

Oregon child advocacy centers get \$130K in funding

Guardian Care Center in Pendleton 1 of 24 centers to receive \$131K in state funds

By BERIT THORSON East Oregonian Apr 4, 2024 Updated 15 hrs ago  0

PENDLETON — The Guardian Care Center in Pendleton is one of 24 child advocacy centers in Oregon to receive around \$131,000 through a grant from Senate Bill 1579 B, which Gov. Tina Kotek signed into law at the end of March.

According to a press release, the bill, known as the Children’s Health and Safety Equity Act, begins the work of funding and expanding access to underserved, historically marginalized, low-income areas of the state while offering needed services, via child advocacy centers, to children who have been abused.

“I think the child advocacy centers provide services to our communities that most people don’t understand,” said Umatilla County District Attorney Dan Primus, a supporter of such centers.

“They don’t know just how much these centers do for the young people in our area who need their help.”

Donations and grants fund advocacy centers, Primus said, so the state support is not only a nice gesture, but it’s necessary.

“We need support from the state to continue to do the work our communities need,” he said.

Reps. Bobby Levy, R-Echo, and Greg Smith, R-Heppner, were sponsors of the legislation in the House, with Sen. Bill Hansell as a sponsor in the Senate.

“These centers are at the forefront of providing crucial services such as forensic interviews, medical evaluations, therapy, and support to child victims of abuse,” Levy said in a press release after the House passed the bill in early March. “This legislation will give every center the opportunity to be accredited with the standards and best practices of the National Children’s Alliance.”

Senate Republican Leader Tim Knopp, R-Bend, chief sponsor of the bill, presented the first check for grant money on April 2 to the KIDS Center in Bend.

“It was heartwarming to see all our efforts come to fruition from our work on SB 1579,” Knopp said in a press release April 3. “My goal was to increase access and services to rural communities, historically marginalized populations, drug endangered children, and children who have been trafficked.”

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Knopp said as such, it was his pleasure to present the first ceremonial check of \$131,000 to one of the regional Child Advocacy Centers, which serves six counties in Central Oregon.

Each of the centers across the state will receive approximately \$131,000 automatically through this grant funding. However, if the CAC is accredited or has an application pending for accreditation through the National Children’s Alliance, the center can apply for additional matching funds, allowing for each site to potentially receive approximately \$250,000 within the next two years.

“Children’s advocacy centers serve as sanctuaries for vulnerable youth who have endured unimaginable traumas,” Smith said in a press release. “This critical investment will help ensure equitable access and services for children who have been abused and neglected.”