

# Protect Our Children



## Mobilizing Oregon Communities to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Seven-Year Impact Report

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UNIVERSITY OF  
**OREGON**  
College of Education

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Protect Our Children  
Mobilizing Oregon Communities to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse  
A Seven-Year Impact Report

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A Developmental Evaluation Partnership

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# Thank you.

Childhood abuse and trauma will likely affect me and a lot of adolescents I know for the rest of our lives. It is nice to be validated and to know people are taking steps to help prevent this.

OREGON CHILD ABUSE PREVALENCE STUDY  
HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANT

# Executive Summary

Child sexual abuse is a persistent and perplexing global public health, human rights and social justice problem. The World Health Organization estimates that over 150 million children under 18 have been sexually assaulted. By one estimate, the lifetime sexual assault prevalence for 17-year-old children in the United States is 26.6% for girls and 5.1% for boys (Finkelhor et al., 2014). These data likely underestimate actual prevalence. According to the Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect, at least three times as many children are abused and neglected than are known to Child Protective Services agencies (Sedlak et al., 2010).

In 2015, The Ford Family Foundation began investing in an effort to end child sexual abuse through Protect Our Children. Protect Our Children is a community-based training program aimed at increasing knowledge about child sexual abuse and promoting pro-prevention attitudes and prevention behaviors. A statewide coordinator overseeing program implementation, rural partner sites and a coordinated learning community have championed this effort in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California.

Protect Our Children is now at a pivotal point in its evolution as it grows into a standalone program. This report details the overall impact of its first seven years as a program of The Ford Family Foundation. It includes information drawn from over 10,000 pre- and post-surveys, follow-up surveys with 425 selected participants cross-compared with 457 randomly selected Oregonians, and focus groups and surveys with partner site representatives. Data were collected between September 2015 and June 2022.



## Overall findings include:

- Participants significantly increased and sustained their child sexual abuse knowledge, pro-prevention attitudes and prevention actions.
- Participants have much higher levels of prevention knowledge and pro-prevention attitudes and take many more actions to prevent child sexual abuse than randomly selected Oregonians.
- Protect Our Children positively impacted training sites by increasing their profile, community awareness about their prevention efforts, and by enhancing and/or creating new prevention partners and partnerships.
- Protect Our Children reduced stigma around conversations about child sexual abuse and sparked prevention-specific actions within and between organizations.
- Protect Our Children fostered a statewide co-learning network with multiple ripple effects, including features that position Oregon for long-term child sexual abuse prevention sustainability, community engagement and movement building.

This report is the first rural-focused pre-post and random-selection comparative statewide evaluation of child sexual abuse prevention programming. In addition to measuring individual level impact, the evaluation documents systems-level changes. This adds to the child sexual abuse prevention field, providing insight into the role a coordinated, statewide learning network can play in fostering a successful and sustainable movement-building initiative.



# Seven Years of Protect Our Children in Rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, California

## Background and History: The Early Years

Following The Second Mile tragedy, a high-profile case of child sexual abuse that happened at Pennsylvania State University in 2012, The Ford Family Foundation's Board of Directors was alarmed that something like this could happen locally. The Board made a commitment to work toward better outcomes for children and youth in Oregon. To begin, the Foundation engaged in a process to learn about current practices in place in Oregon nonprofits to keep children safe. What safeguards should organizations have in place to prevent such a tragedy from happening locally?

The Ford Family Foundation began exploring high-quality curricula that could be implemented at scale in the Foundation's service region, rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. In 2015, the Board of Directors approved a \$500,000, three-year commitment to launch Protect Our Children. This led to the hiring of a statewide coordinator, Mary Ratliff, as well as the formation of a co-learning community and selection of 11 initial partner sites.

**We were first thinking about the impact of Protect Our Children at the level of each individual, but quickly realized that greater awareness and tools to keep kids safe have ripples throughout the community. Like in so many areas of the Foundation's work, community partnerships are the key to impact.**

**ANNE KUBISCH**

President, The Ford Family Foundation

## The Curriculum

In 2016, The Ford Family Foundation selected Stewards of Children (SOC)<sup>1</sup>, a curriculum already being used in several rural Oregon communities. SOC is a two-hour video-based training designed for the public. The curriculum profiles survivors' stories and five action steps individuals and organizations can take to prevent child sexual abuse. Over 2 million adults in at least 76 countries have completed the training, led by more than 12,000 certified instructors and authorized facilitators.

Stewards of Children is an evidence-informed, adult-focused curriculum designed to teach individuals how to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse. Through interviews with child sexual abuse survivors, experts and treatment providers, Stewards of Children teaches adults practical actions they can take to reduce instances of child sexual abuse in their organizations, families and communities. It is available in English and Spanish in three formats: 1) a group setting led by an authorized facilitator, 2) taken individually online, or 3) virtually in a group setting led by an authorized facilitator.

<sup>1</sup> Stewards Of Children was developed and is trademarked by Darkness to Light.

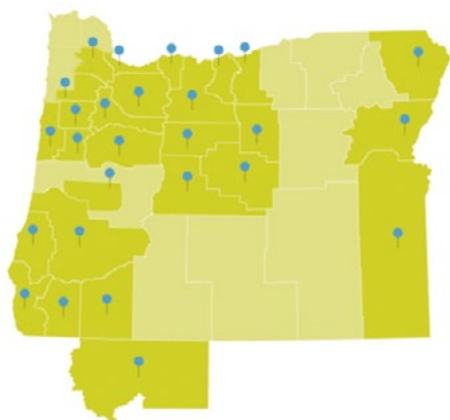


## A Statewide Learning Community

Protect Our Children is a concerted effort to reduce child sexual abuse, change conditions that perpetuate it, and transform norms that thwart help-seeking. It includes an Oregon-wide prevention network, comprised of a core group of rural-based delivery sites (see Appendix A) convened by The Ford Family Foundation. The Foundation served as the Protect Our Children coordinating body and provided an array of support, including funding to participating sites, technical assistance, community-building, peer mentoring, co-learning opportunities and training. The model centers collaboration. Partner sites, facilitators and allies inform and influence ongoing program development, priorities and continuous improvement. The Foundation hosted a twice-yearly, topic-specific training aimed at enhancing site and regional Protect Our Children development and evaluation participation. These events also served to increase connection among sites and support the evolution of the learning community.

## The Problem of Child Sexual Abuse in Oregon

Sadly, child sexual abuse is a common problem in all Oregon communities. Among high school students who participated in the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study (OCAPS), 29% experienced at least one type of child sexual abuse, and 14% experienced three or more types. In fact, among the 10,000+ Protect Our Children participants representing Oregonians from nearly every corner of our state, 33% identified as survivors of child sexual abuse.



Among the 10,000+ Protect Our Children participants representing Oregonians from nearly every corner of our state, **33% identified as survivors of child sexual abuse.**

Child sexual abuse is very often correlated with other forms of trauma in childhood. For example, among OCAPS students, all but one who experienced sexual violence also experienced other forms of trauma, such as physical assault, emotional neglect and seeing/hearing intimate partner violence (domestic violence). This takes a toll. Oregon youth with three or more types of sexual abuse are 2.1 times more likely to be persistently sad or hopeless than all other Oregon students. In addition, 82% of students who received grades of mostly D's and F's said they had observed an adult in their home during an argument punch a wall or throw or ruin something in their house.

Childhood sexual abuse and other forms of trauma are compounded by a culture of silence. In fact, among OCAPS youth, nearly half (47%) had not disclosed their abuse to anyone at any time (Todahl et al., 2019). These data reflect social norms that dampen healing and foster isolation. Consequently, as it stands today, many child and adult Oregon survivors silently endure trauma and its aftermath. A culture of silence – where children receive direct and indirect messages that sex, sexuality and sexual trauma are taboo topics – blocks avenues for protection. Protect Our Children works to upend this cultural norm by directly discussing sexual trauma and its features, and by providing hopeful and practical strategies for protection and social change.

**The Protect Our Children model is** a web of intentionally localized efforts, each contributing to a shared collective vision. Protect Our Children learning community infrastructure includes an annual conference, biannual regional gatherings, technical assistance, in-person and virtual mentoring, site visits, facilitator training oversight, coordination of the facilitator network, communication systems, evaluation and continuous improvement.

# A Developmental Approach to Evaluation and Learning

In 2014, The Ford Family Foundation and The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect formed a Developmental Evaluation partnership (Patton, 2011) designed to measure the impact of the Protect Our Children program. A developmental approach to evaluation was chosen because it is systemic in its orientation, is designed to foster rapid learning in a collaborative and recursive partnership, and is particularly well-suited toward supporting the formation of new efforts and innovations.

## Evaluation Questions

This report seeks to answer the questions: After seven years of concerted, statewide prevention efforts, what difference has Protect Our Children made? What impact has the program had and for whom?

**Data collection methods were designed to answer the following evaluation questions:**

- How has the Protect Our Children program impacted adult engagement in child sexual abuse prevention across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California?
- Does the Stewards of Children training as part of Protect Our Children increase child sexual abuse prevention knowledge, pro-prevention attitudes and prevention behaviors and, if changes occur, do they persist 18 months post-training?
- How do knowledge, behavioral and attitude changes among participants in the Stewards of Children training compare to a randomly selected group of rural Oregonians?
- What impact does Protect Our Children have on provider agencies, on communities where it is delivered, and among partner organizations?
- Do participants value the Stewards of Children training as part of Protect Our Children, i.e., would they recommend it to a friend or family member?
- What percentage of Protect Our Children attendees are themselves survivors of child sexual abuse?
- How has the multi-year investment from The Ford Family Foundation inspired systems-level change in child abuse prevention across Oregon and Siskiyou County, California?





## Evaluation Methods

The Protect Our Children evaluation used a mixed-methods Developmental Evaluation design and included data collection from training attendees, program implementers, community partners and a random selection of rural Oregonians with no Protect Our Children experience. Methods are briefly outlined below. Data were collected between September 2015 and June 2022.

**Individual and group-based interviews.** Individual and group-based qualitative interviews were held with Protect Our Children facilitators, administrators and attendees in English and Spanish. A total of 109 individuals participated in interview experiences.

**Pre-post surveys.** Pre-post measurement of knowledge, behaviors and attitudes. See Appendix C for survey pre-post instruments. A total of 10,748 individuals participated in pre-post tests, representing 28 Oregon counties and 15 of the Protect Our Children sites.

**6-, 12- and 18-month random selection follow-up.** The Center for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect randomly selected 425 individuals to participate in a follow-up survey.

**Random phone survey.** A random digit dial survey was made of 457 rural Oregonians with no Protect Our Children experience. Survey questions included the same demographics, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes items represented on the pre-post survey.

**Ripple effects mapping.** Ripple effects mapping sessions designed to assess ways in which the training and project participation may have influenced communities and community networks. Mapping sessions were carried out at five sites and included 17 total participants; 32 participants completed the ripple effect mapping survey.

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**For additional information about research methods and the data analysis plan,** please contact Simone Piper at [simones@uoregon.edu](mailto:simones@uoregon.edu).

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# 11,205

pre-post, random digit and longitudinal participants

# 109

individual and focus group interview participants

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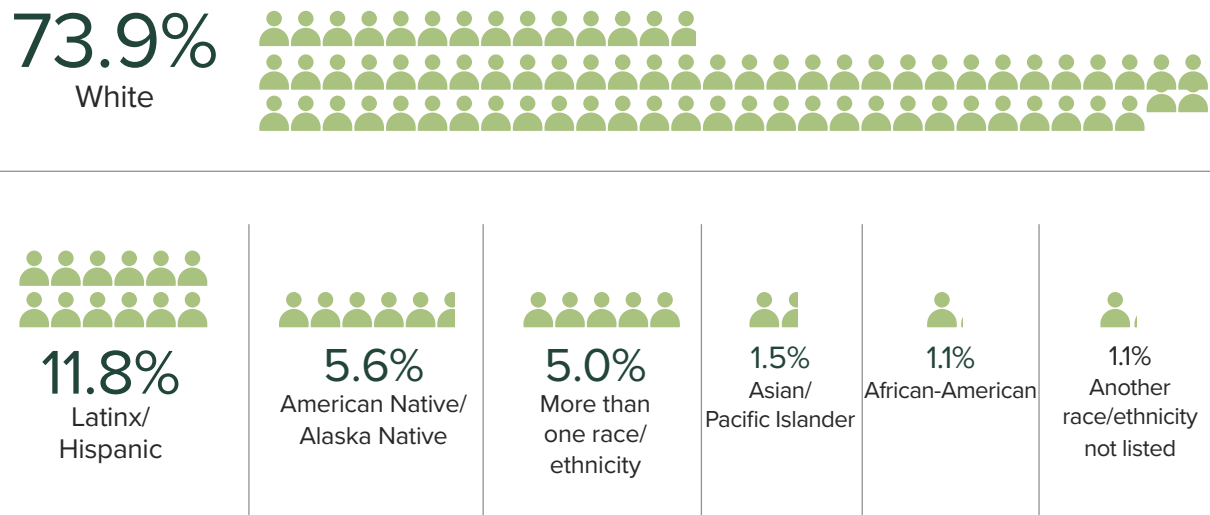
## Evaluation Participants

In total, **10,748 people** in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif., participated in the **Protect Our Children pre-post survey**.

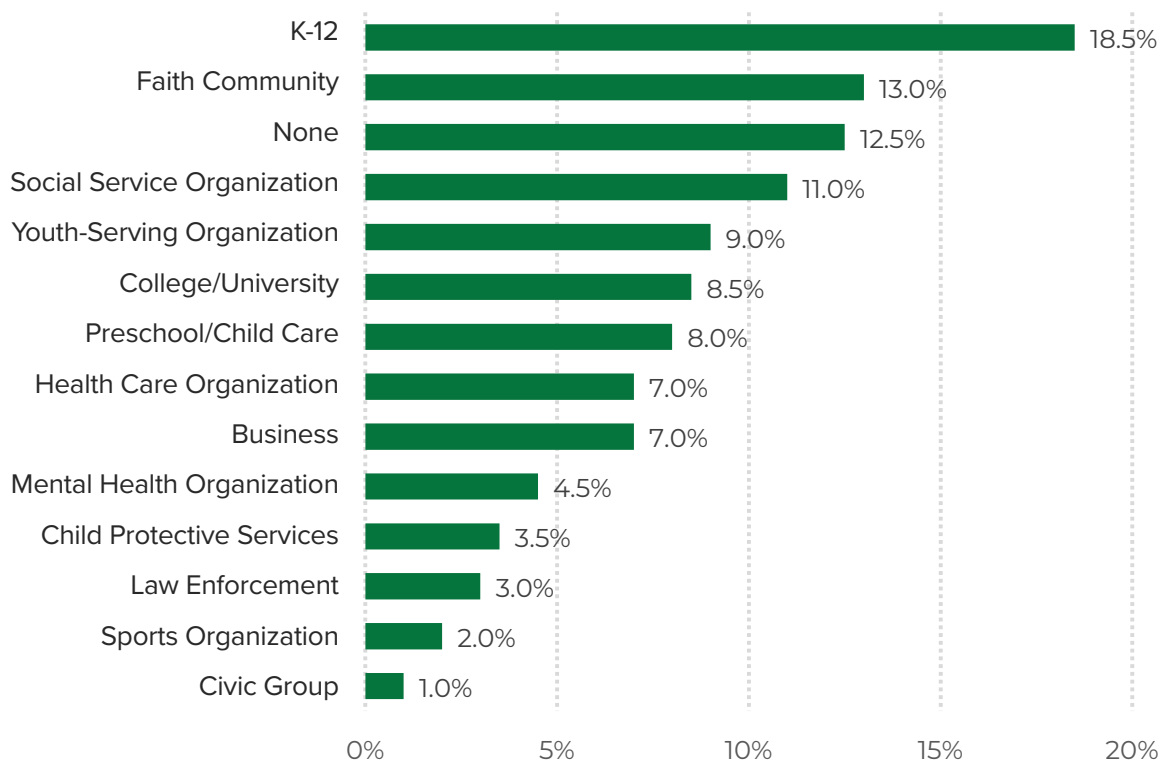
The largest group of individuals participating identified as white, female, and between the ages of 18 and 97, representing 73% of the total participants. Seventy-eight percent of pre-post participants identified as female, 74% white, and average age of attendance was 44. Fifty-four percent of participants reported having earned a two-year college degree or higher, and 45% reported an annual income of \$50,000 or higher. The most frequently reported group or organization affiliation was K-12 (19%), followed by faith communities (13%) and social service organizations (11%).

Notably, among all pre-post Stewards of Children participants, 33% indicated they had experienced child sexual abuse. The child sexual abuse prevalence rate among Protect Our Children participants was three times higher than the estimates purported in SOC materials. Given that child sexual abuse was vividly and comprehensively described in the Stewards of Children trainings, this percentage is likely a more accurate measure of prevalence than is commonly reported in data drawn from population-based retrospective studies and child welfare reporting.

**FIGURE 1. Pre-Post Participant Race and Ethnicity**



**FIGURE 2. Affiliation of Participants**



# Evaluation Findings

**This seven-year impact evaluation report overwhelmingly found that:**

- participants value the Stewards of Children training as part of Protect Our Children.
- knowledge about child sexual abuse increased.
- pro-prevention attitudes are positively impacted.
- participants take many more prevention actions relative to randomly selected Oregonians with no Protect Our Children training exposure – and these impacts are generally sustained 18 months post training.
- Protect Our Children provider sites have increased their profile in their communities and, in many, the array of prevention services provided an organizational identity.
- Protect Our Children is fostering community-level norms change, including opening new conversations that counter the long-standing culture of silence.
- the Protect Our Children co-learning network, supported by intentional infrastructure support, has been instrumental in movement-building, growth and the likelihood of long-term sustainability.

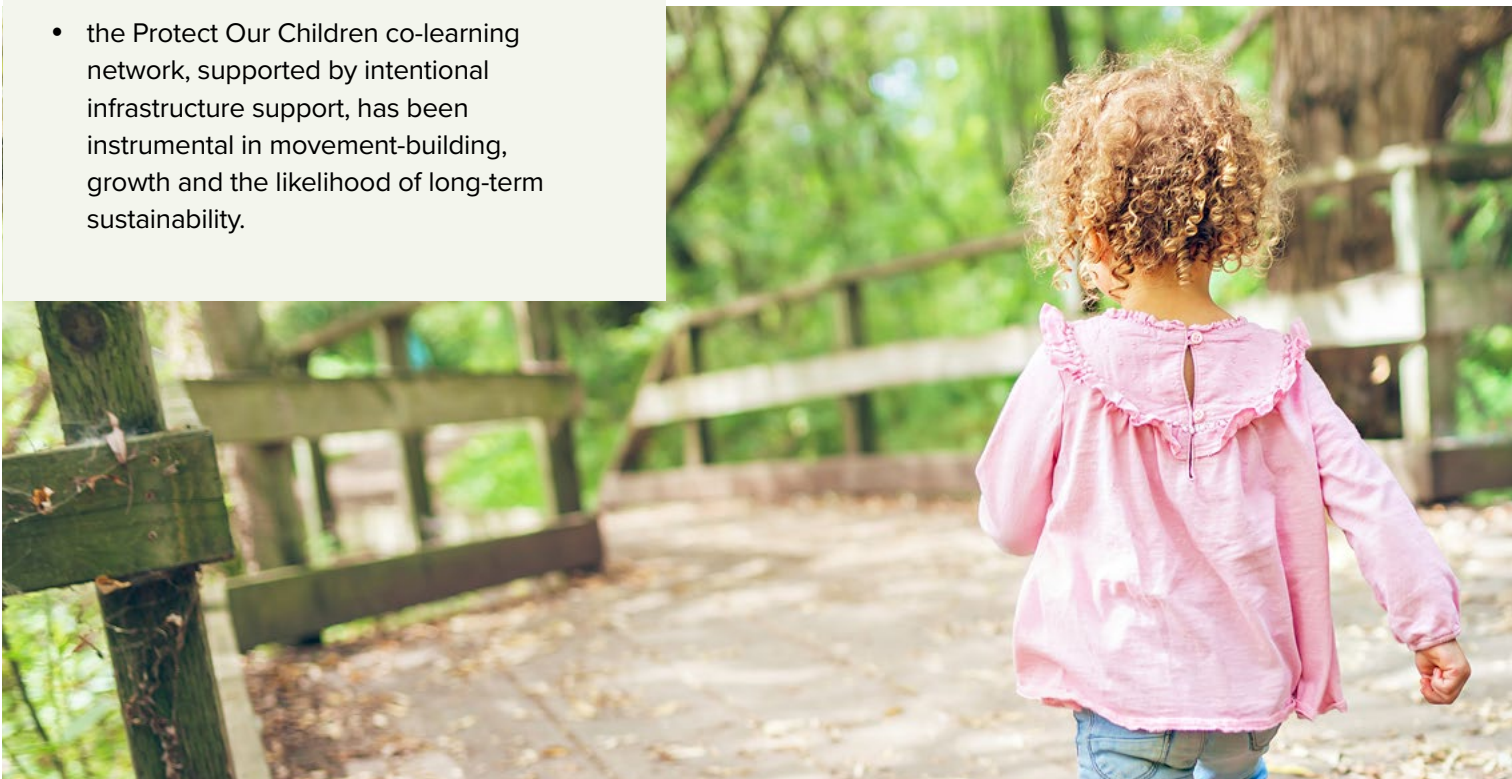
**99%**

of Protect Our Children training attendees **would recommend it to a friend or coworker.**

Moreover, Protect Our Children provider sites reported positive changes within their organizations, expansion of mission statements to include prevention with broad board-level support, and impact in the community – including, for example, emerging shifts in social taboos around openly discussing child sexual abuse and other forms of trauma.

Findings in this report are organized into four categories:

1. Knowledge and Awareness
2. Attitudes and Beliefs
3. Behavior and Action
4. Organization and Community Change





# Awareness

Knowledge and child sexual abuse awareness questions centered on risk factors and perceptions of specific prevention actions that may be effective in preventing child harm, as well as beliefs about ways to talk with kids proactively about safety and how to respond in the aftermath of an abuse incident.

## Finding 1: Participants show increased knowledge and awareness of child sexual abuse and how they can prevent it, even up to 18 months after their initial training.

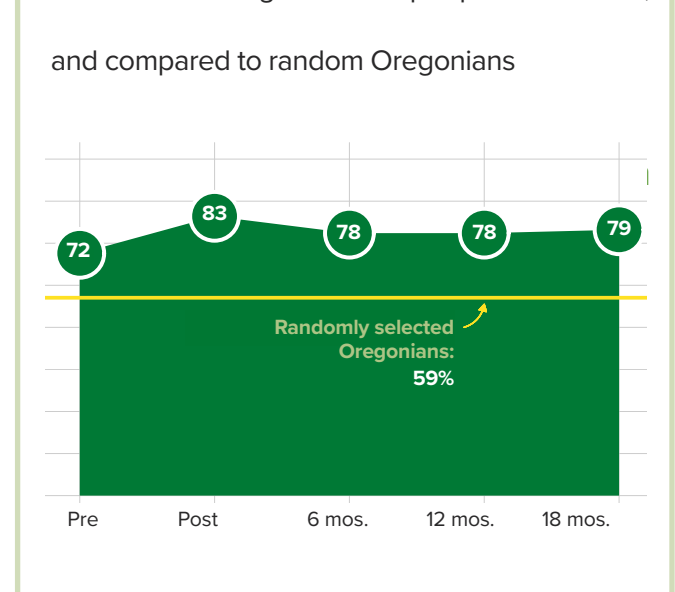
Knowledge was evaluated with 14 questions, given immediately prior and immediately following the training. Among all participants (n=10,748), correct responses increased by nearly 11% (71.6% correct pre, 82.3% correct post) – a statistically significant and large effect. For example, Protect Our Children participants were much more likely to know:

- very young children are at highest risk for child sexual abuse
- using correct language for body parts is a useful sexual abuse prevention tool
- specific actions and steps that one can take to prevent child sexual abuse

Child sexual abuse and prevention knowledge significantly increased overall among all pre-post participants, and these increases remained above baseline 18 months following the training. At all participating sites, participants overwhelmingly agreed that Protect Our Children has raised awareness about child sexual abuse and prevention action-taking.

These scores were much higher than randomly selected Oregonians with no Protect Our Children knowledge or exposure. Figure 3 depicts these changes and comparisons.

FIGURE 3. Knowledge scores pre-post 18 months, and compared to random Oregonians



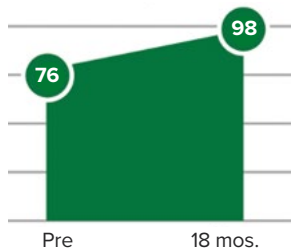
At post-training, Protect Our Children participants were five times more likely to report **they know what to do to contribute to child abuse prevention in their community.**

## Knowledge Questions

Participants showed significant increases in knowledge and maintained those gains 18 months after the training.

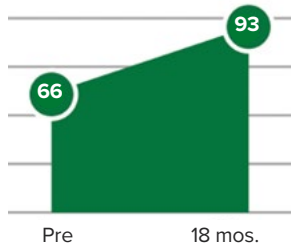
**FIGURE 4.**

Using correct language for body parts is a useful sexual abuse prevention tool



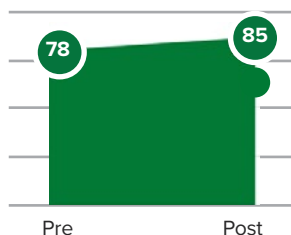
**FIGURE 5.**

Limiting one adult/one child situations reduces abuse



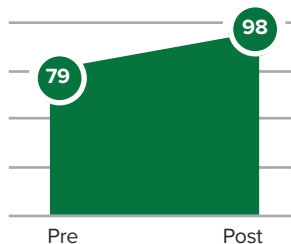
**FIGURE 6.**

Specific actions and steps to take to prevent child sexual abuse



**FIGURE 7.**

Participants who knew that “if an adult is ‘pressing the boundaries’ of acceptable behavior with children, bystanders should describe the inappropriate behavior, set limits and move on.”



**Protect Our Children has raised awareness about child abuse as an issue in our community that wouldn't have otherwise existed. This issue has been shrouded... the training has changed a lot of perceptions.**

**PROTECT OUR CHILDREN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

**You think it is something rare. Yet the reality is that it does happen; it can be your neighbor, your nephew. This is very real, even if we don't want this to be our reality, it exists.**

**PASTOR AND PROTECT OUR CHILDREN PARTICIPANT**



# Attitudes and Beliefs

Attitudes and beliefs inquired about participants' ways of thinking and feeling about child sexual abuse prevention. Questions centered around personal responsibility for child safety, a sense of self-efficacy or confidence around personally knowing what to do, and beliefs about whether child sexual abuse can be prevented when communities work together toward change.

**Finding 2: Protect Our Children participants are not only more aware of child sexual abuse, they are more hopeful about the possibility that it can be prevented.**

Attitudes and prevention beliefs were evaluated with five specific questions. Participants were much more likely to agree or strongly agree that child sexual abuse is preventable and that they can personally contribute to its prevention. After attending the training, participants were far more likely to:

- strongly agree that child sexual abuse can be reduced and believe that they know what to do to contribute to prevention efforts in their community
- strongly agree that their community is working together to reduce child sexual abuse in a planned manner
- strongly believe that it is their responsibility to protect children

These changes from pre- to post-training were significant, included large differences and seem to reflect, for many participants, a sense of optimism and shared action simply from attending the training. Moreover, nearly all participants agreed or strongly agreed that child sexual abuse can be significantly reduced and that they have a responsibility to help protect children. This represents a belief in personal responsibility for child protection among all study participants.

**Finding 3: Changes in attitudes were persistent, enduring for at least 18 months following the training.**

Changes in attitudes and beliefs largely held for participants, even 18 months after the training. People remained hopeful that child sexual abuse can be prevented and accepted personal responsibility, at very high rates, for themselves contributing to prevention efforts. At 18 months, the “strongly agree” response to “I personally know what to do to prevent sexual abuse in my community” increased by 10 percent from the original post-test numbers. This suggests that many people felt even more confident about their personal ability to reduce sexual abuse 18 months after the training.

Raising awareness about childhood trauma is often associated with discouragement and can overwhelm people and thwart action-taking. Among Protect Our Children participants, however, an increase in awareness about child sexual abuse was associated with an increase in hopefulness and action-taking optimism.

## Hopefulness

that child sexual abuse can be reduced increased by more than two times.

## Belief

that child abuse is preventable increased by three times.



#### Finding 4: Participants believe their community has a plan in place to prevent child sexual abuse.

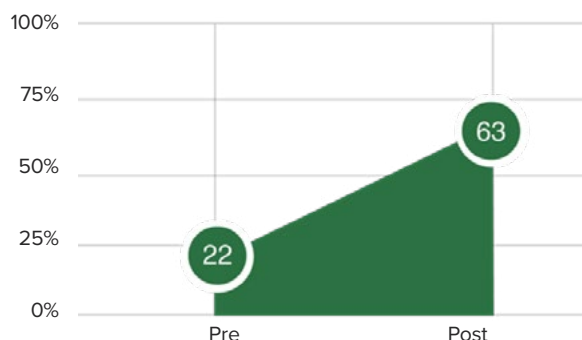
Although none of the trainings offered by Protect Our Children sites discuss local community-based plans for working together to prevent child sexual abuse, simply attending the training stirred a belief that this is in fact occurring. This may be another indication of hopefulness and the power of shared experience, i.e., we are doing something about this long-standing problem. Immediately after the training, and compared with pre-training scores, participants were three times more likely to believe their community “has a plan to reduce child sexual abuse.”

Participants were **three times more likely** to believe their community “has a plan to reduce child sexual abuse.”

**Protect Our Children provides hope; it offers solutions and gives people an opportunity to say, ‘I can do this.’**

**PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FACILITATOR**

**FIGURE 8.** We have a plan to reduce child sexual abuse in our community



#### Finding 5: Protect Our Children participants reported increased confidence for action-taking.

A sense of self-efficacy, including a belief that *I know what to do to reduce child sexual abuse*, increased by more than five times among participants. This suggests that participants felt much more equipped to take practical steps – steps and actions that they could see themselves doing. Many participants also suggested that since they have a much better sense of what to do, they are more willing and able to face this painful social problem and act.

Knowing what to do to prevent child sexual abuse **increased by more than five times.**

**[Protect Our Children] is like propellant for starting conversations. I have seen empowerment, people more willing to face this problem and try to help.**

**PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FACILITATOR**

**Finding 6: Both Protect Our Children participants and randomly selected Oregonians feel a person has a responsibility to contribute to solutions.**

Figures 9 through 12 detail pre- and post-training scores for the attitudes and beliefs questions. Notably, many Oregonians at baseline – prior to the Stewards of Children training – believe that protecting children from child sexual abuse is a basic responsibility of adulthood. Protect Our Children may give that belief legs by offering practical action-taking strategies to embolden a core belief of child protection.

While randomly selected Oregonians also held this core value of child protection, Protect Our Children participants were much more likely to report knowing what to do to prevent child sexual abuse than random Oregonians with no Protect Our Children exposure.

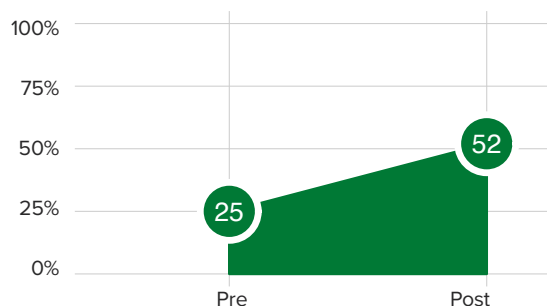
**It's a hard topic, a dark subject. But it has been brought to a new level of understanding. A lot of people want to get involved . . . figure out what they can do to keep children safe.**

**PROTECT OUR CHILDREN FACILITATOR**

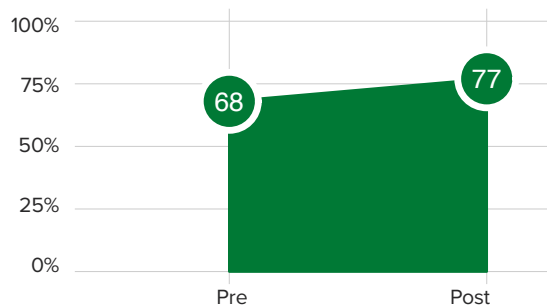
**I feel like child abuse and neglect shouldn't be taken lightly. Use the information to your max potential. Do as much as you possibly can, in every way that you can.**

**OREGON CHILD ABUSE PREVALENCE STUDY HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANT**

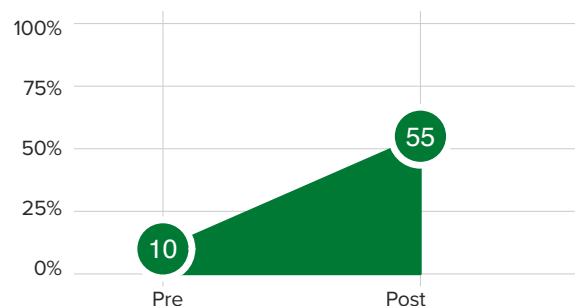
**FIGURE 9.** Child sexual abuse can be very significantly reduced in my community



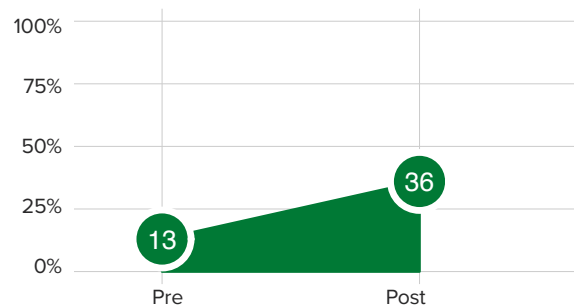
**FIGURE 11.** It is my responsibility to help protect all children from sexual abuse



**FIGURE 10.** I know what I can do to prevent child sexual abuse in my community



**FIGURE 12.** Our community is working together to reduce child abuse



# Behavior and Action

Behavior and action-taking asked participants to examine the extent to which they take pro-prevention actions on a routine or periodic basis. All training participants were asked about this prior to the training, and a randomly selected group was asked this same set of questions at 6, 12 and 18 months post-training.

## **Finding 7: Participants were much more likely to look for signs of child sexual abuse and many additional protective behaviors – and these changes persisted for at least 18 months following the training.**

Immediately prior to the training, all participants were asked whether they had engaged in 16 different kinds of child sexual abuse prevention behaviors over the previous six months. Questions included, for example, *“Did you discuss the issue of sexual abuse with a child or teenager?”* The 16 behaviors were all discussed and encouraged in the training. These same 16 questions were asked of all longitudinal participants at six, 12 and 18 months post-training and all randomly selected Oregonians.

Participants reported many behavioral actions, and these actions persisted over time. At 18 months post-training, participants reported engaging in many more of the 16 behaviors and with much more overall frequency than immediately before the training. For example, at baseline, 50% of all participants reported that they “looked for signs of sexual abuse in children in my life.” When asked 18 months later, this increased to 84%. This finding suggests that SOC influences sexual abuse prevention action-taking and that these actions persist across time.

**At least 66,000 new child sexual abuse prevention actions** were taken in 12 months.

Among the 16 abuse prevention actions included in the study, all remained well above pre-training percentages. Five action types increased over and above the six-month increase, and at 18 months, 10 actions remained equal to the six-month post-training increase. A few highlights:

- At 18 months post-training, nearly 50% of participants had offered support or advice to someone about child sexual abuse (in the previous six months). This is 21 points higher than pre-test participants.
- Immediately before Protect Our Children, 50% of all participants reported that they “looked for signs of sexual abuse in children in my life.” Eighteen months later, this had increased to 84%.
- At 18 months post-training, participants were more than twice as likely to “ask a staff member at a school, church, after-school or other community-based program about the organization’s child sexual abuse prevention policies” than pre-test participants.

Prevention behaviors increased dramatically – and overall continued to increase 18 months after the training. POC participants performed these actions at a much higher rate than randomly phoned rural Oregonians. Behaviors included:

- Talking to kids about sexual abuse
- Making policy changes at churches and schools
- Talking with neighbors and friends about prevention
- Offering advice and support to someone about child sexual abuse

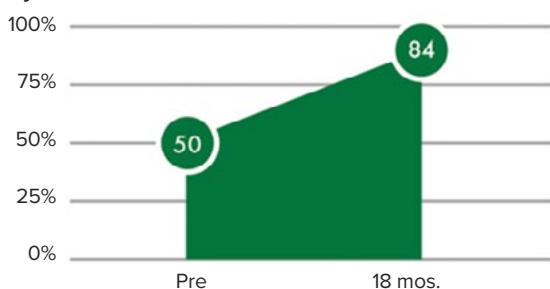


### Finding 8: Protect Our Children participants take many more prevention actions than randomly selected Oregonians.

Protect Our Children participants take many more child protection actions in comparison to Oregonians who have no Protect Our Children knowledge or exposure:

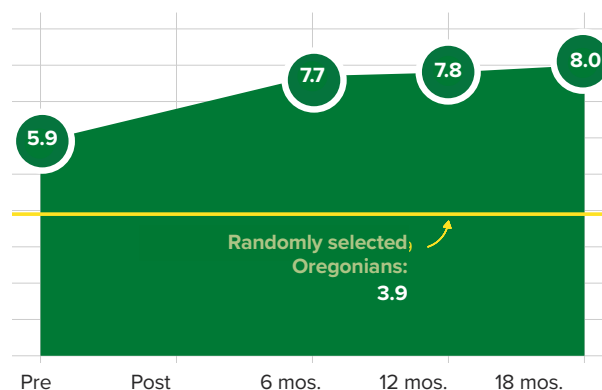
- Protect Our Children participants were **2.9 times more likely** to take action to learn about reducing or preventing child sexual abuse than randomly selected Oregonians.
- Protect Our Children participants were **2.5 times more likely** to “look for signs of sexual abuse in children” than randomly selected Oregonians.
- 18 months following the training, participants were **four times more likely** to ask about sexual abuse prevention policies than randomly selected Oregonians with no Protect Our Children experience.

**FIGURE 11.** Participants who reported they “looked for signs of sexual abuse in children in my life”



**FIGURE 12.** Participants took more actions to prevent child sexual abuse than randomly selected Oregonians - and this number increased over time

*Graph shows number of actions taken by each group*



### Finding 9: Participants in qualitative interviews overwhelmingly encourage parents and community members to open up channels of conversation about sexual abuse and its prevention with kids.

Child sexual abuse and other forms of childhood trauma are perpetuated by a deeply embedded culture of silence, including a sense of shame and fear of unwanted consequences that may follow disclosure. Protect Our Children participants seemed to echo this assumption and broadly urged community members to simply talk with kids about safety, their bodies, personal boundaries, safe touch and more. Many participants urged that talking with kids, and increased acceptance of conversation about trauma and healing overall is a cornerstone of prevention. This recommendation from study participants has high promise for changing the culture of silence that has historically perpetuated child sexual abuse and other forms of childhood trauma.



**All the perpetrator asks is that the bystander do nothing.**  
**JUDITH HERMAN**, *Trauma and Recovery* (2015)

Protect Our Children focus group participants described at length the importance of creating an open and trusting relationship with kids so that they are more likely to share hardships, including child abuse: “Give them trust, so they can always come to us. Or, if I am not here, you can go to any adult and tell them what is happening.” Many others emphasized the importance of open discussion: “Talk openly about it – it’s not a secret; it (sexuality) is normal, not something we shouldn’t talk about.” And “I think the reason it doesn’t end is because we keep creating it ourselves; we remain silent and (in so doing), we ourselves perpetuate it.”

*“Talk directly with kids to prevent abuse – sometimes we’re ashamed, but it is important to talk directly... without taboos, talking openly about it. Treasure it when they (children and youth) come to us.”*

*“One of the most important things is taking the risk to talk... Talk, talk – always talk to our children. As they grow, be aware that in each step, different situations arise. Be in communication with them.”*

Participants spoke of the importance of educating kids about what is and is not appropriate:

*“It’s about talking with children when they are little; let them know the signs if someone is not respecting their personal bubble – no one should go through that bubble . . . These are your private parts, and nobody can touch you if you don’t want. Not your father, not even me. No one.”*

*“We must educate our kids, so they have more ways to protect themselves... This should be our priority, to put this into practice – telling them no one should touch their parts and telling them names (of private body parts). We must be very clear.”*

One participant emphasized that answering questions is crucial no matter the child’s age:

*“When they ask questions (about bodies, sex, etc.), instead of saying ‘you’re too little to know that,’ go there. If they are asking, it is because they have heard something (or are curious). I’ll answer their questions.”*

Talking – and listening well – have high promise for prevention and trauma healing. Based on the “survivor voices” survey of Oregon adults, if a person felt that people *listened to their experience with compassion*, they were 2.9 times more likely to report that they were mostly or completely healed (Todahl et al., 2020; Todahl et al., 2017).

The simple act of opening conversation and listening compassionately – behaviors encouraged as a part of the Protect Our Children movement – is impactful.

# Organization and Community Change

Organization and community change questions centered around the extent to which Protect Our Children may have impacted provider agencies, provider agency-community relationships, and overall community impact. Questions also inquired about the net effect of an intentional and statewide systematic effort to prevent child sexual abuse in Oregon, i.e., what difference has this made toward building a system of prevention?

## Finding 10: Protect Our Children bolsters organizational reputation, networks and opportunities

Focus group interviews and “ripple effect mapping” conversations investigated the impact of Protect Our Children on the community at large, provider organizations and community partners. Participants were asked 1) how their organization has been impacted by Protect Our Children, 2) whether their relationships with other organizations had been impacted, and 3) whether they attributed community-level change to Protect Our Children delivery. Participants uniformly agreed that Protect Our Children has impacted their organization, relationships with partners and new-partner organizations and contributed to an increased awareness about a) the problem of child sexual abuse overall, b) their organization, and c) the services they provide.

Participants were in broad agreement that Protect Our Children helped to expand the identity and perceptions of provider sites, e.g., “It [Protect Our Children] has gone from being a new initiative to being a question about who we are as an organization.” Several participants suggested that their organization is providing a fuller array of services and that Protect Our Children assisted in their expansion: “This gives us an opportunity to really grow our adult training offerings. We’ve been able to grow exponentially.”

**Every day I’m inspired and encouraged by the commitment, compassion, and determination of Protect Our Children partners. They’re relentless.**

**MARY RATLIFF**

Protect Our Children Project Director

Participants also uniformly agreed that Protect Our Children productively impacted their relationship with other organizations and sparked new and deeper collaboration about child sexual abuse and abuse prevention between many community groups:

*“Protect Our Children is like propellant for starting conversations . . . this hadn’t happened prior to this, the [degree of] communication across agencies . . . It allows us to build bridges to other players in the community who are working in the prevention areas.”*

*“I would say we are now intentionally reaching out to organizations with much more focus. It’s given us a purpose to do that – and we get feedback from people saying, ‘I didn’t know you do that, too.’ It’s expanding understanding of who we are and what we do.”*

Protect Our Children, one participant said, “has helped open new networks, new places for us . . . This is something we’re all going to work toward together.”



**Finding 11: Protect Our Children is impacting long-held community norms, including the “culture of silence.”**

Participants also broadly agreed that Protect Our Children sparked changes in the community at large, e.g., “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.”

**I’m looking around the community and seeing changes – youth sports are changing their protocols; they’re being trained, and schools are rethinking how they do things.**

**A GRANDMOTHER  
AND RETIRED TEACHER**

**Finding 12: Community building among partner sites resulted in a stronger statewide network of advocates and also positions Protect Our Children for growth and long-term sustainability.**

Many participants attributed the success of the Protect Our Children statewide effort to 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 support provided by The Ford Family Foundation.

Throughout the first seven years of the Protect Our Children initiative, many participants pointed to a central role for shared learning and community building with providers across Oregon and Siskiyou County: “Our learning community is the ‘secret sauce.’” The shared learning, continuous feedback provided by the evaluation, 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.”

**Virtually Facilitated  
Protect Our Children  
Trainings**



During COVID-19, many Oregon Protect Our Children sites delivered and facilitated virtual Stewards of Children trainings. Participants were asked about their experience with the virtual training overall, whether the virtually delivered training was useful, and a series of questions about their prevention-specific post-training commitments.

Overall, participants found the virtually facilitated training to be useful and appreciated its accessibility. Findings included:

- Of the 111 participants who responded, 91% agreed or strongly agreed that the virtual facilitated training was a valuable use of time.
- 91% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that the facilitator effectively helped virtual training attendees learn from each other.
- Over half of participants (52.3%) stated they would prefer future trainings be held virtually.

*“It’s such a great feeling to be with like-minded people doing the same job ... just a great group of people all working toward the same goal. Many more people will benefit if we do this ... if we’re all knowledgeable.”*

And, overwhelmingly, participants described the importance of the statewide structure, leadership, accessibility, and emotional and technical support provided by Mary Ratliff, Keavy Cook and The Ford Family Foundation: “It’s been very helpful to have such a supportive, flexible funder who’s willing to learn and try new things.”

Participants overwhelmingly agree that prevention is most useful when broad sectors of the community are engaged in a concerted effort. They described increased collective and cooperative work among agencies, schools, religious institutions and more. One participant marked the change in this way:

*"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."*

Others emphasized systemic capacity-building and a hopeful foundation for growth:

*"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."*

*"This is a huge systems effort; we are creating ripple effects in 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."*



**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

# Celebrating Seven Years of Movement Building

**The issue of child sexual abuse prevention is so much bigger than The Ford Family Foundation or one individual community – this is a statewide movement.**

**KEAVY COOK**

Director, Children, Youth and Families,  
The Ford Family Foundation

Protect Our Children's first seven years demonstrate the effectiveness of the unique infrastructure and support system developed by The Ford Family Foundation in the service of this ambitious and aspirational initiative. This has included, for example, deep support from The Ford Family Foundation Board of Directors, Mary Ratliff and Keavy Cook's instrumental leadership, a continuous improvement and co-learning training system, the developmental evaluation, and a scalable curriculum.

It can be reasonably assumed that the state of child sexual abuse prevention in Oregon has substantively evolved since 2014 directly due to The Ford Family Foundation's leadership, the Protect Our Children system of prevention, and distributed site-level implementation. Taken together, this work has generated a new level of enthusiasm and optimism for child abuse prevention across Oregon, a large body of community members eager to support its growth, new layers of infrastructure that allow for expansion, and evidence that child abuse prevention is effective.



The need for this shift in community norms is a widely held belief among prevention providers and is supported by research grounded in Oregon communities. According to the “survivor voices” survey comprised of Oregon abuse survivors, nearly half the sample (48%) indicated that when they first experienced abuse in childhood they were never helped or protected. Nineteen percent of participants reported they were rarely helped or protected (Todahl et al., 2017). As described by survivors in this study: “It would be helpful if someone actually reaches out and initiates the conversation—just kind of allow a space for a discussion about it.” And “Trauma is associated with shame; we need to dismantle shame. If we weren’t ashamed [of what happened to us], then we wouldn’t worry about being judged, because there’d be nothing to be ashamed about.”

*“Out of any training I’ve ever taken, this is one of the most crucial for our community and our kids. What better movement than preventing child abuse?”*

Nearly 40,000 Oregonians have been trained in Stewards of Children through Protect Our Children. The results in this evaluation show a combination of knowledge and beliefs — 1) I have a responsibility to protect children, 2) I know what to do, and 3) I am one part of a community network working to promote prevention — that may be core ingredients for action-taking and sustained change to prevent child sexual abuse.

100%

agreed or strongly agreed that they are **“inspired by the Oregon-wide effort to prevent child sexual abuse.”**

This occurs at a time when the prevention field more fully recognizes the value of integrated abuse prevention efforts. Integrating and aligning abuse prevention initiatives is a promising practice at local, state and national levels. This trend matches youth recommendations, is a call to action for Oregonians and is commensurate with the Protect Our Children movement. As described by a high school student participant in the Oregon Child Abuse Prevalence Study: “Normalize talking about child abuse. Don’t have it be a taboo topic.”

Protect Our Children is normalizing that conversation and building individual prevention knowledge and skills as well as a system of primary prevention education and response. Many reported being inspired by these efforts. One participant – reflecting the view of many – suggested, additionally, that Protect Our Children is fostering healing:

*“(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.”*

A Oregon youth participant in the Prevalence Study and Youth Voice Project urged Oregonians to take action to prevent trauma in childhood: *“Since we’re giving you the information, do everything you can in every way that you can.”* Protect Our Children is a hopeful and statewide response to that call – and evidence that Oregon has high capacity for prevention and reason for optimism.

**“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.”**

**SCOTT EASTMAN**, Siskyou Family YMCA  
Executive Director and  
Protect Our Children Site Leader



# The Future of Oregon's Child Sexual Abuse Prevention Movement

In December of 2021, Protect Our Children began to take on new life when the program transitioned from The Ford Family Foundation to the Tides Center, an organization that serves as fiscal sponsor to a variety of projects for social good. Informed by deep listening with partner sites and in response to their aspirations and needs, this transition came at a pivotal point in the program's development. Protect Our Children, as an independent project, continues to be led by the same trusted Oregon leader and is forming an advisory board, budget and governance structure that will allow the movement and the partner sites across the state to flourish. With the broad support of committed advocates across Oregon, Protect Our Children is positioned to expand its impact in the years to come. As you reflect on the powerful findings in this evaluation report, consider how you and your organization can join the movement to prevent child sexual abuse in Oregon.



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- Comprehensive Prevention Toolkit. <http://oregonsatf.org/satf-comprehensive-prevention-toolkit/>

# Appendix A: Protect Our Children Sites

## **ABC House**

### **Albany, Oregon**

[abchouse.org](http://abchouse.org)

Trainings for Linn and Benton counties

Phone: (541) 926-2203

Email: rsimmons@abchouse.org

## **ADAPT Integrated Healthcare**

### **Roseburg, Oregon**

[adaptoregon.org](http://adaptoregon.org)

Trainings for Douglas County

Phone: (541) 492-0145

Email: mckenzyg@adaptoregon.org

## **Bay Area Hospital/Kids' HOPE Center**

### **Coos Bay, Oregon**

[bayareahospital.org/family-medicine-services/kids-hope-center/](http://bayareahospital.org/family-medicine-services/kids-hope-center/)

Trainings for Coos County and connection to trainings in Curry County

Phone: (541) 266-8806

Email: sarah.bright@bayareahospital.org

## **Building Healthy Families**

### **Enterprise, Oregon**

[oregonbhf.org](http://oregonbhf.org)

Trainings for Wallowa, Baker, and Malheur counties

Phone: (541) 426-9411.

Email: mdalton@oregonbhf.org

## **Treasure Valley Children's Relief Nursery**

### **Ontario, Oregon**

[tvrn.org](http://tvrn.org)

Trainings for Malheur County

Phone: (541) 823-2526

Email: Kimberly\_looney@tvrn.org

## **CARES NW**

### **Portland, Oregon**

[caresnw.org](http://caresnw.org)

Trainings for Multnomah & Washington counties (non-D2L trainings)

Phone: (503) 276-9000

Email: SBlackwo@lhs.org

## **CASA for Children of Klamath County**

[klamathfallscasa.org](http://klamathfallscasa.org)

Trainings for Klamath County.

Phone: (541) 885-6017

Email: karri.mirande@

klamathfallscasa.org

## **Children's Advocacy Center of Jackson County**

### **Medford, Oregon**

[cacjc.org](http://cacjc.org)

Trainings for Jackson County and connection to trainings in Josephine County

Phone: (541) 734-5437

Email: lelliot@cacjc.org

## **Children's Advocacy Center of Lincoln County Newport, Oregon**

[caclincoln-or.org](http://caclincoln-or.org)

Trainings for Lincoln County

Phone: (541) 574-0841

Email: prevention@lccac.com

## **Children's Center of Clackamas County**

### **Oregon City, Oregon**

[childrenscenter.cc](http://childrenscenter.cc)

Trainings for Clackamas County

Phone: (503) 655-7725

Email: liliana@childrenscenter.cc

## **Grant and Harney counties**

Email: traceyblood2019@gmail.com

## **Juliette's House**

### **McMinnville, Oregon**

[julietteshouse.org](http://julietteshouse.org)

Trainings for Yamhill and Polk counties

Phone: (503) 435-1550

Email: carole@julietteshouse.org

## **KIDS Center**

### **Bend, Oregon**

[kidscenter.org](http://kidscenter.org)

Trainings for Crook, Jefferson, and Deschutes counties

Phone: (541) 383-5958

Email: rvisser@kidscenter.org

## **Liberty House**

### **Salem, Oregon**

[libertyhousecenter.org](http://libertyhousecenter.org)

Trainings for Marion and Polk counties

Phone: (503) 540-0288

Email: ktarr@libertyhousecenter.org

## **SafeSpace**

### **Hood River, Oregon**

[safespacecac.org](http://safespacecac.org)

Trainings for Hood River, Wasco, Gilliam, and Wheeler counties (and Klickitat County, WA)

Phone: (541) 436-2960

Email: aholste@safespacecac.org

## **Siskiyou Family YMCA**

### **Yreka, Calif.**

[siskiyouymca.org](http://siskiyouymca.org)

Trainings for Siskiyou County, Calif.

Phone: (530) 842-9622

Email: noelle@siskiyou-ymca.org

## **First 5 Siskiyou**

### **Mt. Shasta, Calif.**

[First5siskiyou.org](http://First5siskiyou.org)

Trainings for Siskiyou County, Calif.

Phone: (530) 918-7222

Email: karenpautz@first5siskiyou.org

# Appendix B: Social Media Tool Kit

## A Spotlight on Communicating Protect Our Children Findings

### A social media strategy for sharing findings in your community.

This section profiles a “Prevention Works” marketing series that is designed for general use by all participating Protect Our Children sites. Each post includes suggested accompanying language.

The posts profile Protect Our Children evaluation data, translated in a manner to:

- a. communicate Protect Our Children effectiveness broadly to diverse audiences
- b. promote Protect Our Children participating sites
- c. expand child sexual abuse prevention throughout Oregon

**The best way to support children and reduce negative experiences is to educate people and provide adults with resources to identify signs [of abuse], and who can approach a child showing these signs.**

**OREGON CHILD ABUSE PREVALENCE STUDY HIGH SCHOOL PARTICIPANT**

Prevention education makes a difference. After the #ProtectOurChildren training, participants took twice as many actions to prevent child sexual abuse – things like asking about an organization’s sexual abuse prevention policies or giving support to someone on the topic - as randomly selected Oregonians. That’s 66,000 prevention actions in one year! To learn more about an upcoming training, visit

#ProtectOurChildren child sexual abuse prevention trainings make a lasting impact. After the training, participants know more about what they can do to protect kids from child sexual abuse and are ready to take action in their communities. Ready to get inspired? Find an upcoming training at [organization website.]



**PREVENTION WORKS**

**Protect Our Children training participants say:**

"I have seen empowerment – people more willing to face this problem and try to help."

"It is like propellant for starting conversations."

PROTECT OUR CHILDREN

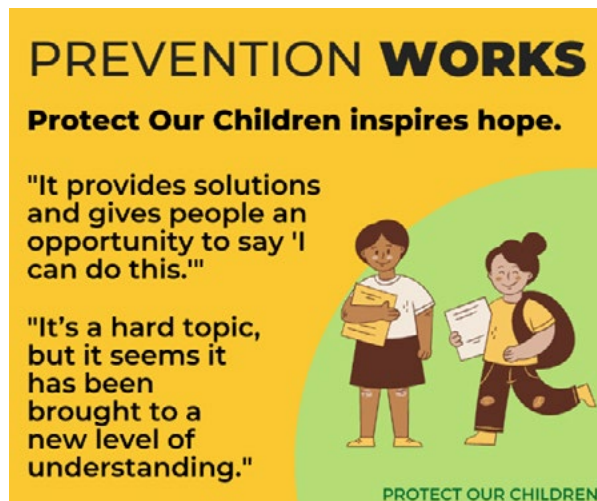


It can be hard to imagine child sexual abuse happening in your community, but as one #ProtectOurChildren participant said, “the reality is that it does happen; it can be your neighbor, your nephew.” In fact, one in three POC participants were sexually abused during childhood. 35,000 people across Oregon and Siskiyou County, CA, have participated in Protect Our Children trainings, bringing us one step closer to making abuse as rare as we all want it to be. To learn more about an

When we take action to prevent child sexual abuse, we make a real impact. Participants in #ProtectOurChildren trainings leave with a renewed sense of hope, ready to make a difference. POC gives community members the tools to keep kids safe and break the silence on issues we’re too often silent about. To sign up for an upcoming training and be a part of the change, visit [organization website].



#ProtectOurChildren child sexual abuse prevention trainings inspire conversations with kids that promote safety. “Talk directly to prevent abuse,” says one participant. “Treasure it when they come to us.” If you’re interested in becoming one of the Protect Our Children changemakers, visit [organization website] to find an upcoming training.



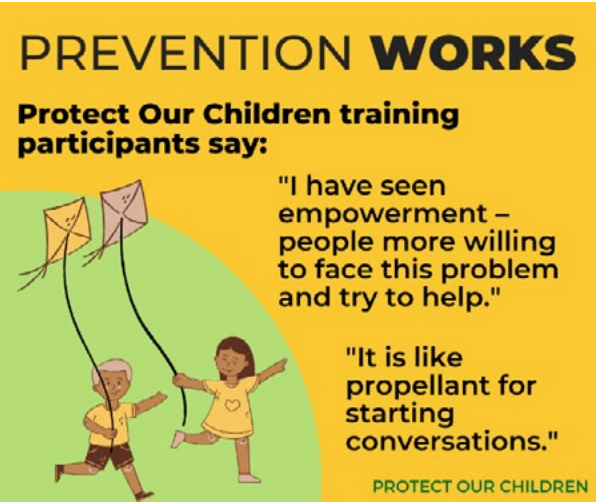
Prevention programs like #ProtectOurChildren work. They stop child sexual abuse before it happens and create safer communities for all kids. After a Protect Our Children training, participants are prepared to take action. For example, before the training, 50% of participants reported that they looked for signs of sexual abuse in the children in their lives. That number jumped to 84% after the training! To learn more about an upcoming POC session, visit [organization website].



#ProtectOurChildren trainings inspire hope. Participants come away more confident that child sexual abuse can be significantly reduced in their communities, more confident that there's a plan in their communities to reduce abuse, and more confident that they personally know what to do to help reduce abuse. Want to be inspired? To learn more about an upcoming POC training, visit [organization website].



How do you start a conversation about a topic as difficult as child sexual abuse? Start with a #ProtectOurChildren training. The training "raised awareness of child abuse as an issue in our community that I'm not sure would have existed otherwise," said one participant. "This issue has been shrouded," said another – and now it's out in the open. Find out more about an upcoming POC



#ProtectOurChildren child sexual abuse prevention trainings are making a difference in your community. More than 35,000 people now know more about how to prevent child sexual abuse in their daily lives and how to inspire action in others. It starts with having conversations, asking questions and changing preconceptions. If you're interested in becoming one of the Protect Our Children changemakers, visit [organization website] to find an upcoming training.



# Appendix C: Additional Resources

**The following reports and publications are available upon request:**

2015, August – Protect Our Children Pilot Report

2016, February – Quarterly Report

2016, May – Protect Our Children Evaluation Summary

2016, May – Quarterly Report

2016, August – Quarterly Report

2016, November – Quarterly Report

2017, February – Quarterly Report

2017, May – Quarterly Report

2017, August – Quarterly Report

2017, November – Quarterly Report

2017, December – The Impact of Oregon’s Stewards of Children on Provider Programs, Community Partners, and the Public at Large, Full Report

2017, December – The Impact of Oregon’s Stewards of Children on Provider Programs, Community Partners, and the Public at Large, Executive Summary

2018, February – Quarterly Report

2018, April – Stewards of Children 1.0 Aggregate Report

2018, July – A Comprehensive Evaluation of Stewards of Children in Rural Oregon, Executive Summary

2019, March – Protect Our Children: Impact on Provider Programs, Communities, and Strategies to Reach New Groups and Populations, Full Report

2019, March – Protect Our Children: Impact on Provider Programs, Communities, and Strategies to Reach New Groups and Populations, Executive Summary

2019, March – Protect Our Children Semi-Annual Report

2019, March – Protect Our Children Site-Specific Reports

2019, August – Protect Our Children Semi-Annual Report

2019, August – Protect Our Children Site-Specific Reports

2019, October – Protect Our Children: Impact on Male Participants in Siskiyou County, CA, Full Report

2019, October – Protect Our Children: Impact on Male Participants in Siskiyou County, CA, Executive Summary

2019, October – Protect Our Children: Community Leaders in Siskiyou County, CA, Full Report

2019, October – Protect Our Children: Community Leaders in Siskiyou County, CA, Executive Summary

2020, January – Evaluating Stewards of Children, Key Findings

2020, March – Protect Our Children Semi-Annual Report

2020, March – Protect Our Children Site-Specific Reports

2020, May – The Impact of Stewards of Children: The Views of Spanish-Speaking Participants, Full Report

2020, May – The Impact of Stewards of Children: The Views of Spanish-Speaking Participants, Executive Summary

2020, November – Protect Our Children 2.0 Interim Report

2021, December – Protect Our Children 3.0 Virtual Facilitator Survey Report

2022, February – Protect Our Children 3.0 Virtual Facilitated Training Participant Survey Report

Todahl, J., Piper, S., Barkhurst, P., Cook, K., Ratliff, M., & Gau, J. (in submission). Stewards of Children and child sexual abuse prevention: How do survivor and mandatory reporter status correlate with program outcomes? *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*.

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Todahl, J., Barkhurst, P., & Piper, S., Cook, K., Ratliff, M., Hinchcliffe, B., & Gau, J. (in submission). Stewards of Children – child sexual abuse prevention: A statewide evaluation of program impact in the rural western United States. *Sexual Abuse*.

Todahl, J., Piper, S., Barkhurst, P., Cook, K., Ratliff, M., Franz, D., Schwartz, S., Shen, F., Trevino, S. (2021). A qualitative investigation of Stewards of Children community and organization impact. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*.



