



Marion County

OREGON

JUVENILE DEPARTMENT

March 27, 2017

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To Chair Roblan and Members of the Senate Committee on Education:

For the record, my name is Kris Kemp and I am an Educational Advocate with the Marion County Juvenile Department. I provide academic support and advocacy for youth who are on probation. I assist youth with developing academic skills, credit recovery, improving attendance, while fostering interest and active participation in learning. Senate Bill 142 considers screening for Irlen Syndrome, which is something that the Juvenile Department has been doing for many years. I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide information on the Juvenile Department's use and experience with screening for Irlen Syndrome.

Irlen Syndrome is a perceptual processing disorder, not identifiable through the typical vision testing methods. It is not a vision problem, but rather a problem with the brain's ability to process visual information. Many of the youth referred to the Juvenile Department have struggled for many years with poor attendance, problematic behavior, underdeveloped academic skills, and little engagement in the learning process. We have found that screening for Irlen identifies one barrier to educational success for some; and, it can be easily mitigated by the use of colored overlays, spectral filters or colored glasses.

In approximately 2004, Marion County Juvenile Department began screening youth who were assigned to our educational support program. This program serves a small subgroup of all youth involved with the Juvenile Department. Approximately nine months ago, we began providing an Irlen self-test at intake for all youth involved with the Juvenile Department. The family is offered written information on the syndrome as well as given resources for further evaluation and diagnostic testing.

Of the 253 youth who took the self-test in 2016, 188 (70%) scored in the range that indicated that a full Irlen screening should be administered.

Youth who utilize the overlays or spectral filters report a significant reduction in headaches, less issues in regard to light sensitivity, and an improvement in reading ability. Overall, we observe an increased level of engagement in the learning process. One youth said, "These aren't sunglasses. I can see so much better. I am not going to get headaches anymore!" Another youth, who was diagnosed with dyslexia was happy because the words now appear as they should. Both youth expressed gratitude for this service. It is exciting to witness how the youth respond; and it evident that they have a new perspective on their ability to learn.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information regarding Irlen Syndrome.

Sincerely,

Kris Kemp, Educational Advocate

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