



Oregon

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NEWS RELEASE

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All Oregon juvenile corrections facilities now working with data-driven national initiative promoting safety and positive outcomes for state's incarcerated youth

A decade ago, Oregon volunteered to be the first state to pilot a national initiative aimed at improving conditions and outcomes for incarcerated youth.

Now, all Oregon Youth Authority facilities have completed requirements to participate in the "Performance-based Standards" effort, which gives agencies solid data on which to make fiscal and operational decisions.

OYA's 11 facilities join more than 200 in 31 states, or about 25 percent of those that are eligible. The Oregon Youth Authority became fully involved with the addition this year of Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility in Albany.

"This is a highly effective tool that holds us accountable for safety, security, treatment and justice in the facilities," said Colette S. Peters, OYA director. "We are able to identify problems, learn the reasons behind them and then implement action plans to resolve them."

The national data-collection effort was prompted by a congressionally mandated 1994 national study of 1,000 juvenile corrections facilities that found inadequate services and dangerous conditions for youth and staff. The federal government mandated the standards, now administered by the national Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators.

Oregon's participation is important to fulfilling OYA's mission of protecting the public and reducing crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments. This includes helping the

agency to identify best practices from across the nation and to adopt proven practices that can result in better outcomes.

Data, available to all OYA employees, is reported twice annually based on questionnaires submitted to staff and incarcerated youth, exit-interview surveys given to youth leaving facilities, and reviews of files to determine whether youth are receiving appropriate services.

In all, 113 areas are tracked to measure facility safety, security, order, health, treatment and justice, as well as factors that contribute to effective community reintegration of youth who leave facilities. The agency can track facility and agencywide data over time, compare individual facilities with agencywide numbers and compare state with national data.

Access to the data enables the agency to look beyond the numbers to discover the stories behind them, said Frank Martin, who manages the initiative for OYA. For example, he said, if a facility begins having a problem with contraband it can look at times and places it is found and compare that with security staffing and scheduling. One facility developed a handbook after it found staff and youth were uncertain about rules, expectations and how to address their safety concerns.

“Performance-based Standards help ensure our staff and youth respect each other, there’s fair treatment and rights are upheld,” Martin said.

The Performance-based Standards initiative won the 2004 Innovations in American Government Award from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

OYA has custody of approximately 900 youth 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 parole and probation in communities throughout Oregon.

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