



Oregon

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NEWS RELEASE

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Survey report delivers demographic snapshot of OYA youth offenders

An increasing share of youth offenders in the care and custody of the Oregon Youth Authority have lower IQs, nearly two-thirds experience mental and emotional disorders, and females in close-custody facilities appear to be an especially troubled population.

These are among the findings noted in a new report based on a biennial survey of OYA youth offenders. Officials in the state juvenile corrections agency use the data to track trends and identify unmet needs for services.

“These data underscore how much support these youth need to put them on a path to crime-free lives,” said OYA Director Colette S. Peters. “By responding to these youths’ treatment and education needs now, we improve our chances of successfully protecting the public, reducing crime and reaching these youths’ potential to be productive, crime-free citizens.”

Nineteen percent of OYA youth had IQs below 80, putting them in the bottom quintile, a significant increase from 11 percent in 2004. Sixty-four percent of youth had diagnosed mental health conditions, while 61 percent were diagnosed as abusing or dependent on alcohol or other drugs. Twenty percent had experienced sexual abuse, and a quarter had experienced physical or emotional abuse.

Among females in close-custody facilities, 52 percent had histories of sexual abuse compared with 17 percent for males. Thirty percent of females in close custody had attempted suicide at least once, 42 percent had an IQ below 80, 59

percent were diagnosed with a conduct disorder, 63 percent were taking psychotropic medications, and 85 percent were diagnosed with abuse or dependence on alcohol or other drugs.

Overall, one in four youth offenders had a biological parent with a psychiatric history. A majority of youth had a biological parent with a history of alcohol or other drug abuse. And one in eight already was the parent of a child.

The full report can be found at

http://www.oregon.gov/OYA/docs/2010_MentalHealthGap.pdf.

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.

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