



# Director's Message

May 13, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

Ensuring the safety of our staff and the youth we serve is one of OYA's most important goals. Consistent with the culture we are trying to sustain at OYA, the concept of safety includes both physical and emotional safety, and freedom from any type of bullying, abuse or harm. Federal laws, state laws and agency policies all seek to protect everyone associated with OYA from being the victim of any type of abusive behavior or unsafe practices.

Within OYA, the Professional Standards Office (PSO) is the group charged with investigating any allegations of misconduct that rise to the level of illegal, unethical or abusive behaviors. PSO investigates all charges of misconduct brought to its attention, regardless of who is involved. As needed, PSO works with OYA's Human Resources Office or law enforcement. PSO's responsibility is to review alleged misconduct by staff, youth, contractors and volunteers – basically, anyone who has contact with OYA. Maintaining a robust PSO is essential to promoting a safe environment. It also enhances transparency and public confidence in our agency.

Responding to concerns of inappropriate behavior is not solely the job of PSO. As agency employees, we also have a role to play, and that is to responsibly report inappropriate behavior. It can be difficult to come forward and formally express concerns about a co-worker, but it is the right thing to do for the safety and well-being of other co-workers and the youth we serve.

It can be even more difficult to personally confront a co-worker who is behaving inappropriately, but often that's the right approach to take. For example, if another employee is making comments that offend you or make you uncomfortable, consider speaking with him or her directly. This may be a more effective solution than reporting it to PSO, although you always have that choice. As a team, we owe it to ourselves to hold one another accountable to our collective high expectations.

Timeliness also is important when reporting inappropriate conduct. Whether you decide to confront someone directly or to involve PSO, it's critical to act as soon as possible after the incident. The more time that elapses between the incident and acting on it, the greater the chance that memories and recollections will fade. This makes it harder to determine what actually happened and what may need to change to ensure continuous improvement. Prolonging the decision to act also increases the chance that the inappropriate conduct will recur.

If you have any questions or concerns about how to deal with a situation involving questionable, unethical or inappropriate conduct in the workplace, you should seek guidance from your manager [or contact PSO directly](#). Doing so may help make a positive difference in the lives of the youth we serve and those of your co-workers.

We appreciate your continued professionalism, respect and compassion in your dealings with youth and each other.

Sincerely,



Fariborz Pakseresht  
Director



Joe O'Leary  
Deputy Director



Dave Manley  
Chief Investigator  
Professional Standards Office