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More than 30,000 Youth in Portland-SW Washington Region Not in School and Not Working

Workforce development boards provide education and training programs to help

PORTLAND-SW WASHINGTON (April 6, 2016) – A report released by the three workforce development boards that serve the Portland-SW Washington metropolitan area finds approximately 30,157 individuals ages 16 to 24 are not in school and not employed.

The report, distributed by the Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative (CWWC), looks at characteristics of these individuals that represent 28 percent of all young people ages 16 to 24 not enrolled in school in the six-county region (Clackamas, Clark, Cowlitz, Multnomah, Wahkiakum and Washington) served by the CWWC.

Dubbed “Opportunity Youth” by the White House Council on Community Solutions, these young people represent an important workforce resource for the local economy.

“This report identifies key demographic information and barriers faced by Opportunity Youth in our region,” said Bridget Dazey, Executive Director of the Clackamas Workforce Partnership. “Knowing who may be falling between the cracks and possibly not accessing programs will enable us to create innovative strategies to serve these individuals as we identify where the gaps in services are, and see if there are additional programs or partners that may address those needs within our community.”

“We wanted to have a better understanding of the young people in our region, their needs and challenges,” said Jeanne Bennett, CEO of the Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC). “These individuals are a key population identified in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) legislation to receive services.”

“Having and sharing this information enables us to have conversations within our respective agencies and externally with partners to identify services and resources needed by these youth,” said Andrew McGough, Worksystems’ Executive Director.

County	Share of 16-24 year olds who are Opportunity Youth	Count of Opportunity Youth
Clackamas	14%	6,135
Clark	11%	6,045
Cowlitz & Wahkiakum counties	16%	2,325
Multnomah	11%	8,730
Washington	11%	6,922
Subtotal Analysis Region	14%	30,157

Overview of Portland-SW Washington region Opportunity Youth:

- Almost evenly divided between female (51 percent or 15,484) and male (49 percent or 14,673).
- Nearly 30 percent of Opportunity Youth moved homes in the last year.
- In 2014, 61 percent or 17,933 Opportunity Youth lived in households earning below 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- Many Opportunity Youth are supporting themselves and also have children of their own. In 2014, 33 percent of Opportunity Youth females lived with their own children; nearly 10 percent were the primary support for their children.
- Opportunity Youth are slightly more likely to be white than all youth age 16 to 24 in the regional overall.
- Non-white and non-Hispanic youth are generally overrepresented among Opportunity Youth. This overrepresentation is most prominently seen among black youth. Although only six percent of Opportunity Youth are black, 23 percent of all black youth in the region are Opportunity Youth.

Opportunity Youth (OY) by Race and Ethnicity, 2014

	Share of Youth 16-24 who are Opportunity Youth	Count of Opportunity Youth
White	13%	21,036
Hispanic	11%	4,541
Asian	8%	1,216
Black	23%	1,823
Other	8%	1,541
Total	14%	30,157

- Forty-two percent of Opportunity Youth aged 16 to 19 have less than a high school diploma.
- Among Opportunity Youth aged 20 to 24, more than 4,500 (20 percent) have less than a high school diploma. This group is twice as likely as those with more than a high school diploma to have worked 26 or fewer weeks in the last year.
- Eighty-eight percent or 26,555 Opportunity Youth were employed for half or less of the last year.
- Roughly two-thirds of Opportunity Youth have not looked for work within the last four weeks and are not considered to be in the labor force.

The report and appendix may be downloaded from www.swwdc.org, www.clackamasworkforce.org or www.worksystems.org.

The Columbia-Willamette Workforce Collaborative is a partnership that delivers a unified approach to serve industry, support economic development and guide public workforce investments in the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area. <http://www.workforcecollaborative.org/>

Clackamas Workforce Partnership, formerly known as Workforce Investment Council of Clackamas County, is a nonprofit organization which serves as an advocate for workforce development within Clackamas County and the State of Oregon. Our mission is to address critical workforce, educational, and training challenges, and develop a skilled workforce that meets the needs of businesses and strengthens the local economy of Clackamas County. Learn more at www.clackamasworkforce.org.

Southwest Washington Workforce Development Council (SWWDC), a nonprofit organization founded in 2002, contributes to regional economic growth by providing investments and resources to improve the skills and education of the workforce in Clark, Cowlitz and Wahkiakum counties. SWWDC helps businesses find and hire the employees they need and provides people the skills, education and training to find work or advance in their careers. SWWDC partners with employers, community colleges and universities, labor groups, government and economic development agencies, high schools and community organizations. Learn more at www.swwdc.org.

Worksystems is a nonprofit agency that accelerates economic growth in the City of Portland, Multnomah and Washington counties by pursuing and investing resources to improve the quality of the workforce. We design and coordinate workforce development programs and services delivered through a network of local partners to help people get the skills, training and education they need to go to work or to advance in their careers. Our partners include employers, labor groups, government, community colleges, high schools, community-based and economic development organizations. Learn more at www.worksystems.org.