



OREGON CURE

Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants

The mission of Oregon CURE is to support the incarcerated and their families and friends by advocating for effective criminal justice policies and procedures.

Spring 2025, Volume 79

A Newsletter for Incarcerated People and their Families and Friends
P.O. Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280

WELCOME TONI, OUR NEWEST BOARD MEMBER

In our newsletter, we asked for volunteer board members and Toni was interested. She attended several of our board meetings to become familiar with what we do at Oregon CURE, and once she felt we were a good fit, she agreed to join our board and was unanimously voted in and gratefully accepted. Toni has a background in education, so it seems only natural that she would become our education specialist. We are thrilled to have Toni as the newest member of our board!

IN TONI'S OWN WORDS:

I am happy to have the opportunity to serve on the CURE board. In recent months I've been on the fast track in learning about the corrections system in Oregon. Before my son went to prison, I had no idea how many perceptions I had about the correction system were not just wrong, but so simplistic. It is not at all like the TV shows. Almost as shocking was the lack of information my friends and I had about the DOC. So, like many families in my situation, I started looking for ways to educate myself about the system and get involved. I wanted to join a group whose mission is to help incarcerated individuals and their families. I wanted to work on access to education and communication between prisoners and family. Education has been shown to help individuals reintegrate when they are released and having a close relationship with family to support them helps them not to reoffend. I am a retired educator; I taught for 32 years. My students ranged from Kindergarten to University. I believe that education is the great equalizer. In this country, public education is available to all students. Whenever there is a barrier to public education, we must remove that barrier. I came to CURE because there is a barrier to access public education for most incarcerated people in Oregon prisons. I want to work on helping to provide that access. CURE has provided a way to partner with individuals and institutions to work on this problem. Another problem in prisons is lack of access to communication, specifically the ability to make phone calls. The Department of Corrections states clearly that incarcerated people need to stay connected to family and friends. But this is not always the case. For example, the largest prison population in Oregon is housed at Snake River Correctional Institution. Physical access from the major urban centers is a 12 hour round trip drive or a \$500+ round trip flight to Boise and car rental to get to Snake River. There is no train or bus service. This makes having access to phones and video stations extremely important. Yet for various reasons, phones are not easily available to all inmates. These problems of access require a long-term commitment to make change. CURE is committed to working to make real change no matter how long it takes. As part of this group, I am learning to be patient yet persistent. It is a great pleasure to be part of the changemaker that is CURE.

OREGON CURE HAS VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Are you interested in joining our board of directors? If so, please let us know, as your attendance at our monthly board meetings in Beaverton, Oregon, on the first Saturday of each month from 1 PM to 4 PM would be required for most meetings. Board members are responsible for tasks such as recapping monthly meetings, tracking Oregon legislative sessions, evaluating changes to OARS, participating in DOC work groups, and working on various projects to improve conditions and communication within the prison system. We welcome any help and can offer opportunities that align with your strengths. Just contact us.

2025 LEGISLATIVE SESSION - UPDATE ON BILLS AS WE GO TO PRESS by Kyle Colleen

Here we are in the middle of the 2025 Legislation Session and personally I believe historical times are being made. Several bills have been proposed that aim at modernizing and improving the judicial system and have been vetted by the Judiciary Committees. They have gone on to the Ways and Means Committee, an essential step in determining funding allocations and fiscal impacts. The Committee will assess the financial implications of implementing these legislative proposals and make recommendations for the full legislature.

A summary of key bills and their implications for the state's judicial landscape:

SB293 | Requires the Department of Corrections to provide certain medical care to adults in custody. Document the reasons for any denial or refusal of medical care to adults in custody, refrain from considering the remaining duration of incarceration for adults in custody in determining medical care, list in the Adult in Custody's file the reason a medical service is denied and that formulary prescriptions mirror the standards of Medicare and Medicaid.

SB703 | Directs the Department of Human Services to provide grants to nonprofit service providers to assist individuals who are noncitizens to change their immigration status or obtain lawful permanent resident status.

SB938 | The bill would allow the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to award grant funds to a statewide coalition that does not directly provide restorative justice programs but assists or supports other potential grant recipients in applying for restorative justice program grants administered by the CJC. The bill establishes the Restorative Justice Grant Program Account and continuously appropriates money for the grant program.

SB1007 | Modifies provisions relating to petitions for compensation for wrongful conviction and increase the scope of available compensation.

SB1120 | Requires the Department of Corrections to implement a list of policies for adults in custody, including policies related to gender-responsive, evidence-based and

trauma-informed practices at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB2233 | Directs the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to establish a program to provide legal services to assist adults in custody who are serving sentences at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB2405 | Appropriates money from the General Fund to the Higher Education Coordinating Commission for distribution to Eastern Oregon University to provide university degrees to adults in custody at some correctional facilities in eastern Oregon

HB2555 | Changes the name of the Family Sentencing Alternative Pilot Program to the Family Sentencing Alternative Program.

HB2747 | Requires the Department of Corrections to provide adults in custody at certain department institutions access to specific online educational programs.

HB3066 | Appropriates money from the General Fund to the Department of Corrections for the purpose of funding the advanced esthetics program at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility.

HB3118 | Requires the Department of Corrections to enter into a contract, or renegotiate an existing contract, with a third party to provide voice communications services at no cost to people confined at a Department of Corrections institution.

The passage of these bills represents a significant stride towards a more equitable and effective judicial system in Oregon. Stakeholders will continue to monitor the progress of these initiatives as they transition through the legislative process. Engagement from the community, legal professionals, and advocacy groups will be crucial in shaping the final outcomes of these bills. Please write to any or all of the following members of the Legislature to voice your concern about these bills being passed and the impact it will have on you personally, our communities and/or the state of Oregon.

JT. COMM. WAYS & MEANS SENATE JUDICIARY

Co-Chair Senator Lieber Room S205

Chair Prozanski Room S413

Co-Chair Rep. Sanchez Room H273

Vice Chair Thatcher Room S307

HOUSE JUDICIARY

Chair Kroph Room H491

Vice-Chair Wallan Room H3888

Vice-Chair Chotzen Room H485

BOOKS AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS REVIEW – APPROVAL AND DENIAL

Special thanks to Randy Geer for putting this together in collaboration with ODOC

The Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC), like all DOCs nationwide, has limitations on what publications are allowed for Adults-in-Custody (AICs). The primary document defining what is allowed and disallowed is the ODOC Rule on Mail (AIC) - Division 291 - Rule 131. You may find the entire Mail Rule at the following web address: secure.sos.state.or.us/oard/displayDivisionRules.action?selectedDivision=963 or on the DOC website in the “Contact an AIC” section.

To summarize, both new and used books are allowed in ODOC institutions provided the books are mailed directly to the prison from an approved publisher, the books do not contain forbidden content, nor are they made with and do not contain unapproved materials linked to security concerns. Roughly stated, content restrictions include sexual content (with a small qualifier for some materials), descriptions of activities or processes that would aid an AIC in committing a rule violation(s) or in producing contraband, inflammatory materials), or material(s) that romanticize criminal activity or gang life. Similar rules exist for magazines and newspapers.

- Sexually Explicit Material
 - Rule of Thumb: If it's so graphic you wouldn't find it on a public library shelf, it will probably be rejected.
- Threatens Security of the Facility
 - Rule of Thumb: Does this incite or promote violence or escape?
- Detrimental to AIC Rehabilitation
 - Rule of Thumb: Based on the individual, is this content something that works against DOC's efforts to rehabilitate? Does the content encourage a behavior that DOC is specifically working to extinguish?
- Facilitates Criminal Activity
 - Rule of Thumb: Does this instruct on how to commit a crime?

When a publication comes into a mailroom and is correctly addressed and from an approved publisher, the publication is entered into a dataset. The dataset allows the mailroom to sort the publication into one of two categories: 1) Not Rejected Publications or 2) Pending Review. Books placed in the Not Rejected category are routed to the AICs housing unit along with regular mail. Books in the Pending Review category may be added to either the Not Rejected Publications dataset or the third dataset, Rejected Publications, after more extensive review. For ODOC purposes a publication must be in one of these three categories of data, which is maintained in software used by all of the Mailrooms.

Please note, there are 5,603 pages containing approximately 65,000 titles in the Not Rejected Publications dataset. In total, in 2024, Mailrooms processed 70,227 books (averaging about 270 books per day). 1,100 were rejected, or about 1.5%. Statistics were provided by ODOC to help CURE understand the sheer volume of the publication processing.

When a publication arrives in the mailroom and is not found in the Not Rejected Publications or Rejected Publications datasets, the publication is first inspected by ODOC mailroom staff. If they find nothing in a publication that violates the **Mail Rule (AIC) – Division 291-Rule 131**, they place the publication in the Not Rejected Publications dataset. The publication is then processed and routed into the AIC with regular mail.

If they find content that may violate the **Mail Rule (AIC) – Division 291-Rule 131**, the decision to ‘reject’ or to ‘not reject’ is deferred to an official (or designee) at the Central Office of ODOC. Once this person has reviewed a scan of the material, he or she forwards their decision, via the software, back to the institution holding the publication.

When a facility mailroom receives a publication that is already in the Rejected Publications dataset, or a Pending Review publication is moved to the Rejected Publications list, the mailroom completes a **Mail Violation and Publication Violation Notice (CD618a)**. A copy of the Notice is sent to the AIC. A copy of the Notice is mailed back to the bookstore with the rejected publication. A copy of the Notice is filed. A book will stay in the Rejected Publications dataset, unless removed by appeal, for three years. After that time, the publication is removed from the Rejected Publications dataset automatically and will be treated like an unknown publication when it next arrives at an ODOC institution. The book will then begin the process again. The three-year figure has to do with the retention schedule for documents but also reflects a commitment by ODOC to reflect changing community standards when appropriate.

A finding by the Central Office reviewer that a publication does not violate the **Rule on Mail (AIC) - Division 291 - Rule 131** will result in the publication being routed to the AIC and the publication being placed in the Not Rejected Publications dataset. Entries of books into either the Not Rejected or Pending datasets are done solely by institutional mailroom staff. Only the Central Office reviewer can place a publication on the Rejected list.

According to the rule, an AIC may appeal the denial of a book based solely on content. When an AIC receives a copy of the **Mail Violation and Publication Violation Notice (618a)**, the AIC can appeal to the Superintendent. Similarly, the original purchaser, if not the AIC (presumably you or other friends or family) can also ask for a review of a decision to reject a publication by writing the Superintendent. However, all requests to appeal a rejection must be accompanied by a copy of the **Mail Violation and Publication Violation Notice (618a)**. If a large volume bookseller, like Amazon, was used to purchase the book, the buyer, if not the AIC, may have trouble accommodating the requirement to attach the Notice. The request for an appeal must be made to the Superintendent in writing within 30 days of the date the original **Mail Violation and Publication Violation Notice (618a)** was originally issued.

Either the AIC or the sender can request the review; however, it's generally easier if it is done by the AIC, who will often be given the opportunity to view the rejected material (if it isn't an immediate threat) and have the rejection clarified in person as to how exactly the material violated the rule. If the Superintendent finds, in the appeal, a publication was inappropriately rejected, the publication may be reordered and will be approved for this specific AIC at this specific location. Upon appeal, the Superintendent's decision, either approving or rejecting the publication, will be sent by the Superintendent or their designee to the AIC and to the mailroom. The AIC should retain the Superintendent's memo. Responsibility for changing the status in the datasets for the entire state is at the discretion of the Reviewer at the Central Office.

Sometimes, for very specific and rare reasons, a book or other publication may be allowed for a specific AIC but not for others.

The exact language for all of this is in the **Rule on Mail (AIC) – Division 291-Rule 131**. CURE encourages you to read it. If you disagree with it, you may provide testimony the next time the Rule on **Mail (AIC) – Division 291-Rule 131** is open for review. Here are a few other facts that might clarify a few things:

1. ODOC recognizes the value of reading and self-study to both personal growth and to transition readiness. ODOC wishes to encourage ongoing life-long learning.
2. The person in Central Office is not the right person to inquire about a specific publication's status. Institutional mailroom staff have access to the datasets and can ascertain the status of a publication.
3. The datasets are dynamic and a part of the Offender Management System (OMS) software and cannot be easily shared outside the system. ODOC is considering whether sharing a copy of the datasets periodically would be useful to friends and families. The datasets change many times each day, but they are approximate at any given time, and that might be useful.
4. The department is working on an interactive 'Chatbot' that would allow friends and family to make an inquiry about a specific publication on the ODOC website. Progress on this 'Chatbot' is on hold while the state studies and considers the future use of artificial Intelligence technology (AI). The test version of the chatbot (which is about 70% accurate at this point) is available to the public on the DOC website by clicking "Contact an AIC" and then selecting "Letters" – the chat bubble appears in the bottom right-hand corner.

5. ODOC uses something called an International Standard Book Number or ISBN when searching the datasets. ISBN is more reliable than ‘title’ as a ‘title’ is sometimes duplicated by the publishing industry. When purchasing a book for a loved one, you should ask the publisher to provide you with the ISBN so you may more easily communicate with ODOC if needed to resolve any problems.
6. Publications that contain other items like CDs, Maps, Study Guides, product samples, or that have wire bindings or other tangible prohibited elements may also be rejected by ODOC. Beware of these “extras” when purchasing a publication for your loved one as a rejection for anything other than content is not reviewable and may not be appealed.
7. In almost all cases, a publication pending review remains in the institution’s mailroom and a scan(s) of content believed to violate the rule is forwarded to the Central Office reviewer. This prevents the publication from being lost or stolen.
8. All books are stamped and the AICs Name and SID Number placed on the inside cover of a book before it is sent into the AIC. The practice is meant to discourage theft or resale of the book and to ensure the book is allowed to transfer with the AIC, if necessary.
9. Books and Publications must fit in or on assigned storage in the housing unit.
10. The Mail Violation and Publication Violation Notice (CD 618a) is a very important document to retain for reference and dispute resolution.
11. If the publication you are attempting to send into ODOC for your loved one is a part of a curriculum for further education or necessary programming to address the criminogenic needs of your loved one or if the book and related materials fit a unique niche and interest and is not otherwise available to your loved one (libraries or commissary etc.), the use of a Package Authorization Form may be a way for your loved one to receive a problematic publication (and/or materials.) The AIC must be the party that requests any item(s) through a Package Authorization Form. The form requires the AIC to communicate with institutional manager(s) to endorse the Package Authorization Form and the approval of the Superintendent is required.
12. Finally, the only mechanism for compensation should a book be lost by ODOC is for the AIC to file a Tort Claim. There is no compensation for rejected publications. AICs and their loved one’s order publications at their own risk.

This is an overview of how publications (books) are intended to work within ODOC. Again, if you find the rule onerous or hard to understand, then please be ready to present your point-of-view when the rule is next open for review. If you have further questions, please contact Karen Cain at CURE and she will seek clarification. ODOC has been very forthcoming about how all the censorship and layered approvals work. Like all ODOC processes, mail and publication reviews are dynamic. Input is always helpful in making a better mousetrap. Maybe ODOC will find ways to improve how to handle publications in the future. I hope a deeper understanding is helpful to you. Please go study the Rule on Mail (AIC) - Division 291-Rule 131. Knowledge is power. If you have further questions, please direct them to Karen at Oregon CURE.

RESOURCES WANTED

Are you needing information regarding release housing, treatment programs upon release, employment upon release, etc. Our Resource Specialist, Kyle, has a wealth of knowledge and is happy to share. If you are incarcerated, you can write to us at Oregon CURE, Attention Kyle B., PO Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280 to ask for resource information and Kyle will get it to you ASAP. If you are not incarcerated, you can request such information via email at oregoncure@gmail.com, and she will get the information to you via email ASAP.

If you have resources that you wish for us to know about, please email us that information at oregoncure@gmail.com and we will share your resource information with those requesting it.

PRISON REENTRY AND THE TRANSCENDENT NATURE OF INSTITUTIONAL BONDS

by Scott Spencer-Wolff, PhD

Walking through prison gates to the “outs” represents freedom to most inmates who count the days (and sometimes hours) until release. But a profound paradox emerges from the shadows of incarceration: Freedom from confinement means leaving behind relationships that often run deeper than marriage, closer than family, and more intense than conventional friendships. Behind concrete walls, many prisoners find themselves bound by invisible chains forged through human connections that serve as both survival strategy and deep trust. The outside world becomes the unknown territory, while these bonds, formed in cellblocks of controlled chaos, offer a paradoxical comfort, challenging our traditional understanding of relationship categories and creating a place where inmates know exactly who they are, where they belong, and what tomorrow will bring.

These dynamics are not something everyone experiences. They are most common with those who have done long sentences, although, depending on each individual, the potential is there. It depends mostly on the emotional development and maturity of each person.

Considering this complexity is something “outsiders” give little consideration to. One’s cellmate becomes more intimate than a spouse, partner, or significant other - sharing every moment of vulnerability, every bodily function, every mood swing, with no ability to take space or create boundaries. There’s no “going home to think about it” after an argument, no separate spaces to maintain individual identity. This forced intimacy establishes a depth of knowing that most couples never experience. You learn to read each other’s breathing patterns, anticipate emotional shifts before they happen, and develop unspoken languages that outsiders can’t comprehend.

The parent-child dynamic gets inverted and multiplied in institutional relationships. An older inmate might simultaneously be your protector, teacher, and student - teaching you prison survival skills while you teach them to use a computer, both of you taking turns being vulnerable and strong. These relationships defy conventional hierarchy. The person who seems to need protection might be the emotional anchor for their protector, creating complex webs of mutual dependency that transcend traditional mentorship models.

Friendship takes on dimensions that make outside relationships seem shallow by comparison. Consider the depth: A friend on the outside might loan you money or give you a place to stay. A friend inside might take a beating to protect your future, risk their freedom to keep you safe or sacrifice their limited resources to help you maintain hope. These aren’t just acts of friendship - they’re contracts written in a currency of trust where betrayal can mean death or added years of confinement.

The boundaries between family and friends dissolve entirely. Your “prison family” might include a spiritual advisor who becomes a father or mother figure, a peer who becomes closer than a sibling, and a mentor who embodies every positive role model you never had growing up. These relationships don’t fit into conventional boxes because they serve multiple functions simultaneously - providing emotional support and development, physical protection, intellectual stimulation, and spiritual guidance, often all within the same bond.

Time works differently in institutional relationships. A year of friendship inside equals perhaps a decade outside in terms of shared experience and emotional intensity. You might know someone for only six months, but if those months include surviving a riot together, holding each other through family deaths, or sharing the last of your food during a lockdown, the bond formed can exceed relationships that lasted decades in the free world.

Trust takes on a much greater significance. Outside, trusting someone might mean sharing secrets or lending possessions. Inside, trust means putting your life, freedom, and sanity in someone else’s hands daily. When someone knows every detail about your case, your weaknesses, your family conflicts, and your deepest fears, while having the power to use any of this information to harm you, the decision to trust becomes a profound act of faith that creates bonds conventional relationships rarely require.

The emotional landscape is more complex too. You might deeply care about someone who you would never associate with outside, recognizing their institutional value while knowing your values don't align. You might form profound connections with people whose politics, beliefs, or lifestyles you oppose, creating relationships based on shared humanity rather than shared demographics or interests.

These bonds often involve a level of emotional honesty rarely seen outside. When you've held someone through withdrawal, talked them down from suicide, or shared their grief over losing parental rights, pretense becomes impossible. The masks people wear in conventional society don't survive in an environment where vulnerability is both dangerous and unavoidable.

Power dynamics add another layer of complexity. Unlike outside relationships, where roles and hierarchies are relatively stable, institutional relationships require constant negotiation of power, protection, and dependency. The person you protect today might be protecting you tomorrow. The mentor you rely on might need your emotional support during their darkest moments. This creates a fluid dance of vulnerability and strength that makes conventional relationship dynamics seem rigid and artificial.

Conflict resolution takes on unique dimensions. Outside, you can walk away from toxic relationships or take time to cool off. Inside, you must develop sophisticated skills for managing conflict without the luxury of space or separation. This creates deeper emotional intelligence and conflict resolution abilities than most conventional relationships require. Still, it also means the bonds formed are tested and strengthened by fire in ways outside relationships rarely experience.

The sharing of resources transcends normal social conventions. Outside, sharing might mean picking up a dinner check or helping with rent. Inside, sharing often means sacrificing your own basic needs for someone else's survival. When someone gives you their last stamp so you can write to your dying parent, or shares their medication when you're in pain, these acts create bonds that make conventional generosity seem superficial.

Memory and shared experience take on sacred significance. You and your institutional friends become holders of each other's stories, witnesses to each other's transformations, keepers of each other's secrets. The person who knew you at your worst, who saw you change and grow, who holds pieces of your history that even your family doesn't know - these bonds create a type of intimacy that conventional relationships rarely achieve.

This complexity makes leaving these relationships uniquely traumatic. You're not just leaving friends or supporters - you're leaving people who have become essential parts of your survival story, who know you in ways that people outside never can. The grief of separation is complicated by knowing that, unlike deaths or normal relationship endings, these bonds are being severed not by choice or natural conclusion, but by circumstance, while both parties continue to exist in separate worlds.

Understanding these unique bonds is crucial for supporting reentry. Traditional relationship counseling models fall short because they're based on conventional relationship dynamics that don't capture these institutional bonds' complexity, intensity, and nature. We can only begin to help people navigate the journey of carrying and healing forward while building new connections in freedom by acknowledging these relationships' complex and highly meaningful nature.

The Weight of Freedom: Understanding and Addressing Survivors' Guilt

Perhaps the most crushing psychological burden of release through parole or clemency is survivor's guilt that may follow. Imagine walking to freedom knowing your cellmate, with a nearly identical case, will serve twenty more years. Or receiving clemency while your mentor, who helped transform you into a person worthy of release, continues serving life without parole. This isn't just guilt - it's a complex trauma that challenges one's fundamental sense of justice and self-worth.

The guilt manifests in various forms: "Why me and not them?" - "Their case was similar - how is this fair?" - "They've changed more than I have." - "They helped me become who I am - they deserve this more."

Or, what some may call 'Responsibility Guilt'. Feeling obligated to succeed for those left behind. Crushing pressure to "make it worth it," - Fear that any mistake dishonors those still inside. Or, the sense of carrying others' hopes and dreams

Or Abandonment Guilt, Feeling like you've deserted your "inside family." - Guilt over no longer being there for daily support. - Pain of missing important moments in others' lives - Struggle with enjoying freedom while others suffer

Lastly, Advocacy Guilt - Pressure to speak for those left behind or of not doing enough to help others. Guilt over enjoying life instead of constantly advocating. Struggling with when to step back and focus on personal healing

Addressing and healing this complex guilt requires multiple approaches: In the immediacy, acknowledge the Validity—recognize that survivor's guilt is a normal and even healthy response to the release. Understand that feeling guilt doesn't diminish the deservingness of freedom.

Accept that these feelings honor the depth of left-behind relationships. I was at the birthday party of a close friend recently, where almost all the guests were friends who had done long sentences – and reflected with incredible love and gratitude all that my friend had done for them, or more importantly, all that he had BEEN for them, while inside. I can't even begin to describe how powerful this was for everyone there.

We can allow space for both gratitude and grief by creating connection rituals. In my circle, the annual "Gathering of the Fellows" (a picnic bringing ex-cons, their families, and some prison staff, together) serves some of this purpose, but groups like ReGroup also offer that chance to check in and report on what's happening inside for insiders and outsiders. We can also set aside specific times to remember and honor those important relationships. As a group (like ReGroup,) we might also use little ceremonies to process these deep feelings.

Some released after long periods may be called to meaningful advocacy for those still incarcerated. Not everyone is ready to do this, and those not called to this kind of role should know that *not* everyone is called to this kind of role. Involvement in groups like CURE, which advocates for systemic changes, and the families of those still incarcerated can often be helpful.

Long-term Healing:

Sometimes, the complexities of this specific form of PTSD can be challenging – and we may want to work with therapists who understand institutional and organizational trauma. There are parallels not related to prisons; often, those getting out of the military after a couple of extremely challenging tours experience very similar dynamics. It would be worthwhile to reach out to those therapists and ask if there is any interest in delving deeper into this area.

Moving Forward:

The key to managing survivors' guilt is understanding that it doesn't have to be resolved to be managed. It's possible to carry both gratitude for freedom and grief for those left behind. The goal isn't to eliminate these feelings but to transform them into something that serves both personal healing and broader justice.

Success after release isn't a betrayal of those left behind - it's a fulfillment of their hopes and investments in you. Every time you succeed, you validate their belief in human potential for change. Every time you heal, you prove that transformation is possible. Every time you find joy, you keep hope alive for those still waiting.

The path forward involves holding multiple truths: that you can be both grateful and guilty, healing and hurting, moving forward and looking back. This complexity doesn't need to be resolved - it needs to be integrated into a new understanding of self that honors all parts of your journey and all those who helped shape it.

The journey through survivor's guilt is not a straight path but a spiral - revisiting feelings while hopefully gaining new perspective each time. The goal isn't to "get over it" but to find ways to honor these complex emotions while building a life that serves *both* personal healing and collective justice.

EUGENE SUPPORT GROUP MEETING INVITATION

The phone rings when you least expect it. The caller is your son, arrested overnight on felony charges. He tries to reassure you, but it's clear he's in big trouble and you have no idea what happens next. A sense of fear, bewilderment and anxiety is paralyzing. In desperation, you seek guidance and comfort from a familiar voice, a friend whose own son went through the prison system. He invites you to a meeting held monthly in town, attended by parents and friends of the incarcerated. "We won't have all the answers," he assures. "But it's a friendly group. We'll have stories to share about our own experiences negotiating the criminal justice system. Join us!"

And so we did. That was among the first steps my wife and I took as we tried to cope with the reality, and we wouldn't be hugging our son anytime soon. Turns out it was a 75-month journey. Fortunately, we had a place to turn for answers, for reassurance, where once a month we could share our concerns with others who've been there. And what was said in the meeting, remained at the meeting — in confidence. Eugene CURE was a lifeline for us. It can be for you, too. Whether you're a "newbie" or have years of experience with a loved one behind bars, our Eugene group is a safe place to find understanding and help for you and for your loved one — even for a friend in a similar situation.

I'm one of several who facilitate monthly Eugene CURE meetings in the quiet and secure conference room of an apartment complex operated by Sponsors, Inc., which provides transitional and permanent housing — among an array of other life-saving services — for men and women with incarceration histories. We meet from 6:30 to 8:30 pm on the first Thursday of the month in the Conference Room of The Oaks at 14th at 1424 Oak Patch Road in west Eugene. The room is spacious and has a sink, refrigerator, and bathroom. It's always a potluck, so bring your appetite. If you're a first timer, there's no need to contribute food. (No one underage, please.) For more information, call me for details. Donovan Mack, 541-521-2231. Leave a message and I will return your call ASAP.

INFORMATION SHARING

The following are facts about incarcerated individuals in Oregon. They might be helpful as beginning questions such as "Did you know...?", or statements for further investigation or just interesting information.

FIRST INFORMATION ABOUT SEX OFFENCES IN OREGON:

- In Oregon we have the second highest number of registered sex offenders in the country.
- Oregon's population is approximately 4,200,000 with 23,500 registered sex offenders.
- Oklahoma's population, 4,000,000 with 7,000 registered sex offenders. Oklahoma's population is near Oregon's population. Oregon has over 3 times as many registered sex offenders than Oklahoma.
- Ohio's population at 12,000,000 has 20,000,000 registered sex offenders. Ohio has 3 times Oregon's population with 3,000 less registered sex offenders.
- Nevada's population about 3,200,000 has 7,000 registered sex offenders. Oregon has more than 3 times as many sex offenders with about 1/4 more population.
- Numbers come from Safehome.org

SECOND SUBSTANCE ABUSE DISORDER TREATMENT:

- "The substantial prison population in the United States is strongly connected to drug-related offenses. While the exact rates of inmates with substance use disorders (SUDs) is difficult to measure, some research shows that an estimated 65% percent of the United States prison population has an active SUD. Another 20% percent did not meet the official criteria for an SUD, but were under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the time of their crime.¹
- Decades of science show that providing comprehensive substance use treatment to criminal offenders while incarcerated works, reducing both drug use and crime after an inmate returns to the community. Treatment while in jail or prison is critical to reducing overall crime and other drug-related societal burdens—such as lost job productivity, family disintegration and a continual return to jail or prison, known as recidivism. Inadequate treatment while incarcerated also contributes to overdoses and deaths when inmates leave the prison system."
- From: nida.nih.gov website
- 13,000 people are incarcerated in Oregon.
- 50% identify as having a Substance Abuse Disorder and need treatment.
- 1,100 spaces for treatment exist per DOC
- 18% are getting their needs met.
- 82% who need treatment aren't.

FINALLY, A HISTORY FUN FACT: The first women's prison in Oregon opened in 1965....women's jeans and t-shirts weren't introduced until 2022, almost 60 years later.

KRISTINA RICE-WHITLOW OREGON'S NEW CORRECTIONS OMBUDS PERSON

Effective March 3, 2025, the Governor appointed Kristina Rice-Whitlow as the permanent Corrections Ombuds person. She has been acting as interim Corrections Ombuds since October of last year. Kristina has served as Governor Kotek's Director of Constituent Services since 2023 and served in the same position during the previous administration, overseeing the processing of an average of 900 inquiries to the Governor per week. Prior to joining the Governor's office in 2017, she worked in administrative roles within the criminal legal system at the Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, the Gresham Police Department, the Yamhill County Circuit Court and the Linn County Medical Examiner's Office.

The Office of Corrections Ombudsman is an independent resource that investigates complaints, concerns, or violations of rights for adults in custody of the Oregon Department of Corrections and provides oversight to the agency. The Office of Corrections Ombudsman can be reached at the hotline, 1-888-685-6842. Written correspondence can be sent to: 900 Court Street, NE Suite 254, Salem, OR 97301-4047.

In her short tenure she has immersed herself in learning about existing DOC policy, e.g. grievances, hearings, etc.

- Begun reviewing, synthesizing, and prioritizing existing backlog of correspondence to the office;
- Established a database and tracking system and significantly streamlined inquiry handling;
- Gathered information on trends regarding the grievance system, tribal/religious ceremonies, medical issues, and disparities in programming, recreational resources, and visitation;
- Started to develop policies and procedures for the office, including an intake form and communications protocols
- Begun developing relationships with facility and agency staff;
- Met with representatives from other state agencies to discuss areas of complementary policy work;
- Visited both Coffee Creek and Santiam institutions, and is scheduled to visit all institutions.
- Received/reviewed AIC handbooks for each facility to explore how those can be used to provide AICs with information about the role of the Corrections Ombuds;
- Identified potential improvements to communication channels between AICs and the Ombuds;
- A Corrections Ombuds website is scheduled to be up and available for use by the end of May.

SHOP & SUPPORT OREGON CURE

You can benefit from Oregon CURE when you shop at any Kroger/Fred Meyer store. Simply sign up at [Kroger.com](https://www.Kroger.com). Link your shopper's card if you already have one or sign up for one and choose Oregon CURE as the organization you wish to benefit from your shopping with each transaction. Once you sign up, any transaction you make moving forward using your membership Shoppers Card number will benefit Oregon CURE at no expense to you. Kroger will donate a percentage of what you spend with them to Oregon CURE. What a great way to benefit our non-profit.

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Oregon Cure appreciates your donations and support. Click to see the full QR code and scan to go directly to our PayPal link.



HOW DOES YOUR DONATION HELP?

It pays for our phone service, post office box, and postage to correspond with those who write to us, both in the free world and the incarcerated, it pays to print and mail our newsletters, and it pays for our non-profit status.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Your membership renewal date is on the address label of this newsletter. If your renewal date is expired, we ask that you please renew today to continue to receive this newsletter and to continue to support our organization.

You can also make a donation for someone you know to become a member. Your support is important to our mission and your donation is tax-deductible.

Send your membership tax-deductible donation to Oregon CURE, PO Box 80193, Portland, OR 97280.

Please fill out the member donation form below to receive our newsletter. Adult in custody subscription donation is \$3 and Individual Non-Incarcerated subscription donation is \$15. **All tax-deductible donations are greatly appreciated and can be made in any amount. Visit our website at oregoncure.org.**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____
(optional)

City/State/Zip: _____

Name of incarcerated loved one / SID & facility: _____

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RELEASE ORIENTATIONS

ODOC in collaboration with Oregon CURE holds quarterly TEAMS meetings as follows: The first Tuesday of February, May, August, and November from 6pm to 7pm.

You can join these meetings through Microsoft TEAMS app or by calling in at:

[Join the meeting now](#)

Meeting ID: 236 196 526 738

Passcode: Hi3sg33T

Dial in by phone

[+1 971-277-2160,,629436211#](tel:+19712772160,,629436211#) United States, Portland

[Find a local number](#)

Phone conference ID: 629 436 211#

INTAKE ORIENTATIONS

Intake Orientations are on hold until further notice. Please look here and on our website and Facebook page for updates.

Alternatively, you can email us at oregoncure@gmail.com for updates. We anticipate there will be intake information shared in the Release Orientations.

Oregon CURE
7805 SW 40th Ave.
PO Box 80193
Portland, OR 97280

ATTENTION:

Your address label has printed your renewal date below your name. This will be your last newsletter if your renewal date has passed. [Renew today to remain informed!](#)



SUPPORT GROUPS

Oregon CURE support groups are intended for adult family members and friends only. Some topics of discussion may not be suitable for small children or pre-teens. Attend a support group and network with family members who have “been there.”

Some of these support groups meet via zoom and some meet in person. Please reach out with the contact information given below as you are planning to attend, or if you have any questions. There is no limit to which or how often you attend a support group, nor is there a location requirement, if you are interested in attending a support group, we welcome you to do so.

Each meeting offers different insights and valuable information, and you are not required to share anything at all, if you do not wish to, simply listen and learn from other attendees.

Portland East Side Support Group

Varies & flexible – please call if interested.
Please call Ray at (530) 635-2763
RayAllenFox@gmail.com

Eugene Support Groups

1st Thursdays: 6:30pm-8:30pm
Please call to confirm location.
Dave (541) 344-7612 or Don (541) 521-2231

Zoom Support Group

1st Wednesdays: 7pm-8:30pm
Please email for Zoom link prior to meeting.
oregoncure@gmail.com or admin@oregoncure.com

Salem Support Group

1st Saturdays: 9:30am-11:30am
The Keizer Senior Center
930 Plymouth Drive NE, Keizer, OR 97303
Kyle (541) 643-5055