Grand Jury Inquiry | Marion County
2025

Oregon Youth Authority
MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility
Woodburn, Oregon

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Executive summary

On May 20, 2025, Marion County District Attorney Paige Clarkson convened a grand jury to inquire into the conditions and management of MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility. The investigative grand jury was specifically undertaken with the goal of increasing the safety of youth[1] and staff at the Woodburn, Oregon location. The grand jury, which consisted of Marion County residents, learned about the Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) generally, but specifically about that agency's largest closed custody detention facility, MacLaren.

During the approximately six-month inquiry, the grand jury:

- Held 13 sessions where they inquired into the conditions and management of MacLaren.
- Heard over 40 hours of testimony from approximately 30 witnesses, which included OYA employees and management, as well as witnesses from Marion County Juvenile Department, Marion County DDA's, Oregon State Police, community partners, and other witnesses.
- Considered hundreds of pages of documentary evidence.
- Toured grounds and facilities at MacLaren on multiple occasions and Marion County Juvenile Department one time.
- Inquiry process included over 500 hours of Marion County District Attorney's Office time at approximately $63,060.
- Inquiry process included over 670 hours of state employee time at approximately $115,231.

In sum, the grand jury investigation revealed systemic challenges creating what is best described as "*Cascading Failures*." These challenges affect the safety of youth and staff, youth rehabilitation, facility staffing levels, and organizational stability. The key findings are categorized in the following areas:

- Identity
- Staffing, Training and Retention
- Population and Behavioral Trends
- Security and Control
- Contraband and Facility Safety
- Gang Activity
- Mental Health and Treatment Gaps
- Sexual Assault/Misconduct
- Case Planning and Parole
- Community Partner Impacts

[1] As used in this report, "youth" refers to any person confined in MacLaren, which, as discussed below, may include a person between the ages of 12 to 25 years old.

Overall, the grand jury made 25 findings across the categories described above. Some findings fit within broad categories, such as the need to strengthen staff recruitment training and development, as well as to address the safety concerns within the facility. Other findings were specific to the named category, such as an increased need to track gang-related safety incidents within the facility. A comprehensive list of all the findings can be found at the end of this report.

Finally, this grand jury also issued 10 criminal indictments for conduct occurring at MacLaren that was discussed as part of its inquiry and learned of additional pending criminal prosecutions stemming from the issues outlined below.

Introduction

PSO Backlog

The Professional Standards Office (PSO) is a division within OYA which, among other responsibilities, is tasked with investigating and coordinating responses to allegations of abuse, staff misconduct, and ensuring the institution is in compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA[2]). The stated mission of the PSO is "to help eliminate organizational conditions which may foster, permit, or encourage inappropriate behavior by OYA employees." To achieve its mission, reports of incidents occurring within the institution are referred to PSO, which conducts an independent review of the reported incident and determines what additional action needs to be taken. After its internal investigation, the incident may be referred to the Oregon State Police for further investigation and referral for criminal charges where appropriate. The role of PSO is pivotal in ensuring the safety and security of staff working in the institution and the youth offenders who are housed in close custody.

In January of 2025, the Chief Investigator of PSO, Raymond Byrd, abruptly resigned and Ken Jeske took over the role of Chief Investigator of PSO. Mr. Jeske determined there were hundreds of incomplete investigations (733[3]) and thousands of cases which had no clear record of being investigated or conclusively reviewed (3400[4]), as detailed in the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Investigative Report (*see* Exhibit A). Mr. Jeske's audit of closed cases revealed many had no documentation of anyone contacting the

[2] Oregon Youth Authority, Professional Standards Office, accessed December 3, 2025, https://www.oregon.gov/oya/pso/pages/default.aspx
[3] DAS Investigation Report, March 13, 2025, p. 4.
[4] Id.

complainant or other people involved in the case before closing the investigation.[5] Under OYA Policy, PSO is required to close complaint reviews within 60 days of receipt and complete a complaint review report containing a record of all the investigative activity.[6] The final DAS report substantiated findings that former OYA Director Joseph O'Leary and former Chief Investigator Raymond Byrd engaged in improper governmental conduct by "inability or unwillingness to appropriately manage the agency's Professional Standards Office."[7]

This PSO backlog of cases impacted several agencies downstream. First, investigations that were not referred led to delayed referrals to Oregon State Police for investigation. Second, the delayed referrals to Oregon State Police also led to delayed referral of potential criminal charges to prosecution offices for potential prosecution, usually the Marion County District Attorney's Office which received a significant increase in the number of cases submitted. Thirty-two cases were submitted for Marion County DA review in March 2025. As of the writing of this report, all cases referred for prosecution have been evaluated and either filed or prosecution of the case has been declined. Of the cases referred for prosecution, 21 were cases where the victim of the crime was an OYA employee, 6 cases involved possession of contraband (LSD, Marijuana, vape pens, cell phones), and 5 involved the possession of a weapon within the institution (in each case, the weapon was some metal or plastic object fashioned into a sharp object).

The backlog of PSO cases also led to the creation of the Oregon Youth Authority Safety Advisory Committee, which is composed of stakeholders and community partners with differing roles within the Juvenile Justice System. The Safety Advisory Committee was established to "review improvements in OYA's reporting, investigation and response systems."[8] There were four main areas the Safety Advisory Committee found lacking (*see* Exhibit B):

1. The path for making reports was confusing and uncoordinated.
2. PSO was not conducting timely or quality investigations of safety issues.
3. PSO data was not being tracked, monitored, or analyzed in a manner to allow OYA leadership to act to address issues reported.
4. No policy or process existed to provide trauma informed care to youth alleging harm while in OYA custody.

[5] DAS Investigation Report, March 13, 2025, p. 5.
[6] DAS Investigative Report, p. 30, quoting OYA Professional Standards Office Investigations, "Personnel Management – 4.0," dated October 26, 2023, signed by Director O'Leary.
[7] DAS Investigation Report, March 13, 2025, p. 30-31.
[8] Safety Advisory Committee Report, October 2025, p. 3.

Safety Reporting Path

The Safety Advisory Committee found a lack of cohesive and consistent systems for reporting safety concerns to OYA management.[9] Multiple avenues existed for youth, staff, and families to make a report: the PSO Complaint line, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) disclosures, and grievance forms. The multiple avenues for reporting a safety concern placed an undue burden on the reporter to figure out where the complaint should go, and led to a lack of coordination of the investigation of a complaint – for example, some complaints may have been investigated by PSO, while others were investigated by OYA's human resources department. OYA has taken steps to improve this deficiency by increasing coordination between the PREA coordinator and PSO, by following recommendations to improve the grievance process, by training staff in mandatory reporting requirements, and by training youth on how to raise concerns they may have.

Untimely Investigations

The Safety Advisory Committee also found a lack of effective leadership or oversight of PSO led to poor coordination of investigations with outside bodies such as the Oregon State Police and the Department of Human Services. The lack of quality investigations led to a distrust by youth and staff that complaints would be adequately addressed. OYA has taken steps to address this concern by changing the leadership of PSO, adding additional staff (three additional investigators, a human resources analyst, and administrative support), and coordinated meetings to follow through with partner agencies (Oregon State Police, District Attorneys, and Oregon Department of Human Services Office of Training, Investigations and Safety Rules [OTIS]), ensure up to date training of investigators, and sharing data with agency partners, elected officials, and OYA management.

Lack of Data Tracking

The Safety Advisory Committee also found that PSO was not adequately monitoring, tracking, or analyzing data from complaints so issues could be addressed by management. Users found it difficult to export PSO data from the PSO database, but instead of attempting to use the database available, the former chief inspector of PSO tracked cases through a system of independent spreadsheets. This lack of unified case management created a situation where cases being investigated could get lost and no action would be taken on the case. OYA has taken steps to address this deficiency through providing OYA's research team with full access to PSO data and improving the way data is managed and coded for efficient and accurate reporting.

[9] Safety Advisory Committee Report, October 2025, p. 7.

Follow up Care

Additionally, the Safety Advisory Committee found that OYA had no policy or process in place to provide trauma informed care or services to youth who alleged harm while in OYA custody. There was a lack of communication after a report had been made to let the youth or family know the results of the complaint, and no system was in place to connect the complainant with resources that may be helpful in personally processing the effects of the harm. OYA has begun taking steps to address this deficiency by directing OYA's Victim Engagement Program to design outreach and support protocols, and through training staff on the importance of keeping youth informed and connected to resources throughout ongoing investigations.

The Safety Advisory Committee noted that OYA has taken steps to remedy each of the described deficiencies, but there is work to be done in each area, and the committee outlined suggestions for additional improvement.

Reform and Oversight

Interim OYA Director Jana McLellan issued an August 14, 2025, memorandum (*see* Exhibit C) in response to the January 2025 DOC peer review and the PSO performance improvement plan. The memo outlined key lessons learned, stating that while many problems were specific to PSO, the larger lessons were structural. She further stated that strong policies existed, but inconsistent implementation created backlogs, gaps, and missed opportunities for intervention. The memorandum highlights improvements needed in implementation, transparency, de-siloing, and persistent oversight, including clearer reporting pathways, coordinated case tracking, and stronger cross-department accountability. Ultimately, the memorandum emphasizes that accountability must be owned at the director's level, with transparent data-sharing, coordinated reviews, and clear expectations across all departments to ensure systemic reliability and trust.

Statutory Background

Pursuant to Oregon Revised Statute 132.440,[10] Marion County District Attorney Paige Clarkson convened a grand jury with the goal of ensuring the safety of youth and staff at

[10] ORS §132.440:
1) At least once yearly, a grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of every correctional facility and youth correction facility ... in the county.
(2) The grand jury is entitled to free access at all reasonable times to such correctional facilities and juvenile facilities, and, without charge, to all public records in the county pertaining thereto.
(3) Other than indictments ... or presentments ... the grand jury shall issue no report other than a report of an inquiry made under this section.

MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, an Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) closed-custody facility. Per ORS 132.250(4), these grand jury proceedings were not recorded.

Oregon Youth Authority System

Background - Applicable Juvenile Legal Principles

Purpose of Oregon's Juvenile Justice

Oregon's juvenile justice system exists to protect the public, reduce juvenile delinquency and provide a fair and impartial procedure to resolve allegations of delinquent conduct.[11] Its founding principles include personal responsibility, accountability and reformation within the context of public safety and restitution to victims and their communities.[12]

Terminology

Common terms used in criminal (adult) court are not typically used in juvenile court. This list compares a few examples of adult court terms with their approximate juvenile equivalents:

- "Defendant" is similar to "Youth""[13]
- "Arrest" is similar to "Custody"[14]
- "Convicted" is similar to "Adjudicated"[15]
- "Sentence" is similar to "Disposition"[16]

While neither "conditions" nor "management" is defined by statute, the plain meaning of those terms is broad, but not ambiguous. *See, PGE v. Bureau of Labor and Industries*, 317 Or 606, 610-12 (1993) (text and context of the statute is considered to determine legislative intent). Within the context of the sentence in which it is used, "conditions" means "attendant circumstances: existing state of affairs." *Webster's Third New Int'l Dictionary* 473 (unabridged ed. 2002). "Management" means "judicious use of means to accomplish an end." *Id*. at 1372. Thus, the grand jury has broad statutory authority to review the circumstances of incidents that occurred at MACLAREN, as well as how OYA addressed those incidents.

[11] ORS 419C.001.
[12] Id.
[13] ORS 419A.004(41).
[14] ORS 419C.080(1)(a).
[15] ORS 419C.400(5).
[16] ORS 419C.411(1).

Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

Juvenile courts are courts of "exclusive original jurisdiction" – the sole courts – that have authority "in any case involving a person who is under 18 years of age and who has committed an act that if done by an adult, would constitute a violation of the law".[17]

An "adjudicated youth" is someone who "has been found to be within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court . . . for an act committed when the person was under 18 years of age."[18] Absent extraordinary circumstances[19], a juvenile court lacks jurisdiction when a person is arrested and charged after that person had turned 18 years of age even if the conduct occurred when the person was under 18.

Juvenile Court Dispositions

If a court finds a youth within its jurisdiction, numerous dispositions are available to the court. For example, the court can order the youth to serve a term of probation,[20] perform community service,[21] or undergo appropriate mental care and treatment.[22] As relevant here, the court may also place a youth in the legal custody of OYA.[23] When a court does so, it must include written findings describing why such a placement is in the best interest of the youth.[24]

The court also has the authority to impose certain orders on the child's parent, such as education or counseling if it is reasonably related to parenting.[25]

Oregon Youth Authority- Placement Determination

If a court commits a youth to the legal custody of OYA, OYA – not the court – decides the youth's specific placement.[26] While the court may specify the type of care, supervision or services to be provided by the youth authority, "*the actual planning and provision of the care, supervision, security or services is the responsibility of the youth authority*."[27]

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[17] ORS 419C.005(1).
[18] ORS 419A.004(1).
[19] *See State v. Scurlock*, 286 Or 277 (1979) (finding that intentional delay by the state to avoid juvenile court jurisdiction frustrated legislative purpose and the case could proceed in juvenile court).
[20] ORS 419C.446.
[21] ORS 419C.462.
[22] ORS 419C.441.
[23] ORS 419C.478(1).
[24] Id.
[25] ORS 419C.570-575.
[26] ORS 419.478(2).
[27] Id (emphasis added).

The Oregon Youth Authority has several levels of placement options to address the wide variety of needs of youth placed in their care. Additionally, those different levels "reflect the differences between the level of scrutiny and direct supervision of the facilities."[28]

At its least-restrictive level, OYA can place youth in community-based settings, including back in their own home, other community placements, or OYA-run foster homes. As a next level placement, OYA may establish regional accountability camps, which are intended to be more secure than community placements.[29] Finally, with the recommendation of the juvenile court, OYA may place a youth in a youth correctional facility.[30]

While OYA must consider recommendations of the court that retains jurisdiction, OYA – not the court – decides what level of placement is appropriate for youth within their custody.[31] Furthermore, OYA may authorize the transfer of an adjudicated youth from one level of custody to another.[32] Any transfer of levels requires the written approval of the OYA Director.[33]

Additionally, the OYA Director is authorized to grant "parole of adjudicated youths."[34] Practically, juvenile law practitioners refer to "Youth on OYA parole" when OYA places a youth back in their community after being held in a youth correctional facility.

Oregon Youth Authority Youth Correction Facilities

The Oregon Youth Authority is statutorily authorized to establish youth correction facilities.[35] A "Youth Correction Facility" is a "facility used for confinement of adjudicated youth and other persons placed in the legal or physical custody of the youth authority includes secure regional youth facilities."[36] "Youth Correction facilities must be used for the confinement of adjudicated youths and others placed in the custody of the youth authority and for the development of those persons into productive members of society."[37] Once established, OYA must supervise the management and administration of youth correction facilities.[38]

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[28] ORS 420A.111(5).
[29] ORS 420A.135.
[30] ORS 419C.495(1).
[31] ORS 420A.111(1).
[32] Id.
[33] ORS 420A.111(2).
[34] ORS 420A.115.
[35] ORS 420A.100(1).
[36] ORS 420.005.
[37] ORS 420A.100(2).
[38] ORS 420A.010.

Restrictions on Youth Correctional Facility Placements

There are complicated restrictions regarding what youth can be placed in a youth correction facility.[39]

i. Age. First, only those youth who are at least 12 years of age may be placed within the legal custody of OYA.[40] Thus, no child under the age of 12 is eligible for placement at MacLaren. Additionally, youth must be less than 20 years of age to be admitted to a youth correctional facility.[41] Furthermore, with exceptions, if a youth is not committed until after their 20th birthday, they are also not eligible to be placed at MacLaren.[42]

ii. Eligible by Conduct. Additionally, only youth who have been adjudicated for conduct designated as a felony or a class A misdemeanor are eligible for placement at a youth correctional facility.[43]

SB 1008 (2019) Implications

During the 2019 Oregon Legislative Session, legislators passed SB 1008 which modified the treatment of youth in the criminal justice system. SB 1008 ended the automatic waiver of 15-, 16- and 17-year-olds into adult court for serious offenses, which had been established in 1994 by Ballot Measure 11.[44] SB 1008 reverted to the pre-Measure 11 scheme that authorized criminal (adult) prosecution and sentences only after a hearing where the court determined that waiver of the person to adult court was justified given the maturity of the youth and that retaining juvenile jurisdiction was not in the best interests of the youth and of society.

Under certain circumstances[45], SB 1008 also required transfer of the physical custody of a criminal defendant to the OYA when the person committed a crime before age 18, but the prosecution and (adult) conviction occurred after the defendant reached the age of 18 but before they reached the age of 20.

Additionally, SB 1008 authorized three significant sentencing modifications: First, it afforded a hearing ("second look") to determine if a person, who was under 18 at the time of the offense, was eligible for conditional release after the person had served half of the sentence imposed. Second, the bill also authorized a second look hearing for a person, who

[39] ORS 420.011.
[40] ORS 419C.478(1).
[41] ORS 420.011(1).
[42] Id.
[43] Id.
[44] ORS 137.702.
[45] ORS 137.124(5).

was under 18 at the time of the offense, if the person's Department of Corrections (DOC) release date falls between the person's 25th and 27th birthdays. Finally, the bill also authorized a parole eligibility hearing after 15 years of imprisonment for any person who was sentenced for a crime committed when the person was under 18 years of age regardless of the seriousness of the offense or the number of affected victims. Finally, the bill prohibits the imposition of a life sentence without the possibility of parole on a person who was under 18 at the time of committing the offense.

Adults at MacLaren

While MacLaren is generally referred to as a "closed custody youth facility", the majority of the population is typically 18 or older. This occurs for several reasons.

First, although youth are placed in the legal custody of the Oregon Youth Authority, they remain within the jurisdiction of the juvenile court.[46] Juvenile court jurisdiction does not terminate due to age until the youth's 25th birthday.[47] Accordingly, *adjudicated youth may remain within MacLaren until their 25th birthday.*[48]

Additionally, under certain circumstances, the Department of Corrections (DOC) may transfer an adult to a youth correctional facility when the person committed the offense when they were under 18 years of age and they were sentenced to prison for the criminal conviction before they turned 20 years of age.[49] While these individuals are placed in the physical custody of OYA, they remain in the legal custody of DOC.

Current population: As of the time of this writing, 60% of MacLaren population was 18 years of age or older.

The real-world impact is that MacLaren is a youth correctional facility housing a population where the majority are adults.

Effect of Conviction

For states that receive funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) within the U.S. Department of Justice, federal law prohibits juveniles from being placed in a facility within the sight and sound of adults in custody.[50] Oregon receives funding from the OJJDP; hence it is subject to those requirements.

[46] ORS 419C.486.
[47] ORS 419C.005(4)(d).
[48] ORS 420A.010 (emphasis added).
[49] ORS 420.011.
[50] 34 U.S.C. § 11133.

To assist states in complying with that federal law, OJJDP provides guidance to state agencies on the OJJDP interpretation of the definition of an "adult inmate".[51] OJJDP has advised that a state will not violate the sight and sound separation requirement for a certain category of youth offenders. When a youth offender commits a new offense when they are over 18 years of age, but still under the jurisdiction of the state's extended juvenile court jurisdiction (in Oregon 25 years of age), the state may place or house the youth in either a juvenile or an adult facility without creating sight/sound separation violations.[52]

Thus, subject to Oregon law, OYA has the discretion to permit such youth offenders to remain in MacLaren after they commit a new offense as an adult without violating sight/sound separation requirements. For example, when an 18-year-old in MacLaren assaults a staff member and receives an adult conviction, or a 19-year-old still on juvenile probation commits a new offense that leads to a return to the facility, OYA may either allow the youth to remain in MacLaren until they reach 25 years of age or they may consider them an adult and release them.

MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility

Facility Overview

The OYA system[53] includes ten secure facilities throughout Oregon. MacLaren is OYA's largest facility and is custodian to OYA's parole violation units, several units for youth with specialized programming needs, and houses a general population. Generally, that general population includes OYA's most serious offenders. At the time of this report, the population of youth placed at MacLaren was 154.

Previously, an additional closed custody facility existed in Marion County, Hillcrest Youth Correction Facility in Salem. However, by the 2010's, the facility needed extensive upgrades and costly changes to create the housing and treatment environment preferred by the state's juvenile justice system, including a return to single-occupancy bedrooms. In 2017, Hillcrest was closed. Youths who were in custody at that facility were moved to other facilities, including MacLaren[54].

[51] 34 U.S.C. § 11103 (26).
[52] OJJDP opinion effective Oct. 1, 2019.
[53] Oregon Youth Authority, "MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility," Oregon.gov, https://www.oregon.gov/oya/MacLaren/Pages/default.aspx.
[54] Libby Provost, "Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility," *The Oregon Encyclopedia*, Oregon Historical Society, https://www.oregonencyclopedia.org/articles/hillcrest-youth-correctional-facility/.

Figure 1 highlights population and budget trends for the last decade. While the OYA budget has increased nearly 30% in the sample period, the population being served decreased by approximately 40%.

YEAR	OYA TOTAL YOUTH	OYA CLOSED CUSTODY	MACLAREN	OYA BUDGET
2025	**890**	**375**	**168**	**$500.7 million**
2024	**900**	**373**	**187**	**$500.7 million**
2023	**908**	**374**	**187**	**$474.8 million**
2022	**961**	**413**	**216**	**$464.5 million**
2021	**1,078**	**429**	**216**	**$455.9 million**
2020	**1,160**	**459**	**271(max)**	**$385.9 million**
2019	**1,201**	**484**	**271(max)**	**$385.9 million**
2018	**1,302**	**536**	**271(max)**	**$411 million**
2017	**1,370**	**546**	**271(max)**	**$405.5 million**
2016	**1,451**	**608 (Hillcrest 136)**	**136**	**$398.3 million**
2015	**1,478**	**601 (Hillcrest 136)**	**136**	**$391.4 million**

Figure 1 data from OYA, "Statistics and Reports," Oregon.gov.

MacLaren is a "youth correction facility" per ORS 420.005(5), and exists within the geographical boundaries of Marion County, Oregon. MacLaren is an OYA closed-custody youth correction facility. As of December 2025, there were 154 youth living on campus with approximately 307 staff, which includes the following:

- Group Life Coordinators - 167

- Living Unit Management - 25
- Programming Support – 8
- Qualified Mental Health Providers (QMHP) – 13
- Health Services – 19
- Physical Plant – 16
- Office Support – 17
- Administration/Management – 23
- Other – 5

Medical and Mental Health Care

MacLaren has a medical clinic with nurses, dentists, a medical doctor, psychiatrists and psychologists. Mental health services are provided on site. MacLaren contracts with health care providers in the community for services that are medically necessary or that cannot be provided at the on-site clinic. OYA policy requires that all youth receive a psychological evaluation within 30 days of arriving at intake. Psychiatry services are by referral only. However, if a youth arrives at intake with mental health medication, policy requires that they see a psychiatrist within two weeks of arriving.

Living Conditions

MacLaren has 12 living units, divided into two groups based on their location: Valley units and Courtyard units. The Valley units include a day room, kitchen and dining area, enclosed outdoor patio, and shared sleeping room with 20 beds. The Courtyard units feature 16 individual sleeping rooms, several day rooms, and an enclosed outdoor patio.

Education, Vocational, and Treatment Programs

All youth who have not yet completed a General Educational Development (GED) or high school diploma are required to attend school. MacLaren has a school on site to help students earn high school and college credits, the school is run in partnership with Willamette Education Service District (ESD). If a youth has already earned a diploma, they can take college courses through Chemeketa and Clackamas Community Colleges.

Youth can also participate in vocational work training programs, offering professional certificates and licenses. MacLaren offers multiple enrichment programs to help youth stay healthy, learn how to interact positively with others, and build skills that will help them

when they return to the community. The programs are staffed by OYA employees and community volunteers. Currently, there are 83 active volunteers serving. [55]

Programs include[56] (but are not limited to):

- **Hope Partnership:** Run by Janus Youth Programs, Hope provides numerous classes, events, and workshops to help youth explore their talents and prepare for their eventual transition back into the community.
- **Recreation and sports:** MacLaren has a full-sized gym with new bleachers and wood floor, plus a large fitness center with exercise equipment.
- **Cultural events:** Native American ceremonies; African American, Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander heritage events; and LGBTQ+ Pride events.
- **Religious programs:** MacLaren provides faith-based holiday celebrations, worship services, small groups, mentorship, and literature. Faith communities actively represented include Catholic, Christian, Buddhist, Islam, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, and Pagan.
- **Tattoo removal:** this free program is available for any OYA youth wishing to remove gang-related, sex trafficking-related, or other anti-social tattoos.

Limitations of this Report

The grand jury recognizes the limitations of its role in evaluating the operations of MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility. While the grand jurors reflect a cross-section of the Marion County community, they may not be correctional administrators, mental health professionals, juvenile probation officers, or legislative policymakers. This report reflects a community perspective based on snapshot observations, testimony, and evidence presented during the inquiry. It is not intended as an expert audit nor technical analysis. Where appropriate, the grand jury highlights potential solutions that arose in discussion but acknowledges complexities that may make the recommendations impractical.

While this report is primarily focused on problem areas identified and discussed during the inquiry. MacLaren, and OYA generally, has numerous hardworking, dedicated staff that work diligently every day to help Oregon's youth. Similarly, the youth at MacLaren also have

[55] Oregon Youth Authority, *MacLaren Quick Facts* (OYA, 2025).
[56] Oregon Youth Authority, "Services for Youth – MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility," Oregon.gov, https://www.oregon.gov/oya/MacLaren/Pages/services.aspx (accessed November 24, 2025).

many positive attributes, and most are working hard at become better versions of themselves.

This report focuses almost exclusively on issue areas in an effort to facilitate sustainable improvements at the facility as quickly as possible. This grand jury did not balance areas of concern with areas that were working well.

Finally, this report is intended for general citizens and policymakers without specific youth correctional or juvenile justice experience.

"Before" and "After"- COVID Impact

Like many systems, Oregon's juvenile correctional environment was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Operations at MacLaren were altered by emergency staffing models, limited programming, reduced volunteer engagement, and restrictions on visitation. Many of these temporary adjustments, while necessary at the time, created long-term disruptions to staffing, youth behavior management, rehabilitation opportunities and facility culture. Many of these ramifications still exist at the time of this report.

MacLaren Staff and administrators frequently referenced "before COVID" and "after COVID" as distinct operational eras. As the grand jury heard testimony, it became clear that some of the current challenges—such as increased contraband, staff burnout, and gaps in training—can be traced, in part, to systems and habits developed during pandemic restrictions.

Accordingly, several of the findings and recommendations in this report should be viewed in the context of rebuilding and re-stabilizing post-COVID operations, rather than as entirely new or isolated problems. MacLaren must move forward, and COVID should no longer justify the unresolved issues identified in this report.

Staffing Impact

The work being done at MacLaren depends on staff committed to corrective and rehabilitative work. This grand jury found that staffing impacted nearly every key area of concern. These impacts are highlighted throughout the report and also presented as a separate finding, due to the fact that staffing directly influences youth outcomes.

Grand Jury Findings

Areas of Concern

The Marion County Grand Jury's investigation revealed systemic challenges at MacLaren creating what is best described as *"Cascading Failures"*. These challenges are complex and interrelated, affecting safety, rehabilitation, staffing, and operational stability for both the staff and youth at MacLaren.

This grand jury concurs with the March 2025 Investigation Report released from the Oregon Department of Administrative Services (DAS) which substantiated findings that recent leadership conduct contributed to the inefficient operations of the agency and undermined the state's ability to fulfill its public mission to youth and staff. To this grand jury, prior leadership appeared more concerned with optics rather than establishing a reformative, safe, and effective correctional environment.

Identity

Key Finding #1 This grand jury has determined that MacLaren is struggling with its role within Oregon's juvenile justice system.

MacLaren is struggling, in part, because it is being asked to fill so many roles.

For example, how does MacLaren balance being a normative living environment and act as a closed custody correctional facility for youth? To that end, how can MacLaren be BOTH a normative environment for juveniles AND adults, while still maintaining its role as a correctional facility for adults, many of whom committed violent conduct? If the facility is designed for youth, how are youth served best when the majority of MacLaren's population is 18 or older and up to age 25?

Additionally, this grand jury repeatedly heard numerous times from staff that MacLaren is not a mental health facility. However, MacLaren has become – unfortunately - a closed-custody mental health facility for youth in the state of Oregon, and without doubt, many of the youth at MacLaren have significant mental health needs.

MACLAREN'S IDENTITY

During the investigation, the grand jury heard from numerous former and current OYA professionals and industry experts. The facility appears to be navigating a struggle of role clarity; which may make it more difficult to provide the service levels and expertise needed in the multiple areas required for successful rehabilitation.

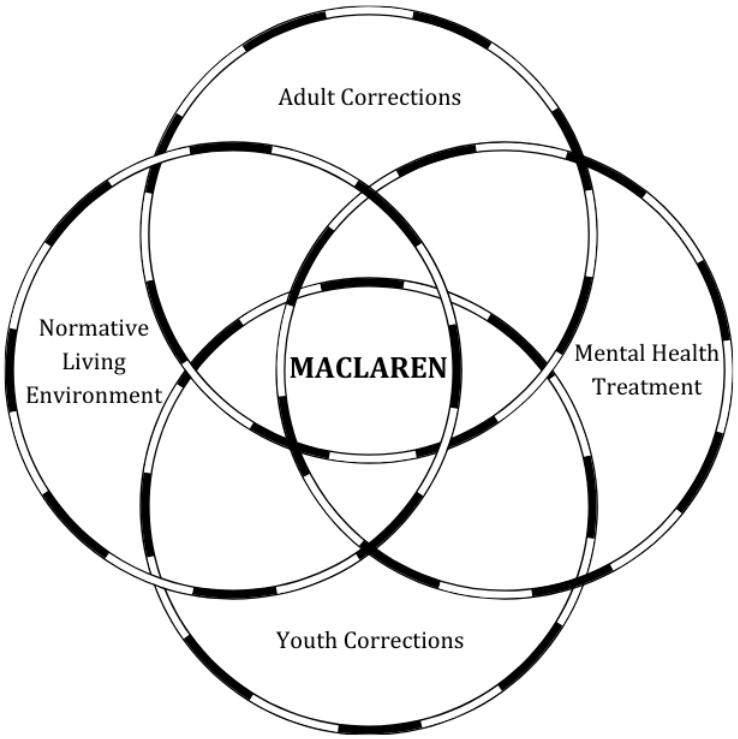


Figure 2

A simple response could be that "MacLaren is all those things." However, this is a dangerous oversimplification because MacLaren **hasn't been performing as it should for Oregon's youth.** This grand jury believes that MacLaren is struggling, in part, because being asked to fill so many roles has resulted in an inability to fulfill any of them well.

This grand jury recommends that policy makers engage in conversation regarding the future role of how MacLaren should best serve a targeted population and require laser-focused accountability to that mission.

Staffing, Training and Retention

Key Finding #2 This grand jury found that staffing challenges impacted nearly every key area of concern.

As discussed in other areas of this report, the work being done at MacLaren depends on staff committed to corrective and rehabilitative work. High turnover, vacancies, and mandatory overtime have created a cycle that reduces morale, supervision capacity, and program delivery. Insufficient ongoing training, mentorship, and volunteer engagement further weaken facility operations. As staffing levels decline, remaining staff are required to cover additional shifts, which leads to staff burn-out and ultimately leads to increased employee turnover.

Furthermore, the role of a MacLaren staff member is somewhat unique. They are not quite corrections officers as they're encouraged to form healthy, mentorship-type relationships with youth. However, they are also not social workers nor juvenile probation officers, as they supervise youth and adults up to 25 years old in a closed-custody corrections facility.

Workforce Continuity

It was reported that there is insufficient ongoing training provided to staff because of the inability to hire and retain a sufficient workforce. There appears to be a disconnect between some policies and the training staff receives (*see* Exhibit E for specifics on training). The result of this lack of experience is further discussed in later sections of this report.

This grand jury also heard testimony regarding the lack of process for staff who have been assaulted by a youth, which contributes to a decline in staff morale and furthers retention problems. (This issue is discussed in more detail below.)

There is an ongoing vicious cycle wherein staff will call in sick to combat burnout. This sick leave leads to the need for mandated overtime, which means staff are directed to work more than their regularly scheduled hours. Covering for people who are out leads to additional burnout.

While staff are trained in de-escalation and conflict resolution during their initial training, after the two-week initial training, staff are expected to further develop through on-the-job training. This program has suffered due to high turnover, vacancies, mandatory overtime, and by lowering hiring standards. Inconsistent and infrequent training results in less frequent or thorough contraband searches, for example. Further, given staffing issues, management have been assuming direct-care staff duties, which leads to less time for staff supervision and development.

While OYA requires annual training and professional development there appears to be a lack of formalized systems for ongoing training, for example, in defensive tactics other than relying on more senior employees to provide that needed training. This "ongoing training" has suffered from mandated overtime.

Staffing and retention issues affect both safety and rehabilitation. The lack of Group Life Coordinators (individuals responsible for interaction and supervision of youth at living units) directly impacts youth ability to access specific programming. A sentiment shared by multiple staff included:

> **"Leadership stopped caring about staff and overfocused on youth"**

This grand jury recommends the following to address staffing, training and retention issues:

-Improve cohesive and ongoing staff training including conflict resolution, gang identification, and appropriate levels of structural authority and accountability.

-Immediately establish creative solutions to recruit, train and enhance the number of Group Life Coordinators.

-Streamline the intersection of policies and training. Address "practice gap" – a failure to consistently execute the processes already in place (*See* Exhibit C- Interim Director Jana McLellan's August 14, 2025, memorandum).

-Establish clear procedures and systems for staff affected by on-the-job assaults or trauma.

-Provide a one-time funding allocation to OYA to contract with a consulting firm to rebuild and expand volunteerism at MacLaren. The purpose would be to identify, recruit, and onboard volunteers to enhance programming and mentoring for MacLaren youth. As identified, volunteers are critically important to maintain robust programming opportunities but are also fiscally responsible.

-Provide a one-time funding allocation to OYA to contract a consulting firm to build and implement a training program for MacLaren staff so that all new staff, moving forward, are fully trained prior to working with youth.

Population and Behavioral Trends

Key Finding # 3 Recent changes in youth population appear to have added to the destabilization of MacLaren. There are two significant changes that this grand jury finds contributed substantially to safety concerns.

First, this grand jury finds that the youth placed at MacLaren have increased in complexity and acuity. Their needs, specifically regarding mental health, appear significantly more complex compared to youth from 10 years ago.

Second, the reduction of long-term Measure 11 youth, following SB 1008 (2019), which allowed for earlier release of youths, has removed what *numerous* MacLaren staff testified were a moderating group helping to stabilize the facility. This change (discussed in more detail below) appears to be an unexpected result from the modifications of youth sentencing policy. Overall, MacLaren staff described how the current population has shorter commitments with fewer incentives to comply with rules, adding to the volatility for both youth and staff.

Impact of SB 1008 (2019)

Prior to SB1008, nearly half of the OYA population in closed custody facilities was DOC clients on an adult conviction for a M11 offense. For example, in 2015, these "BM11" or "DOC" youth were 47%[57] of the population. Current and former MacLaren staff testified these youth were often committed to terms that could exceed their OYA maximum time (25 years old). These youth were, generally, vested in remaining at MacLaren because a substantial rule violation or a new criminal offense at MacLaren could result in a transfer to a DOC facility at the age of 18.

As reflected in the testimony, staff members stated:

> **"These BM11 youth had a built-in incentive to behave since poor behavior could lead to transfer into DOC custody."**
>
> **"[These BM11 youth] were an incredibly stabilizing force."**

These DOC youth created stability for other, often younger youth and staff as they appeared more invested in the community of the facility. This led to mentoring of incoming, younger youth towards rule compliance.

[57] Oregon Legislature, Committee Meeting Document, 2015 Regular Session, https://olis.oregonlegislature.gov/liz/2015R1/Downloads/CommitteeMeetingDocument/79051

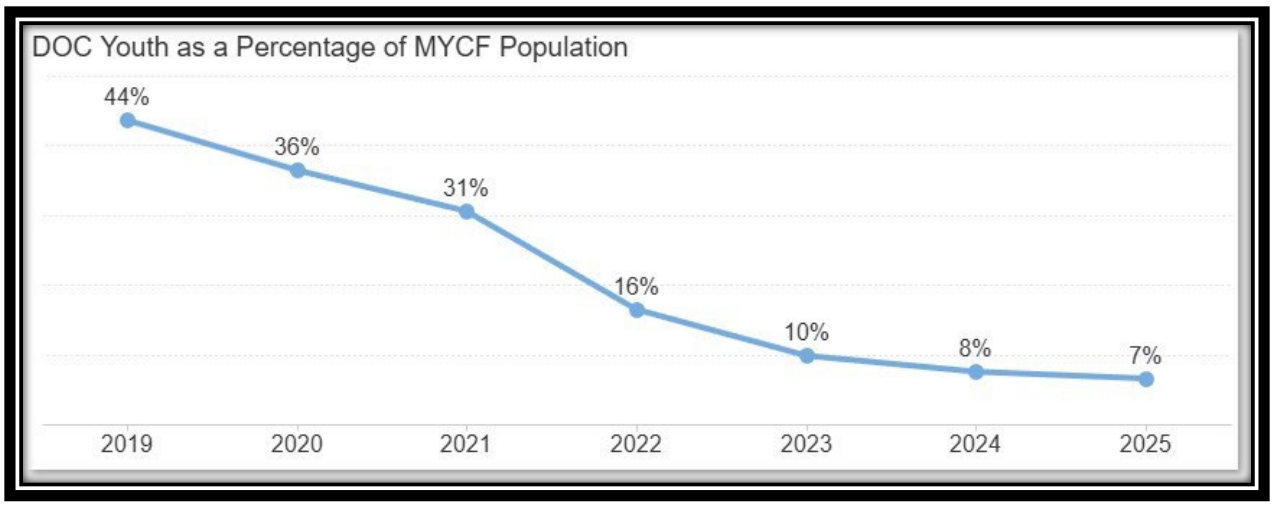


Figure 3, June 2025

This section should not be construed to suggest that reformed youth should remain in a closed custody facility. However, this population appears to have been an integral part of MacLaren's safety culture that has significantly decreased.

Conduct Generally

During the inquiry, this grand jury heard a significant amount of testimony regarding behavior of the youth within the facility. This testimony ranged from specific, discrete acts which were considered for criminal charges, to generalized anecdotal impressions of staff over the span of several years. Gathering data on youth behavior within the institution proved more complicated than expected.

One complication was the wide variation of the testimony provided. At one extreme, one individual testified that:

> **"Youth are in total control and staff are afraid."**

In contrast, the Grand Jury had several tours of MacLaren, which included touring multiple living units. The experience of this grand jury during their tours was that that these living units felt safe, the atmosphere was calm, and staff appeared to be in control.

Despite this experience during their tours, one consistent theme presented during testimony was that incidents of behavior were escalating in frequency and intensity.

Current Population

As of the time of writing this report, MacLaren has only 10 DOC clients within the facility, which is approximately 5% of the MacLaren youth population. Thus, there appear to be fewer stabilizing youth in MacLaren than previously.

Key Finding #4 This grand jury finds that current MacLaren Youth have shorter juvenile court commitments, higher treatment needs, and may be less inclined to comply with OYA rules.

Recently admitted youth tend to have lengthier juvenile offending history with greater programming needs (substance and mental health treatment, gang-related risks, assaultive behavior, etc.), and more volatile behavior.

Overall, the grand jury determined that this change in population dynamics has led to a facility with a more volatile and potentially dangerous population.

Staffing Impact

Key Finding #5 This grand jury finds that staff experience and expertise has not increased in response to the increased complexity of youth being placed at MacLaren.

Staff testimony reflected their recognition that MacLaren was the most restrictive setting for a youth committed to OYA. For example, their comments included:

> **"MacLaren is the end of the line. It's an end place for other OYA facilities."**
>
> **"If a youth is acting out at another facility, the youth will end up going to MacLaren."**

Despite the increase in youth complexities, the staff required to address these concerns has neither increased in numbers nor experience.

Contrarily, since the pandemic, staff turnover has increased, and staffing has sometimes reached disastrously low levels. Staff shortages sometimes led to forced overtime shifts to maintain safe staffing levels, which, in turn, exacerbated staff retention levels. Vacancies aren't the only problem. There are fewer experienced staff who are present and able to work at any moment in time. Currently, approximately half of all MacLaren staff have less than five years of experience.

The high turnover rate necessarily led to a younger, less-experienced team of MacLaren staff and managers. As reported by OYA, younger staff in a correctional setting may face challenges in establishing authority and managing conflict, which can impact their effectiveness in promoting safety and emotional regulation among youth. This can also lead to higher staff stress and lower job satisfaction, which, in turn, can further exacerbate staff turnover rates and affect the stability of MacLaren.

To address staffing shortages during the pandemic and early post-pandemic recovery efforts, OYA management adjusted minimum hiring qualifications. While these changes led to a greater number of potential applicants, the post-pandemic candidate pool often were disinclined to seek employment that required in-person attendance in a correctional facility with shift work outside the typical business hours.

The high turnover rate also impacted training of new staff and managers. Initial training had typically been a shorter period, followed by a longer time with an experienced trainer who provided on-the-job mentoring. Similarly, experienced staff members who were interested in management would often shadow and be mentored by experienced managers. Since the pandemic, the initial training period remains the same, but many of the on-the-job training staff have significantly less experience and are surrounded by coworkers who also have significantly less experience. The lack of experienced mentors is also reflected in management training, with many positions being recently advanced or hired into their positions.

Key Finding #6 OYA management reported that in 2025, staffing levels are beginning to stabilize. However, the grand jury finds that OYA and/or MacLaren needs support identifying and hiring appropriate and dedicated personnel to staff MacLaren.

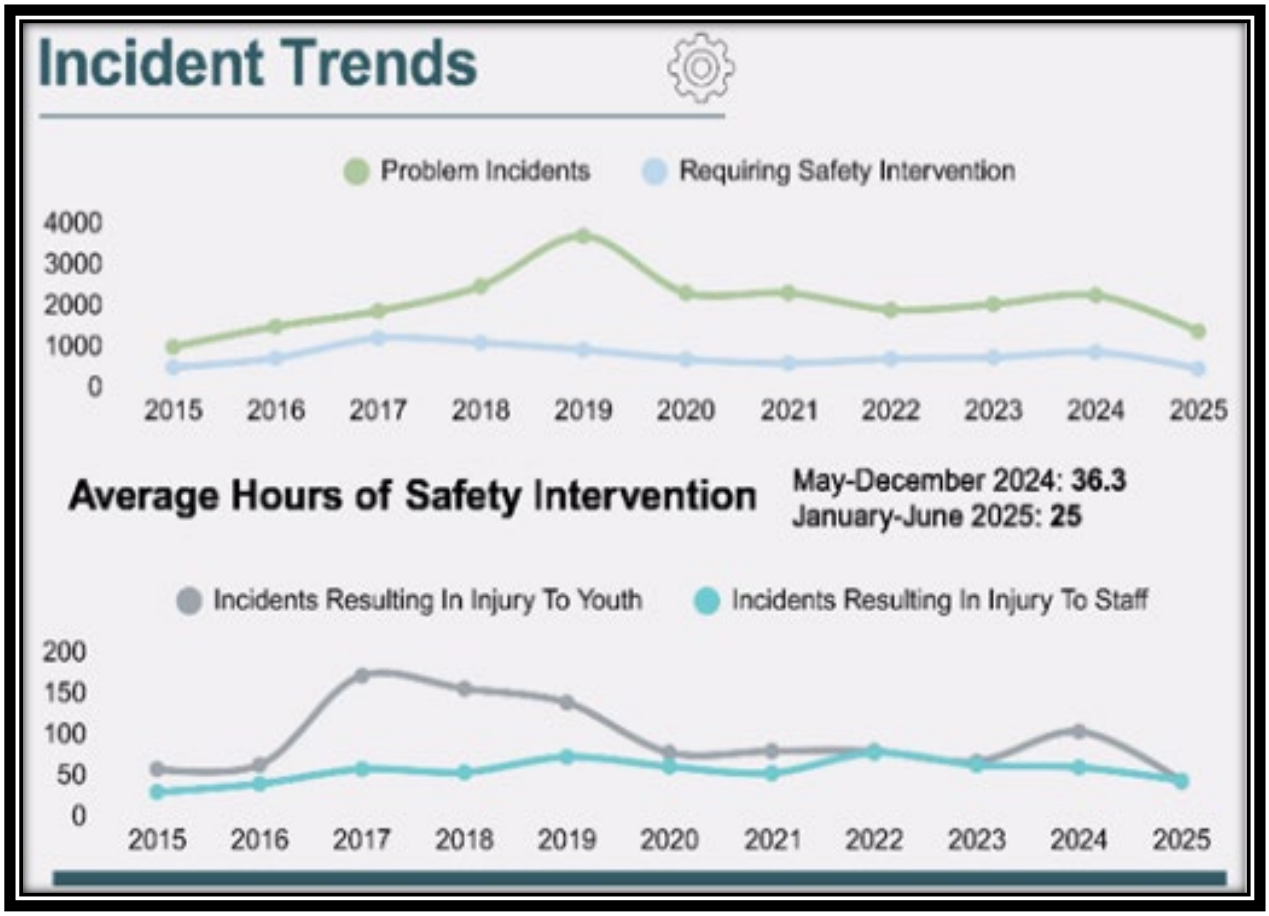


Figure 4

As stated earlier, there was conflicting information provided regarding the security and control within MacLaren. OYA management recognized that security is a paramount concern for the facility. OYA provided an Incident Trends chart (*Figure 4*), which showed that the overall number of incidents and those resulting in injuries have remained largely stable for the last five years with a few minor shifts. Management reiterated that the numbers are improving in 2025 but recognized that data was only available until June of this year.

It is worth noting that the incident trends chart (*Figure 4*) showed trends contrary to experiences described by staff, community partners, and even MacLaren leadership, which generally expressed a concerning picture of incidents increasing in frequency and seriousness. Regardless of the trend, however, upon closer examination, the roughly 2,000 problem incidents in 2022 would average out to approximately 5 incidents per day. Thus,

whether incidents are trending up or down, there appear to be far too many incidents overall.

> **"MacLaren has faced significant safety challenges in recent years, including youth-on-youth assaults, contraband incidents, and escapes. These incidents have not only impacted the safety of youth and staff but have also eroded public trust."**

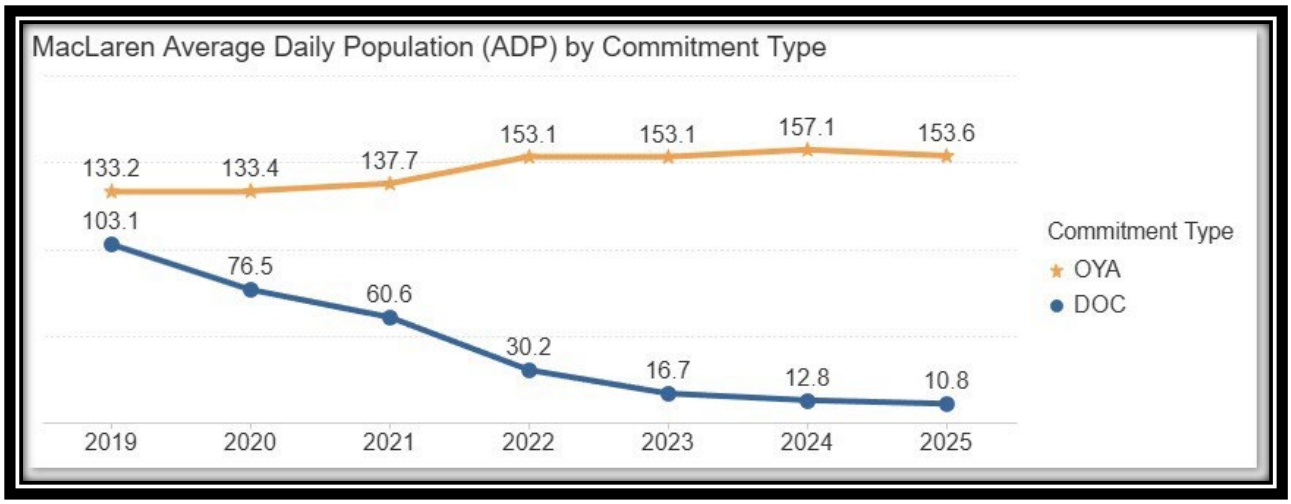


Figure 5

Comparing the trends chart with youth population data *(Figure 5)* also provides some insight. Since 2019, the average daily population of youth in MacLaren has fallen from roughly 236 to 163. However, youth sentenced as adults ("BM11 youth") placed at MacLaren from DOC dropped by 93 or 89%. Considering this population decrease within the last five years of incident trends shows that while the overall youth population at MacLaren has dropped, the number of incidents requiring safety intervention and the incidents involving injuries to staff have remained relatively steady or risen. This occurred while the number of youth entering MacLaren for adult charges has drastically decreased, and youth committed through juvenile court has increased. This supports the anecdotal observations by staff described earlier in this report *(See Figure 5)*.

Institution Investigations Table (# of investigations on cases)	
OYA - MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility-Woodburn	218
DOC - Snake River (SRCI) Ontario	92
DOC - Two Rivers (TRCI) Umatilla	59
DOC - Oregon State Pen (OSP Max) Salem	58
DOC - Coffee Creek (CCCF) Wilsonville	53
OYA - Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility-Tillamook	43
DOC - Eastern Oregon (EOCI) Pendleton	37
OSH Salem	34
DOC - Oregon State Correctional Facility (OSCI) Salem	31
OYA - Eastern Oregon Youth Correctional Facility-Burns	27
OYA - Roque Valley Youth Correctional Facility-Grants Pass	22
OYA - Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility-Albany	20
DOC - Deer Ridge (DRCI) Madras	15
Oregon School for the Deaf	7
OSH Junction City	6
DOC - Columbia River (CRCI) Portland	5
OYA - Other	5
DOC - Powder River (PRCF) Baker City	4
DOC - South Fork Forest Camp (SFFC) Tillamook	3
DOC - Warner Creek (WCCF) Lakeview	3
DOC - Santiam Correctional (SCI) Salem	2
DOC - Oregon State Pen (OSP Min) Salem	1
OYA - Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility-Salem	1
Grand Total	746

Figure 6

Community law enforcement partners testified that MacLaren incidents significantly impacted their workload. The Oregon State Police (OSP), which investigates all potentially criminal incidents within all OYA and DOC correctional facilities, reported that cases referred from MacLaren are substantially higher than any other closed custody facility (*Figure 6)*. For the 2024 calendar year, MacLaren incidents (217) *comprised 29% of all other criminal investigations in both adult and juvenile correctional facilities combined.* As discussed in more detail below, while MacLaren has the largest youth population, it also comprises 64% of all OYA's referred investigations. (336).

OYA staff members also provided anecdotal evidence supporting their concern with the security and control of MacLaren. Multiple staff members described how the youth exert significant influence over the facility environment, which leaves the staff fearful for the safety of staff and other youth. For example, security staff reported an increasing need to be

more alert and organized as a team when responding to incidents because youth have been more organized and coordinated in their assaultive behavior and contraband incidents.

Staff described that one potential source for the increased youth influence was the agency's trend away from the more traditional corrections model that addressed problems with a focus on negative consequences to deter rule violations, to a developmental model that focused on youth positive development, strengths, and resilience. One focus of the developmental model is the importance of emotional regulation and having the youth work through behavioral problems through a process of "de-escalation." De-escalation involves removing the youth from the situation until the youth can regulate their emotional response to a situation. Physical locations in MacLaren that previously have been used to punish undesirable behavior, are now vacant or being used to hold a youth separate from others until the youth is able to calm down and regulate their emotions before returning to their regular living unit.

An additional staff concern is that the focus of the developmental approach on the individual youth led to concerns of inconsistent consequences for different youth for similar misconduct, which weakened perceptions of accountability and staff authority. Some staff shared that the perceived erosion of accountability and authority may have led to more significant offenses within MacLaren.

Sanctions for Misconduct

This grand jury received evidence regarding general information on sanctions for youth misconduct in MacLaren. It understands that OYA refers criminal conduct to OSP for investigation. Upon conclusion, that investigation is typically referred to the Marion County District Attorney's office to review the merit of filing with the court criminal charges or a juvenile petition.

Whether the conduct is criminal or solely a violation of the facility rules, OYA may also sanction the youth. The most common method to sanction rule violations is to remove privileges from youth. A youth's privileges are generally set by their "tag level." A person with a higher tag level has greater privileges in the facility, such as the ability to cook their own food, play video games, wear civilian clothing, and watch TV. (*See* Exhibit E for details on OYA Policies.)

Additionally, focused information on addressing assaultive behavior by youth was presented and included staff reporting there was no set sanction for a youth who engaged in assaultive behavior at MacLaren. Assaultive behavior was generally addressed by removing the youth from the situation by temporarily placing the youth in a different unit.

Under the developmental model, the goal was for the youth to return to their living unit as soon as they were stabilized, and the MacLaren team had formulated a plan for their safe return. This "separation" period was not intended to punish the youth or to hold a youth

accountable for the youth's actions. Rather it allowed space for the youth to regulate their emotions. Given this focus, the period in separation may vary more on the factors of the individual youth, rather than the circumstances of the underlying incident. In most cases, this period is often shorter than a traditional corrections sanction model.

The use of "separation" was one of the most inconsistent areas of testimony, as some MacLaren staff noted that youth are returned to their units far too quickly; sometimes within just an hour or two. On the other hand, MacLaren management indicated that this is rarely the case, and explained the discrepancy may be because staff would not necessarily see the efforts made to address the youth's behavior prior to their return to their living unit.

Staff confirmed that "isolation" is not used in MacLaren as a form of punishment as it is a violation of OYA policy. It is also a violation of state law.[58] This policy applies to all youth committed, regardless of their age. Prior to change in the statute and OYA policy, isolation had been used to separate a youth to ensure the safety of others and as a negative consequence for misconduct.

It is apparent that there is still tension within MacLaren staff given the adoption of the developmental model approach to a period of separation versus the traditional isolation sanction. While management testified in support of the transition, it was not clear that staff have fully understood or adopted the policy, purpose, and practical justifications of the developmental model approach. *See also*, Maxine Bernstein, New isolation unit at Oregon youth prison fails to end use of 1950s-era solitary cells, THE OREGONIAN, Aug. 29, 2025.

Staff conveyed concerns with the shift to the developmental model. Overall, they relayed that the lack of detention as a method to deter misconduct sacrifices the safety of the living unit as a whole. These expressions included:

> **"It's not a matter of *if* you [staff] get assaulted, it's a matter of *when*."**
>
> **"We have lost our operational security. [We need to] refocus on security."**
>
> **"It's not hard for [a youth] who intentionally assaulted someone to self-regulate."**

<u>Key Finding #7 The grand jury finds that MacLaren must be a correctional facility first, and while the developmental model may be an effective tool, visible accountability must be increased and enhanced.</u>

[58] ORS 420A.108(1).

This grand jury recommends OYA:

-Provide incident trend data as a percentage of population, to provide a more transparent and clear representation of what is actually happening at MacLaren.

-Consider dedicated security staff positions that have increased training to recognize, prevent, and respond to threats to the safety and order of the facility.

-Increase transparency in, and staff training on, the youth sanction process so that the youth and impacted staff are aware of the process to determine and implement an appropriate sanction for a violation of OYA rules.

-Increase staff training on the implementation of the developmental model approach to youth behavior that is consistent with the statutory requirement[59] that policies must provide concrete expectations for youth, ensure safety of everyone in the facility, maintain order, and provide a structured environment.

[59] ORS 420a.108(1)(a).

Contraband and Facility Safety

Key Finding #8 The grand jury finds that the youth's possession of contraband within MacLaren is a serious safety issue, and OYA needs to consider all viable options to lessen that risk, including those that were previously rejected due to a disfavored perception of MacLaren as a correctional facility.

Youth possession of contraband (weapons, drugs, cell-phones, and other items prohibited from being possessed by youth in MacLaren) was described as "out of control" in MacLaren. The most prevalent sources for the introduction of contraband into the facility seems to stem from inadequate facility design, the lack of phone call monitoring equipment, inconsistent supervision of the youths' phone calls, the lack of adequate screening equipment for and the inconsistent monitoring of visitation, and general staff shortages.

Another source of contraband was OYA staff. In some cases from theft of staff property, and in a few cases, the direct introduction of contraband by staff for various reasons including inducement by youth and financial gain by staff. The main source of staffing failures appears related to turnover, morale, training, and oversight challenges. Overall, the youths' possession of contraband undermines safety, which leads to an increase in violence, and drains community partner resources.

Case Study

Just after midnight on March 28, 2021, Anthony Fitz-henry (18), Preston Andrizzi (19), and Christian Goin (then 17yo) worked together to escape from Maclaren Youth Correctional facility. Fitz-Henry, Andrizzi, and Goin created a plan which utilized Fitz-Henry as a decoy to keep the lone on-duty Group Life Coordinator (GLC) distracted while Andrizzi and Goin positioned themselves to overpower the GLC. Goin armed himself with a metal shank, while Andrizzi had a cell phone. As Goin and Andrizzi positioned themselves to attack the GLC, Goin communicated with a person outside the facility to pick them up outside MacLaren's fence at a specified time. As Fitz-Henry talked to the GLC about changing his life and making better choices, Andrizzi and Goin approached the GLC from behind, took his radio (his means of communicating with MacLaren Security) and began punching and kicking the GLC. Eventually, Andrizzi and Goin wrestled the unit keys away from the GLC and unlocked the door to the sleeping area where Fitz-Henry had been sitting. Fitz-Henry joined the fight and the three took the GLC's shoes, wallet, and backpack before locking him away in a bathroom unit. Andrizzi, Goin, and Fitz-henry left the unit and made their way to a side fence which had a hole cut through it, and the three got into the waiting car and fled the scene. The three were taken into custody in Linn County a few days later after a short vehicle pursuit.

Shift in Contraband Types

Staff generally reference two categories of contraband: nuisance and danger. Nuisance items include batteries, ink, and food items in prohibited locations. Dangerous items include weapons, drugs[60], cellular devices, and money. As the Case Study illustrates, these items lead to safety risks for both youth and staff at MacLaren.

[60] Drugs include tobacco products, marijuana, and other controlled substances, which create risks when consumed, or when used as a form of payment by youth in the facility.

Staff noted that pre-SB 1008, nuisance items outnumbered dangerous items, since 2019 dangerous items have increased in prevalence and are more frequently located by staff. Contraband issues are a resource drain for both staff and facilities.

Sources of Contraband

Facility design and maintenance – The living units on the south side of MacLaren are closer to the adjacent property than other living units. When these units were constructed, the adjacent property was used for agriculture or had limited use. Since then, the adjacent property has been developed with an apartment complex and parking lot. The complex has a standard chain-link fence that is close to the MacLaren fence (*Figure 7*). Unlike many adult correctional facilities, MacLaren does not use barbed or razor wire and does not have multiple fences. MacLaren has a single, chain-link fence that is curved inwards at the top.



Figure 7 *(Photo from the residential complex looking Northeast into the MacLaren grounds. The black fencing is the edge of the residential parking lot, while MacLaren's fence can be seen curving inwards almost adjacent to the shorter, black fence.)*

Given the proximity of the residential complex and the type of fencing, there have been multiple incidents where people have thrown objects, such as tennis or footballs, loaded with contraband over the fence and onto MacLaren grounds. Youth then exited the nearby dorms to retrieve the contraband contained in the balls. In another example a football did not clear the fencing, and the suspect climbed the apartment complex fence to attempt to retrieve the contraband on MacLaren grounds in-between the fences. Such events have led to increased contraband within MacLaren and violent altercations between youth and staff, which have caused staff injuries.

Testimony also showed that, while additional fencing methods to improve security were considered, projects have not been approved due to funding priorities and a concern that such methods would not foster the agency goal of positive youth development given that fencing style would create the appearance of a traditional correctional setting.

Phones - In addition to contraband cell phones, the routine use of telephones within the institution causes problems within MacLaren. Youth have lightly controlled access to phones. While staff generally control the transfer of calls to youth based on whether the caller is on a permitted list, nothing prevents three-way calling or a hand-off of the physical device to another person. Phone calls are neither monitored nor recorded to ensure youth are not speaking with unapproved persons or discussing topics that create safety risks in the facilities such as plans to escape or introduce contraband into the facility.

For example, the thrown contraband incident described earlier was preceded by a phone call to the involved youth, likely to coordinate the timing of the event. The lack of monitoring or recording phone calls is unlike adult jails and correctional facilities, which routinely record and monitor adult in custody calls to ensure compliance with court orders, rules, and the safety of the facility. OYA has previously considered phone monitoring, but such concepts were rejected due to funding priorities and the agency's goal to support youth reformation through free contact with approved persons without creating potential barriers via a fee-based phone system.

Visitation - A metal detector is the only routine means of screening visitors. Visitors' personal items are passed through a screening machine. If there is no alert, the visitor is permitted to access the visitation room where they can have limited contact with the youth. There are staff in the room to supervise but given the ratio of staff to youth and visitors, the staff do not directly monitor each visit. When returning from visitation, youth pass through a metal detector and are frisked before returning to their living unit. Significantly, metal detectors do not detect controlled substances or other nonmetallic contraband such as gift cards, when they are impermissibly brought into the facility.

OYA has considered changes to visitation, such as additional screening or non-contact visits, but has not implemented any significant changes given funding priorities and the agency goal of building positive relationships with approved family and friends in a more

normative setting rather than the approach of adult jails and correctional facilities that may only permit a visit where the adult in custody is separated from the visitor by a barrier.

Staff – Staffing issues have also exacerbated the contraband issue. Inadvertent staff conduct can indirectly lead to an increase of contraband in the facility. There have also been staff that have been internally investigated, and some who have been criminally charged, related to the introduction of contraband in MacLaren. As with the other categories, staff turnover, morale, and training impact contraband accessibility in the facility.

Several factors lead to staff *directly* supplying contraband: staff sympathy for the youth, staff attempts to appease youth to make their shift easier, inappropriately close relationships between staff and youth, staff personal financial gain, or a youth who threatens staff.

Several factors lead to staff *indirectly* supplying contraband: staff members personal property, including medication, currency, and other items may be stolen by youth due to staffing issues, inattention, and facility design, including that the older living units have a single-door to access the staff control room, rather than multiple doors in the newer units.

This grand jury heard testimony on an increase in staffing challenges with younger, less experienced staff who may not be committed to work in a correctional setting, who may not accept or internalize the youth rehabilitation model, and who have less experience in following internal procedures and recognizing contraband.

Staff turnover and morale also impact contraband enforcement. When more experienced employees leave the agency, the training and mentoring of less experienced staff transitions to less seasoned employees. A high turnover often begets lower staff morale, which could lead to less stringent compliance with agency directives. For example, some employees reported other staff members performed incomplete, less-thorough searches for several reasons, including a lack of training, conflict avoidance when a youth refuses to comply, fear of assault after youth threats, or simply succumbing to coaxing by the youth.

As noted by one staff member:

> **"[We] don't typically randomly search youth, [however, we will do a search] whenever we feel necessary to do so."**

Staff also recognized that while searches are an important tool to locate contraband, they must be conducted in a manner that recognizes and lessens trauma for youth who have been victims of certain offenses.

Key Finding #9 The grand jury finds insufficient staff training, inadequate monitoring of youth during visits and phone calls, and deficiency in preventive measures exacerbates the introduction of contraband into MacLaren.

Safety Impact

Weapons - Nearly all weapons found in MacLaren are improvised weapons (*e.g.*, a sharpened piece of metal, wood, or plastic with a tape or cloth-wrapped handle – a shank). However, all weapons, regardless of their manufacture, increase the risk of violence and potential for injury to youth, staff, and others at the facility.

Weapons are a security risk not only based on the violent potential of the object itself, but also due to the effect on the possessor. Possessing a weapon in a place where most others do not emboldens the possessor as it is a means to intimidate others who oppose you and protect those that support you. As such, weapons are often associated with groups who associate to facilitate criminal acts (*i.e.*, gangs).

One example included a youth posting pictures on social media from within the facility. The pictures showed two different youth posing in front of a facility door and wall that was covered in graffiti. The pictures show each youth in control of a metal shank with one end wrapped in tape; one has it in hand and the other in his waistband.

Drugs - Multiple staff identified an increase in the possession of marijuana products and tobacco. Staff identified difficulty in locating marijuana concentrates (*i.e.* dabs) as the product could be smeared on different surfaces and would be hard to distinguish from other substances. Staff also reported concern with an increased risk of overdose, and erratic and violent behavior by youth. Staff noted this behavior has changed since SB1008, because previously youth on the unit would have disclosed when other youth had contraband to protect the unit and the unit's privileges, but in the more recent years youth are less likely to report contraband.

One example included an incident where multiple youth in a unit were searched and numerous items of contraband were located, including marijuana and tobacco related vaping devices and cellphones. During this incident multiple youth threatened staff who were directing the search and one youth brazenly used a vape as it was confiscated telling staff that they would have another smoking device soon.

This grand jury recognizes there are multiple avenues to respond to the increased prevalence of contraband at MacLaren. Some of those routes, including those mentioned above, have previously been considered and rejected by OYA management due to budget or policy concerns.

This grand jury recommends that given the administrative change and the increasing risk that contraband presents at the facility, OYA should consider all potential methods to reduce contraband in the facility, including:

- body scanners for youth, visitors, and staff;

- drug, electronic, and other detection K9s;

- recording and monitoring youth's communications, including phone and electronic messages;

- increasing the length and depth of annual staff training;

- reevaluate facility design to address the introduction of contraband, including raising fence height, layering fences, and using appropriate barriers to restrict access to MacLaren grounds; and meeting and discussing with city and community partners to address concerns with property development.

Gang Activity

Key Finding #10 This grand jury finds that gang activity within MacLaren and the leadership's lack of response to it, is an area that needs critical attention.

Staff, community members, family members of youth, and MacLaren youth themselves, all reported an increase in gang-related activity at MacLaren. This behavior included threatening and assaultive conduct, contraband distribution, and graffiti. This sentiment was reflected in the following statement:

> **"Youth who enter the facility without a gang will at some point become involved in gang activity."**

Despite the increased gang-related activity, OYA leadership appeared slow to recognize the complex needs and risks these associations create.

For example, staff testified that previous OYA leadership discouraged gang designations and specifically discouraged labeling a youth as "gang involved." This is consistent with prior leadership's focus on optics, as previously discussed. Additionally, MacLaren leadership noted that labeling a youth in their internal system could have unintended downstream implications, such as potentially affecting placement or employment.

While labeling youth as "gang members" obviously has downstream consequences that should be addressed, staff identified they currently lack the tools and training to recognize gang-related risks, signs of gang activity, and the risks associated with gang culture. For example, one MacLaren security employee was unaware that gang members may use certain whistles to communicate with fellow gang members. Some staff noted that the agency previously provided such training to staff but had more recently discontinued or shifted focus away from this topic.

Staff also noted they were unaware of information within their internal system to document a youth's association with gang activity. Other staff stated that they are no longer allowed to document such an association. This creates a situation where youth would be placed in living units with rival, potentially competing gang members without staff being aware of and prepared for the risks of such placement.

When asked about this significant concern, management staff confirmed that OYA has a policy regarding sensitive case descriptors, including gang involvement, in their record system. Furthermore, they disagreed that staff were prohibited from accessing or documenting gang affiliation. Thus, even if the policy remains in effect, there appears to be a lack of training on how to enter, alter, or access the information.

Key Finding #11 This grand jury finds that MacLaren security staff were unfamiliar with how to determine whether a youth was actively involved in a gang, which directly impacts their ability to keep that youth and other youth safe.

Impact

This increase in gang or group-related incidents has had a real, detrimental impact on the rehabilitation of youth at MacLaren. For example, due to the increase in threatening and assaultive conduct by youth, recreation access has been adjusted. The grand jury was told how previously multiple living units of youth could congregate in the yard at one time to allow for increased participation in group activities like outdoor basketball; now only one unit at a time is allowed limiting access to that space and activity.

It also affects community partner trust in MacLaren. Many community partners testified how the increased violent incidents at MacLaren, including gang activity, have fundamentally affected how they view the agency as a whole and how they work with youth within their respective roles. Testimony received included statements where partners did not recommend commitment of youth specifically because of concerns about the youths' safety if they were to be housed at MacLaren. While fewer youth being committed to MacLaren is a valid goal, the safety of the institution should not be a determinative factor in any partners' decision whether to recommend commitment for a youth.

Volume of Gang Affiliated Activity at MacLaren

To try and determine how many behavioral incidents were gang-related, this grand jury inquired of OYA whether behavior incidents are characterized as "gang related." Specifically, it directed inquiry to determine whether there is a report that would define what behavior incidents in the institution are "gang related." In its November 2025 response, OYA responded that it does not specifically track whether certain incidents are gang related. Although that can be noted in the narrative section of the report, there is no good way to track that information.

Key Finding #12 This grand jury finds that this lack of data tracking is concerning and contrary to the safety of the institution.

Gang "Treatment"

One of the most distressing topics to this grand jury was what appeared to be an unwillingness to address the real-world safety impact and complex cultural considerations of gang affiliations within MacLaren. One of the areas that highlighted this concern the most clearly was that as of the date of this report, MacLaren does not have a specific "gang treatment"[61] program.

Managers associated with MacLaren treatment programs confirmed that there was previously a program related to "gang treatment." The program was called "Street Smarts" and was used at different levels throughout MacLaren until approximately two years ago, upon the retirement of the program facilitator. This grand jury was told that program was not empirically validated and therefore was discontinued. However, no new, gang-specific program took its place. The explanation provided was because there is no known specific, evidence-based approach to "gang treatment."

Therefore, currently MacLaren does not have a treatment program specifically for gang activity. Instead, the grand jury was told that the current treatment modality addresses some of the underlying principles typically associated with gang involvement. This treatment includes programs addressing anger and aggression, emphasizing social and emotional skills to develop an understanding of the harm caused by certain behaviors and skills to repair that harm.

Key Finding #13 This grand jury finds that this logic is contrary to the community's reasonable expectation to address gang involvement and is a classic example of perfect being the enemy of good. Gang activity and gang culture is currently affecting and impacting the safety and conditions at MacLaren.

Key Finding #14 Thus, this grand jury does not believe that anger and aggression treatment is sufficient to address the complexities exhibited by gang-affected youth.

Furthermore, it is not clear that MacLaren clearly communicated the termination of their gang treatment program to community partners, such as local juvenile departments, courts, and lawyers. It came as a surprise to some of those partners who testified that MacLaren stopped its "gang treatment" programming. The result has been that some youth are

[61] "Gang treatment" will be used for the colloquial theory of addressing gang-impacted youth programming.

purposefully recommended to MacLaren because of their gang-related behaviors and gang activity, which is the very issue not being addressed.

Key Finding #15 This grand jury is also concerned about OYA's messaging on gang treatment programming.

For example, in a November 28, 2025, *Salem Reporter* article, an OYA spokesperson was quoted as saying "The agency now runs a similar program for youth affiliated with gangs to work on decision making and managing their emotions."[62] That "similar program" was not communicated to this grand jury nor would it characterize the specific issues identified and addressed in Street Smarts as a "similar program" to aggression and anger treatment modules.[63]

Overall, this grand jury recommends that MacLaren focus on a common sense, targeted focus of treatment for gang-affected youth.

Mental Health and Treatment Gaps

Repeated testimony suggested that MacLaren staff have a culture of rejecting that they are a mental health facility for youth. This is important, in part, because staff do not believe it appropriate for youth to be sent to a youth correctional facility to access mental health services.

Key Finding #16 This grand jury finds that it is inappropriate for youth to be sent to a youth correctional facility solely to access mental health treatment.

However, the problem with this ethos is that it fails to recognize the reality that MacLaren is being used as a mental health facility for youth with complex mental health issues in Oregon. This is especially true since COVID, when Oregon lost numerous community-based mental health providers for youth. It is undisputed there is a need for mental health treatment for this population - *54% of all incoming youth are diagnosed with a mental*

[62] Madeline Moore, "New Marion County program supports youth in reducing violence, gang involvement," SALEM REPORTER, Nov. 28, 2025.
[63] The article describes how the individual previously employed at MacLaren doing the same gang reduction work is now a consultant working with the Marion County Juvenile Department, doing the exact same gang mitigation work for Marion County gang affected youth.

health disorder and 18% of MacLaren's population is housed in specialized mental health units.[64]

Despite this documented need, access to mental health care is limited within the walls of MacLaren. MacLaren has limited psychiatric staff with psychiatric care being done through outside referrals. At the time of this report, MacLaren was staffed for 16 qualified mental health professional (QMHP) positions to support its population, but only 11 of those positions were filled, and just a single QMHP was bilingual. Additionally, MacLaren is different from residential treatment facilities in that residential treatment facilities can refuse to accept violent youth, while MacLaren is required to house the youth committed to its custody.

Key Finding #17 This grand jury finds that MacLaren is required to house youth with serious mental health needs yet appears to lack sufficient resources to serve as a proper treatment facility in addressing the mental health needs of those same youth.

Key Finding #18 This grand jury finds that the issue of sufficient mental health treatment in a youth correctional facility is expansive in scope and complexity. It needs further and deeper investigation than this grand jury can meaningfully address.

This grand jury recommends additional investigation by qualified youth rehabilitation and mental health providers. In the meantime, treatment options should be explored, such as QMHP's by video, to provide youth with required support.

Sexual Assault/Misconduct

Key Finding #19 This grand jury finds that of all the trust-eroding conduct that has come to light recently, it is beyond dispute that staff sexual abuse of youth at MacLaren is the most damaging and concerning.

This grand jury learned of staff abuse allegations that are historical, such as allegations of sexual abuse at the hands of a former pediatrician employed by MacLaren, while other evidence was more contemporary – such as the March 2025 conviction of Emily Echtenkamp, a QMHP at MacLaren who pled guilty to multiple counts of Custodial Sexual

[64] Oregon Youth Authority, *MacLaren Quick Facts* (OYA, 2025)(emphasis added).

Misconduct in the First Degree for her sexual abuse of a youth committed to the custody of MacLaren.

According to the DAS investigation report, there were multiple complaints of OYA staff having an improper relationship with youth in custody. Complaints of sexual abuse and misconduct were included in a number of cases found in the PSO backlog, languishing, under-investigated, and remaining unresolved.

As of the date of this report, the Marion County District Attorney's Office reported that it has active, pending prosecutions with ongoing investigations involving charges of Custodial Sexual Misconduct in the First Degree, charges of Sex Abuse in the First Degree where the alleged offender – a former employee – met the victim while the youth was in custody at MacLaren, and sexual offenses where the defendant and victim were both youth in MacLaren.

The issue of sexual abuse in a closed custody facility is expansive in scope and complexity. It needs further and deeper investigation than this grand jury can meaningfully address. However, to ensure the safety of youth in MacLaren, allegations of sexual abuse must be promptly and thoroughly investigated, and resolved in a timely manner.

Key Finding #20 This grand jury finds that while eliminating the PSO backlog should remain a serious priority for OYA and MacLaren, it is much more important that experts in youth safety focus on how to prevent these incidents from occurring at MacLaren in the first place.

Case Planning and Parole

This grand jury heard testimony surrounding planning for a youth's reformative needs, a process that often begins before a youth is committed to OYA. The local juvenile departments, OYA, and other community partners primarily address the youth's needs within the community. Generally, when the youth is unable to safely be rehabilitated in the community, due to the youth's conduct and/or a lack of access to appropriate services, the juvenile court may determine it is in the best interests of the youth to be committed to OYA with a recommendation for placement in MacLaren.

Within set times after the initial intake of a youth, OYA crafts a case plan. To assist in this planning, OYA completes a risk/needs assessment. This tool is completed by OYA based on an interview of the youth, a review of the youth's records, and a conversation with the juvenile department and OYA parole and probation.

The risk/needs assessment is used at intake and periodically throughout commitment. The tool identifies static and dynamic areas of risk, need and protective factors in known criminogenic risk areas for youth. It also focuses on youth's needs for change such as antisocial attitudes, antisocial friends, substance abuse, lack of problem-solving skills, impulsive behavior, and academic failures. The assessment helps develop an individualized case plan in identified domains (*i.e.* offense specific, family, mental health, substance use, education, vocation, life/social skills, and medical). OYA structures services related to the identified domains.

The risk/needs assessment also assists in determining the youth's progress through periodic competency ratings. This leads to the parole review committee process to determine if a youth is ready to be stepped down from MacLaren to an OYA camp, a contracted treatment program, or a community placement.

Parole Determination

In making the parole determination, the committee considers multiple factors, including the youth's efforts, participation in and progress on treatment, educational, vocational and behavioral goals; the youth's transition plans; whether the youth has made and agrees to continue to make restitution to the victim; and any available community resources that support continued development and safe placement availability.

The committee also examines the threat of harm the youth represents to self or others. This factor was described as an internal discussion within the multidisciplinary team (MDT). It also included a review of any rule violations and the severity of those violations to determine any impact on subsequent placements. For example, while violent incidents would impact most placements, less significant violations may not impact parole depending on whether the planned placement was more restrictive (*e.g.*, OYA camp, secured treatment) or less restrictive (*e.g.*, foster or community placement).

Key Finding #21 When determining whether a youth should be released on parole, OYA should increase efforts to seek direct input from the victim of the underlying offense and the community (*e.g.* the local juvenile department) to which the youth will be released.

Additional considerations include the impact of the youth's release on the victim and the community. Of note to this grand jury, the OYA is still developing a victim engagement program including a process for notifying and providing an opportunity for victim input. However, it was not clear whether this victim engagement program is focused on youth in the facility who have been victimized or outward facing victim outreach to victims in the youth's home community, or both.

In the interim, OYA may consider records of prior victim input or the team's subjective belief of the impact on the victim. OYA indicated that it intends to further develop this area to provide the victim with an opportunity for direct input. Additionally, OYA did not describe a clear process to consult with the juvenile department or any other community representative for the parole placement. It appeared that the OYA parole and probation officer was responsible for providing such information.

Key Finding #22 When using a risk assessment tool to predict whether a youth who will be released on parole will reoffend, the community is concerned not only with convictions for felonies but also if a youth will be arrested for any new crime, including both misdemeanors and felonies.

The parole review will also include an examination of any applicable predictive data tools (including); the OYA risk/needs assessment (as described earlier), and the OYA recidivism risk assessment tool. This tool helps predict whether a youth who is released will be adjudicated or convicted for any new felony within three years of release. Of note, in the adult community corrections context, recidivism is statutorily defined as an *arrest* or conviction for a new *crime* (felony or misdemeanor) within three years of release.[65] This definition is commonly used in the criminal justice context in Oregon. OYA management adopted a different definition for recidivism in the juvenile justice context. OYA acknowledged that this definition would lead to a lower rate of recidivism in adjudicated youth given that the data would neither capture released youth that were arrested for a new felony, nor any new arrest, adjudication or conviction for misdemeanors.

Also under review is the youth's demonstrated development of the following markers of psychosocial maturity shown by research to be corroborated with desistance from crime (*i.e.* the healthy youth development domain, which is a subjective assessment of the MDT and the youth on a scale of 1-5 for each factor):

- Emotion management and impulse control
- Suppression of aggressive behavior
- Consideration of others
- Future orientation
- Ability to take personal responsibility including commitment offense impact on community and victim, and current and future conduct
- Resisting peer influences

Finally, the committee will consider any other factors or circumstances deemed relevant by OYA based on the individual characteristics and circumstances of the youth.

[65] ORS 423.557.

When the parole review committee recommends parole, there is a second OYA review process to make the final determination. This process involves different levels of OYA management based on the severity of the offense for which the youth was committed. If approved by management, the youth is paroled from MacLaren.

Key Finding #23 This grand jury finds that to determine the effectiveness of management of programming for youth within MacLaren, an additional assessment and/or inquiry should occur to determine the success of youth released on parole. When doing so, the data used should be transparent and easily understood.

This grand jury recommends an independent audit or study occur to determine the efficacy of rehabilitation programming at MacLaren. This inquiry should specifically focus on youth performance after release and while on parole using data that is clear, transparent and easy to comprehend.

Community Partner Impacts

This grand jury also considered testimony from numerous community partners connected to Oregon's youth correctional facility, including juvenile prosecutors, defense counsel, the judicial department, juvenile directors and family members of committed youth. Without exception, every perspective represented discussed the importance of a healthy, functioning youth correctional facility.

Community Involvement

One particularly impactful topic was MacLaren's lack of relationship with local government, specifically the City of Woodburn. Woodburn is one of Oregon's fastest growing cities and is a vibrant, multicultural community.

Key Finding #24 This grand jury finds the lack of meaningful relationship between MacLaren and the City of Woodburn creates unnecessary and avoidable difficulties for both.

For example, residential development in the Woodburn area immediately adjacent to MacLaren has already impacted the conditions and safety within the facility. As noted earlier in this report, a residential apartment complex was recently built immediately adjacent to MacLaren's south fence. The parking lot of that facility is almost adjacent to

MacLaren's security fence. The city testified that had OYA or MacLaren taken advantage of the public land use process, the city could have required mitigations from the builder to address those safety concerns. Instead, the city knew of no feedback from MacLaren nor OYA during the land use development process.

Additionally, the city had no notice of the escape described in the case study referenced on page34 where three individuals had escaped from the facility. Instead, the city and local police department learned of the escape from the news, causing unnecessary confusion and concern.

Furthermore, by failing to meaningfully communicate with the city, MacLaren misses opportunities for collaboration, such as increased volunteerism and programs for youth. During testimony, the city expressed a strong desire to partner with MacLaren to provide youth healthy and safe ways of integrating and taking advantage of the many youth-focused programs occurring in Woodburn.

Shifting Costs

Key Finding #25 This grand jury finds that the numerous issues at MacLaren have created significant workload for its partners, which have additional created costs for local government and other state agencies.

Institution Investigations Table (# of investigations on cases)	
OYA - MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility-Woodburn	218
DOC - Snake River (SRCI) Ontario	92
DOC - Two Rivers (TRCI) Umatilla	59
DOC - Oregon State Pen (OSP Max) Salem	58
DOC - Coffee Creek (CCCF) Wilsonville	53
OYA - Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility-Tillamook	43
DOC - Eastern Oregon (EOCI) Pendleton	37
OSH Salem	34
DOC - Oregon State Correctional Facility (OSCI) Salem	31
OYA - Eastern Oregon Youth Correctional Facility-Burns	27
OYA - Roque Valley Youth Correctional Facility-Grants Pass	22
OYA - Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility-Albany	20
DOC - Deer Ridge (DRCI) Madras	15
Oregon School for the Deaf	7
OSH Junction City	6
DOC - Columbia River (CRCI) Portland	5
OYA - Other	5
DOC - Powder River (PRCF) Baker City	4
DOC - South Fork Forest Camp (SFFC) Tillamook	3
DOC - Warner Creek (WCCF) Lakeview	3
DOC - Santiam Correctional (SCI) Salem	2
DOC - Oregon State Pen (OSP Min) Salem	1
OYA - Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility-Salem	1
Grand Total	746

Figure 6 and 8

For example, the Marion County DA's Office does not receive state funding to provide prosecutorial support for criminal incidents at MacLaren, which, again, has the most investigations of Oregon's close custody facilities by a substantial margin. *See Figure 8.* This is also true for Oregon State Penitentiary, Oregon State Hospital, and other closed custody facilities in Marion County (*see* Exhibit F for OSP Major Crimes data*).* Thus, when MacLaren identified a significant backlog of cases spanning multiple years, the Marion County District Attorney's Office was immediately required to shift resources from other important work to address the issue. The costs related to that response impacts local budgets and are not reimbursed by the state.

Additionally, OSP testified that MacLaren incidents in particular significantly impact their workload, as discussed earlier. OSP is responsible for all closed-custody state criminal investigations. In 2024, Oregon State Police received 336 referrals for investigations regarding an OYA facility. Of those OYA investigations, 218 involved MacLaren, which comprised 64% of all OYA investigations. *Figure 9.*

MacLaren vs. OYA Cases
January 1 – December 31, 2024

MacLaren: 218 cases

Rest of OYA:

Institution Investigations Table (# of investigations on cases)	
OYA - Tillamook Youth Correctional Facility-Tillamook	43
OYA - Eastern Oregon Youth Correctional Facility-Burns	27
OYA - Roque Valley Youth Correctional Facility-Grants Pass	22
OYA - Oak Creek Youth Correctional Facility-Albany	20
OYA - Other	5
OYA - Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility-Salem	1
Grand Total	118

Figure 9

The Marion County District Attorney's Office also reported a significant increase in MacLaren cases referred for prosecution (36 cases). The PSO backlog (discussed earlier) and the delay in criminal investigations given the volume of cases created a downstream log jam on the number of cases referred for prosecution.

This grand jury recommends that state law makers consider pathways to offset costs for a local government especially when a state agency's mismanagement creates a substantial burden on local government resources.

While this grand jury recognizes its limitations (discussed earlier), it recommends that policymakers initiate a Secretary of State audit focused on MacLaren to assess and/or improve performance and operations, potentially reduce costs to taxpayers, facilitate decision making, and contribute to public accountability.

MacLaren Response

On November 14, 2025, this grand jury took its third and final tour of MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility. Prior to the tour, this body met with Troy Britting, the current Superintendent of MacLaren and was provided a "Grand Jury Status Report." That report is included as an Addendum to this report. Many of the steps outlined in that report are positive. This grand jury appreciates superintendent Britting's responsiveness to its areas of inquiry.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of the process, this grand jury received evidence that substantiated the need for District Attorney's Clarkson's detailed inquiry. As stated, the focus of this inquiry was on areas of improvement to facilitate the goal of a safer, rehabilitative MacLaren. These findings, which impact the safety and well-being of youth and staff, youth rehabilitation, and workforce stability, all point to the need for improved role clarity, staff training, and community engagement. With strong leadership, MacLaren can fulfill its statutory obligation of "confinement of adjudicated youths and others placed in the custody of the youth authority and for the development of those persons into productive members of society", while continuing to prioritize the safety and well-being of youth and staff.

Grand Jury FINDINGS

1. MacLaren is struggling with its role within Oregon's juvenile justice system.
2. Challenges in staffing, training and retention impact nearly every key area of concern.
3. An increase in the complexity and acuity of the youth, and the reduction of long-term Measure 11 youth following the passing of SB 1008 (2019), have added to the destabilization of MacLaren.
4. Current MacLaren Youth have shorter juvenile court commitments, higher treatment needs, and may be less inclined to comply with OYA rules.
5. Staff experience and expertise has not increased in response to the increased complexity of youth being placed at MacLaren.
6. MacLaren needs support identifying and hiring the appropriate and dedicated personnel to staff the facility.
7. MacLaren must be a correctional facility first, and while the developmental model may be an effective tool, visible accountability must be increased and enhanced.

8. Possession of contraband within MacLaren is a serious safety issue, and OYA needs to consider all viable options to lessen that risk, including those that were previously rejected due a disfavored perception of MacLaren as a correctional facility.
9. Insufficient staff training, inadequate monitoring of youth during visits and phone calls, and deficiency in preventive measures exacerbates the introduction of contraband into MacLaren.
10. Gang Activity within MacLaren and the leadership's lack of response to it, is an area that needs critical attention.
11. MacLaren security staff were unfamiliar with how to determine whether a youth was actively involved in a gang, which directly impacts their ability to keep that youth and other youth safe.
12. The lack of data tracking is concerning and contrary to the safety of the institution.
13. Gang activity and gang culture are currently affecting and impacting the safety and conditions at MacLaren.
14. Anger and aggression treatment are insufficient methods when addressing the complexities exhibited by gang-affected youth.
15. Clarity is needed surrounding OYA's messaging on gang treatment programming.
16. It is inappropriate for youth to be sent to a correctional facility solely to access mental health treatment.
17. MacLaren is required to house youth with serious mental health needs yet appears to lack sufficient resources to serve as a proper treatment facility in addressing the mental health needs of those same youth.
18. The issue of sufficient mental health treatment in a youth correctional facility is expansive in scope and complexity. It needs further and deeper investigation.
19. Staff sexual abuse of youth at MacLaren is the most damaging and concerning conduct.
20. Eliminating the PSO backlog should remain a priority for OYA and MacLaren, but it is more important that experts in youth safety focus on prevention of these types of incidents.
21. When determining whether a youth should be released on parole, OYA should notify and seek direct input from the victim of the underlying offense and the community (e.g. the juvenile department) to which the youth will be released.
22. When using a risk assessment tool to predict whether a youth who will be released on parole will reoffend, the community is concerned not only with convictions for felonies but also if a youth will be arrested for any crime, including both misdemeanors and felonies.
23. To determine the effectiveness of management of programming for youth within MacLaren, an additional assessment and/or inquiry should occur to determine the success of youth released on parole. When doing so, the data used should be transparent and easily understood.

24. The lack of meaningful relationship between MacLaren and the City of Woodburn creates unnecessary and avoidable difficulties for both.
25. Numerous issues at MacLaren have created significant workload for its partners, which have created costs for local government and other state agencies.

This grand jury calls for swift, coordinated action by OYA leadership, legislators and community partners to address these challenges, and restore safety and public confidence in MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility.

More specifically, this grand jury calls for the following recommendations:

Grand Jury RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Policy makers should engage in conversation regarding the future role of how MacLaren should best serve a targeted population and should also require laser-focused accountability to that mission.
2. Improve cohesive and ongoing staff training including conflict resolution, gang identification, and appropriate levels of structural authority and accountability.
3. Immediately establish creative solutions to recruit, train and enhance the number of Group Life Coordinators.
4. Streamline the intersection of policies and training. Address "practice gap" – a failure to consistently execute the processes already in place (*see* Exhibit C).
5. Establish clear procedures and systems for staff affected by on-the-job assaults or trauma.
6. Provide a one-time funding allocation to OYA to contract with a consulting firm to rebuild and expand volunteerism at MacLaren. The purpose would be to identify, recruit, and onboard volunteers to enhance programming and mentoring for MacLaren youth. As identified, volunteers are critically important to maintain robust programming opportunities but are also fiscally responsible.
7. Provide a one-time funding allocation to OYA to contract a consulting firm to build and implement a training program for MacLaren staff so that all new staff, moving forward, are fully trained prior to working with youth.
8. Provide incident trend data as a percentage of population, to provide a more transparent and clear representation of what is actually happening at MacLaren.
9. Consider dedicated security staff positions that have increased training to recognize, prevent, and respond to threats to the safety and order of the facility.

10. Increase transparency in, and staff training on, the youth sanction process so that the youth and impacted staff are aware of the process to determine and implement an appropriate sanction for a violation of OYA rules.
11. Increase staff training on the implementation of the developmental model approach to youth behavior that is consistent with the statutory requirement[59] that policies must provide concrete expectations for youth, ensure safety of everyone in the facility, maintain order, and provide a structured environment.
12. OYA should consider all potential methods to reduce contraband in the facility, including:
    a. body scanners for youth, visitors, and staff;
    b. drug, electronic, and other detection K9s;
    c. recording and monitoring youth's communications, including phone and electronic messages;
    d. increasing the length and depth of annual staff training;
    e. reevaluate facility design to address the introduction of contraband, including raising fence height, layering fences, and using appropriate barriers to restrict access to MacLaren grounds; and meeting and discussing with city and community partners to address concerns with property development.
13. Focus on common sense, targeted focus of treatment for gang affected youth.
14. Additional investigation by qualified youth rehabilitation and mental health providers. In the meantime, treatment options should be explored, such as QMHP's by video, to provide youth with required support.
15. An independent audit to determine the efficacy of rehabilitation programming at MacLaren, specifically focused on youth performance after release and while on parole using data that is clear, transparent and easy to comprehend.
16. State law makers consider pathways to offset costs for a local government especially when a state agency's mismanagement creates a substantial burden on local government resources.
17. Initiate a Secretary of State audit focused on MacLaren to assess and/or improve performance and operations, potentially reduce costs to taxpayers, facilitate decision making, and contribute to public accountability.

Meaningful improvement will require sustained leadership, a strategic plan and continued monitoring to ensure that any changes implemented will result in desired and measurable changes.

Acknowledgments

This grand jury wishes to recognize the following agencies for their cooperation and support during this investigatory process: Oregon Youth Authority, Oregon Department of Justice, Oregon State Police, Marion County Juvenile Department, Marion County District Attorney's Office, Marion County Circuit Court, City of Woodburn, Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association.

Finally, this grand jury wishes to express gratitude to the many dedicated, hard-working, and tremendously capable individuals working at MacLaren Youth Correctional Facility, and within the Oregon Youth Authority. Without their passion for public service, and Oregon's youth, MacLaren simply could not function.

Dated this 19TH day of December, 2025.

X Jeffrey A. Landreth

Presiding Juror

Exhibits

Exhibit A – DAS Investigative Report (March 13, 2025)

Exhibit B – Safety Advisory Committee *Final Report* (October 2025)

Exhibit C – Lessons Learned from PSO Reform and Oversight (August 14, 2025)

Exhibit D – New Employee Training

New Employees receive the following training related to defensive tactics or de-escalation while in their new employee training:

- 2 hours of training in Physical Intervention Policies (Week 1)
- 1.75 hours in Physical intervention (mod1)
- 6 hours in Verbal De-escalation
- .75 hours in Verbal De-escalation Skills practice
- 3.25 hours in Physical Intervention (mod2) (Week 2)
- 1.75 hours in Behavioral Management (mod1)
- 1.25 hours in transport and escort tips
- 2.25 hours in Handcuffing and Transport gear
- 2.25 Hours in Physical Intervention (mod3)
- 2 hours in Behavioral Management (mod2) (Week 5)
- hours in Physical Intervention (mod4)
- 4.25 hours in Physical Intervention (mod5)
- 3.5 hours in conflict resolution

Exhibit E – OYA Agency Information and Training Policies

Exhibit F - OSP Major Crimes Section – Jan 1– Dec

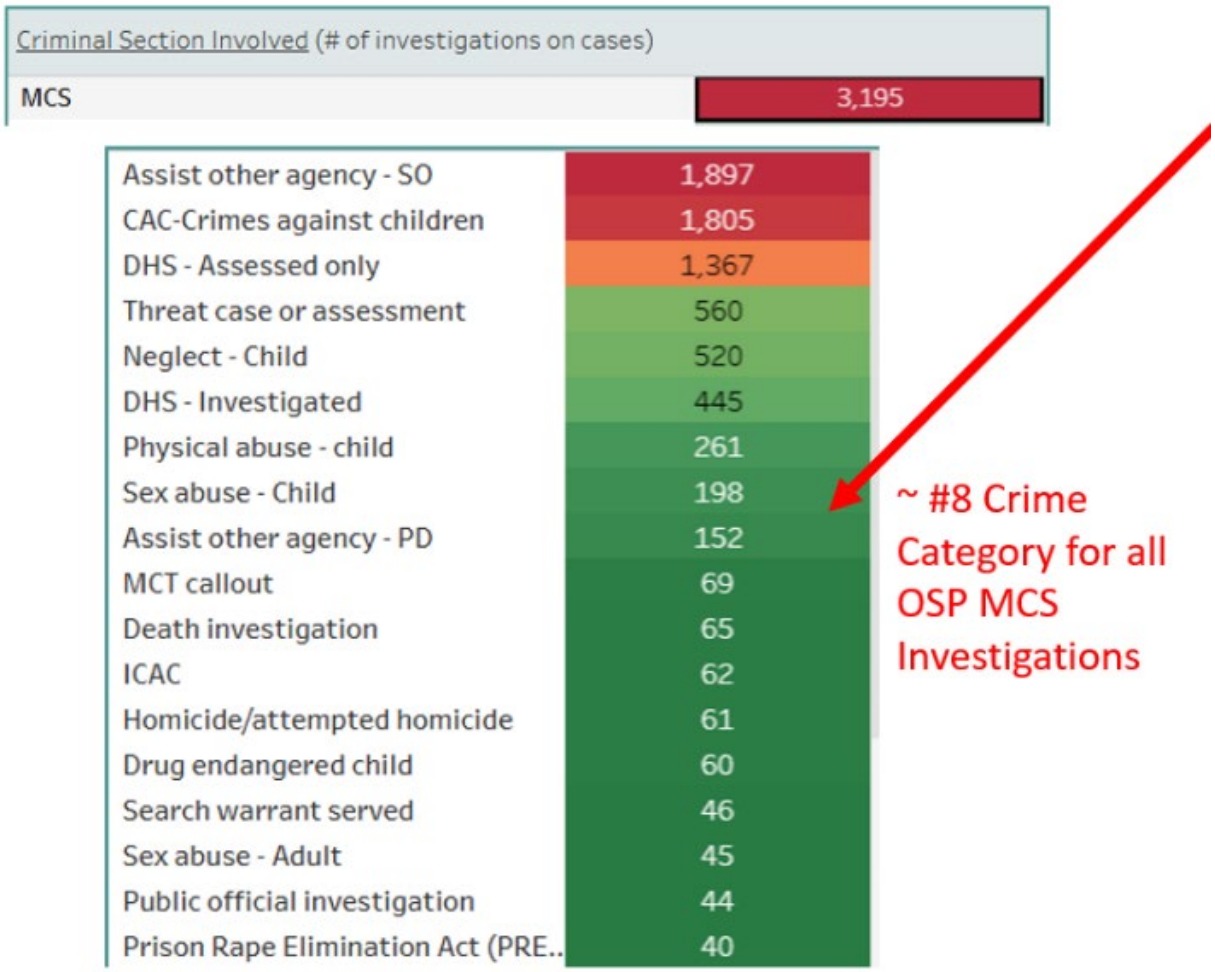


Exhibit G – OYA Operational Structure

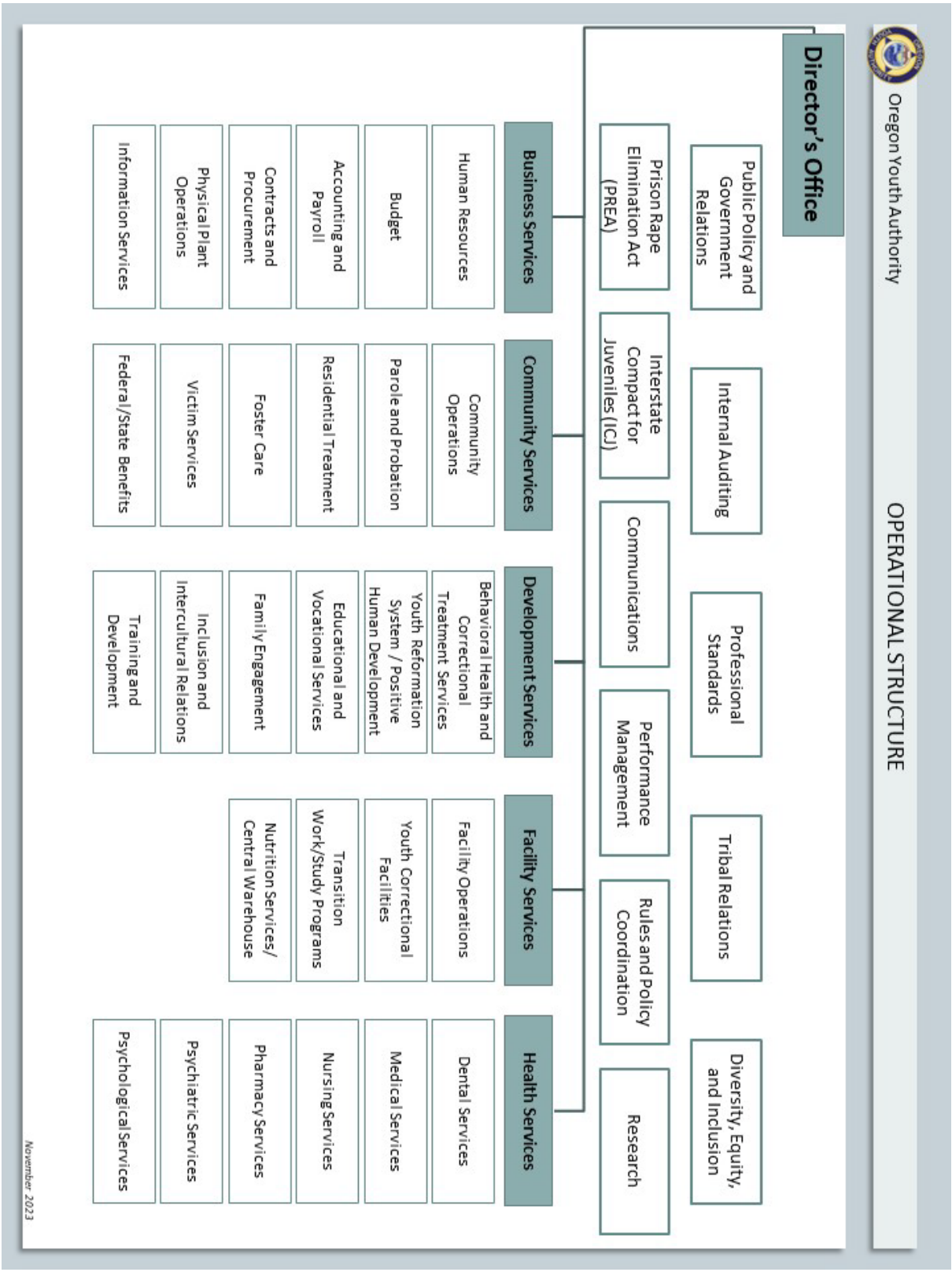


Exhibit H – OYA Response to SAC Recommendations (December 2, 2025)

Exhibit I – Grand Jury Status Report, Troy Britting (November, 2025)