



# Oregon Youth Authority

Issue Brief

February 2011

## Protecting youth offenders from sexual victimization

**11**

Number of OYA close custody facilities

**887**

Number of youth offenders in close custody for which OYA is budgeted

**962**

Number of forecast beds needed for youth offenders

**1,100**

Number of youth offenders on parole and probation

**311**

Total funds, in millions of dollars, in OYA's 2009-2011 Legislatively Approved Budget

**71**

Percent of youth who leave OYA who go on to lead crime-free lives

### Overview

The Oregon Youth Authority exercises a zero-tolerance policy toward sexual and other threats of harm to the approximately 2,000 youth in its close-custody facilities and under community supervision. Trained investigators examine all reports of abuse or threats of harm to youth or staff. The agency also ensures youth, staff and families understand the reporting process and why it matters.

### Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

Congress unanimously approved the 2003 Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA), creating a commission that in 2009 submitted standards to the federal executive and legislative branches for preventing, detecting, monitoring and responding to sexual assault.

Affected agencies such as the Oregon Youth Authority must comply with the law's requirements within one year after the U.S. Attorney General's anticipated 2011 approval of the PREA Commission's recommendations.

PREA addresses not only rape, but also applies to all public and private facilities that house adult and juvenile offenders, and covers physical and verbal sexual abuse. PREA addresses OYA facilities, field services (youth on parole and probation), contracts (ensuring all contractors comply with PREA requirements), and human resources (conducting employee criminal history checks and training staff).

A state's failure to comply with PREA can result in its losing 5 percent of federal corrections funding. It also can result in civil and criminal liability to the agency.

### How OYA supports PREA enforcement

With a goal of being a national leader, OYA began early to meet PREA standards. In 2005 OYA implemented a policy supporting safe living and work environments, committed the agency to a zero-tolerance standard, and set uniform guidelines and procedures for close-custody facilities.

In 2006 OYA created a Professional Standards Office (PSO) to document, track and investigate allegations of abuse. PSO works as appropriate with medical professionals, forensic investigators, law enforcement agencies, counselors, and district attorneys. OYA also implemented principles of conduct, standardizing and clarifying expectations of employees; delivered a 90-minute PREA training to all staff and instituted a 2.5-

## Oregon

### Youth Authority

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#### Mission

The Oregon Youth Authority protects the public and reduces crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.



#### Vision

Youth who leave OYA lead crime-free lives.



#### Core Values

Integrity  
Professionalism  
Accountability  
Respect



#### Director

**Colette S. Peters**



#### Deputy Director

**Fariborz Pakseresht**



Assistant Director  
for Business Services

**Jean Straight**



Assistant Director  
for Community Services

**Philip Cox**



Assistant Director  
for Facility Services

**Karen Daniels**



Assistant Director  
for Health Services

**Marcia Adams, M.D.**

hour PREA training delivered to all direct-care employees during new employee orientation; established and publicized a toll-free OYA Hotline (1-800-315-5440); placed posters in all facilities and prepared a comprehensive safety guide for youth and families, including procedures for filing a grievance; and provided safety materials in multiple languages, used language interpreters, and delivered one-on-one presentations of safety information for youth.

In 2009 OYA established a full-time PREA coordinator in the Professional Standards Office, and received requested National Institute of Corrections and Moss Group technical assistance to assess compliance. In response to their recommendations, the agency updated its policy in 2010 and designated a Sexual Assault Response Team in every close-custody facility and parole/probation office to address victims' medical and mental health needs.

Also in 2010 Oregon's Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS) was programmed to automatically notify the PREA coordinator for review of every incident indicating sexual behavior.

### OYA's record of PREA compliance

PSO tracks all abuse including PREA-related incidents to determine patterns and to assess a need for corrective action. After implementing these changes, OYA experienced a spike in allegations and founded reports reflecting its commitment to reporting and follow-through. Other states like Oregon, which have vigorously encouraged reporting, also have seen higher numbers.

During 2008-2009, a U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics national survey of 26,000 randomly selected incarcerated youth included 263 youth in four OYA facilities in Florence, Salem, Woodburn and Grants Pass. Survey results showed OYA's rate of sexual victimization was slightly below the national average. Oregon also was among five states with one facility (Camp Florence) reporting no incidents.

### OYA's strategies to further improve safety

OYA continues to vigorously strengthen its PREA reporting, investigating and tracking systems to ensure the agency attains full compliance with all PREA standards on or before the law's anticipated 2012 implementation date.

Among OYA's 2011 PREA initiatives are:

- Continuing to install new cameras in close-custody facilities' identified high-risk areas;
- Implementing Web-based PREA training for contractors and volunteers;
- Developing multiple PREA refresher courses to educate youth and staff;
- Leading a multi-agency effort to create a safety video for youth;
- Developing a comprehensive screening tool specifically designed for youth offenders; and
- Programming JJIS to track conflicts with potential for sexual victimization or acting out.