

Safety Advisory Committee

Date: Friday, August 22, 2025

Time: 12:00 PM – 1:15 PM

Chair: K.O. Berger, Youth & Family Advocate, Governor's Office

Facilitator: Debbi Martin, OYA

Attendance

Present

- **K.O. Berger**, Youth and Family Advocate, Governor's Office (Chair)
- **Mike Tessean**, Interim Director, OYA
- **Addie Smith**, Public Affairs Manager, OYA
- **Ken Jeske**, Chief Investigator, OYA PSO
- **Winifred Skinner**, Senior Rules and Policy Analyst, OYA
- **Debbi Martin**, Legislative Coordinator, OYA
- **Will Howell**, Communications Director, OYA
- **Mark Greenwald**, Research Manager, OYA
- **Holly Lonergan**, Research Analyst, OYA
- **Valerie Colas**, Public Safety Advisory, Governor's Office
- **Judge Amy Holmes Hehn**, Multnomah County Circuit Court
- **Judge Andrea Janney**, Klamath County Circuit Court
- **Rep. Will Chotzen**, Oregon House of Representatives
- **Rep. Rick Lewis**, Oregon House of Representatives
- **Lt. Aaron Jackson**, Oregon State Police
- **Christina McMahan**, Clackamas County Juvenile Department / OJDDA
- **Mark Cebert**, Lewis & Clark
- **Lisa Kay Williams**, filling in for **Jennifer McGowan**, Youth Rights & Justice
- **Stacey Lowe**, SW Oregon Public Defender Services
- **Annette Majekodunmi**, Family Advocate, POIC
- **Nella Hogberg**, Oregon Judicial Department
- **Vera Stoulil**, The Alliance

Not Present

- **Dave Manley**, Office of Training, Investigations, and Safety, ODHS/OHA
- **Angey Rideout**, Youth Prevention and Engagement Grants Manager, The Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- **Brendan Murphy**, Chief Deputy DA, Marion County

Agenda

1. Victim Engagement / After-Action Protocol – Sandra Santos & Susanna Escobedo

Staff from the Victim Engagement Program and Program Services presented a draft trauma-informed protocol for contacting youth and families named in aged cases. The protocol described two pathways: one for youth who were no longer in OYA custody and another for those who remained in care. Phase one would apply to aged cases, with a second phase extending lessons learned into standard practice. Materials included sample outreach letters, plain-language explainers, and a county-by-county list of advocacy resources.

During discussion, members raised the following questions:

- Is there coordination with law enforcement or the district attorney's office, and could this outreach negatively affect an ongoing criminal investigation?
- Is the protocol limited to youth only, or will there be opportunities for victim outreach to staff who have been harmed in a PSO report?
- OYA receives funding to do external outreach to victims of youth committed to OYA. Are resources from that work being pulled to support this effort?
- For youth who choose the pathway of a county advocate rather than OYA's advocate, how will OYA coordinate with the local juvenile department and DA to ensure the county actually has someone available?
- Can committee members receive a copy of the protocol?

The committee agreed that the draft protocol should be circulated for review and that revisions should be documented and reported back at the next meeting. Members emphasized that coordination with law enforcement and county partners, clarity about scope, and transparent sharing of the draft protocol were all essential before finalization.

2. Introduction of Director Mike Tessean

Director Mike Tessean was introduced to the committee. In his opening remarks, he affirmed his commitment to sustaining reforms, maintaining transparency, and prioritizing youth safety. He emphasized expectations for timely, high-quality investigations and for public reporting that would build confidence in the agency's processes. Members introduced themselves and described their perspectives on the committee's work and the importance of the final report. Several members requested that OYA continue to provide clear weekly figures, accompanied by short narrative explanations to aid public understanding. Director Tessean stated that he looked forward to reviewing the committee's recommendations and supporting the resourcing required to implement them.

3. Lessons Learned Memos – K.O. Berger

The committee then turned to discussion of two lessons learned documents distributed in advance, one prepared by Interim Director Jana McLellan and the other by Youth and Family Advocate K.O. Berger. Discussion highlighted several key themes. Members stressed that transparency should include publishing consistent metrics and ensuring that internal staff are informed prior to public release. There was agreement on the need to clarify the division of responsibilities between PSO and HR and to align both with PREA and grievance processes. Members noted the importance of continuing improvements in grievance access—such as coordinators, lockboxes, and interpreter services—and emphasized the need to measure youth confidence in those systems. Oversight was also discussed, with members pointing to the value of maintaining independent review through the Safety Task Force once the committee’s work concludes.

Members agreed that the two memos should serve as the backbone of the committee’s final report. They requested that PSO leadership provide additional input on how lessons are being implemented. There was also a recommendation that each lesson include an identified owner and target date for completion. Finally, members suggested preparing a public-facing glossary that explains the differences among complaints, grievances, and PREA reports, to reduce confusion for youth and families.

4. PSO Performance Improvement and Staffing Update – Ken Jeske

Chief Investigator Ken Jeske provided an update on PSO staffing and improvement efforts. He reported that recruitment for two investigator positions was underway, with finalists identified and moving through background checks. The posting for a deputy chief investigator had closed, and applicants were being screened. Jeske reviewed current case figures and provided slides summarizing progress, noting that Research and Evaluation staff were validating counts and working to improve the usability of weekly updates. He also described ongoing work to ensure that cases suspended to law enforcement were appropriately resumed and resolved.

Committee members asked questions about the timeline for onboarding new hires and the expected effect on the pace of case resolution. They also inquired about the status of quality assurance reviews of completed investigations. Members requested that future weekly reports include a short narrative note to explain changes in figures and to place the numbers in context. Staff committed to providing a written hiring timeline with milestones and to reporting initial quality assurance findings at the next meeting..

5. Conclusion – K.O. Berger