



## **Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association**

*Representing Oregon's County Juvenile Departments*

[www.ojdda.org](http://www.ojdda.org)

- James Goodwin, President
- Molly Rogers, President Elect
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### **The Importance of Education in Juvenile Detention Centers during the current Pandemic climate**

The Oregon Juvenile Department Directors' Association is representative of all 36 of Oregon's county juvenile departments. Oregon has 12 juvenile detention centers operated independently by the county where they are housed. All of Oregon's 36 county juvenile departments are attached to one of these 12 facilities. As part of the operation of these detention centers these facilities house the Juvenile Detention Education Program (JDEP) at each site. Sites work with the Oregon Department of Education and either a local school district or an Educational Service District (ESD) to ensure youth receive educational services as outlined in statute. Youth enter juvenile detention centers directly from the community settings often not fully engaged in their education, often having been pushed out of the public school setting. There is already a disproportionate number of inequities in the system for youth who are incarcerated including an overrepresentation of youth of color and a higher representation of students experiencing disability. Because of the many barriers these youth face they are often ill-equipped to advocate for their own needs in a socially appropriate way.

#### **Common Barriers:**

- Unidentified learning disabilities
- Poverty
- Children of incarcerated parents
- Housing or homelessness
- Systematic racial bias
- Language barriers
- Undiagnosed mental health disorders
- Non-supportive home environment

#### **JDEP programs provide:**

- 5.5 hours of education each weekday.
- Supportive staff such as teachers who are a stabilizing force in the lives of many incarcerated youth.
- 220 day contract, essentially making JDEP programs year round school.
- Individualized learning opportunities in small learning settings.
- Stable environment for academic testing.
- Re-engagement in the learning process building on successes.
- Developmentally appropriate and trauma focused approaches.
- Individualized Education Plan (IEP) implementation.

### **COVID-19 Safety Protocols Put Into Place at Detention Centers:**

- JDEP programs are following programming based on the facility completion of the Operational Blueprints for Reentry as part of the Ready Schools, Safe Learners; Guidance for School Year 2020-21
- Youth screened at intake for temperature and symptom checks -and monitored daily for any changes in symptoms and health issues
- Staff are required to wear masks while engaging with youth.
- Suspended facility contact visits and access to community volunteers
- Safety screening process for all staff entering the facility
- Increased handwashing for staff and youth in the facility
- Practice Physical Distancing within the school setting and general programming
- Additional sanitizing on a daily basis
- No physical contact between students and teachers

### **Concerns of OJDDA:**

- Without direct and supportive learning environments, this group of youth will fall behind their peers in learning outcome measures.
- Equity in education in relation to the youth's placement at detention centers
- Access to online learning – detention centers may not have the Information Technology (IT) infrastructure needed to connect with the online learning for each youth
- Relationships with educators is a key factor in students' success in learning
- JDEP teachers receive Police and Fire PERS as outlined in ORS 238.005(s) recognizing that they are viewed differently than other public school employees and should be required to provide in-person instruction, especially during times of crisis.

OJDDA appreciates participating in on-going discussions regarding how to best serve the educational needs of this distinct population of youth in our juvenile detention centers.

For Further Information contact Lara Smith at [lsmith@governmentrelations.com](mailto:lsmith@governmentrelations.com) or 503-804-9750