

State efforts

Since the publication of the 2006 Poverty Report, the state witnessed further results of the recession and budgetary reductions.

Declining support from the federal government also affected services to Oregon's low-income population. Almost 20 percent of the 2005-2007 legislatively adopted budget consists of revenues from the federal government.

Over the previous five biennial budget periods, Federal Funds have averaged growth of about 19 percent per biennium. Nearly three-fourths of Oregon's federal funds support Human Services program area.

Despite increased caseloads and inflation, Federal Funds increased only 0.8 percent for the 2005-2007 budget, the smallest increase since the nation's last serious recession in 1981-1983, when federal fund support fell.

Areas experiencing the greatest effect of federal budget reductions: Medicaid match, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, and social services block grants.

Oregon Department of Education

Summer lunch program

The Oregon Department of Education administers the US Department of Agriculture Summer Food Service program. This program provides healthy meals to children in low-income areas during summer vacation. A recent federal Rural Transportation Grant helps more low-income children get to the meal sites. In 2005, the Oregon Legislature also increased the meal reimbursement rate to encourage public and non-profit organizations to make the Summer Food Service Program available to more children.

Serving homeless students

The Oregon Department of Education oversees the implementation of the federal McKinney-Vento Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program in each of the state's 197 school districts. District liaisons train local staff and help serve homeless families and unaccompanied youths, so they can access and achieve in Oregon's K-12 public schools. The state coordinator provides training on service provision, including identification and outreach, and conducts a competitive subgrant application process for districts serving high numbers of homeless children and youth. For more information, click on: www.ode.state.or.us/go/HomelessEd, or contact the state homeless education coordinator at dona.bolt@state.or.us.

State efforts

Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS)

The Oregon Department of Human Services is the state's largest agency, with a biennial budget of \$9.9 billion in all funds for the 2005-2007 biennium.

Since the 2001 recession, federal and state budget reductions greatly reduced many DHS programs serving people below or near poverty. At the same time, growth in the number of seniors and people with disabilities eligible for services continues to strain public resources. Despite cost-containing efforts such as limiting cost-of-living increases for providers, this program area saw a 17 percent growth in General Funds allocations between the 2003-05 biennial budget and the 2005-2007 budget—driven by caseload and cost increases.

Health Services

In July 2004, DHS closed enrollment in OHP-Standard, the Oregon Health Plan program serving people at or below 100 percent of the poverty threshold. This action followed significant revenue shortfalls at the department.

Enrollment in OHP-Standard, the health care program for low-income and predominantly childless adults who do not qualify for traditional Medicaid, peaked at 131,961 enrollees in July 1995. It now enrolls approximately 24,000 people.

OHP-Plus, which serves people federally entitled to Medicaid benefits, continues to enroll those who are eligible.

Mental Health and Addiction Services

The expanded treatment opportunity for Oregonians addicted to gambling is a Lottery-financed treatment facility in Salem that opened July 2006. It is in addition to 27 outpatient clinics across the state, two short-term respite centers in Grants Pass and St. Helens, and a home-study program for people who cannot go to a center. All are financed by the Oregon Lottery.

In the rest of the system, budgets reflect limited cost-of-living adjustments for providers, with the likely result of reduced access to care across the state.

Self-Sufficiency Services

Oregon's Temporary Assistance for Needy Families serves about 17,600 families. Revenue shortfalls resulted in a series of reductions in TANF training and employment services. Today's clients receive a much less diverse set of services than those served by the original program.

In 2006, services relate to work search and work experience with most life skills and educational opportunities were eliminated – including adult basic education.

Recession-driven reductions in other state and locally funded support systems, including mental health and alcohol and drug services, limit options for TANF clients seeking to become more self-sufficient.

Characteristics of the clients receiving ongoing cash assistance have changed. Since 2000, the department sees a growing percentage of near-job ready and non-job ready clients who require training, support and intervention, stabilization and rehabilitative services. Clients who do leave assistance for a job, more frequently return to the system within a short period because they lack the soft skills needed to maintain employment permanently.

Budget developers estimated about \$24 million in unfunded need for clients served in TANF, employment-related day care, and child welfare programs.

More change on the horizon

With the passage of the federal Deficit Reduction Act, Oregon has an opportunity to re-examine the values, goals, and outcomes for this program within the larger context of family stability and child safety.

Food Stamps

During 2005, Oregon's Food Stamp Program served a monthly average of approximately 430,000 individuals in more than 220,000 households. The program reached 91.4 percent of eligible Oregonians during the 2003 fiscal year.

Teen pregnancy prevention

The evidence in Oregon indicates that more teens make healthy choices. Through the efforts of teens, parents and local communities, between 1991 and 2002, the teen birth rate in Oregon declined by 33 percent.

Oregon Housing and Community Services

In April 2006, the Governor issued Executive Order 06-05, which created the Ending Homelessness Advisory Council and designated the OHCS as the lead state agency to coordinate EHAC's work.

EHAC will serve as the official state entity to tackle homelessness and create policies that improve service to homeless people. It will also help the Governor develop a ten-year plan to end homelessness and collaborate with communities to develop local plans. The council will report to the Governor and the Legislature on progress in the effort against homelessness.

The council's membership includes representatives of both the private and public sectors, including non-profit housing and service providers, housing authorities, county and city government, legislators and faith-based communities.

State efforts

Resources and links

Department of Education

- Gene Evans, 503-947-5737, Gene.Evans@state.or.us or Donna Bolt (state homeless education coordinator) dona.bolt@state.or.us or www.ode.state.or.us/go/HomelessEd

Department of Human Services

- www.oregon.gov/DHS/index.shtml
- Public assistance (TANF, day care, food stamps, services for victims of domestic violence): www.oregon.gov/DHS/assistance/index.shtml
- Teen pregnancy prevention www.oregon.gov/DHS/children/teens/tpp/index.shtml

Oregon Housing and Community Services

- www.ohcs.oregon.gov
- Homeless assistance: www.ohcs.oregon.gov/OHCS/CSS_State_HomelessAssistance.shtml
- Ending Homelessness Advisory Council: Roberto Franco, 503-986-6732, roberto.franco@hcs.state.or.us or www.ohcs.oregon.gov