



Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association

Representing Oregon's County Juvenile Departments

www.ojdda.org

- Torri Lynn, President
- Joe Ferguson, President Elect
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OJDDA
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OJDDA Supports HCR 33 and Trauma Informed Training

The Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association supports House Concurrent Resolution 33 which encourages all employees and agencies of the State who work with vulnerable children and adults to become informed on the impacts of trauma and to implement practices and interventions proven to develop resiliency and promote recovery from trauma.

For the past 20 years, Juvenile Departments across the state have dedicated significant time, energy and money into identifying the risk factors that need to be effectively addressed and treated to reduce reoffending behaviors. Research is clear. **The risk factors that lead to delinquency ARE the adverse childhood experiences identified in the ACES study:**

- Experience of physical or sexual abuse or neglect
- Growing up with violence in the home
- Having an incarcerated parent
- Living with a substance abusing, abusive, or neglectful caregiver

The dysfunctional coping strategies, emotions and behaviors adolescents develop in response to those traumas increase that risk:

- Youth substance use, mental distress, and isolation
- School failure and disconnection from social systems and employment
- Violence and self-harm
- Association with delinquent peers

The normal adolescent development process involves momentous neurological change and a time of unpredictable and risky behavior. Children and youth who have experienced trauma have even more risky behaviors and their normal development is interrupted, delayed and

sometimes frozen. Individuals with ACES scores of 4 or higher are twice as likely to smoke, 12 times as likely to have attempted suicide, twice as likely to be alcoholic and 10 times as likely to have injected street drugs. Compared to 11% in the original ACES study, 50% of youth in the juvenile justice system have ACES scores of 4 or more. Family violence is experienced almost across the board by every youth in the juvenile justice system. The majority have experienced a separation from a parent and have had a household member incarcerated. Many have experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse. One study shows that eighty percent of youth who had an ACES score of 0 or 1 were low risk and not likely to reoffend. Eight-five percent of youth who had an ACES score of 9 or 10 were high-risk and penetrated deep into the juvenile justice system. It is not surprising these youth engage in behaviors that result in their involvement in the justice system. <http://www.journalofjuvjustice.org/JOJJ0302/article01.htm>). Our detentions, correctional facilities, jails and prisons are filled with individuals who experienced early and persistent traumas.

Research shows that individual likelihood of reoffending is directly related to whether they received appropriate treatment to address their risk, including treatment for the trauma they have experienced. Individual motivation to engage in treatment is directly related to the sensitivity and approach professionals take with them.

State, County and Provider Organizations have the responsibility to educate, train and support staff to utilize trauma sensitive and responsive approaches. With appropriate attention, support and intervention, individuals can heal. They can go on to live productive lives, raise healthy children and make contributions to their communities.

As noted by Casey Gwinn, San Diego prosecutor that started the first Family Justice Center and developed camps to help children exposed to family violence, our jails and juvenile justice facilities are filled with people who grew up in homes exposed to a combination of domestic violence, child abuse and addiction behaviors. When we understand the impacts of early trauma and begin to effectively intervene early, we will begin to empty our jails, prisons, juvenile justice facilities and mental health facilities. (Cheering for the Children, Creating Pathways to Hope for Children Exposed to Trauma. Tucson, AZ: Wheatmark, 2015.)

Addressing childhood trauma early and effectively is a critical path to creating safer communities, to increasing our high school graduation rates, and eliminating future childhood victims.

For Further Information Contact: Please contact Lara Smith at 503-804-9750