

Secretary of State Audit Report

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Oregon Youth Authority: Female Youth Offenders Need More Transition Options

Executive Summary

Transition services for female youth in state custody lag behind those available to males. The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) has opened a transition pilot program for female youth, but funding has only been allocated through mid-2017.

OYA and counties show an interest in improved program reporting, but county program reporting is still inconsistent and incomplete. Without an accurate picture of program participation, it is difficult to evaluate program effectiveness or forecast service needs for the juvenile justice system.

Female youth are a growing share of the juvenile justice population



Female youth, including both adolescent girls and young women age 16 or older, are a growing portion of the juvenile offender population in Oregon. While overall youth referrals to juvenile departments have declined since the early 1990s, the decline has been much steeper for male youth offenders. Referral rates for females have remained comparatively steady. As a result, the proportion of statewide referrals for female youth in Oregon rose from 33% in 2000 to 37% in 2014.

Female youth have unique treatment needs

Female youth in juvenile justice tend to have more acute physical and mental health needs, and three times as many female youth in OYA custody have attempted suicide as their male counterparts. A substantial number report previous sexual, physical and emotional abuse, for which they have received little, if any, treatment. Female youth also tend to respond to untreated trauma differently; they are more likely to run away, and less likely to engage in more criminal acts. As a result, female youth sometimes do not receive appropriate treatment until their behavior lands them in the juvenile justice system.

Young women in Oregon Youth Authority custody do not have equitable transition services



Female youth transition facility
near Oak Creek YCF

Three permanent, stand-alone transition facilities for male youth offenders are operated by OYA, but the state does not currently operate an equivalent stand-alone program for female offenders. OYA has a dedicated building for a female transition program, but has been unable to secure funding to run the full program. The building had not been used for its intended purpose since its construction in 2010. OYA opened a transition pilot program in the unused facility in November 2015.

Previously, Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility had hosted a limited female transition program within the custody facility. But this arrangement did not allow participants in the program to partake fully in community activities, and taxed staffing resources needed to run Oak Creek. Should the pilot program not be permanently funded following the trial period, it will have to be moved back to Oak Creek.

Community facilities that provided services to female youth also recently closed, creating a gap in available treatment options. OYA currently reports on gender disparities as part of its budget request, but a standalone report on gender equity could draw more attention to gaps that should be addressed.

Need for better county program and service tracking

Due to the lack of comprehensive county program data, we were unable to draw system wide conclusions about the effectiveness of treatment and programming for female youth in the juvenile justice system. Without a clear picture of what programs are being used and how appropriately services are matched with female youth offenders' needs, it is difficult to evaluate program effectiveness or accurately forecast service needs for the juvenile justice system.



Less than a quarter of Oregon counties report documenting all youth program participation in the Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). Of the county files we reviewed, over half of female youth offenders' program participation was not documented in a form that can be extracted and analyzed. This means that the program data reported in JJIS for both female and male youth offenders is incomplete and inconsistent, and cannot be used to analyze trends or inform program evaluations or statewide policymaking decisions.

OYA and county juvenile departments are responsible for comprehensive and accurate program reporting. However, program reporting is a relatively new function in JJIS, and counties are only required to report participation in state-funded programs.

Recommendations

We recommend:

- OYA work with the Legislature to seek ongoing funding to operate the Young Women's Transition Program beyond the pilot period and ensure adequate community services for female youth;
- OYA consider creating a regular, standalone report to identify and address disparities between transition programming for male and female youth;
- OYA and county juvenile departments work together to delineate what program information should be captured in JJIS and help ensure that program information is entered consistently; and
- OYA and county juvenile departments work together to further identify and resolve existing barriers and restrictions to program data entry and collaborate on finding ways to improve program reporting.

Agency Response

The agency coordinated its response with the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association, and together they generally agreed with our recommendations. They intend to work collaboratively to resolve program data entry barriers and help ensure program information is consistently entered into JJIS. OYA will also pursue ongoing funding for the Young Women's Transitional Program. The full agency response can be found at the end of the report.

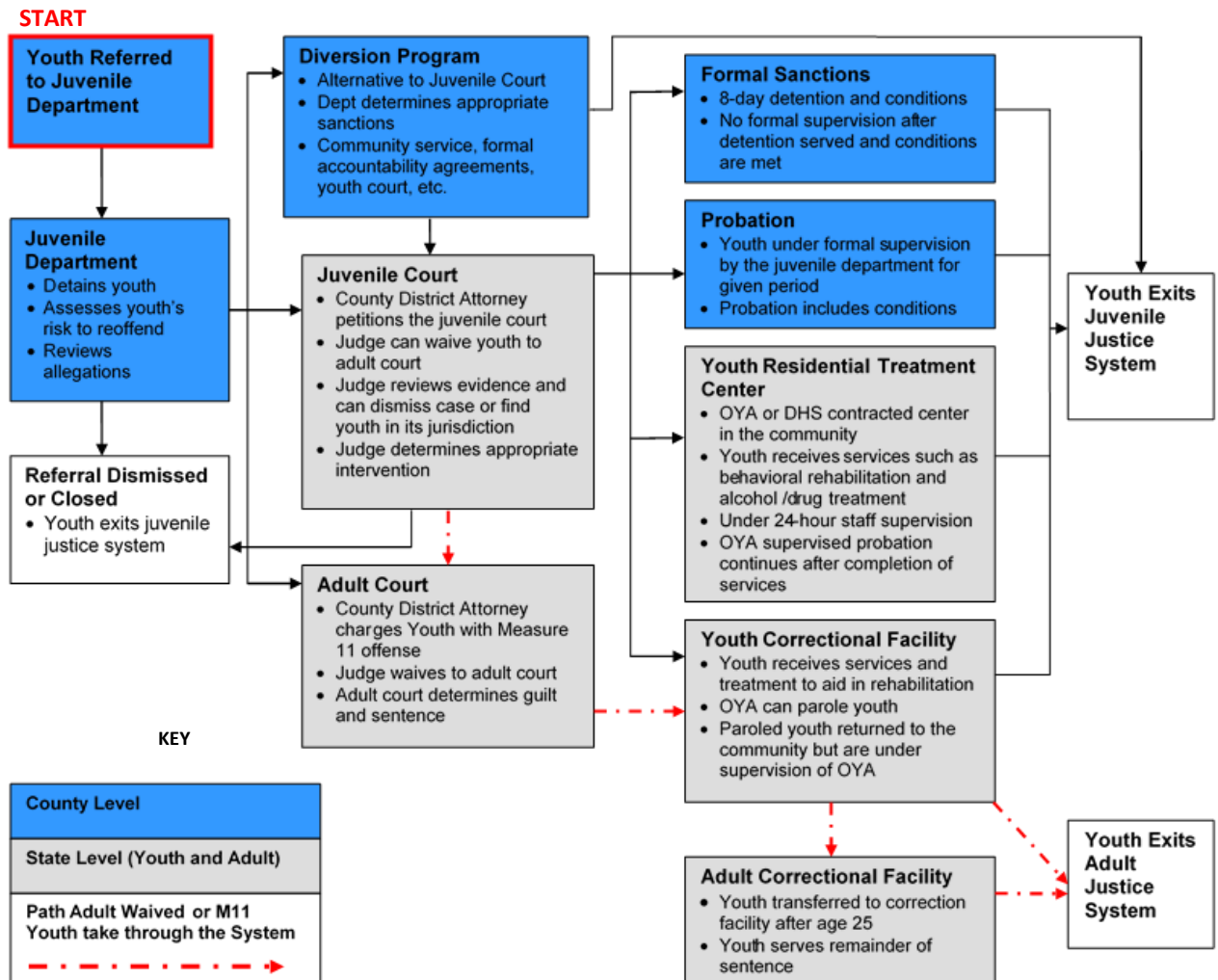
Background

Oregon's juvenile justice system involves coordination among several state and local agencies

The juvenile justice system is complex, involving collaboration among county juvenile departments, district attorneys, the courts, and the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA). A youth's path through the system depends on a variety of factors, such as the severity of the alleged crime and what services may help the youth avoid further delinquent behavior.

In most cases, Oregon's 36 county juvenile departments are the first point of intervention for youth offenders. Juvenile departments provide sanctions and services to about 90% of the 13,500 youth in the juvenile justice system. Figure 1 shows the various paths a youth can take through the juvenile justice system, beginning with the county juvenile department.

Figure 1: The various paths a youth can take through Oregon's juvenile justice system



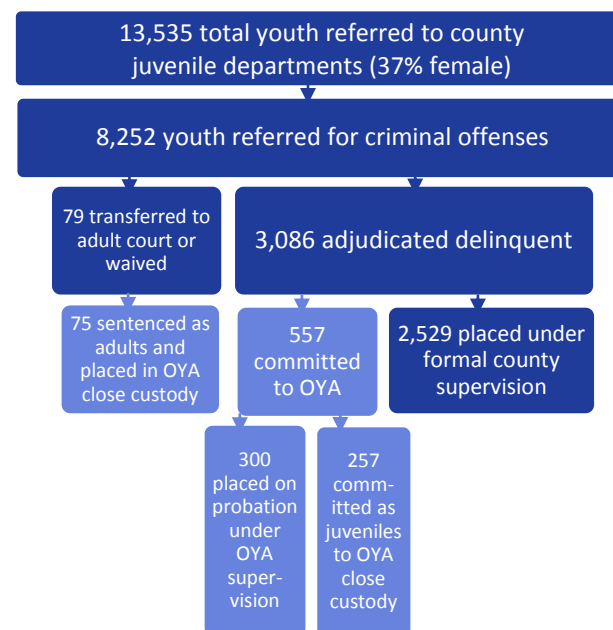
(Source: Oregon Youth Authority)

Usually, youth under age 18 are initially referred to a juvenile department when suspected of committing an offense. Juvenile departments conduct intake assessments to determine how cases should be handled. Depending on the severity of the alleged violation, counties can decide to informally address the violation in lieu of sending a youth to juvenile court. For example, county diversion programs allow youth to avoid juvenile court if they successfully complete certain activities, such as community service or youth court.

For youth sent to juvenile court, the judge determines whether the court should have jurisdiction and if the youth should be placed under formal county probation. For certain serious offenses, often referred to as Measure 11 crimes, Oregon law allows a county district attorney to charge a youth as an adult. When this occurs, the juvenile court automatically waives the case to the adult court, which then determines the youth's guilt and sentence.

Figure 2 breaks down the number of youth that moved through the system to a county juvenile department or OYA in 2014. Of the 8,252 referred for criminal offenses, just 3,086 (37%) were adjudicated delinquent. The vast majority of those youth ended up on formal county supervision, with only 557 committed to OYA.

Figure 2: Number of youth that moved through the juvenile justice system, 2014



(Source: OYA JJIS Data & Evaluation Reports, 2014)

Youth can be referred to a county juvenile department for criminal or non-criminal offenses. In 2014, most youth were referred to a county for a criminal offense, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Percentage of juvenile justice referrals by offense type, 2014

Offense Type	% All Referrals
Criminal offenses – Includes violent, property, drug, and weapons charges	61%
Non-criminal offenses – Includes possession of alcohol/tobacco, curfew violations, etc.	26%
Dependency Status offenses – Includes “behavior to endanger self or others,” running away, and other dependency status offenses	13%

(Source: OYA JJIS Data & Evaluation Reports, 2014)

Oregon Youth Authority supervises the state’s most delinquent youth

OYA administers youth correctional facilities and programs across the state and helps coordinate the statewide juvenile justice system by assisting and cooperating with the 36 county juvenile departments. OYA manages the state’s most serious youth offenders, from ages 12 through 24. This population includes youth ages 15 to 24 who have been tried and sentenced as adults for Measure 11 offenses, which include violent crimes. A youth sentenced as an adult may be eligible to stay in OYA custody until his or her 25th birthday, depending on the length of his or her sentence.

As of July 2015, the Oregon Youth Authority was serving 1,478 youth that had been referred through county juvenile courts or who had received adult sentences. More than 850 OYA youth were on probation or parole in their communities, with about another 600 in close custody facilities, which include youth correctional facilities (YCFs) and OYA transition programs. About half the youth in YCFs were tried and convicted as adults.

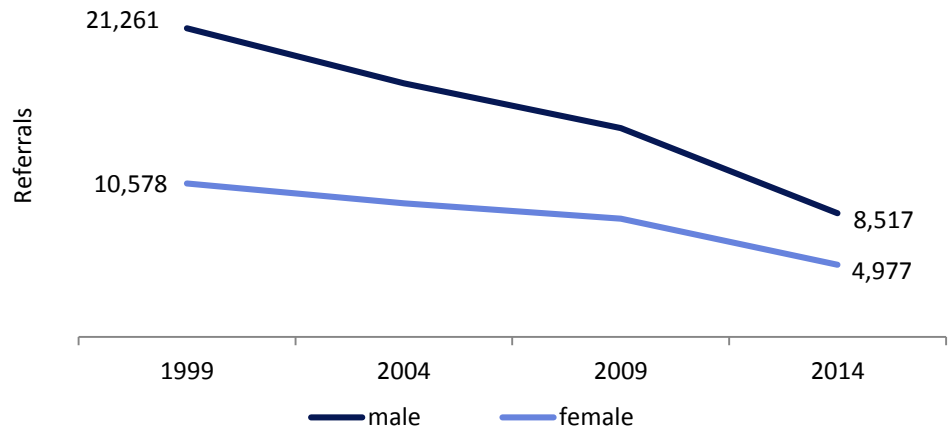
There are currently 10 close custody facilities across the state with a total capacity of about 650 beds. OYA plans to close the Hillcrest facility in 2017 and move that population to MacLaren YCF, as the number of youth in OYA custody has dropped significantly over the past decade.

Since male youth make up approximately 87% of those under OYA supervision, there are more OYA facilities for male youth. About 10% of youth in custody facilities are female youth. As of July 2015, 63 OYA and Department of Corrections (DOC) female youth were housed at Oak Creek YCF, the only correctional facility for female youth. Another 136 females were on OYA parole or probation in the community, about 16% of the total OYA parole and probation population.

Female youth make up a growing portion of the juvenile justice system and commit different offenses than male youth

Referral numbers for youth offenders have dropped steadily in Oregon counties, and across the rest of the United States, for almost two decades. In 1999, Oregon saw over 30,000 youth referred to county juvenile departments. That number dropped to just over 13,500 by 2014, a decrease of about 55%.

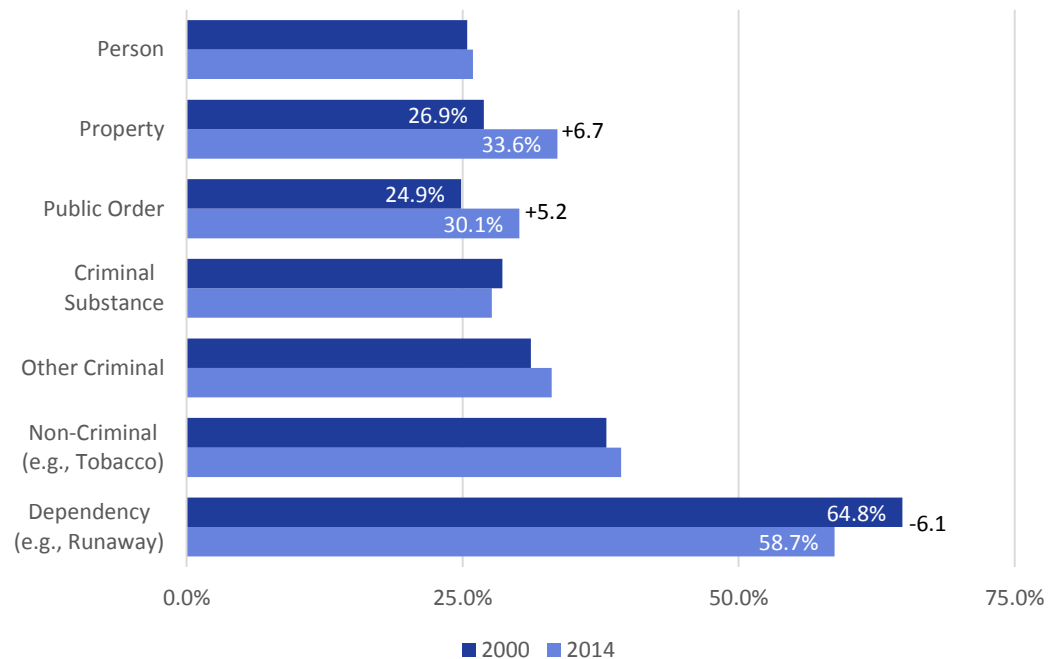
Figure 4: Youth referrals to juvenile departments have declined steadily since 1999



Male youth make up the majority of the referred juvenile offender population in county custody, and are a particularly large proportion of those that commit property and violent person offenses. On the other hand, female youth make up a smaller but gradually increasing proportion of the juveniles referred to county custody. In 2014, female youth made up about 37% of county juvenile referrals, up from 33% in 2000.

Female referrals have also slowly shifted toward more criminal offenses and away from dependency offenses. As Figure 5 shows, female youth referrals for property and public order offenses have seen the biggest increases, while referrals for dependency offenses have dropped the most.

Figure 5: Females as percentage of all youth referred, by type of referral



Female and male youth share many risk factors, but behave differently in response to those factors

While both males and females in the juvenile justice system report a history of experiencing abuse and neglect, abuse rates for females are significantly higher. A substantial portion of OYA female youth report previous sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, for which they may have received little or no treatment. Many come from unstable homes in which the parents have a history of psychiatric issues or drug/alcohol abuse. Female youth are also about three times as likely as male youth to have attempted suicide.

Figure 6: Percentage of OYA female and male youth reporting mental health problems, 2014

Reported mental health issue	Female	Male
Documented history of:		
• Sexual abuse	45%	14%
• Physical abuse	42%	24%
• Emotional abuse	50%	25%
Diagnosis of:		
• Depressive disorder	55%	33%
• Bipolar disorder (and related)	23%	7%
• Anxiety disorder	30%	21%
Currently taking psychotropic medication	48%	28%
At least one suicide attempt in last 3 years	23%	8%

Figure 6 shows the incidence of some mental health conditions among female and male youth. A literature review by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention found that delinquent activities by females often mask serious problems and trauma. As a result, these youth sometimes do not receive appropriate treatment until their behavior leads them to the juvenile justice system. Female youth in OYA are more likely to act out by violating the conditions of their probation or parole, such as by running away or using drugs, as opposed to males, who tend to commit new crimes.

The Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) helps provide for continuity of information across OYA and the counties

The Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) is a statewide electronic information system collaboratively designed and developed by the Oregon Youth Authority and county juvenile departments in the 1990s. Originally designed as a case management database, JJIS was built on the idea of “one youth, one record”: regardless of where a youth comes in contact with the juvenile justice system, the information is captured in a single record within JJIS.

By creating a statewide system with one overall case record for each youth, OYA and counties can seamlessly share case information as a youth moves through the system. Prior to JJIS, different agencies used different case management systems. This made it difficult to track youth offenders across jurisdictional lines and to evaluate the effectiveness of juvenile programs used across the state.

OYA and the county juvenile departments created the JJIS Steering Committee to set JJIS data reporting requirements, as well as the policies and procedures system users are expected to follow. The committee is co-chaired by a county juvenile department director and an OYA representative, and includes managers and staff from OYA, the counties, and external partners.

Over time, the JJIS Steering Committee has added to the system’s functionality. JJIS now includes information on demographics, allegations, referrals, adjudications, court/parole conditions, risk assessments, case plans, close custody and residential commitments, incident reports, and treatment services. System administrators are also able to provide decision-makers with agency-specific and statewide reports, and make data available to agency and authorized external researchers.

Audit Results

OYA's transition program for young women falls short of its options for young men

Transition programs are an important bridge back to the community

Transition services help youth to develop skills they need to successfully return to the community. These services include job training, education, and independent living skills. Such services can help increase the likelihood that former youth offenders will complete their education, become employed, and ultimately become productive members of society.

A transition program helps youth develop skills they need to successfully return to the community and respond to difficult situations in a healthy way.

Programs that provide transition services offer a supervised environment that acts as a bridge from a youth correctional facility (YCF) or residential program back to the community. Youth need support to accomplish goals set forth in treatment as well as skills and support to ensure they are successful while gradually reentering the community.

Youth who have been exposed to trauma are often hypervigilant and can be easily triggered into a defensive or aggressive response toward adults and peers. Youth we spoke with expressed a need to learn to handle triggers while in the community, such as disagreements with family members or associating with substance abusing peers. Transition programs show youth that there are viable opportunities in their community, as opposed to thinking that a correctional facility is the only place they are safe.

A safe environment where gradual transitions are managed with the help of professionals is very beneficial to a youth's transition experience, reducing the chance that they will return to custody. They need to be able to plan for their return and practice what they have learned in safe and productive ways, as they may encounter triggering experiences, people, or places once outside the program. Helping youth respond to difficult situations in a healthy way increases the chances that they will succeed in the community and not return to county or OYA custody.

OYA's Young Women's Transition Program falls short of options for males

OYA currently runs three transition programs for young men, but does not have a permanent, standalone transition program for young women. Camp Florence, Camp Tillamook, and the Riverbend facility are OYA-run programs that provide space for up to 75 males transitioning out of an OYA facility. Young men in these programs learn such skills as construction, landscaping, computer repair, firefighting, and in some cases, they work in the community.

OYA currently runs three transition programs for males, but does not have a permanent, standalone transition program for females.

OYA operates one program for women, the Young Women's Transition Program (YWTP). However, this program is limited in capacity, and until recently, operated inside the Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility, despite the fact that OYA built a separate facility specifically to house the program.

1999

OYA provides a transition program for 25 young women at Corvallis House



Beginning in 1999, OYA ran a transition program for 25 young women at Corvallis House, but the facility was in need of extensive renovations and was closed in 2009.

From 2009 to November 2015, the YWTP operated within the walls of Oak Creek with fewer dedicated staff. This location limits opportunities for participants to obtain outside jobs and perform community service, attend community college, and develop and practice skills they need to return to the community. Oak Creek shifts staff members off other duties to escort youth to off-site appointments, but it is not always feasible to do so. According to Oak Creek officials, two young women working in the community create as many as 16 to 20 extra transports a week for Oak Creek staff. Oak Creek is working to build relationships with businesses to help with transition services, but since the YWTP is a relatively new program, they are still working to establish important community relationships.

2009

OYA closes Corvallis House and moves transition program into Oak Creek YCF serving an average of 9-12 young women.



OYA probation officers may suggest YWTP as an option for young women that are in a good position to do well in such a program. The young women must apply for the program and agree to stay at Oak Creek an additional six months to receive transition programming with the understanding that they will have increased privileges. Some of the current YWTP participants opted to stay at Oak Creek because they had built healthy relationships with staff and peers.

When operating within Oak Creek, the capacity of the program is limited to eight beds; any additional young women participating in the program must live in units with the general population, which may include youth who are not dedicated to treatment. When we spoke with some YWTP participants, they pointed out that they are held responsible for actions of youth who are not committed to treatment. These YWTP participants set high expectations for themselves and do not want to be held accountable for the actions of youth they characterized as not caring about their future. These young women saw themselves as having progressed past that stage and wanted to move forward with their lives.

YWTP participants attend different group therapy sessions and have more privacy and privileges than the general population. Programming in YWTP also includes personal budgeting, job skills, resume building, gardening, working with animals, and developing basic life skills. Young women we talked with hope the program will help them manage money, have a sense of ownership, be able to take care of themselves, live independently, avoid old habits, and maintain positive social supports.

Dedicated space would allow the YWTP to emphasize skills needed for a successful transition. In such an environment, youth are able to plan and structure their own time, develop good decision-making skills, and practice independent living.

2010

OYA uses stimulus funding to construct a \$2.7 million building for 24 young women but does not open the facility due to budget cuts.



2015

OYA opens a pilot program for 12-14 young women in the YWTP facility.



2017

OYA will have to discontinue the pilot unless further funding is obtained.

OYA has a new facility for the YWTP pilot program, but does not have a stable funding source to ensure ongoing operations in the facility

In 2010, OYA constructed a new \$2.7 million YWTP facility (\$1.8 million of which came from “Go Oregon” stimulus funding) on the grounds of Oak Creek to replace Corvallis House. The facility was built specifically for transition programming with best practices in mind, but OYA did not open the building due to budget cuts.

The new facility has a capacity of 24 youth in a “mini-dorm” setting. The building has up-to-date classrooms and computer rooms, a large kitchen and lounge area, and access to a garden and greenhouse. Some of these amenities would be reserved for the sole use of the YWTP. However, upon completion, the building remained closed due to budget shortfalls and fewer female youth being referred to OYA.

Five years later, in November 2015, OYA opened a pilot program in the YWTP facility. The pilot has been temporarily funded by OYA and staffed by rotating in professionals from other OYA facilities. The purpose of the pilot is to estimate the costs of running the program and provide YWTP staff the opportunity to create a transition curriculum that could be used in the future.

The YWTP pilot will be able to access medical, food, mental health, and education services from the Oak Creek YCF but is expected to be self-regulating. For example, they will not rely upon Oak Creek for security services, except when shift coverage dictates the need for additional support.

The pilot program will house 12-14 young women from 15-24 years of age. The population will consist of those transitioning out of Oak Creek, those returning to Oak Creek on parole violations (after spending 30-45 days in “tune-up”), and hard-to-place young women older than 15½. Youth will plan and cook their own meals, organize activities for themselves on the weekends, and participate in more community activities. Currently, youth help with landscaping and quilting at the American Legion in Albany. Activities like these help them get involved in the community and allow members of the community to see the Oak Creek youth in a better light.

Just before the start of the pilot, 10 young women were participating in the YWTP, with 15 more on a waiting list. Opening the pilot allows YWTP to slightly expand capacity, but OYA would eventually like to make the program permanent and operate at the full capacity of 24 participants. However, unless OYA can continue to allocate resources until more permanent funding is obtained, the agency will have to discontinue the pilot and move YWTP participants back into Oak Creek.

A group who could particularly benefit from the pilot program are young women over 18 who are otherwise ineligible for community independent living programs for juveniles. Programs currently available for these young

women are designed for adult women transitioning from prison, not for youth leaving a juvenile correctional facility. Operating the YWTP could fill a legitimate gap in the continuum of care for young women and provide a good environment for those who may lack family support and resources.

The Oak Creek Superintendent indicated that having a separate YWTP facility would also allow Oak Creek to reorganize its YCF units to be more in line with best practices. Oak Creek would be able to use its existing eight-bed space as a mini-dorm for youth who have earned more privileges and decrease the population of other units to more manageable levels, creating a better treatment environment.

Community Services for female youth have also been uncertain

Beyond YWTP, OYA also contracts for some transitional services through community organizations. Several of these programs that provided transition services to female youth have closed since August 2014, including Rosemont, Pettygrove, and Lithia Springs. By losing these three contractors, OYA lost a total of 30 gender-specific program spots for females. Not only does this leave a gap in available, less-restrictive options, but Oak Creek has seen a direct rise in its population.

Juvenile justice professionals across Oregon noted that the closing of several programs has led to a treatment gap in services for female youth.

Figure 7: OYA's efforts to replace lost transitional services

Program	Closure Date	No. of Contracted	
		Beds Lost	Current Status
Rosemont	August 2014	9 female	Replaced with 9 female beds through an existing contractor
Pettygrove	October 2014	10 female	Replaced with 5 co-ed beds at a county juvenile facility and added 4 female beds with an existing contractor
Lithia Springs	October 2015	11 female	In process – RFP for 11 female beds is being reviewed

Figure 7 shows OYA's efforts to fill the gap in services through new requests for proposal (RFP) or contract extensions. Some community options remain available to female youth, but having a variety of service providers helps case workers find the right fit for a youth. Some available programming may be co-ed programs that are open to female youth, but may not offer all the supports of gender-specific programs.

Current YWTP participants noted that a gradual transition from YWTP to the community would help them be successful after leaving the program and reduce the shock of re-entry. One youth described her transition from a community program back to her mother's house positively. She mentioned that the transition itself had been quite gradual and included a few home visits. She had her own apartment and bathroom at the program that she was responsible for, which helped her think about how to care for her own space when she went home.

Residential treatment and independent living programs can help female youth gradually return to the community.

Standalone reporting could draw attention to service disparities between female and male youth

Statewide policy on equal access is laid out in ORS 417.270 with the recognition that female youth often lack the same access as male youth to facilities, services, and treatment available through human services and juvenile corrections programs. It requires agencies to report on disparities in services provided for females and how those disparities will be addressed. It has not reported these issues in a standalone report since 2007. OYA currently includes this information only in its budget request. A separate report might gain wider attention and place more focus on disparities.

Better reporting needed to ensure programs and services meet youth offenders' needs

Improved tracking could enable OYA and county juvenile departments to:

- Better forecast service needs
- Better budget to meet needs
- Better identify gender, racial, and geographic disparities
- Better inform state-wide policy decisions
- Identify and address barriers to program access
- Evaluate effectiveness of individual programs and providers

Comprehensive service tracking necessary for evaluating county-level and system-wide needs and disparities is lacking

Due to the lack of comprehensive county program data, we were unable to draw system wide conclusions about the effectiveness of treatment and programming for female youth in the juvenile justice system. Documenting program participation and treatment outcomes is necessary to evaluate what kinds of programs are successful and which ones struggle to achieve positive treatment outcomes for youth. It can also help guide program management by measuring effectiveness.

Without a clear picture of what programs are being used, how appropriately services are matched with needs, and what programs are most effective at rehabilitating female youth, OYA and Oregon's county juvenile departments cannot accurately forecast their service needs.

Through research and interviews, we were able to identify external issues affecting female youth program participation and barriers to service tracking. However, without comprehensive program tracking, it is time-consuming to gather treatment outcomes and difficult to use that information to improve programming and inform statewide policy decisions.

OYA has been diligent about accurate program tracking for youth in state custody using state funded programs and paid community services, but programs not paid for by the state continue to be under-tracked. In general, most county-level program and service reporting lags behind. We requested program information from JJIS, which we planned to use to assess the availability of treatment and transition services for female juvenile offenders at both the state and county level. In testing some of the data against county records, we found county juvenile departments were not entering program information into JJIS in a timely way, if at all.

Several factors affect program participation

Program availability

There are a limited number of programs in Oregon that offer specialized services for female youth offenders. Some counties even commit hard-to-serve female youth to OYA custody to obtain services not available in the area.

Cultural factors

Youth that need culturally-informed services may have to be sent out of their community to access them, or in the case of Native American youth, may need to meet a blood quantum requirement to access appropriate services.

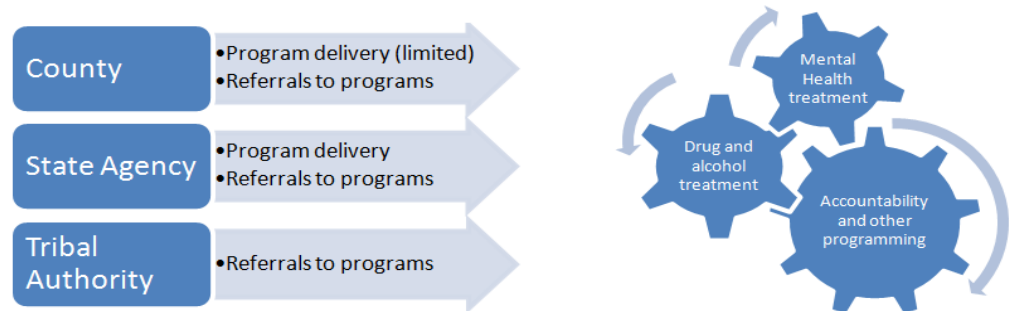
Transportation and location

This can be a barrier to service for youth living in rural areas.

Public or private insurance

Youth covered by the Oregon Health Plan can access most treatment options. Youth covered by private insurance may be limited to accessing programs that the insurance provider will approve.

Youth across Oregon's juvenile justice system often receive services and treatment that are not comprehensively tracked. Counties provide services that help youth meet their probation conditions, such as community service or paying back restitution. Youth in need of substance abuse interventions, mental health treatment, and other forms of assistance, however, may also be referred to community programs or residential services. Referrals to programs are dependent upon custody and may be made by the county, by the Department of Human Services, OYA, or by a tribal authority.



When accessing programs through the juvenile justice system, county and OYA probation officers, parents and treatment providers work together to help ensure that youth access timely and appropriately matched services. Because of their unique treatment needs, it is not unusual for female youth to access multiple programs in an effort to have those needs adequately met. Availability is another complicating factor in service matching. Female youth may start one program to get timely treatment while waiting for another program that may be a more appropriate match.

Participation in programs is generally documented, but not in a consistent format allowing for comprehensive, system-wide analysis

The JJIS Steering Committee establishes what kinds of data elements OYA and the counties are required to enter into JJIS. The committee works collaboratively with OYA, county juvenile departments, and external partners to ensure the needs of all parties are considered when changes to JJIS are implemented.

The JJIS program tracking function, called Program History, was introduced in 2009. This function gives OYA, counties, and to a limited extent, service providers, the ability to document the program participation of youth in their custody or care. The JJIS Steering Committee also approved a new policy in 2013 to standardize service tracking in JJIS and provide a foundation to compare trends in key areas over time.

The JJIS Steering Committee currently only requires counties to use Program History to track programs funded with state dollars. However, counties may use the feature to enter all their program information, including services not funded with state dollars. According to a survey of

counties conducted by the committee, less than a quarter of the responding counties were documenting all program data in JJIS Program History.

We conducted file reviews to identify the services that female youth were using and how those services were tracked. Although OYA itself has made a concerted effort to track program participation of youth in state custody using state-funded programs, tracking of non-paid and privately-accessed programming is not as thorough. However, the majority of the juvenile justice population is using services at the county level.

Program participation by youth under county custody is tracked in a variety of formats: the JJIS Program History table, the JJIS notes function, and in electronic or paper county files. Only Program History data can be extracted to analyze program participation for youth across the juvenile justice system.

Over half of the programs for our sample group were not tracked in JJIS Program History and could not be easily extracted and analyzed. On average, programs were documented in both county files and Program History only about a third of the time.

Several barriers to county program tracking still need to be addressed

Counties identified several barriers to recording program information.

Too few county staff



Following years of budget cuts in several county departments, county probation officers may have anywhere from 5 to 60 juveniles on their caseload in a given month. According to county probation officers we spoke with, the demands of the job mean an ideal caseload number is about 15 cases at a time.

Time-consuming data entry requirements



The increasing amount of paperwork and documentation that is required of probation officers and service providers cuts into the amount of time that they have to spend working directly with youth. Adding more detailed program information into JJIS may further increase the administrative burden on both parties.

Separation of duties



According to one Juvenile Department Director, administrative assistants in some counties are in charge of entering program history information into JJIS instead of probation officers. Program information may be entered at the closure of a case, and not concurrently with a juvenile's program use. Because cases may remain open for years at a time, several years may pass between when a youth received services and when those services are recorded in JJIS. In this case, the separation of duties may create a delay in program tracking, which could impact the accuracy and quality of the information being reported.



Privacy Requirements

Multnomah County reported that federal health care privacy requirements, such as HIPAA, restrict them from reporting certain treatment related information in JJIS. Juveniles in county custody who receive drug and alcohol treatment services qualify as patients. Therefore, enhancements to JJIS may be needed to protect this information and ensure patient privacy.



System limitations

OYA administrative staff work with counties to update program information in JJIS. Counties can enter data for existing programs, but must depend on JJIS administrators to verify that new programs meet the state funding requirement. This requires probation officers and other county staff to wait on OYA staff before they can complete data entry on new programs.

Counties also mentioned a few other barriers in a recent JJIS Committee survey:

- Need for training and analysis for work flow changes to avoid duplicate data entry
- Issues related to tracking services for un-adjudicated youth
- Lack of cooperation of service providers
- Need for mechanism to track rarely used programs

OYA and county juvenile departments should work together to ensure these concerns are addressed. Removing and reducing barriers to data entry in Program History will be crucial to improving reporting across the state.

Improvements to program tracking do not appear to be a priority

As mentioned previously, the JJIS Steering Committee only requires counties to track state-funded programs. This requirement allows OYA to track the use of particular state funding streams, but gives an incomplete picture of the array of services actually accessed by youth in the system.

Other important data elements, such as dispositions, have been consistently tracked in JJIS as far back as the 1990s. This allows JJIS to be a useful tool for both OYA and counties to keep abreast of current trends (such as increases or decreases in substance abuse referrals), which can help them prepare to better meet the service needs of the youth in their custody.

OYA and several counties are taking some steps to improve their program tracking. At both the state and county level, some information about program participation has been tracked for several years. Probation officers have also informally used the JJIS notes feature to document program use. In fact, the majority of Oregon counties are willing to increase their program reporting, and none of the barriers to reporting identified by counties were considered to be insurmountable by OYA.

However, while a handful of counties are documenting most or all juvenile offender program use in Program History, statewide program tracking remains incomplete and inconsistent.

Recommendations

Transition Services

- OYA should work with the Legislature to seek ongoing funding to operate the YWTP beyond the pilot period and ensure adequate community services for female youth.
- OYA should consider creating a regular, standalone report to identify and address disparities between programming for male and female youth.

Program Reporting

- OYA and county juvenile departments should work together to delineate what program information should be captured in JJIS and help ensure that program information is entered consistently.
- OYA and county juvenile departments should work together to further identify and resolve existing barriers and restrictions to program data entry and collaborate on finding ways to remove barriers and improve program reporting.

Objectives, Scope and Methodology

The objective of our audit was to determine if equitable and appropriate transition services were available to female youth offenders across Oregon's juvenile justice system.

The scope of our audit covered the Oregon Youth Authority and all 36 county juvenile departments in Oregon.

Over the course of the audit, we interviewed a wide variety of stakeholders across the juvenile justice system. This included discussions with OYA executive staff and research analysts, county juvenile justice directors, OYA and county probation officers, district attorneys, residential service providers, political action groups, and female youth offenders in OYA and county detention and probation.

We collected and analyzed JJIS data covering all juvenile cases opened from 2005-2014 and then closed from 2010-2014. The data extracts included a master file of all the youth, referrals and allegations, dispositions, location and program history, risk assessments, statewide detention, and an extract of all decision points that included rollups of referral, allegation and disposition data. We used the master file and the Program History extract to select a judgmental sample of 100 juvenile cases from OYA and four counties (20 files each)- Klamath, Jefferson, Marion and Multnomah. The counties were chosen for their relative geographic and cultural diversity and their willingness to participate in the audit.

We performed site visits at the aforementioned four counties to compare data pulled from JJIS Program History to 77 available county juvenile case files (not including the 20 OYA files). Three Jefferson county files were not available for review. We later reviewed JJIS notes on all of the available samples to determine how complete the program participation reported in JJIS Program History was in each county and OYA.

We surveyed all 36 county juvenile departments. Thirty-two of 36 counties responded to the survey, which collected information on perceived barriers to service delivery, number of available beds, and the accessibility and availability of services for female offenders in each county.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained and reported provides a reasonable basis to achieve our audit objective.

Auditors from our office, who were not involved with the audit, reviewed our report for accuracy, checking facts and conclusions against our supporting evidence.



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor

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February 09, 2016

The Honorable Jeanne P. Atkins, Secretary of State
Gary Blackmer, Director, Audits Division
136 State Capitol
Salem, OR 97310

The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) and the Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association (OJDDA) have reviewed the Secretary of State Audits Division review of transition options for female youth offenders. We appreciate the information provided in the audit and the opportunity to respond to and address the observations and recommendations. We generally agree with the audit recommendations and will continue to support and strengthen the Oregon juvenile justice system through the lens of collaboration and continuous improvement with the goal of realizing our shared vision. Please accept this letter as OYA's and OJDDA's joint management response to the Secretary of State's Audits Division audit report, *Oregon Youth Authority: Female Youth Offenders Need More Transition Options*.

Oregon juvenile justice system: A shared vision

The statutory purpose of the Oregon juvenile justice system is to protect the public, reduce juvenile delinquency, and provide fair and impartial procedures. The Legislature created Oregon's Juvenile Justice system on the principles of personal responsibility, accountability, and reformation within the context of public safety and restitution to the victims and the community. The system is charged to provide a continuum of services that emphasize prevention of further criminal activity by the use of early and certain sanctions, reformation and rehabilitation programs, and swift and decisive intervention in delinquent behavior.

The leadership of OYA and OJDDA work together under a shared vision that grounds our collective approach, our ability to connect and strengthen systems, and our achievement of positive outcomes for youth and measurable results.

Our collective approach recognizes the unique needs of youth and their development. Based on data, research, evaluation, and professional discretion, we strive to deliver the right interventions for the right youth, in the right locations for the right amount of time, to get the best outcomes for public safety.

- Our services are built on appropriate assessments and individualized interventions that are responsive to the needs of youth and the community. We view youth, families, the community, and our staff as resources to support public safety and reformation.
- Our work is accomplished through an equity lens with a commitment to fair and respectful treatment that does not perpetuate disparities.

- We believe that youth are capable of positive change, and we provide supportive, healthy, and safe youth enhancement environments that support positive change.
- We respect and are accountable to crime victims, their needs, and their rights.
- We recognize that each community and locality is unique and may have different perspectives, resources, and solutions.

We achieve positive measurable outcomes and quantify results.

- We are accountable for how we invest and spend resources. We demonstrate the return on investments.
- We strive to help develop youth who are crime-free and productive community members.
- We promote public safety and youth accountability through the development and sustainability of a statewide juvenile justice information system.

External reviews and observations, like those provided in the Secretary of State Audits Division report, support and enhance our efforts to realize this shared vision.

Female youth: Services throughout juvenile justice continuum

As noted in the Audits Division report, female youth represent a significant share of the juvenile justice population, commit different types of offenses, and have unique treatment needs. Beginning at the county level and through the juvenile justice continuum to the state level, resources and services addressing these different factors are identified and provided.

Services may be recommended to the youth and their families or required through diversion agreements or court orders. These programs may take place in home, outpatient, residential, or close-custody environments depending on where the youth is on the continuum. The majority of county juvenile departments do not have residential or outpatient programs. In these situations, the county juvenile departments often serve as a “broker” and assist in connecting youth with the necessary services. The costs associated with these services may be addressed through private, county, state, or federal funds. Services may be provided by agencies other than county juvenile departments or OYA, including the Oregon Department of Human Services or Oregon Health Authority. Efforts to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Oregon’s juvenile justice system must consider these dynamics. When committed to the legal custody of OYA, outpatient, residential and close-custody services for adjudicated youth become the responsibility of the state agency. Reformation and other services, including behavioral health treatment, purchased by OYA, are tracked in JJIS and are most often paid through JJIS.

We recognize the need for additional residential beds available to female youth within the juvenile justice system. We agree the Young Women’s Transition Program, being piloted by OYA, provides a necessary avenue for transition services at the high end of the juvenile justice service continuum. OYA will work with the Governor and Legislature to seek ongoing funding to operate this valuable transition program. Additionally, we will continue to work with community partners to develop and support additional outpatient and residential programs serving female youth at all points along the service continuum, reducing the risk of female youth escalating further into the juvenile justice system.

We agree a regular, standalone report identifying disparities between programming for male and female youth in OYA's care and custody may assist in our efforts to address inequities and develop solutions. OYA and the county juvenile departments will work with the JJIS Steering Committee to investigate reporting formats and content.

Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS): Continued collaboration

The 2000 *JJIS Status Report* provides a solid foundation for the collaboration between OYA and the county juvenile departments. Per the report, "The JJIS partnership is successful because it was borne out of a common need.... After years of limited capacity, neither Oregon's counties nor the state could respond to policy-makers' and budget committees' requests for basic programmatic and fiscal information about juvenile crime, treatment services, or recidivism rates.... Oregon's collective ability to remove seemingly immovable blockades is evidenced by the status of JJIS today." We recognize JJIS continues to provide the capacity for and aid in the overall planning, development, and evaluation of programs designed to reduce juvenile crime, increase investment return, and enhance positive youth outcomes.

Although JJIS has proved to be an unprecedented data resource, we agree program information within JJIS is relatively limited and inconsistent throughout the system. We will work with our partners to explore collective opportunities and to delineate basic programmatic data desirable within JJIS.

Significant fiscal and logistical barriers were overcome to establish JJIS 20 years ago. However, new challenges face this one-of-a-kind information system today. The technological platform on which JJIS was built no longer meets OYA's business requirements and needs to be replaced with modern, stable, web/mobile compatible technology. OYA is starting the process to evaluate project options for modernizing the system and propose next steps for JJIS modernization that are necessary to improve the program and other reporting tools.

Together, we will continue to identify and resolve barriers and restrictions to the development of system-wide program data entry and reporting, recognizing that not all services available to youth, particularly at the local level, can be tracked in a juvenile justice information system. We will work with the JJIS Steering Committee to design and implement a project strategy and timeline focusing on clear, consistent, and complete system-wide program data elements.

Recommendation responses: Next steps

- OYA will work with the Governor and Legislature to seek ongoing funding to operate the Young Women's Transition Program through the 2017-19 biennium and beyond. Additionally, we will continue to work with community partners to enhance and support viable outpatient and residential programs serving female youth at all points along the service continuum, reducing the risk of female youth escalating further in the juvenile justice.
- We will consider developing a regular, standalone report to identify and address disparities between programming for male and female youth. We will work with the JJIS Steering

Committee to investigate reporting formats and content that will support our commitment to fair and respectful treatment that does not perpetuate disparities.

- We will work to delineate which program information can and should be captured in JJIS and develop a strategy to identify and resolve existing barriers and restrictions to the development of sustainable, system-wide program data entry and reporting tools. We will start the process to evaluate project options for modernizing the system and determine the appropriate next steps needed to modernize the technology platform on which JJIS operates.

OYA and OJDDA appreciate the information provided in the audit and the opportunity to respond to and address the observations and recommendations. We will continue to support and strengthen the Oregon juvenile justice system through the lens of collaboration and continuous improvement with the goal of realizing our shared vision. Please feel free to contact us if more information is required.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fariborz Pakseresht".

Fariborz Pakseresht
Oregon Youth Authority
Director

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Torri Lynn".

Torri Lynn
OJDDA Board of Directors
President

About the Secretary of State Audits Division

The Oregon Constitution provides that the Secretary of State shall be, by virtue of her office, Auditor of Public Accounts. The Audits Division exists to carry out this duty. The division reports to the elected Secretary of State and is independent of other agencies within the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of Oregon government. The division audits all state officers, agencies, boards, and commissions and oversees audits and financial reporting for local governments.

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This report, a public record, is intended to promote the best possible management of public resources. Copies may be obtained from:

website: sos.oregon.gov/audits

phone: 503-986-2255

mail: Oregon Audits Division
255 Capitol Street NE, Suite 500
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The courtesies and cooperation extended by officials and employees of the Oregon Youth Authority and the county juvenile departments – particularly the Jefferson, Klamath, Marion, and Multnomah county juvenile departments – during the course of this audit were commendable and sincerely appreciated.

Photo on Page 1 courtesy of Kmiragaya @ Dreamstime.com.