

Marion County District Attorney Secures Accountability in Another Juvenile Shooting

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The Marion County District Attorney's Office announced today that Saul Sosa-Medina, now 18, has been sentenced in both juvenile and adult court for the shooting of two young women on August 8, 2022.

On 8/8/2022, then 17-year-old Sosa-Medina shot two women. One 17-year-old victim was struck in her hip, and 23-year-old Rayna Dawn Keener was hit in the hand and right hip area. Both women were transported to a local hospital. Thankfully neither of their injuries were life threatening.

The motivation behind the shooting remains unclear. However, the investigation revealed that Sosa-Medina was one of three juvenile males walking through the Evergreen Park Apartment's parking lot, where the two victims were also outside. Witnesses did not describe any confrontation, however Sosa-Medina fired one shot at the victims and fled south. Salem Police apprehended Sosa-Medina in less than an hour in nearby Englewood Park. He matched the description of the shooter provided by the victims and was detained for violating curfew and trespassing.

Sosa-Medina denied firing the gun, but admitted to law enforcement that he was in the area. He also admitted to being an active gang member.

At the time of the incident, Sosa-Medina was on parole from the Oregon Youth Authority for Criminal Mischief 2, Reckless Burning and Unauthorized Use of a Vehicle.

Sosa-Medina's arbitrary, reckless, and incredibly dangerous behavior placed innocent victims in grave danger.

"This case is yet another disturbing example of gang-affiliated juveniles with guns," said District Attorney Paige Clarkson. "I wholeheartedly support community intervention to address this increasing problem- but know this: my office is committed to protecting the innocent, especially children, and holding those who put them at risk accountable for their actions."

Sosa-Medina was initially charged in juvenile court. Since 2019 (see SB 1008), juvenile courts have exclusive jurisdiction over all conduct committed by people under the age of 18 regardless of the severity of the offense. In Oregon, a youth can only be tried as an adult if a judge determines that is appropriate through a complicated legal analysis and subsequently waives the youth into adult court.

Despite that high legal threshold, and due to the severity of the crime and Sosa-Medina's previous OYA involvement, the Marion County District Attorney's Office sought to waive Sosa-Medina into adult court. That would ensure that his criminal history reflects the violent conduct and hold him accountable under an adult sentencing structure.^[1]

Rather than litigate the waiver, the parties agreed to a bifurcated resolution: Sosa-Medina stipulated to an adult conviction for the lesser offense of Assault in the Second Degree with a Firearm, while also being adjudicated in juvenile court for two counts of Attempted Assault in the First Degree and Unlawful Use of a Weapon. He will serve his 70-month sentence at the Oregon Youth Authority but is eligible for release halfway through his sentence (legal process known as "second look"). He was sentenced by Marion County Circuit Court Judge Lindsey Partridge.

"Our office is committed to pursuing justice through whatever creative means necessary," said Chief Deputy District Attorney Brendan Murphy, the prosecutor on the case.

District Attorney Paige Clarkson stated that, "We all have a collective obligation to address the increasing problem of young men with firearms. Our office will continue to work tirelessly to ensure the safety of our community and hold all offenders accountable. Here, we do that by ensuring a significant sentence while making sure that the offender has the best chance at rehabilitation before being released into the community."

The case was investigated by the Salem Police Department. The lead detective was Det. Tom Johnson.

^[1] Under Oregon law, when youth are sentenced as adults they do not immediately go to the Department of Corrections. Instead, they serve adult time within the Oregon Youth Authority until they're 25 years old.