

THE FORD FAMILY FOUNDATION



A PRIVATE, NON-PROFIT FOUNDATION'S
**IMPACT ON CHILD PROTECTION IN RURAL
AND URBAN COMMUNITIES**

2020 CHILD PROTECTION CASE STUDY



One foundation's motivation to improve the lives of children has led them to prioritize training 30,000 adults in communities throughout Oregon and California.

The Ford Family Foundation aims to make successful citizens and vital rural communities, which includes ensuring that children in their rural communities are protected from child abuse. The Foundation is dedicated to working with partners, grantees, families, and rural communities to support youth and their families to be successful and free from abuse and neglect. They want to change the way we protect children by educating community members on how to recognize and prevent child sexual abuse. After extensive research, the Foundation partnered with Darkness to Light to provide *Stewards of Children*® as the centerpiece of the *Protect Our Children* initiative, a state-wide Foundation program across 14 sites in Oregon and California. The focus of the *Protect Our Children* initiative is training adults in the community in child sexual abuse prevention, with rigorous evaluation through the University of Oregon's Center for Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN).

THE MOTIVATION

The media often shares news stories regarding a pastor, a teacher, or a trusted authority figure who has been charged with child sexual abuse. The headlines grab your attention and remind you that child sexual abuse happens in every community. In 2019, more than 13,000 children in Oregon were confirmed victims of abuse.¹ Nationally, experts estimate one in 10 children are sexually abused before their 18th birthday.² An even more astounding statistic, 90% of victims are abused by someone they know and trust.^{3,4}

Child sexual abuse can have a long-lasting impact on a child's development and overall quality of life. Victims of child sexual abuse have an increased likelihood of developing chronic illnesses, psychological problems, and behavioral problems as an adult.



Understanding these facts, the question became: how can a foundation prevent child sexual abuse that ultimately leads to positive outcomes for the community?

The Ford Family Foundation found an answer – education and awareness. Although there is no single solution to preventing abuse, experts agree that education is crucial. The Foundation realized the need to help grantees build stronger child protection policies and procedures. After extensive research, they chose Darkness to Light's evidence-informed training *Stewards of Children*® due to its scalability and accessibility. They knew that *Stewards of Children*® would serve the needs of their community.

THE PROGRAM

“In Oregon, many of our nonprofits, state agencies, and individuals work hard every day to prevent and fight child sexual abuse, but the challenge is great. We see this program as a way to help.

– Keavy Cook, Director of the Children, Youth and Families Department at the Foundation.”

The Foundation has partnered with 11 nonprofits across the state of Oregon and in Siskiyou County, California to offer the *Protect Our Children* initiative, which seeks to prevent child sexual abuse through community education.

The initiative began in 2015, with the ultimate goal of training more than 20,000 adults in rural Oregon and Northern California using Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children*®, all for free or at minimal a cost. An essential piece of the *Protect Our Children* initiative is the understanding that parents are not the only ones responsible for preventing child sexual abuse. Athletic coaches, teachers, clergy,



school personnel, healthcare workers, and others are required by law to report child sexual abuse. The initiative provides participating agencies the resources they need to deliver the training in their communities, including training volunteers to facilitate the two-hour curriculum, bringing them together twice a year for additional training, and a chance to network with others in the field.

Evaluation is also a large part of the program. Select sites work closely with the project coordinator and evaluation team from the University of Oregon's Center for Prevention of Abuse and Neglect (CPAN). The evaluation is done through pre and post surveys, longitudinal studies, focus groups, randomized telephone surveys, and existing data analysis to measure knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors in addition to changes in child abuse reporting rates.

“Each site is tasked with reaching 5% of its population, which is widely acknowledged as the tipping point. When you reach 5%, you can create social change.”

– Mary Beattie, Program Coordinator

THE RESULT

Darkness to Light's *Stewards of Children*[®] has had a noticeable impact on the participating organizations in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. At an organizational level, *Stewards of Children*[®] has allowed several 'inward facing' organizations, like child advocacy centers, to become 'outward facing' and elevate their presence and visibility in their community. It has helped establish them as experts in child sexual abuse prevention locally and regionally. *Stewards of Children*[®] has allowed the Ford Family Foundation to engage with larger systems and effect change at a greater level. They've helped change and ignite



community conversations around prevention, intervention, and social norms. Training is also inspiring conversations about trauma-informed care, as communities recognize and acknowledge the prevalence of child sexual abuse and the subsequent devastating outcomes.

Since the *Protect Our Children* program began in March 2015, more than 30,000 people in Oregon and California have taken the pledge to protect children in their communities. They have served 26 counties in Oregon and California. Additionally, The Ford Family Foundation has also contributed to the development of *Stewards of Children*® PLUS and funded, filmed, and co-developed the Advanced Facilitator Training, making a large impact on child sexual abuse training nationally and globally. *Protect Our Children* continues to work hard evaluating their program and meeting the needs of their community through research and evaluation.

SOURCES

¹ Fast Facts for FFY 2019. 2019 Child Welfare Data Book. <https://www.oregon.gov/dhs/CHILDREN/CHILD-ABUSE/Documents/2019%20Child%20Welfare%20Data%20Book.pdf>. Published 2020.

² Townsend, C., & Rheingold, A.A., (2013). Estimating a child sexual abuse prevalence rate for practitioners: studies. Charleston, S.C., Darkness to Light. Retrieved from www.D2L.org.

³ Finkelhor, D. (2012). Characteristics of crimes against juveniles. Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center.

⁴ Whealin, J. (2007-05-22). "Child Sexual Abuse". National Center for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, US Department of Veterans Affairs.