Camp HOPE America – Oregon is a partnership between Clackamas Women’s Services (CWS) and A Safe Place Family Justice Center (ASP-FJC). Our model, developed by Camp HOPE America and Alliance for HOPE International, aims to break the generational cycle of family violence by providing a values-based camping and mentoring experience. The collaborative and trauma-informed approach of Camp HOPE empowers youth to create HOPE-centered pathways to believe in themselves, in others, and in their dreams.

CWS’ Youth Mental Health Therapist experienced the power of this revolutionary model at a 2013 Camp HOPE California training. In 2014, CWS staff and 10 youth participants were able to experience this unique program in full at Camp HOPE California. Knowing that this program would be an asset to the Clackamas County community, CWS and ASP-FJC launched a pilot program and began planning for Camp HOPE America – Oregon to be launched in 2015.

During Small Group Time, camp counselors lead campers in daily conversations about HOPE Heroes - young people who have overcome adversity in their lives. By the end of camp, each camper has been highlighted at campfire and given a Character Trait Award that recognizes them for using their unique strengths in a positive and specific way.

At Camp HOPE, we embrace the concept of "Challenge by Choice" and support campers who are on a journey to leave their Comfort Zone and enter their Challenge Zone, whatever that may look like for them. No campers are ever asked to enter their Panic Zone.

More than “Just Camp”
Hosted at beautiful Camp Arrah Wanna in Welches, Camp HOPE America – Oregon builds bridges for campers to connect with nature, themselves, and other campers. While on-site, campers participate in an array of camp activities: skits and camp songs, arts and crafts, water activities such as kayaking and rafting, ropes courses, and horseback riding. Camp HOPE is special because of the curriculum and activity components that promote healing and connection:

- During Small Group Time, camp counselors lead campers in daily conversations about HOPE Heroes - young people who have overcome adversity in their lives.
- Campers attend a nightly campfire where they answer the question, "Where did you see HOPE today?" By the end of camp, each camper has been highlighted at campfire and given a Character Trait Award that recognizes them for using their unique strengths in a positive and specific way.
- At Camp HOPE, we embrace the concept of "Challenge by Choice" and support campers who are on a journey to leave their Comfort Zone and enter their Challenge Zone, whatever that may look like for them. No campers are ever asked to enter their Panic Zone.
The Pathways Program
Camp HOPE does not end with the last day of camp. Historically, Camp HOPE campers and their families have been invited to participate in the Pathways Program, a series of community-building and mentoring events that take place throughout the year. As of September 2019, Camp HOPE America – Oregon is proud to expand program referrals to include any child receiving services at CWS or ASP-FJC to join the Pathways Program, regardless of whether or not they have attended camp. In doing so, CWS will be able to serve a larger number of children and youth impacted by family violence. Pathways Program participants are able to attend family-friendly events alongside CWS and A Safe Place staff, camp counselors, and Camp HOPE volunteers. Sustaining the connections built at camp, and creating new connections, further supports Camp HOPE America – Oregon’s efforts to build a community of support.

Why HOPE?
According to their groundbreaking ACE study, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) determined that children who directly or indirectly experience any form of abuse (physical, sexual, or emotional) or other childhood adversities are at an increased risk for certain lasting impacts, such as chronic health conditions and various social/emotional challenges (Felitti et al., 1998). Children served by Camp HOPE programs have experienced higher rates of childhood adversity than is represented by the CDC national average (Featherngill & Hellman, 2018).

Camp HOPE sites across the country, including Camp HOPE America – Oregon, have partnered with The HOPE Research Center at The University of Oklahoma – Tulsa and Dr. Chan Hellman, PhD to evaluate the efficacy of the Camp HOPE Model. Using data from multiple Child Hope Index self-assessments and Counselor Observation assessments for each child, The Hope Research Center completes a yearly evaluation of program impact on Hope, Resilience, and Character Development (Featherngill & Hellman, 2018). In their most recent evaluation, Featherngill and Hellman (2018) found that overall Hope and Resiliency levels showed a statistically significant increase on camper self-assessments from pre-test to the last day of camp. Additionally, a statistically significant increase occurred from the final day of camp to self-assessments completed 30 days later (Featherngill & Hellman, 2018). The increase in Hope and Resiliency reported by campers correlated with an increase in Character Strength scores as reported by camp counselors (Featherngill & Hellman, 2018).
Preparing for Camp: Training
Camp HOPE Staff and Volunteers

We believe that creating safe, supportive relationships between members of the Camp HOPE community requires a group of camp counselors, staff, and volunteers who have a foundational understanding of how our campers’ lived experiences impact them. Knowing this, we have developed a variety of training components that are in line with our core values of trauma-informed care, building a community of support, and understanding the impact that relationships can have on individuals. Prior to Camp HOPE 2019, we were proud to have provided 1,109 hours of online and in-person training that resulted in a knowledgeable, cohesive, and supportive team of caring adults.

Our 2019 training modules consisted of:

**Online**
- 12 hours
- Completed by camp counselors and support staff volunteers
- Advocate-level training through the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic & Sexual Violence
- Trainings introduced:
  - The root causes and impacts of domestic violence, sexual violence, and stalking
  - The impact of trauma on children and adults
  - Anti-oppression concepts and the impact of oppression

**In-Person**
- Camp counselors completed two days of in-person training
- Support Staff volunteers (general, medical, mental wellness) completed one day of in-person training
- Facilitated by members of the Camp HOPE Leadership team
- Introduced the Camp HOPE philosophy
- Attendees learned and practiced skills related to working with children impacted by trauma, conflict resolution, building safe and supportive relationships, and adhering to confidentiality

**Leadership Retreat**
- Three days on-site at Camp Arrah Wanna
- Attended by camp counselors and Programming Leads
- Facilitated by members of the Camp HOPE Leadership team
- Camp counselors practiced leading Small Group Time and other curriculum-based activities
- Camp counselors were debriefed on the emotional support plans and needs of their campers
- Camp counselors bonded, creating a cohesive, supportive team.
Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office (CCSO) has been a lead supporter of Camp HOPE America – Oregon since its inception in 2015. Their involvement over the past five years has been instrumental throughout all phases of the program – from planning to delivery to follow-up services. Through their donation of programming supplies to the onsite staff who serve as incredible mentors for campers, CCSO’s presence within the Camp HOPE program continues to move the dial on the impact this program has within our community.

The Children’s Center of Clackamas County (Children’s Center) expanded their partnership with Clackamas Women’s Services in 2019 by providing three Family Support clinicians to join us onsite, more than doubling the capacity of our onsite Mental Wellness Team. In addition to our Mental Wellness Team, 16 medical professionals contributed their personal time to our Medical Wellness Team. With the help of these partners, every camper, camp counselor, and staff member on site at camp was able to feel safe and supported during their time at camp.

Camp HOPE America – Oregon is proud to serve Clackamas County with the generous support of our community members. In addition to the CCSO staff, Children’s Center staff, and medical professionals mentioned above, 18 camp counselors, 16 Clackamas Women’s Services employees, and 19 community volunteers pitched in to provide a total of 1,140 staff and volunteer hours during our 2019 camp sessions.

Programming expertise provided to our campers during their activity rotation days was donated by the following community partners:

- Outdoor survival and safety skills education with a CCSO Deputy
- Horseback riding with the CCSO Sheriff’s Posse
- Gardening education with CCSO’s Community Garden
- Self-expression and collaboration through music with Veronica Vargas
- Mindfulness through movement and art with MindMoveMake
During the 2019 camp sessions, Camp HOPE America - Oregon served a total of 74 campers who were impacted by domestic or sexual violence. Thirty-two campers, ranging in age from 7 to 11, attended Classic Camp. Forty-two campers, ranging in age from 11 to 16, attended High Adventure Camp. Of the 74 campers in 2019:

- 56% were girls (cisgender), 43% were boys (cisgender), and 1% were boys (transgender)
- 47% of campers were White, 58% were Latino, 11% were Multi-Racial, and 4% were Asian
- 100% of campers spoke English at home, 23% spoke Spanish, and 3% spoke Mandarin

**Building Connections**

Every family engaged in the Camp HOPE program was first referred via another program of Clackamas Women’s Services or one of our partners at A Safe Place Family Justice Center. With a foundation of trust in place, many families choose to remain connected to Camp HOPE for years – continuing to strengthen the relationships they have built with each other and with our Camp HOPE staff and volunteers. Well over half of our campers (75%) are returning from having spent previous years with us. Caregiver buy-in is evidenced by the high numbers of young siblings that attend our Pathways Program community building events and who are excited to join us as Classic Campers in the coming years. Some campers continue their involvement with the program after they have aged out – three of our 2019 Camp Counselors are former campers, each of whom have younger siblings that are still engaged in the program.
After gathering feedback from our larger Camp HOPE Community – Caregivers, Camp Counselors, Camp HOPE Staff, and other stakeholders – we have determined ways to update and improve how we plan for and implement Camp HOPE America – Oregon. Here, we have outlined six of the most exciting and impactful changes that we plan to make.

Increase Camper Engagement

On-site activities and Pathways Program events play a key role in helping campers find new ways to challenge themselves and have new experiences. Camp HOPE 2019 saw the addition of many new partners as well as the expansion of existing partnerships. On-site programming included adventures like: stand up paddle boarding and kayaking with Adventures Without Limits, yoga and art with MindMoveMake, horseback riding and outdoor preparedness with Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office, and more. Our partnership with Clackamas County Community Corrections expanded from an annual Pumpkin Patch event to gardening education on-site at camp. For Camp HOPE 2020, we will continue to strengthen existing partnerships and seek out new community partners who are interested in helping our campers have the fun, playful experiences they deserve.

Follow-Up Phone Calls

Each year, we seek feedback that will let us know how we can further develop and strengthen the relationships that exist between our camper families, our program, and our volunteers. Follow-up contact with caregivers has occurred primarily through Pathways Program events and additional CWS Children’s Program services. Moving forward, each caregiver will receive a follow up phone call within one week of camp ending. In addition to the electronic caregiver feedback survey, this will provide a space for individualized, one-on-one feedback that some families may want to share with us. Follow up phone calls will also give us the space to check in with each family about how we can best support them and connect them with additional resources available through CWS and ASP-FJC.

Multi-Year Pathways Program Expansion

Starting with our 2019-2020 Pathways Program events, we will begin expanding programming in three phases, allowing us to provide a more diverse array of programming to a larger group of children and youth. These changes will include:
2019 - 2020: The Camp HOPE referral window will be expanded so that children and youth between the ages of 7-16 may be referred to our program as Pathways participants at any point during the year.

2020 - 2021: Pathways participants who fall within our High Adventure age range (11-16) will be invited to attend new programming events and workshops focused on post-high school graduation opportunities. We will partner with local schools, businesses, and organizations to host events for our participants.

2021 - 2022: Pathways Program participants will have an opportunity to join an Affinity Group of their choosing. Affinity Groups will reflect their specific interests, such as STEM, art, or nature, and will meet for smaller, more focused events during the Pathways Program year.

Multi-Year Planning
Camp HOPE America - Oregon and our host site, Camp Arrah Wanna Inc., will work together to secure multi-year camp dates. Doing so will allow us to provide Camp Counselors and Support Staff volunteers with dates for camp well in advance, increasing retention rates and allowing families to plan more easily. Multi-year planning will also increase our ability to secure new and exciting programming for Camp each summer.

Training Curricula
Every staff and volunteer on-site at Camp HOPE receives training that gives them the tools they need to interact with our campers in a safe, trauma-informed manner. Every summer, we review our post-camp feedback and adjust the training curricula as needed. This year, we will not only be adjusting all training curricula to fit the needs of our growing program, but will build in consistency across all content so that every adult on-site has received the same foundation of knowledge and skills.

Medical Expansion
The health and well-being of our campers is of paramount importance, and we want to develop medical policies that reflect that. Our Physical Wellness volunteer team at camp has worked hard to help us establish norms and best practices. Our program has grown since many of those policies were developed, and we know that it is time to dig deep and re-evaluate our medical policies. For the 2020 planning phase, we have created a Medical Partners & Systems Ad hoc Committee that will review our medical policies and ensure that they are guiding us toward a healthy and safe camp environment. This committee will also build connections with medical professionals in our community to create a sustainable team of Physical Wellness volunteers on-site.
References


Get Involved

Are you interested in partnering with Camp HOPE America - Oregon?

Would you like to volunteer your time on site at Camp HOPE 2020?

Contact CampHOPEOregon@cwsor.org or call the CWS Children's Program at 503.908.9411 for more information.

Camp HOPE America - Oregon is a program of Clackamas Women's Services and A Safe Place Family Justice Center