

COURT OF APPEALS OF OREGON

State v. R. E. S.

345 Or. App. 540 (2025) · No. A183401 (Control), A183408 · Decided December 10, 2025

SUMMARY

The Oregon Court of Appeals held that handwritten findings supporting a juvenile’s commitment to the Oregon Youth Authority were illegible and inadequate under ORS 419C.478(1). The court vacated the probation-revocation order and remanded for adequate written findings explaining why OYA placement was in the youth’s best interests.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Court of Appeals of Oregon
WRITING FOR THE COURT	O'Connor, J.; Shorr, Presiding Judge; Powers, Judge; O'Connor, Judge
JURISDICTION	Oregon Court of Appeals
DECIDED	December 10, 2025
DOCKET	A183401 (Control), A183408
DISPOSITION	vacated
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Youth appealed a juvenile court order and judgment revoking probation, placing youth in Oregon Youth Authority custody, and committing youth to a youth correctional facility.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviews for legal error whether a juvenile court's written findings satisfy ORS 419C.478(1).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published opinion
PARTIES	R. E. S. v. State of Oregon

TOPICS

- appellate procedure
- preservation of error
- statutory interpretation
- standard of review

PRACTICE AREAS

- juvenile law
- appellate procedure
- statutory interpretation

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Court of Appeals should reach the first three assignments of error when youth failed to preserve them and did not request plain-error review.
2. Whether preservation should be excused for a challenge to written findings when the alleged error first appeared in the judgment.
3. Whether illegible written findings satisfy ORS 419C.478(1)'s requirement that an order committing a youth to Oregon Youth Authority custody include written findings describing why the placement is in the youth's best interests.
4. Whether findings focused on probation violations, community behavior, and community safety, without explaining why OYA placement is in the youth's best interests, satisfy ORS 419C.478(1).

HOLDINGS

1. The court will not address the first three assignments of error because youth failed to preserve the combined argument and did not request plain-error review.
2. Preservation was properly excused for the challenge to the written findings because the asserted error appeared for the first time in the judgment.
3. Written findings supporting commitment to Oregon Youth Authority must be sufficiently legible to be read and independently reviewed; illegible findings do not satisfy ORS 419C.478(1).
4. Findings that merely explain probation violations, catalog behavioral concerns, or express concern about community safety do not satisfy ORS 419C.478(1) because they do not describe why placement with OYA is in the youth's best interests.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“In any order issued under this section, the court shall include written findings describing why it is in the best interests of the adjudicated youth to be placed with the youth authority or the department.” (at 542)

“Illegible written findings violate at least two of the purposes of ORS 419C.478(1).” (at 544)

“We cannot review written findings when we cannot read many of the words that comprise the findings.” (at 544)

“Those concerns are insufficient to comply with the child-centered best interest assessment that the legislature requires.” (at 544-45)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

The juvenile court revoked R. E. S.'s probation, placed youth in Oregon Youth Authority custody, and committed youth to a youth correctional facility. The handwritten findings supporting the OYA commitment were substantially illegible. To the extent the readable portions could be discerned, they focused on probation violations, treatment history, conduct involving sexual boundaries, lack of another placement, and community safety rather than explaining why OYA placement was in youth's best interests.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The Washington County Circuit Court entered an order and judgment revoking youth's probation and committing youth to Oregon Youth Authority custody and a youth correctional facility. On appeal, youth raised four assignments of error. The Court of Appeals declined to address the first three because they were not preserved and plain-error review was not requested. It excused preservation as to the fourth assignment because the alleged defect first appeared in the judgment, reached the merits, and vacated and remanded for adequate written findings.

DISPOSITION

vacated

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The case is remanded for the juvenile court to make adequate written findings under ORS 419C.478(1).

CASES CITED

- State v. Ardizzone, 270 Or. App. 666, 673, 349 P.3d 597, rev. den., 358 Or. 145 (2015)
- State v. D. B. O., 325 Or. App. 746, 747-48, 529 P.3d 1004 (2023)
- State v. E. S., 333 Or. App. 350, 352-54, 552 P.3d 754 (2024)
- State v. M. B., 341 Or. App. 334, 341, 575 P.3d 219 (2025)
- State v. S. D. M., 318 Or. App. 418, 421, 506 P.3d 1190 (2022)
- State v. N. K. H., 341 Or. App. 78, 82, 572 P.3d 349 (2025)