

Oregon Voices News

News from Oregon that you can use

Oregon Voices is committed to justice and rationality in policies regarding sex offenses and will continue to work toward supporting legislation that will positively impact the lives of registered citizens and their families. We continue to support the efforts of other organizations that are also striving to make lives better for AICs and those reentering our communities.

Board members of Oregon Voices completed the Handbook for *Oregon Relief from Registration for Adults* this past July. They want to remind folks that Oregon laws and administrative procedures change frequently. Since this Handbook reflects the law and administrative procedures as of the publication date, it may not reflect those that occur thereafter. Oregon Voices will keep updating the Handbook as necessary to reflect such changes; however, remember to research the latest Oregon laws and procedures rather than rely solely on the Handbook.

The initial goal for writing the Handbook was to provide a step-by-step guide for individuals seeking relief from registration. The published work can be accessed by going to the OV website, <https://www.oregonvoices.org/>. It can be downloaded or, if that is not a possible option, and assistance is needed, contact OV at info@oregonvoices.org

We applaud those RCs who have already applied and were granted relief from the registry! You are an inspiration to others and can serve as mentors when support is needed.

OV is gearing up for the Oregon 2025 legislative session. We are in the process of forming a committee to monitor the bills as they are introduced, targeting those that we want to support or defeat. Check your email often as committee members may be contacting you to write letters or give testimony if needed. If you are at all interested in serving on this committee, contact us at info@oregonvoices.org

As we look forward to the new year, OV remains committed to supporting legislation and programs that help AICs and RCs. We are fortunate to live in a state where legislators recognize the need to provide more affordable housing as well as to find ways to alleviate Oregon's severe workforce shortage. And, recent federal funding to support job training within our prisons has proven to be a real boost.

There have been other noteworthy advancements such as the federal creation of the Second Chance Act, the opportunity in Oregon to expunge some crimes, the availability of more job opportunities as our state continues to offer more training programs, and the increased number of employers who have chosen to hire RCs. Most importantly, there are very strong supportive re-entry programs

such as Free on the Outside and Sponsors that have continued to grow over the years and serve as models for other communities.

While the main focus of OV is to offer support for the registered citizens of our state, we also look forward to working with other non-profits that advocate for safety and health reforms within the prison walls and better support systems for AICs as they reenter their respective communities.

We encourage you to support Oregon Voices by volunteering your talents and time wherever and whenever possible. Please contact us at info@oregonvoices.org

An Oregon Voices Proposal to the Legislature

The number of Oregonians on the sex offense registry has grown steadily since the current system was adopted in 2013 when the Oregon registry had nearly 17,000 individuals on it. Just over a decade later, the Oregon registry had ballooned to include about 27,500 persons. More importantly, more than 12,000 of those individuals who have been on the registry since before 2015 still have not been scored and classified into a risk level because funding to do so has been inadequate. *(See another story in this newsletter about recent developments on these numbers.)*

Many of those individuals have been on the registry for 20 years or more. Meanwhile, persons coming into Oregon or emerging from incarceration are scored and classified when they emerge from prison or move into the state.

We believe that this situation is both grossly unfair and uninformed by what the best research tells us. We are making another effort to address this problem. Our one-page proposal is included in this newsletter. We are asking the state legislature to make changes so that a person who has been out of prison for 20 years or more should be immediately automatically eligible for relief from registration without having to submit an application if they have not committed any new sex offenses in that time.

Adopting a proposal like this would move Oregon one step closer to being in line with what the research tells us about the ongoing risk of reoffending. We also hope that it will provide an automatic cap on the number of individuals living with all of the restrictions that inevitably follow persons on the registry.

Oregon Voices has been working with the legislature for more than a decade now, and we know that change comes slowly. But we also know that change does not happen without people advocating for it. As always, we will keep you informed about our legislative efforts in the 2025 session and in sessions to follow.

Some Interesting Statistics

The Problem

In 2013, when HB 2549 was passed, the Oregon Sex Offender Registry included 17,000 persons. It was hoped that providing a path off the registry might stabilize or even reduce the size of Oregon's registry. Things have not worked out that way.

- Since then, the Oregon registry has grown to include about 27,500 persons.
- Approximately 12,000 persons still have not even been scored and classified.
- More people are being added every month than the relief system can process in a year.

A Way to Curb and Reduce the Size of the Registry

We now know some important things we did not know in 2013.

- Oregon recidivism rates for persons with sex crimes are vastly lower than was assumed in 2013. According to a 3-year study published in 2018 by the CJC, just 1.8% of persons coming out of incarceration for sex offenses had reoffended in that time.¹
- Research published in 2018 by the same research team that developed the Static 99R showed that the risk of reoffending for all persons, whatever the risk level, declines by about 50% with every five years spent sex offense-free in the community. After 20 years, even formerly high-risk individuals did not re-offend.² The data also shows at what point lower-risk individuals reach a safe desistance point for reoffending.

A Modest Proposal

We should consider incorporating the new research into our procedures and remove people when the research shows that they have reached that safe desistance point for reoffending.

But we could start simply by doing background checks on persons when they reach or have reached 20 years on the registry and removing those who have not had a new sex offense in that time. Going forward, we could do the same for all additional persons added when they reach 20 years on the registry. This small step would reduce registry size, stabilize the registry at a lower and more manageable number, and free up resources to deal with persons who still represent a significant risk.

The data from this study has already been incorporated into the Static 99R protocols. Since Oregon uses the Static 99R, it would make sense to take the modest step of using at least this portion of the new protocols in dealing with long-term registrants, both those who have been scored already and the thousands who have not. If we are committed to a risk-based system, we can safely cap and even reduce the size of our registry.

¹ Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, Oregon Recidivism Analysis, May 2018, p. 20.

² R. Karl Hanson and others, "Reductions in Risk Based on Time Offense-Free in the Community: Once a Sexual Offender, Not Always a Sexual Offender," *Psychology, Public Policy and Law*, 018, Vol. 24, No. 1, 48 – 63.

Oregon Registry Shrinks with New Research

The Oregon State Police registry office has just announced that a review of the registry records has revealed that about 6,000 persons listed on the Oregon Registry have moved to other states and are now registered there. When people move to another state, they are supposed to notify the state they are leaving as well as the state to which they move. A great many people who move, however, are unaware of this and move without letting the Oregon registry office know of their departure. As a result, the size of Oregon's registry has been reduced from about 33,500 to 27,500. Now the registry office is doing more systematic research on registrants who may have died. They expect that the current number of 27,500 will shrink even more when that work is done.

Higher numbers feed the mostly groundless fears that people have about registrants in their midst. Although the reduced numbers coming from this research don't provide relief for any individuals living on the registry, they might help just a bit to lower the level of social panic in Oregon society at large.

Photos Expressing Hope and Courage

OV dedicates some space in each newsletter to highlight the creative talents of AICs and RCs. These particular photos give us some things to think about as we approach the new year. They were submitted by a special person who is dedicated to attending our general meetings and who hopes to gain relief from the registry sometime during 2025! We wish him well!



Free On the Outside's Housing Program Continues to Grow

Since its inception in 2008, the mission of Free On the Outside, based in Oregon City, has been to restore hope and rebuild lives by providing safe, affordable, clean, and sober housing within a supportive community for those coming out of jails, prisons, addiction treatment, and homelessness. OV thanks Mike, who is solely responsible for his endless efforts to find more and more “beds” and surrounding support systems over the past sixteen years in Clackamas, Multnomah, and Washington counties. And F.O.T.O. continues to grow! To find out more about the program, refer to the contact information provided in the following flyer.

FREE ON THE OUTSIDE
RESTORING HOPE • REBUILDING LIVES

OUR MISSION
Free On The Outside's mission is to restore hope and rebuild lives by providing safe, affordable, clean & sober housing within a supportive community.

WHAT WE OFFER

- Single & Shared Rooms
- Co-Ed/Family & Gender Specific Housing
- On-Site Laundry
- Utilities Included

CONTACT US
CALL 503-383-1834
admin@freeontheoutside.org

ABOUT US
Free on the Outside was founded in 2008. We specialize in finding housing for those coming out of jails, prisons, addiction treatment & homelessness.

 *website*

 *donate here*

admin@freeontheoutside.org

Sponsors, Inc. Shares an Impressive “Impact” Report for 2024

Annie Herz, the new Executive Director of Sponsors, Inc. recently spoke at a meeting attended by an OV board member who was impressed by the impact that this non-profit organization has had on those reentering Lane County following incarceration. Annie pointed out that the philosophy of Sponsors is deeply rooted in the belief that people can and do change, and that each and every person is deserving of a second chance at life. And you can tell when she talks that she is passionate about her work.

Since its beginning in 1973, those at Sponsors have helped men and women find housing and employment and provided them with the surrounding services that they need to transition to the outside world. It started with 5 transitional beds and has since expanded its housing programs to provide 242 beds of transitional and long-term housing available at seven different sites scattered throughout the Eugene area. Be sure to check out their website at:

<https://sponsorsinc.org/sponsors-housing/>

Annie reported that every year, Sponsors helps more than 500 people released from incarceration in their efforts to be productive, law-abiding, and contributing members of Lane County. Upon release, they are directly placed in transitional housing at Roosevelt Crossing located at 338 Highway 99 N., in Eugene, given access to the reentry resource center where potential jobs are constantly posted and updated, and given the support that they need whether it be for drug or alcohol addiction, depression, anxiety, adapting socially, or simply how to use iPhones and computers! Behavioral health services, the mentorship program, the Reentry Resource Center, community gardens, and a gym are all available on-site.

There is also a warehouse that is stocked with supplies and when people arrive from prison with just the clothing on their backs, they can get what they need. Annie reported that when individuals get hired for specific employment, they can even get the equipment needed for the job. For example, if they are going to work with a logging company, they can get boots, a hard hat, and the clothing needed.

Those who transition from incarceration to reentry at Roosevelt Crossing also have access to help 24/7 when trying to adjust to a world that seems out of touch. Annie reminded us that there are rules to follow, journals to keep, and meetings to attend with their probation officers.

Over the years, Sponsors has proven itself to be effective in helping those reentering Lane County following incarceration become successful citizens who are our neighbors, our friends, and our family members. This organization has earned the respect and trust of those who participate in city and government affairs, so they are fortunate to get the support and financial backing that they need.

Both Sponsors and Free on the Outside have shown us that offering housing to those coming out of Oregon's prisons and jails is not enough. Wrap-around services are also needed. These are proven programs that can serve as models for other communities that need to find ways to better assist AICs as they leave incarceration and reenter their respective home counties.

The Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP): Its Involvement in Assisting AICs As They Transition From Incarceration Back to Their Home Counties

The Oregon Workforce Partnership (OWP) was originally established to identify community employment needs throughout the state and to develop training programs to prepare job seekers to fulfill them. It aims to efficiently and effectively use resources to achieve better outcomes for businesses and job seekers. <https://oregonworkforcepartnership.org/reentry>

Later, a reentry initiative allowed for a statewide collaboration between OWP and the Department of Corrections to enhance Oregon's prison technology infrastructure and integrate what is known as WorkSource Oregon Reentry Services across the state's 12 prisons.

This initiative facilitates job placement, offers skills training, and provides continuous support for Adults in Custody (AICs) transitioning from incarceration to rejoining the workforce in their respective home counties.

By engaging with AICs 90 days before release and providing comprehensive post-release services, including employment opportunities, advanced career training, and additional support services in their communities, the program aims to facilitate a smooth transition and promote successful reintegration into society.

While the information provided in this article may seem confusing, two programs were presented on OPB that readers may find very interesting and much easier to understand:

--OPB. "Oregon's Got Jobs but Could Use Workers to Fill Critical Positions"

<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/05/15/oregon-industries-workers-shortage-critical-positions-new-report/>

-- OPB. "State Initiative Helps Oregon Inmates Forge New Career Pathways"

<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/11/19/worksource-oregon-reentry-inmates-employment/>

A Recent Court Decision May Pave the Way for AICs to Receive Better Health Care

At the November OV General meeting, a parent discussed a court petition that her incarcerated son filed to get medical care after he was beaten by other inmates. He suffered an "extremely damaging, brutal, and violent assault" on June 2, 2022, that left him with injuries that included a traumatic brain injury, fractured ribs, and chronic pain. She was relieved to report that a judge recently ruled in her son's favor, finding that the Oregon Department of Corrections failed to meet the standards of medical care to treat "extreme and debilitating injuries". As a result of the findings, the Oregon Department of Corrections must now provide him with specialized medical care, including a chronic pain assessment and surgical consultation.

To learn more about the case, click on either of the following links:

[Judge finds Oregon guard invited ‘violent assault’ on prisoner, then state failed to provide adequate care](#)

<https://www.opb.org/article/2024/10/24/umatilla-county-judge-finds-oregon-guard-invited-prisoner-assault/>



An Important Holiday Project!

Recently, two board members created a very special holiday greeting and sent it to 48 AICs who stay in touch with Oregon Voices. We are also extending special wishes for a peaceful holiday to all of you who receive this newsletter.

Remember to check the Department of Corrections website to see when and if the proposed new rules for mailing any correspondence become a reality, are modified, or go simply away!

Last, But Not Least

Oregon Voices needs your support and input. We look forward to your attendance at our quarterly General meetings because it is where we can best communicate with one another.

Help is always needed to work on such issues as housing, employment, education, legal resources, the website, legislation, and the OV newsletter. If you would like more information about Oregon Voices or wish to volunteer in some capacity, please call 971-317-6868, or email: info@oregonvoices.org

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