



Oregon Youth Authority

Issue Brief

December 2011

Reforming youth while controlling facility costs

10

Number of OYA close-custody correctional and transition facilities

750

Approximate number of youth offenders supervised in OYA close-custody facilities

1,075

Approximate number of youth offenders supervised by OYA in communities

302

Total Funds, in millions of dollars, allocated to OYA in 2011-2013

258

General Fund, in millions of dollars, allocated to OYA in 2011-2013

87

Approximate percent of OYA's budget spent locally in facilities and communities

Overview

The Oregon Youth Authority is statutorily tasked with reforming Oregon's most delinquent and dangerous youth. These youth have committed serious person-to-person crimes and require significant amounts of treatment to help them learn accountability, develop pro-social thinking and behavior skills, and safely reintegrate into their home communities.

As stewards of public funds, it is OYA's responsibility to deliver these services in a cost-effective manner. Questions frequently asked of OYA include: How much does Oregon spend on care and treatment of youth offenders in close-custody facilities? How does that figure compare with other states' juvenile justice facilities? How does that figure compare with adult inmate costs at the Oregon Department of Corrections?

Cost comparisons

Oregon's 2011-2013 cost (\$260 per day) for managing and treating close-custody youth offenders pays for security and housing, facility maintenance, medical care, treatment services, and other reformation supports aimed at turning the agency vision into reality — youth who leave OYA will go on to lead productive, crime-free lives. This daily cost is below the national average, although direct comparisons are difficult because each state calculates the costs of delivering programs differently.

Another cost driver for OYA is the changing population of youth offenders being served. Higher numbers of youth offenders are entering custody with mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependencies, gang affiliations, and other significant needs requiring additional and more intensive treatments.

Oregon's adult corrections system spends approximately \$90 a day per inmate, reflecting the different methods for housing and supervising juvenile and adult offenders, and reflecting differences in treatment and other services.

Cost components

As a percentage of funds spent, housing and supervision represent the largest share of the cost for both juvenile and adult offenders (slightly more than 50 percent). However, in terms of actual dollars spent, care and custody of youth offenders cost more than the amount spent for DOC inmates for several reasons.

Oregon Youth Authority

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Mission

The Oregon Youth Authority protects the public and reduces crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.



Vision

Youth who leave OYA go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.



Core Values

Integrity
Professionalism
Accountability
Respect



Director

Colette S. Peters



Deputy Director

Fariborz Pakseresht



Assistant Director
for Business Services

Jean Straight



Assistant Director
for Community Services

Philip Cox



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for Facility Services

Karen Daniels

A major cost difference is housing — smaller living units versus cell blocks. Research shows juveniles are less likely to reoffend if they receive correctional treatment in smaller, less institutional living units. In OYA living units, which typically hold 25 youth, staff deliver evidence-based treatment to reform criminal thinking and behaviors, and to engage youth in developing pro-social skills. Staff work with youth offenders in group treatment sessions and one-on-one.

OYA emphasizes delivery of evidence-based treatment to youth offenders, spending approximately \$35 a day compared with approximately \$5 a day at DOC. OYA exceeds the Legislature's requirement that 75 percent of treatment spending be on research-proven practices.

For health care and medications, OYA spends approximately \$25 per day compared with DOC's approximately \$15. Many juvenile offenders receive their first medical and dental care when they come to OYA, and need more initial care to deal with long-term untreated health problems.

Food services for juvenile offenders cost more than twice that for adult offenders in DOC custody. Several reasons underly this cost difference: OYA follows strict USDA nutritional guidelines in order to participate in the National School Lunch Program. This ensures youth offenders receive appropriate nutrition and enables OYA to receive federal reimbursement for youth breakfasts and lunches. In addition, OYA, with its smaller population of offenders, does not enjoy the same economy of scale for food purchases available to DOC.

To ensure comparability with DOC data, OYA does not include education in its cost-per-day calculation. The education cost at OYA, which is funded by the Oregon Department of Education, is comparable to what it would be for students attending any Oregon public school.

Reducing close custody costs

OYA continually seeks more cost-effective ways of managing youth offenders and delivering treatment. The agency works closely with county juvenile departments and community-based residential treatment providers to place youth offenders in the most appropriate programs in the least restrictive and lowest-cost environments while protecting public safety. OYA also monitors length-of-stay to ensure youth offenders are not unnecessarily kept in custody after completing treatment.

Initiatives under way to further improve services and reduce costs include the agency's mapping project to create more efficient processes for placing youth offenders in close-custody facilities and community residential programs; the overtime initiative to enable large close-custody facilities to more efficiently reallocate staff among living units as needed to reduce use of overtime; and the centralization of food purchasing under the guidance of a nutritionist.

These are just some of the ways OYA seeks to demonstrate good stewardship of the public's funds and to meet the agency's mission to reduce crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.