



Oregon Youth Authority

Issue Brief

January 2015

Volunteering to help youth succeed

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

- ▲ Community volunteers provide an essential service to the Oregon Youth Authority by helping youth build connections with the community and understand they can become valued members of society.
- ▲ Volunteers support positive youth development in close-custody facilities and community settings throughout Oregon.

Volunteer opportunities

Research shows the three key ingredients to helping at-risk youth build better lives for themselves and their families are treatment, education, and job-readiness. Community volunteers help youth advance in all of these areas. Volunteers:

- ▲ **Mentor youth:** Mentors offer young men and women positive relationships with adults. In many cases, volunteers provide the first supportive role models youth have known. Mentoring can cover many areas -- social and emotional guidance, decision making, life skills, and other needs.
- ▲ **Tutor youth:** Academic progress correlates directly with a reduced risk of future criminal behavior. Many youth in facilities and community settings benefit from one-on-one help in basic and advanced academic subjects.
- ▲ **Lead religious activities:** Volunteers are OYA's primary resource for providing a variety of spiritual and religious services and study groups for youth in close-custody facilities.
- ▲ **Help youth gain job skills:** The ability to get and maintain a job correlates with a reduced risk to reoffend. Volunteers can provide youth with practical on-the-job experience in both the 'hard' technical skills of a profession and the 'soft' skills important to employers such as timeliness, appearance, work ethic, and other factors that make a good employee.
- ▲ **Provide post-incarceration job opportunities:** Volunteers in businesses can provide a step up to OYA youth, offering internships or jobs for the short- or long-term after a youth is paroled from OYA custody. Maintaining employment significantly helps youth who leave OYA go on to lead productive, crime-free lives.

**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

- ▲ **Support a living unit:** Volunteer groups can sponsor living units of 12-25 youth by providing holiday celebrations and recognition of youth birthdays and special events such as graduations.
- ▲ **Assist with special programs:** Volunteers support the Project POOCH program at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility (YCF) in Woodburn and the PAWS program at Rogue Valley YCF in Grants Pass. These and similar programs at other facilities teach youth empathy and responsibility as they train and care for shelter animals. There are many more work experience program opportunities in all facilities that lack state funding and rely on volunteer support.
- ▲ **Become an intern:** OYA partners with colleges and universities to offer internships to students seeking experience in the juvenile justice and juvenile mental health fields.

Volunteer commitments

There is no set time commitment for volunteers. The amount of time someone spends as a volunteer varies depends on the service being provided. Individuals can volunteer to give a one-time presentation, teach an activity for a day or a class for a month, mentor or tutor a youth weekly, or help out on holidays and special occasions. The level of commitment is up to each individual volunteer.

Volunteer requirements

OYA makes every effort to ensure that volunteers meet the same standards as employees and contractors, to ensure the safety of youth. This means all volunteers must pass a background check, follow OYA's zero-tolerance policies for harassment and other inappropriate behaviors, have a background in the work for which they are volunteering, and have the patience and understanding to work with troubled youth.

Volunteer benefits

One of the most essential roles volunteers play is helping youth make a positive connection with community members and learn pro-social thinking and behaviors. Many youth in OYA's custody have never seen themselves as being valued, have never been given consistent expectations in their lives, and have not experienced many of the positive interactions most people take for granted. Volunteers can provide all of that.

Volunteers help OYA fulfill its vision that youth who leave OYA will go on to lead productive, crime-free lives. By helping achieve this vision, volunteers not only help youth build better lives for themselves, but also for their families and the larger communities.