

TASK FORCE, from page 4

governor's staff on April 7 to request the formation of a Children's Cabinet. This Cabinet is one of the task force's key recommendations, and it would bring together representatives from all three branches of state government – and consolidate the various work groups and task forces assigned to issues facing children in state custody – to address ongoing reforms to juvenile delinquency programs.

Hockaday said Brown is in the process of “re-envisioning what a 21st-century behavioral health system in Oregon looks like.”

But that kind of system overhaul doesn't happen overnight, and there is an immediate need for placements.

“We're working very closely with our agencies to figure out what we can do to prioritize the limited resources to better meet the immediate needs and the immediate challenges that we are facing, and at the same time we work to do this overhaul, systemwide so that long term, we're seeing better outcomes,” Hockaday said.

He said it's too early to know how these issues might materialize in the governor's budget.

McKechnie said the state should look to incorporating “treatment foster care” into its system. It serves as an alternative to state hospital-level care and has been shown to be effective with children exhibiting challenging behavioral issues. It involves a higher level of home care and outside resources available to foster parents when they need to call for assistance. He said while the model was developed in Oregon, the state has not figured out a way to fund and sustain such a program as other states, such as

Wisconsin, have.

In May, Andrew Nanton, a doctor with Oregon Youth Authority, authored a response to the task force's findings and recommendations. It was his opinion that Oregon should increase access to Multisystemic Therapy, an intensive treatment program that involves everyone in a child's environment, from family to community, friends and teachers.

“It is my understanding that this modality was previously available in Oregon, but no longer formally in effect,” he wrote. “It is an effective intervention for Conduct Disorder and would be a useful tool for community interventions to avoid progression to foster care, detention and hospitalization.”

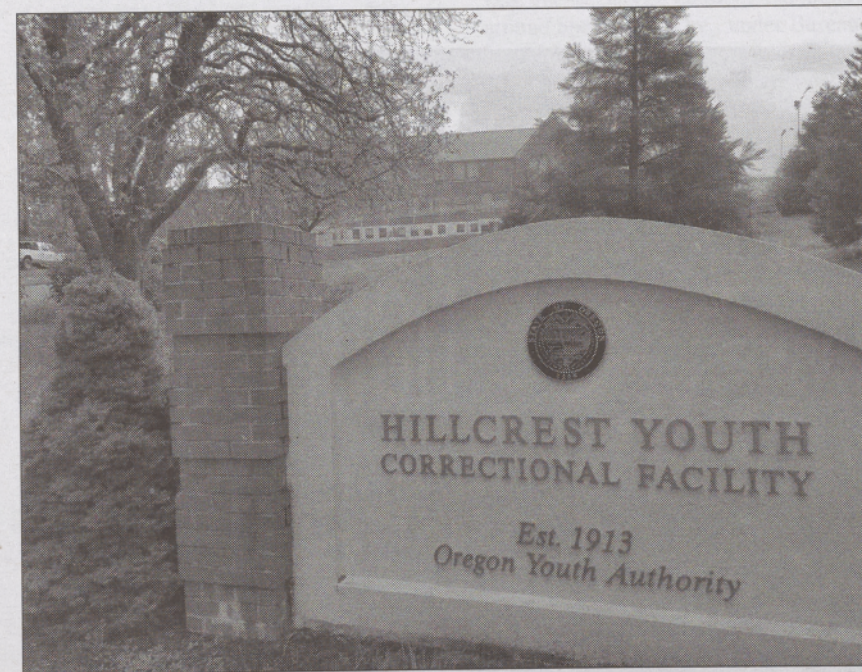
In addition to meeting with the governor's office, task force members have been working with the Juvenile Department Directors Association to adopt uniform mental health screening across the state's 11 county juvenile detention facilities; they are working to develop a

legislative concept to expand the legal protections for juveniles taking psychotropic drugs within Oregon Youth Authority facilities; Oregon Health Authority has begun a mapping project to collect data on juvenile mental health needs in different regions; and Waller plans to present to judges across the state the task force's plan and coach them on what to do when there are gaps in service, according to the task force's implementation plan.

emily@streetroots.org

“If you compare the size of the system in the 1990s to the population of kids we were serving then, and compare the size of the system now to the population of kids we're serving now, there's a deficit of services.”

PAULA BAUER,
TREATMENT SERVICES
PROGRAM MANAGER AT
OREGON YOUTH
AUTHORITY



STREET ROOTS PHOTO

Youths with mental health needs who come into state custody are being warehoused in juvenile detention facilities, like Hillcrest in Salem, according to a draft report from the Oregon Judicial Department.

Conditioned Friend

by Slow Coyote

Conditioned friend,
I'll love you
I'll represent you
fight for you.
You move from
hopeless occupation
to other
predictable outcomes
home is repetitiveness
for you
the world consists of
routine commutes
asking,
where did all that time go?
your health has suffered
from all those
speedy meals
the meals are a chore
and your free time is just
glue that binds the workdays
together.

Oh, conditioned friend.
I can spark your energy
For traveling
With a motivational
Phone call
You get excited, inspired
Then,
when the phone is placed
On the hanger
Your fear of the unknown
and enslaving
friends and family
continue to
knock some good old
Common sense into you

Conditioned friend!
You must serve!
Your health can wait,
your self-discovery
can happen secondarily
Your fun having
can get you high
while the alcohol
can numb
your true calling
for gratification

Oh yes, conditioned friend
You will be taken care of.
relinquish all those silly
internal urges of that
strange soul you have
because REALITY
is waiting for you to serve
Everyone in this REALITY
all around you is
serving just the same
and they will help you
get through the inconsistent
unhappy portions
You will inevitably experience
deep in that strange soul
of yours,

Conditioned friend.