

Oregon Youth Authority Strategic Plan 2006-2009

Introduction

The purpose of this plan is to describe the goals, observable outcomes, critical success factors and future initiatives that allow the Oregon Youth Authority to better serve the needs of its staff, youth in its care, partners, and the public.

The plan was developed through joint visioning sessions with OYA senior and mid management, staff, and the OYA Advisory Committee in 2005-06.

Vision

- We are a nationally recognized leader in developing and applying most effective practices for the rehabilitation of juvenile offenders.
- We are committed to cultural competency and workforce diversity through developing and implementing strategies which strengthen the diversity of our workforce and integrate cultural competency within our organizational structure.
- We take a proactive role in developing juvenile justice policy.
- We are advocates for the youth in our care.
- We create partnerships with Oregon communities to hold juvenile offenders accountable, engage victims, and enhance the quality of life for the citizens of Oregon.
- We are a committed, creative, and productive organization which recognizes safety and security of the public, our staff and the juveniles in our care as an essential business practice.
- We practice sound fiscal management of public resources using outcome-oriented strategies.
- We provide programs and resources which support the department's mission.
- We share the responsibility for outcomes across organizational boundaries.

Mission

The Mission of the Oregon Youth Authority is to protect the public and reduce crime by holding youth offenders accountable and providing opportunities for reformation in safe environments.

TO ACHIEVE THIS WE:

- Emphasize safety of the public, youth, and staff;
- Provide certain, consistent sanctions for youth offenders through a continuum of services and sanctions;
- Support the concerns of crime victims;
- Provide comprehensive youth reformation programs;
- Promote and support juvenile crime prevention activities;
- Encourage involvement and responsibility of families, communities, and juvenile justice partners; and
- Select, train, support, and empower a competent and diverse workforce.

Core Values

The Oregon Youth Authority values:

- Excellence in public service;
- Partnerships with local communities and other agencies;
- Openness and accountability to the public; and
- Providing services in a fair, respectful, and humane manner.

Goals and Outcomes

The goals of the Oregon Youth Authority for the next three years are:

Create a more open and collaborative culture. The agency is now ten years old and desires to be more open to new ideas and support the most effective practices in juvenile rehabilitation. When effectively implemented the agency and people within it will have:

- A clear, well communicated, and commonly understood mission;
- A shared philosophy and model of how we interact with and manage youth in our care;
- Effective teamwork in the organization;
- Increased trust, communication and cooperation among central and field offices and facilities;
- Adopted and internalized evidence based practices;
- Staff that all clearly understand what we do and why we do it;
- An organization where positive attitudes and innovation are valued and rewarded;
- Better relationships and a stronger role with our partners in the counties, community and legislature; and
- Recognition as a state and national leader in juvenile justice.

Expand our use of measures and “most effective” practices. The agency currently utilizes measurement as a tool to determine most effective practices. However greater value could be received from this tool if use of measurement and associated best practices were better integrated into the fabric of the agency. When this goal is accomplished it will mean:

- Everyone in the agency clearly understands why we do what we do and how and why we measure it;
- Everyone practices it consistently;
- Our interactions with youth and our operations are driven by most effective practices and performance measures;
- Our ultimate measures are directly related to Oregon Benchmarks;
- Measures and outcome measures are used to achieve consensus on action within the agency;
- We cooperatively participate in determining what does and doesn't work;
- We efficiently and effectively analyze both our successes and failures to continuously improve our outcomes;
- Measures are meaningful, communicated and understood not only internally but also by our partners;
- Our most effective practices take into account differences among youth (e.g. risk and need level, youth of color, cultural differences);
- We are open to accepting most effective practices from all sources, not just internally (e.g. other states, national experts);

- The agency becomes recognized statewide and nationally for its use of measurement and most effective practices; and
- Services to youth are provided based upon need and efficacy of treatment.

Better use recidivism in evaluating our progress. The ultimate measure of our success is “do we keep youth from committing further crimes” or recidivism. We must consistently define this term and promote its use as the ultimate measure of our success. To that end we will have met this goal when:

- There is a clear, unambiguous, and simple definition of recidivism;
- We are consistently evaluating and strengthening the actions we take that reduce recidivism;
- We ultimately measure ourselves at all levels on recidivism (geographically, by facility, by staff member);
- This focus on recidivism is reflected in our practice, our actions, and measures, and our effective practices ultimately reduce recidivism;
- Recidivism is used in describing our mission;
- We have and promote an accurate picture of recidivism in the state of Oregon; and
- We focus on our success in presenting recidivism.

Trust, value and support each other. Agency personnel practices and policies must be clear and supportive of employee growth. Roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined and communicated. If it is to thrive the agency must value and support its employees. This goal will have been accomplished when:

- Practice and model among all levels of staff the basic tenets of pro-social behavior, positive reinforcement, positive performance measurement, and team building;
- Staff feel free to contribute ideas and action that improve the success of the agency;
- Staff hold each other accountable for the work they perform;
- Good work is valued and acknowledged;
- Management and staff work cooperatively to plan and accomplish our goals;
- Staff understand what is expected of them and receive appropriate education and materials to perform their work;
- There are clear career paths within the agency, everyone takes an active role in managing their own career and receives regular guidance about their career;
- We have a comprehensive personnel management approach in place that permits us to proactively guide employees through their career with the agency;
- We promote, encourage and support the development of job related skills at all levels of the agency from entry level positions to senior management;
- We devote financial and management resource to staff development;
- We recognize, accommodate and support differences in work environments;
- Ideas, plans and actions are effectively communicated throughout the agency; and
- Institutional knowledge is retained through succession planning and mentoring.

Improve youth safety. It is one of our primary responsibilities to make sure youth are safe while in our custody. Our goal is to ensure youth do not commit new crimes upon release from our custody. In order to focus on this youth must feel safe while in our custody. Ensuring youth safety must be paramount in our practice. This goal will have been accomplished when:

- Youth safety is recognized as part of our mission statement;
- Youth are empowered to communicate safety issues;

- Preventive and detective controls are in place that keep youth safe;
- Staff practice how to manage youth behavior so both their and the youths' safety is assured;
- Standard mechanisms are in place to report and address safety issues and continuously improve safety of youth, staff and the general public;
- Youth are treated with respect by staff;
- Staff are accountable for keeping youth safe; and
- Youth are protected from racial or discriminatory actions and harassment.

Increase transparency and accountability of the agency. The Oregon Youth Authority is a small agency that often doesn't get its stakeholders or the public's attention. This leads to a situation where people are confused as to the roles and responsibilities of the organization. Increasing the profile of the agency with both stakeholders and the public will help. We will have increased our visibility, transparency and accountability when:

- Stakeholders and the public know who we are and what we do;
- We actively and regularly communicate our initiatives, actions and outcomes, both positive and negative, with our staff, the public and our partners;
- Staff share a common understanding of our roles and responsibilities and can communicate our mission and goals;
- We have articulated and executed a plan to regularly communicate with and educate the public and our partners;
- We respond rapidly and accurately to requests for information;
- We regularly identify and lead discussions about issues that are important to staff, partners and the public;
- We better utilize technology to make information available through multiple channels; and
- Information is readily available for others to see how we are meeting our mission and goals.

Critical Success Factors

To accomplish our goals we must acknowledge and address the following critical success factors:

Change is challenging. Changing the culture will require hard work. We will all be drawn out of our realm of comfort. We must recognize and address the stress that arises from this if we are to succeed.

Collaboration is required. The hierarchical command and control model used in our institutions is necessary for operations but does not foster collaboration. Every staff member must feel free to bring ideas, positive and negative, forward for consideration. Collaboration at all levels of the organization will be required accomplish our goals.

We must remain flexible. The agency's public service mission requires us to respond quickly to rapidly changing community needs. We must retain the flexibility to shift resources to new areas of priority (e.g. legislative mandates).

Innovation is necessary. We must be committed to developing innovative practices and processes that reflect our deep knowledge of our fields and our ongoing evaluation of what does and does not work in our operations.

Accountability must be accepted. Our success depends on our ability to follow through on our commitments and to learn from our experiences.

Acknowledge that not everyone is willing to change. The majority of individuals will be excited by real change. There may however be individuals who will not accept change. While understanding their concerns and reticence with change we must persevere in accomplishing our goals.

Our attention must be focused. We must reprioritize what we are already doing, adjust our attention and devote our resources to those things that will help us best accomplish our goals. The agency is currently involved in a number of initiatives. If we are to be successful we must weed out those things that don't directly help us accomplish our goals. Those initiatives that are contributing to our goals must be prioritized and included as part of a "big" picture plan for the agency.

Existing resources must be utilized. We have talented resources and we must take advantage of those resources in affecting change. We have the staff, skills and desire to change. We must take advantage of this situation. It is not likely we will receive other resources (dollars or staff) and we will have to make change happen with what we have available now.

We must be selfless in moving forward. We must all take a global view of what the agency is trying to accomplish. Though we may not see direct benefit to us we must be able to understand and communicate the big picture and accept that every change may not benefit every individual in the organization.

Accept a matrix organization for strategic initiatives. To accomplish our goals the organization must work together across the current lines of responsibility and authority. We must avoid a silo mentality and accept that, for purposes of accomplishing our goals, we will be a matrix organization. This must be balanced with the need for the agency to conduct its ongoing operations along the current lines of authority.

Empower others to change. Change will happen, both top down and bottom up in our organization. This means all staff must be given the time, direction, responsibility and authority to accomplish our goals.

Clear direction and communication must be provided. Though we do not know how we will accomplish our goals yet, the strategic planning process has shown us what we want to look like after our goals are accomplished. Agency personnel need to understand that initiatives they undertake must contribute to the accomplishment of our common goals.

Travel will be needed. OYA is geographically very diverse. Implementing common goals will require face to face communication and an understanding of the unique challenges each location faces. This means we must be willing to support travel to accomplish our goals.

Continuous learning will be required. We must accept that fact there will be failures and successes in our efforts and use the knowledge of each failure or success to adjust our actions. We must not let failures prevent us from accomplishing our goals.

Understand and accept that differences of opinion will arise. We all will have an interest in change, sometimes those interests will conflict. We must work out our differences understanding

the dissent is not disloyalty. Regardless of the direction chosen, once our course is set we must put aside our differences and stand behind our decisions and direction.

Strategic Initiatives

We anticipate taking action on the following initiatives over the next three years:

Consolidate our initiatives

The Oregon Youth Authority currently has numerous initiatives under way. Though all are important the agency has limited capacity and resources to accomplish its goals. An excess of initiatives and disjointed change has led to “change burnout” within the agency. In the future, initiatives undertaken should address mandates outside our control (e.g. legislative requests) or be in support of our goals. Steps in this initiative include:

- Inventory existing initiatives;
- Define the criteria for “critical” initiatives;
- Prioritize existing and planned future work as either mandatory or optional based on our criteria;
- Stop initiatives that are not mandatory;
- Refocus and support critical initiatives; and
- Build a process for ensuring future initiatives are adequately prioritized according to our criteria.

The intended outcome of this initiative is to reduce the amount of work staff are performing that doesn’t contribute to our day to day operations, goals and mission..

Equip ourselves to manage change

The agency has been moderately successful at change in the past (witness the implementation of JJIS) but at a high price. We need to recognize that planning and management of change is a skill we must enhance. It will be critical we identify, adopt and educate all on a change management model for the agency if our goals are to succeed. The steps in this initiative include:

- Discuss and document our needs for management of change;
- Examine models of change and select or create one appropriate to our needs;
- Develop plans to implement the model within the organization;
- Give staff and management the education and tools necessary to implement the model;
- Evaluate our implementation of the model, assess its efficacy and adapt as needed;
- Build the plans for change; and
- Enact the process for evaluating the effectiveness of changes we make.

The outcome of this task is an agency with a common model and skills for implementing the change the rest of this plan will bring about.

Improve communications

The geographic and cultural diversity of the Oregon Youth Authority, autonomy of individual institutions, and a historical philosophical distance between central office policy and field operations has impeded effective communication in the past. Effective two-way communication between staff, peers, management, labor, the public and the stakeholders will be necessary to truly achieve our

goals. Most of our goals are as much about improving communications (e.g. valuing staff and improving youth safety) as they are about action. The steps in this initiative include

- Evaluate our mission statement and what it communicates;
- Identify who we need to talk to;
- Set up conversations to understand their needs for communication and discuss the best ways to communicate with each group;
- Develop plans for regular communications to each of our constituents; and
- Assess and acquire the resources necessary to effectively conduct the communications plan.

This outcome of this initiative is intended to directly address the goals of:

- Creating a more open cooperative culture;
- Enhancing trust, value and support our employees;
- Improving youth safety; and
- Increasing transparency and accountability of the organization.

Support the growth of our staff

OYA's geographic diversity and history of each unit operating autonomously have led to inconsistent and ineffective support for staff. OYA has grown to the point it needs more to adopt more formal personnel management policies and practices to help ensure all staff receive support and an equal opportunity to be successful in their careers. However it should be recognized that policy and process alone will not ensure that staff are sufficiently supported. Practices must be modeled and measured at all levels of the organization. The steps in this initiative include:

- Identify the weaknesses in our current system;
- Systematically and individually address each of the weaknesses identified;
- Clearly outline all staff roles and responsibilities;
- Identify the skills each role will require;
- Devise methods of ensuring staff understand and have needed skills;
- Provide means for staff to acquire skills;
- Devise career counseling and mentoring approaches for the organization;
- Devise evaluation approaches;
- Devise methods to educate and train staff;
- Devise and implement methods to measure staff performance;
- Ensure staff have the tools they need to avoid burn out and reduce the stress of change; and
- Provide methods of feedback about expectations and performance.

This outcome of this initiative is intended to directly address the goals of:

- Creating a more open collaborative culture;
- Enhancing trust, value and support our employees; and
- Improving youth safety.

Ensure the safety of our youth

Youth in our custody must be safe. To ensure this we will need to enhance and adopt youth safety processes, policies and improve staff training for managing youth. The steps in this initiative include:

- Identify the weaknesses in our current system;
- Systematically and individually address each of the weaknesses identified;
- Clearly outline roles, responsibilities, procedures and policies for ensuring youth safety;
- Provide a reliable and safe method for youth to report safety concerns;
- Educate staff on how to spot safety concerns and what to do about them; and
- Devise and implement measures and means of collecting performance information on safety.

This outcome of this initiative is intended to directly address the goals of:

- Creating a more open cooperative culture;
- Improving youth safety; and
- Increasing transparency and accountability of the organization.

Continue implementation of performance measures and most effective practices

OYA has already taken steps to utilize performance measurement, recidivism measures and most effective practices. Existing initiatives around case management and data analysis could be combined with a stronger focus on outcome measurement and implementing best practices. The agency will need to develop and adopt a sustainable model of performance measurement (including recidivism), continuous quality improvement and most effective practices. Steps in this initiative include:

- Inventory existing measures, best practices and outcomes;
- Investigate national best practices in juvenile justice;
- Define our use of performance measures;
- Define measures (including recidivism) and method of practice/program evaluation;
- Evaluate information necessary to produce measures and find a source for that information;
- Build a comprehensive model of performance measurement, recidivism and best practices within OYA;
- Define continuous quality improvement process;
- Review/refine processes within the agency; and
- Adopt processes.

This outcome of this initiative is intended to directly address the goals of:

- Expanding our use of measures and most effective practices; and
- Adopting recidivism measures to evaluate our progress.