



Michael Tessean brings over 20 years of experience at the intersection of juvenile justice, behavioral health, and organizational leadership. Prior to joining OYA in August 2025, he served as director of the Colorado State Board of Parole, where he led significant operational reforms to improve transparency, reduce backlogs, and strengthen public trust in the parole process.

Previously, Tessean held senior leadership roles within the Colorado Department of Human Services, including as director of

leadership and organizational development and deputy director for both the Office of Behavioral Health and the Office of Children, Youth and Families. In these roles, he helped lead statewide initiatives focused on competency restoration, youth justice reform, and large-scale cultural transformation. He oversaw multimillion-dollar budgets, supported legislative and strategic planning efforts, and championed leadership development across the agency.

Tessean's early career included direct service roles in probation and problem-solving courts, where he worked with youth and adults impacted by substance use, mental health conditions, and systemic inequities. He later served as executive director of a front-end juvenile justice agency, implementing data-driven strategies to reduce detention for younger youth and shift resources toward evidence-based practices.

A passionate advocate for building healthy organizations, Tessean's leadership philosophy centers on culture, connection, and creation. He believes that inclusive, people-centered culture is the foundation for any successful system—and that strong relationships, clear structures, and accountable leadership are essential for lasting change. His approach emphasizes curiosity, humility, and the continuous use of data to understand problems, measure progress, and drive improvement.

Tessean is a national trainer in active bystandership and has supported teams across the country in strengthening accountability, psychological safety, and peer intervention. He holds a Bachelor of Science in psychology from Colorado State University and a Master of Business Administration from the Jack Welch Management Institute.