



Oregon

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NEWS RELEASE

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State juvenile corrections agency seeks transitional foster homes

The Oregon Youth Authority is preparing to add a new type of foster care to help older youth move successfully to independent living in the community.

The state juvenile corrections agency has long offered traditional foster care for youth ages 12-18 who are on probation or parole, need an out-of-home placement, may be in various stages of treatment for their offenses and for whom an evaluation has shown them to be appropriate for foster care.

Transitional foster care will be another step helping the agency to fulfill its mission of protecting the public and reducing crime by holding offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.

“Foster parents in transitional homes will help youth ages 18 to 24 learn the basics such as establishing a bank account, preparing a household budget, learning how to shop for food and prepare meals, understanding job-hunting skills and performing related tasks essential to independent living,” said Erin Fultz, OYA community resources manager.

“Youth in transitional foster care will have completed treatment, have been behaviorally stable and are ready to transition back to the community.”

People interested in learning more about OYA foster care, either traditional or transitional, may log on to <http://www.oregon.gov/OYA/foster.shtml>. The Web site answers frequently asked questions, provides phone numbers to regional foster care offices and has a link to an application. Fultz said OYA certifiers are available to speak about OYA foster care opportunities, as well.

Although the agency always is seeking high-quality foster parents, Fultz said, the need is greatest in Deschutes, Clackamas, Multnomah and Washington counties. The OYA foster care network is separate from that of the Oregon Department of Human Services, so OYA and DHS youth are not placed in the same home.

“Our foster parents dedicate themselves to helping youth succeed,” said Fultz, noting that Gov. Ted Kulongoski proclaimed May Foster Care Month in Oregon. “We have an exemplary foster home in Linn County that has served youth since 1976, for example, and another in Klamath County that helped a youth move from near illiteracy to the dean’s list.

“Our foster parents sometimes have adults come back and tell them what a positive difference they made in their lives.”

Qualifications to serve as a foster parent include being at least age 21 (or 25 for a transitional foster parent), a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, financially stable and able to pass a criminal history check. Prospective foster parents also should be emotionally mature and have an understanding of how to help youth build positive relationships and live independently.

New foster parents receive a thorough introduction and training and at least weekly phone contact from OYA certifiers, monthly face-to-face visits and regular training, coaching and other assistance. They can expect regular contact with youth parole and probation officers and an opportunity to participate in the case planning process. Foster parents receive a monthly maintenance reimbursement for the services they provide to youth, Fultz said.

OYA has custody of approximately 900 offenders ages 12 to 24 in correctional and transitional facilities in Albany, Burns, Florence, Grants Pass, La Grande, Salem, Tillamook, Warrenton and Woodburn, and the agency supervises approximately 1,100 offenders on parole and probation in communities throughout the state.

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