



Oregon

Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Oregon Youth Authority
Director's Office
530 Center Street NE, Suite 200
Salem, OR 97301-3765
PHONE: (503) 373-7212
FAX: (503) 373-7622

Jan. 3, 2011

NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Ann Snyder, OYA Communications Office, 503-378-6023,
ann.snyder@oya.state.or.us

OYA director applauds decisions of county juvenile justice partners

A new state audit of Oregon counties' decisions about placing juvenile offenders illustrates that county and state juvenile corrections officials are working together as a system, the director of the Oregon Youth Authority said Monday.

"It is gratifying that placements for more than 3,000 youth were found to be supported by generally accepted placement factors," said OYA Director Colette S. Peters. "These findings show counties are promoting effective youth reformation, honoring public safety and dealing consistently with youth offenders."

The OYA director's comments came after the Oregon Secretary of State's Audits Division released a report of its review of 36 counties' placements of 3,300 youth during 2008. The audit found 84 percent of placements were based appropriately on four factors – severity of offense, youth's history of offenses, youth's risk to re-offend, and existence of a probation violation. For the balance of cases, auditors said case file analysis identified factors suggesting the placements were appropriate.

"Despite Oregon's highly decentralized juvenile justice system," the audit found, "its restriction level decisions appeared consistent." The 2007 Legislature directed the Secretary of State to audit county juvenile departments.

After a youth is taken into custody, a local juvenile justice team recommends appropriate sanctions ranging from the youth's participation in a county-level diversion program to placement in an OYA youth correctional facility. The team typically comprises representatives of the county juvenile department, OYA and

state Department of Human Services, and forwards its recommendation to a county judge who makes the final decision.

Youth are placed with OYA for the most serious offenses and represent those with the highest risk to re-offend. OYA placement options include a close-custody facility, a contracted residential treatment provider, and foster care.

The auditors made two recommendations to OYA:

- Work with county juvenile departments to improve documentation in the state Juvenile Justice Information System of local treatment services provided to youth. OYA responded that it agreed and believed counties also would see the value of strengthening reporting.
- Develop a process for expunged records that both protects privacy and allows long-term analysis of factors such as former offenders' education and employment achievements. OYA responded that it believed it was outside the agency's statutory authority to retain the ability to track youth whose records have been expunged; the agency said legislative action would be required. OYA said it would pursue the question with the Juvenile Justice Information Steering Committee.

The audit report is available on the Oregon Secretary of State's Web site at www.sos.state.or.us/audits.

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

#