



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

Oregon Youth Authority
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February 28, 2020

Jeffrey H. Anderson, Director
Bureau of Justice Statistics
810 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20531

Dear Director Anderson,

I'm writing in regard to the 2018 National Survey of Youth in Custody – specifically, the *Sexual Victimization Reported by Youth in Juvenile Facilities, 2018*. As you may know, Oregon has a facility that was listed in the report as having one of the highest rates of sexual victimization in the country. This was a surprise to us, as we work very hard every day to keep youth safe from sexual victimization, and our own data – including PREA reports — tells a much different story.

For that very reason, it is of the utmost importance to us that we thoroughly review the results of the federal survey to determine why there are discrepancies and identify strategies, if any, that we can adopt to improve youth safety.

Unfortunately, the 2018 survey, unlike the 2012 survey, does not differentiate between staff-on-youth incidents vs. youth-on-youth incidents — a key piece of information, I'm sure you'll agree, in determining where issues may lie and how to address them.

The day after we received an embargoed copy of the report on Dec. 7, 2019, our research staff contacted the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), to ask for the youth/youth vs. staff/youth breakout data. Staff were unable to reach a live person, and so left messages asking for a return call.

On January 6, 2020, an OYA staffer finally connected with an analyst at BJS. He asked that the missing breakout information be provided to us, if possible. He followed up the verbal conversation with an e-mail the same day, outlining our request.

On Jan. 13, we received an email reply indicating that our request had been brought up with you and other “senior leadership” at BJS and that you were reviewing your options, “including possibly releasing some supplementary tables prior to our next planned full report release.”

We received another email on Jan. 17 indicating that there would be more discussion with senior leadership the following week, and that we would be kept posted. But we've heard nothing since.

I certainly understand that you and your staff are busy and have a lot of priorities to juggle. It's also my understanding that the decision not to release the breakout data was part of a well-meant attempt to release the results of the survey in a timely manner, for the use of local jurisdictions. However, it has been frustrating to have the high-level information without the additional specifics; it has hampered our ability to investigate and act to protect youth, and it has made it difficult to respond intelligently to questions from the media and others.

We appreciate anything you're able to do to share the breakout data with us in an expeditious manner.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JO' followed by a stylized flourish.

Joseph O'Leary

Director

Oregon Youth Authority

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