



Building a Case for Change

News release: Embargoed until April 5, 2010

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Executive director named to partnership improving child welfare system

SEATTLE -- Benjamin de Haan, Ph.D., has been named executive director for Partners for Our Children. Dr. de Haan, who has 30 years of combined experience in academia, philanthropy and as director of several state agencies, was elected by unanimous vote of the board last week. He will begin his new role on May 3.

Dr. de Haan directed child welfare services for the State of Oregon, and served there in a variety of leadership positions for nearly 20 years. He has also directed two university-based research centers and was the managing director of Casey Family Programs' State Strategy Division. He currently serves as president of the Oregon Children's Trust Fund Foundation, a private endowment focused on preventing child maltreatment.

"Partners for Our Children's mission is to use top-notch research to build a case for change in the child welfare system to improve the lives of children, so Ben is an excellent fit for us," said Connie Ballmer, POC Board Chair.

"Partnerships are at the heart of why Partners for Our Children has been successful so far, so Ben's proven track record of partnering and leadership was an important factor in the board's decision to ask him to join POC," said Eddie Uehara, Dean of the University of Washington School of Social Work. "You can only make real, lasting change for children in the child welfare system if you bring all the leaders and policy makers in government, the private sector and academia to the table."

Partners for Our Children was founded in 2007 as a collaborative effort of the UW School of Social Work, Washington State Department of Social and Health Services and private funders. Since that time, POC's research has helped DSHS learn more about the extent of poverty and the basic needs of the families in the child welfare system, explore ways to safely bring children home to their families more quickly, and evaluate whether a new casework practice model adopted by the state improves outcomes for children and their families.

“I look forward to working with the UW School of Social Work, the Department of Social and Health Services, private sector leaders and others to build on all the work and successes Partners for Our Children have accomplished so far,” de Haan said.

He succeeds Mark Courtney, Ph.D., who – after serving as executive director at Partners for Our Children for its initial two and a half years – stepped down in October to become research director.

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