



Director's Message

September 3, 2014

Dear Colleagues,

As many of you may know, the 2013 Oregon Legislature included a note in OYA's budget requiring us to develop a 10-year plan for facilities. The note referenced the declining number of youth committed to OYA, the unused capacity at Hillcrest and MacLaren, and our significant deferred maintenance costs. The budget note instructed OYA to develop a 10-year plan for facility use that considers these factors.

In response to that budget note, OYA has been working with DLR Group and Chinn Planning to review our close-custody facilities. DLR Group are consultants with significant expertise in major construction projects including correctional facilities, and Chinn Planning is a group with more than 20 years of experience in juvenile justice. That review is now complete and has been submitted to the Legislature. You can see a copy of the complete report at <http://www.oregon.gov/oia/reports/OYA%2010%20Yr%20Strategic%20Plan.pdf>. A summary of the report recommendations follows.

Report recommendations

First, the consultants recommend restructuring our facilities to align with current research and knowledge about best practices in juvenile corrections. Many of our facilities were designed based on correctional practices borrowed heavily from adult corrections that followed the conventional wisdom for juvenile justice in the early 1990s. The master plan highlights the reality that those physical environments do not align with what we know today about best practices in juvenile justice and are not conducive to supporting a culture of positive human development.

For example, the report recommends renovations consistent with current best practices, which call for living units with fewer youth than our current 25-bed design, while retaining appropriate staffing patterns to oversee those units; a higher ratio of individual rooms to dormitory housing, particularly in intake units; a distance view of horizons; and enhanced space for treatment, education, recreation, and vocational training. The report also recommends funding all deferred maintenance needs, including seismic retrofitting.

In addition, the consultants recommend combining the two largest Willamette Valley facilities -- Hillcrest and MacLaren -- by renovating MacLaren to enable it to serve the total populations of youth at both facilities. Once renovations to MacLaren are completed, which is expected to take approximately three years after funding is obtained, Hillcrest would close. The consultants also recommend establishing more transition beds, particularly in the Willamette Valley. This would mean opening the unused transition program building at Oak Creek and starting a transition program at MacLaren.

The total estimated cost of implementing all of these facility recommendations over the next 10 years is \$97.4 million, divided between two phases. Costs could fluctuate somewhat, depending on youth populations and staffing needs, and could be lower if youth commitments continue to decline.

Impact on staff

These recommendations align with best practices and our goals of implementing YRS and positive human development. The recommendations focus on enhancing physical environments to improve youth outcomes and create a safe and satisfying work environment for staff. However, we know the recommendation to close Hillcrest and move youth to MacLaren may cause concern, particularly for those of you who work in our Willamette Valley facilities. That's why we want to reassure you that OYA has NO plans to lay off any staff as a result of the recommendations in this report.

At this point, we don't know which of the recommendations, if any, will receive legislative approval and funding. Should any recommendations be accepted that require staffing changes, those changes would be at least three years away. Many discussions will take place about these recommendations before a final decision is reached. It is far too soon to make any plans as a result of the report's recommendations.

Next steps

OYA will study the recommendations more thoroughly and seek feedback from agency staff, our advisory committees, other stakeholders, and policy makers. As part of that review process, Assistant Directors, Field Supervisors, and Superintendents and Camp Directors will be talking with you to hear your thoughts and answer your questions. We also invite you to send comments to us at oya.director@oya.state.or us. We want to be sure your voices are heard.

In addition, we will be meeting with legislators and other external stakeholders to review the report's recommendations. As part of those discussions, the 2015 Legislature will consider the budgetary impacts. It will be many months before any kind of consensus is reached on how to proceed.

Finally, in sending out communications like this we try our best to be sensitive to everyone who is potentially impacted. Despite our best intentions and efforts, though, things occasionally fall through the cracks. We rely on you to let us know how we are doing and what we could do differently. Your feedback, ideas, and suggestions can help us improve our planning and communications.

As always, please know that we greatly value your work and dedication toward improving the lives of the youth we serve. We will keep you updated as we move forward.

Sincerely,



Fariborz Pakseresht
Director



Joe O'Leary
Deputy Director