

# OREGON YOUTH AUTHORITY

## Policy Summary



### How OYA Investigates Youth Safety and Rights Concerns

The following is only a summary of OYA policy [I-D-4.0 Professional Standards Office Investigations](#). Please refer to the policy for full details and as the official policy record. For other policies, visit <https://www.oregon.gov/oya/aboutoya/pages/policies.aspx>.

### What is the Professional Standards Office (PSO)?

The Professional Standards Office (PSO) is a special office within the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) that looks into serious concerns about the safety, rights, or well-being of youth in OYA custody. They also investigate possible staff misconduct. Investigations of youth sexual abuse or sexual harassment are in compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Standards. PSO reports directly to the director of OYA and works to ensure that all youth are treated fairly and respectfully.

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### When does PSO get involved?

PSO may investigate when someone reports or suspects:

- A youth's rights have been violated
- A youth has been mistreated, harmed, or harassed (including sexual abuse or harassment)
- An OYA staff member, volunteer, or contracted worker has acted inappropriately toward a youth
- There is a safety concern that needs immediate attention
- A complaint is made to PSO through the OYA Reporting Line (1-800-315-5440), youth grievance, or third party

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### How does the process work?

1. **A concern or complaint is reported to PSO.**
  - This can be through the reporting line, a youth grievance, staff, families, the online complaint form available on OYA's website, or other sources.
2. **OYA checks if a youth's rights or safety are at risk.**
  - If yes, and a staff member is involved, PSO may investigate or work with Human Resources.
  - If it's a possible crime, PSO may notify law enforcement. If law enforcement initiates an investigation, PSO may suspend their own investigation.

- If the issue is not related to youth rights or safety, it may be referred to another department.
- 3. **PSO gathers information.**
  - This may include interviewing youth, staff, or witnesses, and reviewing documents.
  - Interviews with youth are private and handled with care.
- 4. **PSO decides what happened.**
  - Based on the evidence, PSO determines whether the complaint is credible or not.
  - If it is a credible PREA investigation, the PREA coordinator is notified.
  - PREA investigations must be completed within 60 days, non PREA investigations must be completed within 90 days.
- 5. **If needed, PSO writes a report.**
  - The report explains what happened and may include steps to prevent future issues.
  - If the findings indicate staff misconduct, the case is referred to Human Resources for further action.
- 6. **Families may be notified.**
  - If the investigation involves a youth complaint, the youth and their family may be informed of the outcome.

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### **Additional Information on Investigations of PREA-Related Allegations**

Investigations must be completed within 60 days, unless a law enforcement agency starts a criminal investigation, which may extend the timeline. If additional time is needed, the chief investigator must inform the OYA director and document the reason for the delay.

PSO must continue an investigation even if the victim or accused staff member leaves OYA's custody or employment, or if the complaint is retracted. They must also determine whether staff actions or inactions contributed to the incident. All findings are documented in writing.

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### **Important protections for youth:**

- **Youth will never be punished** for making a complaint. Information gathered during a youth's interview is kept as confidential as possible.
  - **Youth have the right to be interviewed in private.**
  - **Youth can report a concern anytime**—even if it happened in the past.
  - If a youth feels unsafe or mistreated, they can call the OYA Reporting Line: 1-800-315-5440.
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