

July 2012

Word Count 228

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QuickPoint! – Oregon Cosmetology Regulations Entangle Hair Braiders

By Shane Young

Did you know you need a license to braid hair in Oregon?

Last year, Amber Starks of Portland [tried to start a hair braiding business](#) geared towards young girls in foster care. The State of Oregon informed Starks that she could not start her business without a cosmetology license. A cosmetology license typically requires over \$1,000 and a minimum of 1,700 hours of training focusing heavily on the proper use of hairstyle chemicals and heating equipment—things hair braiders don't use.

Starks then tried to braid hair as an unpaid volunteer with the state foster care system. She was told once again that it would be illegal for her, and nearly anyone else, to dress hair outside their own homes without a license.

Regulations like these prevent people like Starks from providing simple yet desired services at competitive market prices. Meanwhile, those with cosmetology licenses are protected from competition in markets such as hair braiding—fields that hardly require 1,700 hours of training.

Where public health and hygiene are issues, the state could require professional braiders to undergo a basic health course in lieu of a cosmetology license. By analogy, the [Oregon Food Handler's Card](#) certifies that people who prepare and serve food for the public know basic food safety.

In 2005, Washington State declared that braiders no longer need cosmetology licenses. It's time for Oregon to do the same.

Shane Young is a research associate at Cascade Policy Institute, Oregon's free market public policy think tank.

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