



# Oregon Youth Authority

Issue Brief

January 2015

## Delivering services to youth while managing costs

**10**

Number of OYA close-custody facilities

**650**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises in close custody

**550**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises in community residential treatment and foster care settings

**450**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises who live independently or at home in communities

**323**

Total Funds, in millions of dollars, allocated to OYA in 2013-2015

**88**

Approximate percent of OYA's budget spent locally in facilities and communities

### Overview

By statute, the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) is tasked with reforming Oregon's most troubled youth. These youth have committed serious person-to-person crimes and require significant treatment to help them learn accountability, develop pro-social thinking and behavior skills, and safely reintegrate into their home communities.

As a steward of public funds, OYA is responsible for delivering these services in a cost-effective manner. Questions frequently asked of OYA include: How much does Oregon spend on care and treatment of youth offenders in close-custody facilities? How does that figure compare with other states' juvenile justice facilities? How does that figure compare with adult inmate costs at the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC)?

### Cost components

Oregon's 2013-15 cost for managing and treating close-custody youth offenders is budgeted at \$263 per day. This pays for security and housing, facility maintenance, medical care, treatment services, and other reformation supports aimed at turning the agency vision into reality — that youth who leave OYA will go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.

Oregon's adult corrections system spends approximately \$90 a day per inmate, reflecting the different methods for housing and supervising juvenile and adult offenders, and reflecting differences in treatment and other services.

As a percentage of funds spent, housing and supervision represent the largest share of the cost for both juvenile and adult offenders (slightly less than 50 percent). However, in terms of actual dollars spent, care and custody of youth offenders cost more than the amount spent for DOC inmates for several reasons.

A major cost difference is housing — juveniles live in smaller living units whereas adult inmates live in cell blocks. Research shows juveniles are less likely to reoffend if they receive correctional treatment in smaller, less institutional living units. In OYA living units, which typically hold 25 youth, staff deliver evidence-based treatment to reform criminal thinking and behaviors, and to engage youth in developing pro-social skills. Staff work with youth offenders in group treatment sessions and one-on-one.

## Oregon

### Youth Authority

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#### Mission

The Oregon Youth Authority protects the public and reduces crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.



#### Vision

Youth who leave OYA will go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.



#### Core Values

Integrity  
Professionalism  
Accountability  
Respect



#### Director

Fariborz Pakseresht



#### Deputy Director

Joe O'Leary



#### Key Service Areas

Business Services  
Community Services  
Facility Services  
Health Services  
Information Services  
Treatment Services

OYA emphasizes delivery of evidence-based treatment to youth offenders, spending approximately \$59 a day compared with approximately \$6 a day at DOC. OYA exceeds the Legislature's requirement that 75 percent of treatment spending be on research-proven practices.

For health care and medications, OYA spends approximately \$24 per day compared with DOC's approximately \$16. Many juvenile offenders receive their first medical and dental care when they come to OYA, and need more initial care to deal with long-term untreated health problems.

Food services for juvenile offenders cost more than twice that for adult offenders in DOC custody. There are several reasons for this cost difference. First, OYA participates in the National School Breakfast, School Lunch and After-School Snack programs. These programs require OYA to follow strict USDA nutritional guidelines. This ensures youth offenders receive appropriate nutrition and enables OYA to receive federal reimbursement for youth breakfasts and lunches. In addition, OYA, with its smaller population of offenders, does not enjoy the same economy of scale for food purchases available to DOC.

Another cost driver for OYA is the changing population of youth offenders being served. Higher numbers of youth offenders are entering custody with mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependencies, gang affiliations, and other significant needs that require additional and more intensive treatments.

To ensure comparability with DOC data, OYA does not include classroom education in its cost-per-day calculation, but does include vocational education programs. The education cost at OYA, which is funded by the Oregon Department of Education, is comparable to what it would be for students attending any Oregon public school.

## Reducing costs

OYA continually seeks more cost-effective ways of managing youth offenders and delivering treatment. The agency works closely with counties and treatment providers to place youth in the most appropriate, least restrictive and lowest-cost environments while protecting public safety. OYA also monitors length-of-stay to ensure youth offenders are not unnecessarily kept in custody after completing treatment.

Initiatives underway to further improve services and reduce costs include using sophisticated data techniques to inform decisions for placing youth offenders in the most appropriate close-custody facilities and community residential programs; improving staffing processes for close-custody facilities to more efficiently allocate staff to promote safe living environments and reduce use of overtime; and customizing treatment and education options based on in-depth, validated assessment tools.

These are just some of the ways OYA seeks to demonstrate good stewardship of the public's funds and to meet the agency's mission to reduce crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.