes

- Social norms change
- Cumulative action-taking and behavior
- Attitudes (community sentiments)

Statewide Mobilization – A Learning Community and Emerging Prevention System

- Gateway to new and evolving local partnerships
- Emerging local and Oregon-wide adult education child sexual abuse prevention network
- Impact of common goal
- Systems-level aspirations: Looking ahead

Organizational Identity and Practices

As participants reflected on the organizations they represent and their key role in Protect Our Children, Organizational Identity and Practices emerged as a central theme with three subthemes: a) expanded role in the community, b) policy changes, and c) changes to 'built environment.'

"Some of our sites have never considered themselves 'doing prevention' before and now they're leaders in prevention in their communities. It's wonderful."

MARY RATLIFF, Protect Our Children Project Director

Expanded Role in the Community

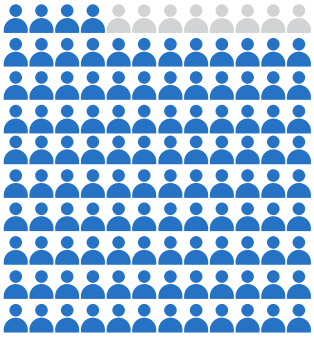
Protect Our Children leaders were asked to describe how local beliefs and perceptions about their organization may have shifted since offering the Stewards of Children training – and how this may have altered their relationship with community groups and community members. Participants uniformly agreed that Protect Our Children has had an impact on their organization, their relationship with partner and new-partner organizations, and pointed to cascading benefits of a shift in perceptions about their organizations as prevention experts, convenors, and community leaders championing a comprehensive child sexual abuse prevention initiative.

More and more organizations and community members realize we are not just here for evaluations – we do much more than investigations.

A CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER PARTNER

As a result of this shift, Protect Our Children partner sites receive many more calls for consultation, requests for prevention recommendations, and requests for prevention training. A total of 94% of REM survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that their reputation as an organization that provides prevention services has improved because of Protect Our Children. Concurrent to this, community members are more likely to see provider organizations as more connected to the community, available, and as "an open and inviting place" with an array of services. As described by one participant, this shift is a "real win, win situation."

Figure 1. Our reputation as an organization that provides prevention services has improved as a result of our Protect Our Children efforts.



94%
Agree or Strongly Agree

Protect Our Children providers are also now more likely to be regarded as "a proactive organization," and a place that champions the message "let's protect kids beforehand" (prior to trauma). As described by one participant representing a child advocacy center, people are more aware that we "are not just a building where kids who have been abused go. It's a place where we also talk about prevention, take prevention into the community, and work with prevention every bit as strongly as we do with assessments." As a result, "more and more people are having respect for the work that's being done here."

Others suggested that Protect Our Children provides a "flagstone training"—Stewards of Children—and that this training transformed their reputations as specialists and including providers of robust prevention education, comprehensive services, and reciprocity. One participant stated, "In addition to prevention education, (we are seen) as providing services outside of our walls and connecting with different organizations." Consequently, more partners and community members understand that "our mission is dedicated to prevention, evaluation, and treatment of child abuse" – allowing us to "present a holistic mission to get ahead of the game."

> *Protect Our Children has moved us into the consciousness of the community as a very proactive organization.*

Expanded Role: A convenor – not 'just an agency.'

Protect Our Children identity has also shifted for many from "just an agency" to an active "partner and collaborator." Many participants indicated that Protect Our Children spurred long-term relationships with local organizations, community groups, and specific and sometimes "hard to reach" populations. Due to this persistence, Protect Our Children providers are more often perceived as invested-for-the-long-term partners, i.e., "We've been saying we will see anyone that is referred – and let's join together." And, due to forming deeper partnerships, providers are more likely seen as being able to "bridge gaps – and Protect Our Children was a big piece of that."

Others suggested that Protect Our Children providers are more likely to be seen as leading a conversation about child sexual abuse by providing "a platform for discussion:"

> *[People see that we] are providing opportunities for discussion…and including what we can do (as a community) to reduce prevalence.*

Expanded Role: An innovative leader promoting systemic change.

Many participants indicated that Protect Our Children contributed to their organization being more often perceived as leading a larger effort – first beginning with "one-off trainings," and since having "snowballed into a bigger concept." Consequently, Protect Our Children providers are more likely seen as leading a vibrant and visible movement and promoting "valid approaches" that are community wide and "proactive and actively protecting children."

Protect Our Children has created a new visibility that would not have existed. (We are known) in the community for leading an effort to do things ahead of time, instead of being reactive.

This shift in perception has led to a cascading effect of increased requests for consultation by provider sites. One participant reflected the sentiment of many: "They'll call and say, 'Hey, here's a situation – what do you think?'" Another remarked that they receive the following kinds of requests, which have rapidly increased:

Hey, what would your advice be on this [child sexual abuse] tricky issue? I've heard from churches, individuals, schools, sports teams – it's over 100 for sure over the last few years.

Cascading Policy Changes and Capacity Building

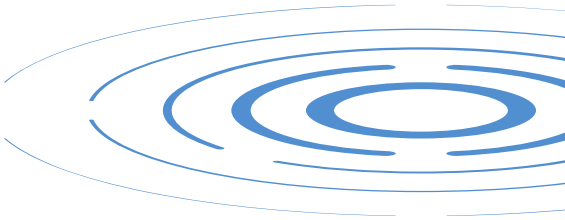
Participants were asked whether Protect Our Children impacted their policies and if any policy changes had influenced other organizations or partners. Each site asserted that Protect Our Children has impacted their policies and practices and including among community partners. Several participants described developing and updating codes of conduct – a pledge to community members about how they will treat each other and the people they serve – and making sure these standards are visible to staff, families, and the public who enter the building:

We're trying to bring more awareness and make sure that people are getting codes of conduct, not only having them, but making sure they're where parents who come in see it, staff sees it whenever they're at work, so that everyone knows… It says this is what we promise and what we ask of you, public or clients. If you see that we're failing in some way, we want to hear from you.'

One participant explained that developing an organizational code of conduct was a crucial first step before encouraging partnering organizations to do the same. They shared, "[Our staff] all knew what we were supposed to do, but we didn't have an actual code of conduct. I thought, I can't go out and ask someone else to write a code of conduct if we don't have one." This site went on to develop a code of conduct and trained a local church in Stewards of Children; the church immediately made changes to their built environment and wrote a code of conduct.

Many sites also stated that their organization's policies were updated to require Stewards of Children for all employees and volunteers, and for some sites, this also included board members. Seventy five percent of REM survey respondents stated that the training is required of their organization's employees. Participants explained that many of their community partners made the training mandatory as well—one participant stated that some local schools require teachers to attend a training every two years. Another shared that Protect Our Children is embedded in the local community college's education program:

There was a [community college] education group we were going to every year. Making it mandatory to take that training prior to becoming a teacher I think is fantastic… this is now part of their regular occurring program. It's exciting to see future teachers getting this information so much sooner than they used to.



This site also stated that they present Stewards of Children annually at the college's early childhood education conference, and the training has been added to the nursing curriculum. A new Siskiyou YMCA policy requires the training as a condition of employment and volunteer service, and childcare centers in that region will now be required to attend sexual abuse prevention training. Siskiyou County's First Five has determined that it is essential that Protect Our Children is one of the training priorities for any organization that receives funding from them. Trainings also include Family Resource Centers, including Protect Our Children and child sexual trafficking prevention.

> 75%
> of respondents stated that the Protect Our Children training is now required of their organization's employees.

Sites also reported new practices of "blended training" for parents, staff, and volunteers, i.e.,

> *We added an extra week to our evidence-based parenting programming (so that) participating families can attend Protect Our Children. And we blend Protect Our Children with the child abuse mandated reporter training.*

Additional policy and procedure changes included a church attending a Protect Our Children training and subsequently re-running background checks for staff, which resulted in a staffing change. Two sites referenced local summer camps and youth programs that created policies to ensure one-adult/one-child situations were avoided. One person mentioned that a summer camp "completely changed their staff ratios—they used to have one counselor per cabin and are now mandating two counselors per cabin." Another participant discussed similar changes that occurred at a local county fair for kids participating in a 4-H program and camping during the event.

Changes to the "Built Environment"

Changes to the "built environment," e.g., design of new buildings and remodeling for child safety, was a very commonly cited ripple. Sites described how Protect Our Children has influenced schools, churches, daycare facilities, and other organizations across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California to design and remodel their spaces to better protect children from abuse. Eighty one percent of REM survey respondents shared that, because of Protect Our Children, their organization has made changes to the built environment.

At one site the Board of Directors attended the training during the beginning stages of a capital project. Subsequently, the Board changed the architectural drawings twice to include modifications that would enhance visibility in all physical spaces, including a redesign of the locker room and door systems. Participants shared several examples of areas within buildings where windows, mirrors, and additional lighting were installed to increase visibility:

> *[A local church] did a [Stewards of Children] training and immediately had windows put in all the doors of the classrooms. They paid attention to light switches and doorknobs so that two kids couldn't get in a room and lock themselves in. They have a wonderful play area where kids can easily be seen from anywhere in the room… a lot of seemingly simple things that are huge in even a small facility.*

[A local dance studio] realized that so many of their students might be hanging out outside of the building, waiting to be picked up after their dance lessons, so they installed significant outdoor lighting to make it a safer place.

Additional examples of how Protect Our Children prompted organizations to alter their built environment included the removal of unnecessary doors and modifying existing doors and windows to allow better monitoring of spaces where children are present:

[A local church] cut all the doors in half. The rule was that the doors remain open on the top whenever there are classes going on, and they put cameras in certain areas in the hallway so they could see everything that was going on.

[A daycare] removed the exterior door to a restroom so that all the stalls had their doors, but that adults can monitor who's going in what stall… those small tweaks go a long way to making those buildings safer and for people to realize that they don't have to spend thousands of dollars to keep kids safe, but that they can implement small changes to create large impact.

We installed small windows and automatic lighting in all our closet and office spaces – and including a weight room, our youth activity center, and we changed the order of traffic through a locker room changing area.

Others described installing camera systems and reconfiguring doors to increase sound access:

We purposely left a one-inch gap between the doors that you could hear all sound between the various areas… You can be in the front area and hear into the showers 50 feet away or so. I know of at least two instances within churches where they have done a very similar measure, including retroactively creating automatic lighting systems and large windows.

Two of our board members (after viewing Stewards of Children) were instrumental in not only shifting of the blueprint during phase four, but then subsequent camera placement. We had 56 security cameras installed indoors and outdoors; board members walked through looking at all angles and potential risk areas.

81%

of REM survey respondents shared that, because of Protect Our Children, their organization has made changes to the built environment.

Norms, Behaviors, and Attitudes

Previous Protect Our Children evaluation data concluded that most individual participants shift their attitudes and behaviors following the training – and that these changes persist over time. Individual participants are more hopeful about child sexual abuse prevention, take more specific actions to prevent child sexual abuse, and have more confidence that their actions make a difference. A participant in an earlier phase of the evaluation remarked, for example: "Protect Our Children has raised awareness of child abuse that I'm not sure would have existed otherwise; we've been able to reach people that had no idea... I do feel like people are thinking about it – including recognizing that it's the adult's responsibility, not the child."

The ripple effect evaluation asked similar questions about attitudes and behaviors, but from a more pulled-back lens, focusing more broadly on community-level changes. Three subthemes emerged under the main theme of Norms, Behaviors, and Attitudes, including a) social norms change, b) cumulative action-taking and behavior, and c) attitudes (community sentiments about child sexual abuse prevention).

Social Norms Change

Participants described how their communities' social norms and everyday ways of thinking and behaving have changed because of Protect Our Children. For example, one primary theme identified across sites was community members actively requesting consent and engaging in more conversations about consent. One participant explained: "We're melding [the topic of consent and healthy sexuality] into our everyday conversations without just having a one-time conversation about it." Another participant shared:

> *I've seen [people actively seeking consent and acknowledging kids' bodily autonomy and agency] happening more visibly in the community where somebody's like, 'Oh, can I have a hug' and that kind of thing, and that has been exciting to see happening organically… it feels like a community-established norm now.*

Multiple sites reported their communities experiencing increased comfort in talking about child sexual abuse and its prevention. A total of 97% of REM survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Protect Our Children has reduced the "culture of silence" that historically has surrounded child sexual abuse in their community. As described by one participant, "People in all of the communities in the county were beginning to talk about sexual abuse and how something needed to be done, and they are now talking more and more freely about it." Another participant stated:

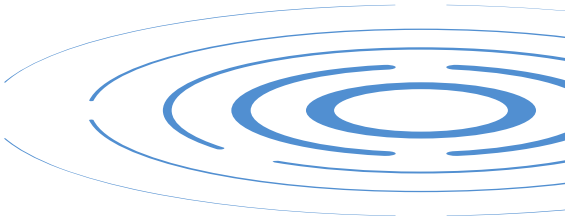
> *You know, people just weren't talking about child sexual abuse at all. Maybe in your family, you would tell your kid to watch out for this guy or whatever. For this county, [the training has] made it OK to talk about [child sexual abuse], and it's made it a thing that we are not going to accept this happening – if we can prevent it, we're going to.*

In addition to increased comfort with talking about child sexual abuse prevention, participants reported a greater overall understanding of trauma and its potential impact. One participant reported that "people are starting to recognize how trauma is connected to [things like] school delinquency or early substance use, and there's a larger understanding that it's not just going to have one form of repercussion – it's going to manifest itself in different manners that at first glance don't [seem related] to trauma." Another participant described how local businesses have developed a greater understanding of the relevance of trauma and its impact on their businesses and personal lives:

> *When we started this process, businesses would say, 'My business has nothing to do with children, so why would I be interested in any of this?' And then you begin to talk to them about the impact [of sexual abuse] on their employees, clients, and perhaps even their own families. I've had people go, 'Oh my god, the reason they just stopped coming to work, is it because they were having a reaction to something tied back to abuse, they had in their life? I never thought about it.'*

Participants also indicated that norms are shifting among men, among male school administrators, and among many parents:

> *(We are seeing) more male involvement, the expectation and norm is shifting – it's not something we need to broach every time; it's [discussing child sexual abuse and attending a training] less taboo.*
>
> *Male school administrators seem to be more open – and to see it is not taboo, but a shared responsibility. (In our community) it's a night and day difference.*
>
> *Because of these training opportunities, parents are feeling safer and more comfortable to come to us and say, 'Hey this happened, where can I get some resources?' It really has normalized conversations… Slowly taking the shame away from parents discussing what happened to them, or what has happened to their children.*



97%
of REM survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that Protect Our Children has reduced the "culture of silence" around child sexual abuse in their community.

Cumulative Action-Taking and Behavior

Participants were asked about the potential impact of Protect Our Children on community-level prevention action-taking. Eighty eight percent of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have noticed an increase in prevention-specific action taking among community members – and attributed this to Protect Our Children. Teachers and coaches shared ways in which they have changed their behavior to respect consent and practice safety with their students:

> *[A husband of a dance instructor] would spot some of the kids in their gymnastics and he would just put his hand on their lower back and help them flip over without even thinking about it. I was talking with him after the training and he said, 'I never even thought to explain what I was doing and to get their consent… from this day forward I will explain to them what I'm going to do and do I have their consent. If I don't have their consent, then I won't do it.'*

> *[An elementary school gym teacher] changed the way he did things, and when he needed to talk to [a student who] was doing something wrong . . . he used to do it just after the session, and of course it would just be he and the student talking in the gym you know for about 5-10 minutes, and then they changed that, so now his new method was [ask another student to] hold the door open and wait . . . it was things like that that really had an effect in our community.*

Some sites referenced the ways in which they used their knowledge to mitigate the limitations of their physical space, especially increasing staff presence in areas of lower visibility:

> *[A local elementary school] has a main hallway that has stairwells. Maybe four or five classrooms kind of hover around the outskirts. They have one or two teachers walk that area when they're able to so that they can make sure they're aware of the corners and the blind spots and that they can address anything if needed.*
>
> *[A local Boys & Girls Club] had two bathrooms, a girls and boys, and they were right by each other. During designated times for kids to go to the bathroom, they would always have an adult standing right in the middle of those two bathrooms, so nothing happened.*

Much of the application of knowledge and skills shared by the participants was in sharing that knowledge with others who did not go through the training. People who took the training were so moved by what they learned that they wanted to have conversations about it with family and friends:

> *That's one of the revelations that folks who attend the training have had. Because they believe that it's a stranger that's going to cause this issue with their children. And when it becomes known to them that there's a high likelihood that it's going to be someone known to the child, it really has opened eyes and opened conversations.*

> *I was talking to my son-in-law and daughter about the training. It came up because of my granddaughter. My daughter said, 'Mom, she's yelling her body part in the Walmart bathroom' and I said, 'We need to tell her what she needs to know—the correct name for our body parts.'*

88%
of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that they have noticed an increase in prevention-specific action-taking among community members – and attributed this to Protect Our Children.

Attitudes (Community Sentiments)

Participants from each site described the impact of Protect Our Children on community members' feelings about the issue of child sexual abuse and its prevention. Site leaders described a growing sense of hopefulness that child sexual abuse is preventable, and healing is possible: "It goes back to that whole message of hope and healing and prevention. Everybody's invested in that." Another participant added:

> *We give people hope. We give them the tools to say 'As scary as this may seem, there is a solution, and the biggest part of that solution is you. You can prevent this in your own family, neighborhood… wherever you may be.'*
>
> *We've changed the dynamic, we've changed the dialogue. This is about hope and healing, moving forward, and preventing tragedy from happening. Every one of us plays a role in that.*

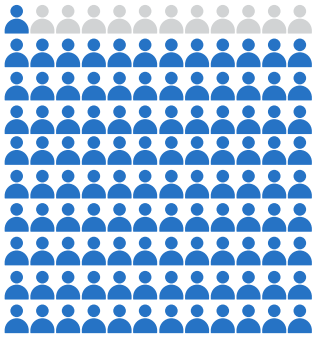
Many participants spoke of their own feelings of hopefulness as they reflected on Protect Our Children and other prevention efforts at their organizations. They believed a similar sense of optimism for abuse prevention is spreading through their communities. Ninety-one percent of REM survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that their sense of hopefulness about child sexual abuse prevention has increased due at least in part to their Protect Our Children efforts. Furthermore, 100% of participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement: "I am inspired by the Oregon-wide effort to prevent child sexual abuse." Several people stated that they felt energized, inspired, and appreciative of what they have accomplished in their communities:

This [REM session] really helped me to step back and go, 'Wow, in spite of something like COVID, we're still making progress, we're still making an impact.' I'm even more inspired and re-energized to get back out there and get the community fired up.

It's enlightening to see where it started and how much it's grown… it's so entrenched in our community and in a lot of spaces.

I feel energized about the future and what else could happen with CACs nationwide.

Figure 2. My sense of hopefulness about child sexual abuse prevention has increased due at least in part to our Protect Our Children efforts.



91%
Agree or Strongly Agree

100%
of participants agreed or strongly agreed with this statement:
I am inspired by the Oregon-wide effort to prevent child sexual abuse.

Participants suggested that these shifts in attitudes have been bolstered by locally driven efforts, i.e., attitude shifts are a ripple effect of systematic and shared work – and that these collective efforts have contributed to greater outreach and rates of participation.

We went from reaching a few, to the idea that this is everyone's business… Working together in an organized and systematic way really mobilized this. We need to continue this conversation about how we're all doing this together.

Statewide Mobilization–A Learning Community and Emerging Prevention System

"The Protect Our Children model is a web of intentionally localized efforts, each contributing to a shared collective vision."

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN CUMULATIVE REPORT

At the time of the Protect Our Children launch in 2015 it can be fairly assumed that no statewide child sexual abuse prevention network existed in Oregon – only a handful of Oregon regions led largely by Child Advocacy Centers provided adult-based sexual abuse prevention education. The Ford Family Foundation-led statewide co-learning network, therefore, seeded for the first time in Oregon a rurally centered child sexual abuse statewide prevention effort. Considering this context, participants overwhelmingly pointed to an instrumental role for the co-learning network that emerged as a part of the Protect Our Children initiative. As described by participants, this network was bolstered by a) a sense of community and co-learning as part of a larger effort, b) talent and deep commitment by individuals and participating sites, and c) infrastructure and co-learning support provided by The Ford Family Foundation. One previous evaluation participant described the "learning community" as "the secret sauce."

Given participants' emphasis on networking, co-learning, and the rippling effects of these efforts, a main theme of Statewide Mobilization emerged, along with the following three subthemes: a) gateway to new and evolving local partnerships, b) emerging local and Oregon-wide adult education child sexual abuse prevention network, c) impact of a common goal, and d) systems-level aspirations: looking ahead.

The statewide ecosystem of partners that now exist as a result of Protect Our Children is a powerful tool for advocacy and the protection of the most vulnerable residents of our state.

ANNE KUBISCH, President, The Ford Family Foundation

Protect Our Children – Gateway to New and Evolving Local Partnerships

Participants shared that Protect Our Children has led to new partnerships with a range of local organizations and communities. A full 97% of REM survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that their organization has developed many new partnerships because of Protect Our Children. One participant reflected the view of many: "Protect Our Children became the gateway for new partnerships and opportunities." A recurring theme included new partnerships with local school districts and academic institutions. For example, one site shared that Protect Our Children led to new partnerships with multiple school districts in their county, and that these relationships paved the way for every school in their county to receive the training. Another participant shared:

> *[A local college] was awarded a grant to train within this next school year 300 staff, faculty, and students in Protect Our Children, and several undergrad students and graduate school students are involved in this process to research how a preventative training could be implemented and included in a higher education system. How to get this education—something that is a standard as math is standard—within higher education.*

97%
of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that their organization has developed many new partnerships as a result of Protect Our Children.

Others indicated that the relationship formed through Protect Our Children sparked other additional shared work, e.g., "It really helped us initiate our kindergarten readiness assessment countywide. You need solid relationships; Protect Our Children sparked this." Site staff, when reaching out to offer "this free training," indicated it frequently "became the beginning of other partnerships." This was fostered by Protect Our Children outreach and relationship building, i.e., "You need solid relationships and a point person."

Participants also often mentioned new partnerships with churches. One site reported being contacted by the largest evangelical church in their county, which had previously expressed disinterest in partnering. They shared, "They actually reached out to us and said, 'Do you have any kind of training for our staff and maybe some of our congregants?' [Now], every new staff member goes through the training. They want their congregation and all their Sunday school trained. They understand the importance of it, and they're supportive of it, 100%." Another site shared that they were introduced to a local church while conducting a Stewards of Children training at a prison, and that the partnership "blossomed quickly and got us more connections than we ever thought we would have."

Notably, some sites reported success in establishing relationships with communities they had previously failed to engage. Many of the survey responses pointed to stronger relationships with Hispanic/Latino or Tribal communities as one of the top three impacts of Protect Our Children in their communities:

> *Historically, [we haven't been able to engage with] the Latino Community Association, but a strong relationship bloomed where they were inviting us to their community events and really reaching out to us as a partner versus somebody who had a scary training that talked about, you know, children and sex.*

We've been endorsed by the tribal council for this work, so I feel very, very hopeful that as COVID lessens, we'll be able to get back in there and do more training with them. It's a major cultural shift – it's huge that we're training them to provide this training within their tribal community.

Some participants reported establishing partnerships with law enforcement. One person stated, "One of the detectives attended a training and said, 'This is the full meal deal, it talks about everything in one training.' The chief went on to write a wonderful full-page letter in support of Protect Our Children." Another participant reported:

Our [district attorney] was one of our [organization] founders when he was a deputy district attorney, so he has gone to great lengths to make sure that all the police departments in [our county] are very well educated around dealing with families where child abuse is being reported.

Participants also reported new and strengthened partnerships with EMTs, local businesses, a prison, mental health agencies, motorcycle clubs, parent educators, childcare providers, and health care organizations.

Emerging Local and Oregon-wide Adult Education Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Network

Participants described the emergence of a newly established child sexual abuse prevention rural Oregon network, and that this emergent system is directly contributing to local, state-wide, and national strategic planning and adult prevention education systems. As described by one participant, and representative of many:

I'd never even considered it initially – the (establishment of) a network, an evolving communication system to protect kids more comprehensively. This is specific to this movement. I can tell you, being in this career since 1999, we've never had conversations with other entities like this until the last three or four years. It's a huge byproduct of this high-level communication.

[Protect Our Children] provided the most collaborative environment I've ever worked in. We learned from each other, shared our challenges, and experienced the utmost of professional support and guidance.

I've been in the field 20 years, and I've never seen folks at the state level eager to work together the way they are without their own personal organizational agenda and without competition for resources.

Others indicated that the Protect Our Children network has sparked rippling conversations with high promise for sustainability, i.e., "It [Protect Our Children] has leveraged consistent conversations about next steps we can take to protect kids – (and including), where do we go from here as a community… it's leveraged a higher level of introspective work at a variety of levels."

We've built topic-area (child sexual abuse prevention) experts throughout Oregon; in this way, even if a parent is attending a parent education program, they often now have access to rich conversations about prevention because of expanded expertise.

Impact of a Common Goal

As described by participants, The Protect Our Children network's common goal to prevent child sexual abuse is itself contributing to a rippling effect throughout Oregon. The collective effort, including a sense of shared understanding and being part of a larger initiative, was characterized by participants as generative, encouraging, and disarming:

> *It's more disarming when they [community members] see us as part of a collective effort all trying to do the right thing by creating child safety. It's not just pointing a finger – like 'you need to get trained' – it's much more supportive since it's a large-scale conversation.*
>
> *This is a huge systems effort; we are creating ripple effects and linkages to other services and supports… because we are working together, hand in hand, and including the strengths of each one of the participating organizations.*

Participants also described that their shared goal, in partnership, is encouraging, affirming, and fosters healing, e.g., "It is a great feeling to know that there are so many people working across the state to stop this problem." Many others shared a similar sentiment:

> *(Since) organizations are taking a stand and making a commitment to do everything in our power to stop this [child sexual abuse] moving forward, it is tremendously affirming… and from a community healing perspective that's important.*

> *It has been incredibly enlightening… we're seeing that you can shift the problem, that it's possible to do it. (We are) moving from a nihilistic view and understanding of the situation [child sexual abuse] – a void of hope type of thinking – to… seeing the great potential; we can and are doing something. Like rafting, you navigate obstacles by pointing positive.*

This finding is consistent with the 7-year cumulative report. As described by one participant, the shared learning and strategic planning generated "hope and connection – peer to peer learning and discussion forged bonds and confirmed that individuals (and sites) are not alone in this work."

> *We've gone from a single flower to a bouquet of resources available to people in the community.*

Oregon's concerted Protect Our Children effort has had rippling effects in several U.S. communities, including partnerships and planning with several states with Mary Ratliff's direct involvement. Ms. Ratliff, Protect Our Children's Project Director, described partnerships and extensive strategic planning conversations in collaboration with prevention leaders in Georgia, Kansas, and Colorado. Oregon has emerged as a leading thought partner in these collaborations, and other states are drawing on what has been learned with Protect Our Children to inform their own prevention programming. As described by Mary Ratliff:

Other states have reached out and used our data to go to their state leaders to go to funders and say, 'hey, look, this is what Oregon learned. We need to invest in this.'

There's a core group from Oregon, Georgia, Kansas, and Colorado that meet monthly since early 2020, right before the pandemic. Our models are all different about how we're using these tools and how we're approaching our communities with child sexual abuse prevention.

Darkness to Light, the developer of the Protect Our Children curriculum, has looked to Oregon for leadership as well. The experience and knowledge gained in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California has informed the curriculum development, procedural considerations, and accessibility to Spanish speaking community members.

From the moment we launched, our experts in the field - our coordinators, our sites - were feeding back through [Mary] and directly to Darkness to Light improvements that were needed, things that worked and things that really weren't working well.

[Darkness to Light] did the trainings in Spanish, but they didn't offer the Train the Trainer in Spanish. The Ford Family Foundation paid for the translation . . . And we brought on and paid for training for the first bilingual-bicultural instructor that does the workshop. She's still the only instructor that does the entire workshop to train facilitators in Spanish.

Systems-level aspirations: Looking ahead

Participants were also asked to look ahead – what do they hope to see continue or change into the future due to the Protect Our Children Initiative? What systems-level changes have perhaps started to form but have not yet come to fruition? Much of the discussion centered on local and statewide capacity-building, including expanded trainings, ongoing built environment changes for child safety across varied organizations, deeper business engagement, broader overall prevention education engagement, and new or updated Protect Our Children curriculum.

One participant voiced eagerness for many more childcare centers to meet built environment standards to better protect children:

We have a new partnership with The Ford Family Foundation to provide additional funding to childcare providers for building remodels and expansions. When the projects are funded, we can say, 'here are the kinds of things that others have done, here's a protocol.'

The participant also explained that an important component of capacity building is ensuring survivor access to trauma-informed clinicians: "That probably is the biggest gap in general, the capacity to have trained clinicians to work with people who have been impacted by sexual abuse… this has to be part of our collective effort in building that capacity."

Another participant expressed a desire for greater recognition and celebration of the Darkness to Light Partner in Prevention[2] distinction for organizations and businesses. This participant explained that by encouraging more businesses to become Partners in Prevention, children who experienced or are experiencing abuse will have more safe places in the community where they can seek support:

> *It's such a big deal. I think it needs to have more recognition. If a child has been abused and saw that sticker or poster for Partner in Prevention on the front window of a business, they could go into that business and know those people have been trained [in Protect Our Children] and are safe people who could help them report.*

Participants also envisioned deeper and broader prevention training involvement with a diverse array of sectors and organizations – and that this becomes more embedded in natural systems with which families engage:

> *We'd like to see healthcare providers involved. For example, when a child receives a well-child visit, they are (provided information); (I look forward to a day when) health care providers are knowledgeable and able to openly discuss these issues with families. And for example, every Chamber of Commerce and Rotary organizes efforts to make sure that their members are trained.*

An additional hoped-for ripple mentioned by many participants is the development of new and diverse prevention trainings, including trainings designed for children. One person reflected the view of many:

> *I would like to see all of us work together to increase access to other curricula. It would be to all our benefit, to the benefit of the vision and the mission of this effort.*

Several participants also described a near-future where sites across Oregon blend funding and share marketing and prevention education messaging: "Child abuse prevention dollars are so limited… it's so important to leverage those dollars."

> *Especially during the first round (when new relationships are being formed), it's incredibly difficult to get a two+ hour commitment – I think we could leverage resources to create prevention modules; if you have 15 minutes, here's this; if you have half an hour, here's this. Tiers of educational opportunities will engage many more people; this can be spurred by new and leveraged funding to expand the programming and promotion… and co-funding our efforts.*

2 A Partner in Prevention a) presents the Stewards of Children training to 90% or more of staff and volunteers who interact with youth, b) conducts background checks on staff and volunteers who interact with youth, and c) implements policy that limits one-adult/one-child situations.

Summary and Next Steps

In addition to individual-level changes in child sexual abuse prevention knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, these findings point to multiple and interconnected impacts of Protect Our Children within and between participating organizations, across communities, and in collective action-taking. Practical, beyond-the-individual changes, included literal structural and procedural changes – to blueprints, building renovations, institutional policies and practices to require prevention trainings, new opportunities for blended trainings, and installation of protective cameras. Participants described social norms changes that included a reduction in the culture of silence that perpetuates child sexual abuse, a reduction of help-seeking shame, and a transformed prevention and public outreach identity among many Protect Our Children partner sites.

Participants emphasized the emergence of an unprecedented system of child sexual abuse prevention in rural Oregon. This network, reiterated in the Protect Our Children 7-Year Cumulative Report, includes the establishment of a child sexual abuse prevention co-learning system, a new team of child sexual abuse prevention experts throughout Oregon, linkages to other services and supports, and a diverse array of provider organizations "working together… and including the strengths of each one of the participating organizations." Participants emphasized the power of this collective effort, referencing it as "tremendously affirming…and from a community healing perspective, that's important."

The collective effort, including a sense of shared understanding and being part of a larger initiative, was described as generative, encouraging, and disarming. A full 100% of participants reported being inspired by the Protect Our Children prevention model – and pointed to its infrastructure, the learning community, and an aspirational, shared goal as centerpieces of their inspiration and hopefulness. Finally, many looked ahead, expressing high interest in capacity building, expanding prevention education, updating and revising prevention education materials, reaching new and more diverse populations, and centering the value of co-learning for systemic change.

Due to the impact and ripple effects of the Protect Our Children movement, Protect Our Children partners and The Ford Family Foundation are investigating options for next-phase expansion, the development of a statewide strategic plan, and long-term sustainability. This includes a concerted effort, now underway, to draw on a) knowledge gained during Protect Our Children 2015-2022 and b) insights from individuals with lived and professional expertise across Oregon and in other U.S. and international communities. One part of the strategic planning process includes interviews with Protect Our Children partner sites and others. Questions for exploration include, for example:

- What is in place and happening in a community where child physical abuse, child sexual abuse, and child exposure to intimate partner violence in childhood are all rare?
- The task to prevent child abuse and neglect is complex. It requires many organizations and individuals working in concert and sharing a certain set of beliefs, attitudes, and practical actions. What do you believe must be in place to keep all these parts working well together?
- Many people believe that long-term solutions for childhood harm and violence requires deep integration of prevention practices in communities. Put another way, many prevention activists believe prevention is more likely when many people in many 'spaces' (e.g., at home, at work, with neighbors, with friends, in daily interactions) actively apply prevention practices. What are some strategies to foster this kind of broad and deep action-taking in your community?
- If you were to design a new child sexual abuse training for adults, what would you include as its essential content and its essential features[3]? If you modified the training to focus on child physical abuse prevention, what would you keep and what would you change? If you modified it to focus on the prevention of child exposure to intimate partner violence/domestic violence, what would you keep; what would you change?
- Name organizations, groups, and/or sectors in Oregon that have a key role to play in building a sustainable child abuse primary prevention system.

While the infrastructure and strategic planning continue, many participants urged community members, leaders, and prevention educators to acknowledge and celebrate one-at-a-time successes, too. Mary Ratliff illustrated this point with a specific example: "A training participant, immediately after the training, approached the facilitator, saying 'I think this is happening to my neighbor girl. She's exhibiting these signs that you talked about. Can you walk me through those steps, again, about what to do?' A call was made to child welfare, the allegation was founded, the offending party was arrested, and the child was supported and referred to therapy the following day."

3 "Features" includes, for example, length(s) of the training, delivery method (e.g., in-person, asynchronistic), and technology formats.

Appendix

Ripple Effect Mapping Focus Group Questions

Cultural. This is about social norms, traditions, and everyday ways of thinking and behaving. How has/Protect Our Children impacted any of these things in your community?

Social. This is about connections, networks and relationships among people and organizations – the social "glue" to make things happen. Has Protect Our Children created new networks and relationships in your community? If so, please explain.

Political. This is about policy, procedures, and law. Has Protect Our Children had an impact on policy, procedures and laws in organizations, groups, or government in your community?

Financial. This is about new investments, fundraising and philanthropy. Has Protect Our Children spurred new funding opportunities, such as leading to new funding or funding applications for your organization or your partner organizations?

Built Environment. This is about new buildings, remodels and 'built' environment. Has Protect Our Children impacted how your organization or others in your community have designed, remodeled, or changed their 'structure' to protect children?

Human. This is about knowledge, skills, understanding and ideas about how to take action to address a local problem. Has Protect Our Children impacted knowledge, skills, understanding, and prevention action of child sexual abuse in your community?

Additional Considerations/Questions

- What are people doing differently?
- Who is benefitting and how? If some people are doing things differently, how is it affecting others?
- What changes are you seeing in the community's systems, institutions, and organizations? Are everyday ways of thinking and doing changing? If so, how?
- What do you think are the most significant changes? Why?

Ripple Effect Mapping Questionnaire

1. Have you engaged any of the following audiences as a result of your work with Protect Our Children? *(please mark all that apply)*

Churches/faith communities
- ☐ Higher education
- ☐ K-12 school districts
- ☐ Local businesses
- ☐ Police
- ☐ EMTs
- ☐ Mental health agencies
- ☐ Prisons
- ☐ City government
- ☐ Youth-serving organizations
- ☐ Parent educators
- ☐ Childcare providers
- ☐ Health care
- ☐ Tribal communities
- ☐ Latinx community
- ☐ Other _____

2. Our organization is much better known in our community because of Protect Our Children.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

3. People think about our organization differently as a result of our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

4. Our reputation as an organization that provides prevention services has improved as a result of our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

5. Many more people in our community understand and value child sexual abuse prevention as a result of our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

6. Stewards of Children is a required training of all employees and volunteers at our organization.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

7. Our organization has implemented policy changes as a result of Stewards of Children (e.g., developed or updated codes of conduct, re-ran background checks, etc).

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

8. Our organization has developed many new partnerships as a result of our work with Protect Our Children.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

9. I have noticed an increase in prevention-specific action taking among community members that I believe is related to Protect Our Children.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

10. As a result of Stewards of Children, our organization or others in our community have made changes to the 'built environment' to better protect children, such as increased lighting in and outside the building, adding windows or removing parts of doors to allow for better visibility, and designed or are designing new buildings with child safety in mind, etc.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

11. We have instituted policy changes that ensure staff, volunteers, and/or board members are learning about child sexual abuse.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

12. We have instituted policy changes that increase the likelihood that staff, volunteers, and/or board members are actively contributing to child sexual abuse prevention in their communities.

- ☐ True
- ☐ False

13. My sense of hopefulness about child sexual abuse prevention has increased due at least in part to our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

14. Many more people in our community believe that child sexual abuse is preventable due to our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

15. Many more men in our community believe they have a role and can contribute to child sexual abuse prevention due to our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

16. Many more women in our community believe they have a role and can contribute to child sexual abuse prevention due to our Protect Our Children efforts.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

17. Protect Our Children has reduced the 'culture of silence' that historically has surrounded child sexual abuse in our community.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

18. Protect Our Children is serving an important role toward reducing child sexual abuse in our community.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

19. I am inspired by the Oregon-wide effort to prevent child sexual abuse.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

20. I have personally taken more actions to prevent child sexual abuse due to my involvement with Protect Our Children.

- ☐ Strongly agree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Strongly disagree

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
College of Education
CENTER FOR THE **PREVENTION** OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT
1244 Walnut St., Eugene OR 97403 541-346-7484

THE Ford Family FOUNDATION