



# Oregon Youth Authority

Issue Brief

January 2015

## Assessing youths' treatment and reformation needs

**10**

Number of OYA close-custody facilities

**650**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises in close custody

**550**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises in community residential treatment and foster care settings

**450**

Approximate number of youth offenders OYA supervises who live independently or at home in communities

**323**

Total Funds, in millions of dollars, allocated to OYA in 2013-2015

**88**

Approximate percent of OYA's budget spent locally in facilities and communities

### Overview

The Oregon Youth Authority serves the state's most delinquent youth ages 12 through 24 who commit crimes prior to their 18th birthday. These young offenders' criminal activities include murder, rape, arson, robbery, substance abuse, other violent and anti-social behaviors, and gang activity. OYA holds these offenders accountable and provides opportunities for reformation in safe environments.

The agency's vision is that youth who leave OYA go on to lead productive, crime-free lives. One of the ways OYA measures the effectiveness of its programming and treatment in achieving this vision is by tracking the number of former OYA youth offenders who relapse into criminal behavior. Relapsing, or reoffending, is called recidivism.

To reduce recidivism, OYA assesses the risk and needs of youth when they enter the agency's custody, then develops a case plan that includes recommended placement, treatment, education, and other services. These assessment tools are listed below.

### OYA Risk-Needs Assessment

The OYA Risk-Needs Assessment (RNA) evaluates each youth for criminal and delinquent behavior, social skills, attitudes and beliefs, substance abuse, mental health, family and parenting issues, interpersonal relationships, use of free time, employment, and education. Results from the RNA help OYA's treatment professionals determine the optimum placement, treatment, and other programming for each youth.

### OYA Recidivism Risk Assessment

The OYA Recidivism Risk Assessment (ORRA) and the OYA Recidivism Risk Assessment for Violence (ORRA-V) use mathematical equations to analyze data collected as part of standard practice on all youth with records in Oregon's statewide Juvenile Justice Information System (JJIS). ORRA and ORRA-V quantify the relationship of factors that have been found to be most closely associated with recidivism, and produce a numeric score.

Scores are generated automatically for four types of youth offenders — juveniles committed to county probation, juveniles committed to OYA probation, juveniles released from OYA close custody, and DOC youth released to post-prison supervision from OYA close custody.

## 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 will go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.



#### Core Values

Integrity  
Professionalism  
Accountability  
Respect



#### Director

Fariborz Pakseresht



#### Deputy Director

Joe O'Leary



#### Key Service Areas

Business Services  
Community Services  
Facility Services  
Health Services  
Information Services  
Treatment Services

## Applying assessment scores

### Placement and treatment decisions

OYA must carefully weigh how to best achieve its mission through the prudent allocation of scarce resources to youth offenders in the agency's care. Knowledge of a youth's assessment results and treatment needs can help the agency and its contracted providers identify appropriate supervision levels, service dosage, and placement for each youth committed to OYA custody. The agency can minimize current and future public risk by reserving the most intensive — and most costly — supervision for youth offenders at the highest risk levels and who have committed the most severe crimes. Youth at lower risk levels can benefit from the provision of treatment programs in less restrictive — and typically less costly — settings.

### Parole decisions

OYA has paroling authority for adjudicated juveniles committed to youth correctional facilities. Taken together with other available information about a youth and input from those involved in providing the youth's treatment, assessments can help gauge a youth's readiness for transitioning into a community setting.

### Program evaluations

Using these assessment results and other demographic variables, researchers can employ matched sample research designs to evaluate program effectiveness. Because youth not in OYA's custody are unlikely to have received the same treatment programs as OYA youth, researchers can compare treated with non-treated youth. These kinds of program evaluations can provide critical input to agency discussions and decisions around selecting treatment programs, improving program delivery, and identifying youth most likely to benefit from specific services.

### Sentencing practices

In the future, assessment results may be considered along with such factors as crime severity, victim statements, and the number of victims when determining sentences. Making information about a youth's recidivism risk available to judges, district attorneys, defense attorneys, and victims and their families may make it possible to improve youth outcomes and conserve limited resources without compromising public safety.

### Looking ahead

The current assessment methods represent a starting point. Although they have been validated as having high predictive accuracy, OYA's researchers anticipate assessment methods will evolve as new data elements become available.

OYA is committed to preserving public safety while providing services that are both effective and cost-effective. Youth assessments play an important role in helping OYA's treatment professionals make the optimum placement and treatment decisions for individual youth, and in advancing research into the effectiveness of programs and treatment to maximize the opportunities for youth who leave OYA to go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.