

Justice for Girls Blueprint for Action



**CHILDREN'S
CAMPAIGN,
INC.**

Acknowledgements

The Justice for Girls Reform Initiative and this Blueprint for Change is possible due to the generous support of The Florida Bar Foundation. We are exceedingly grateful for their leadership, guidance and expertise in systemic reform and most notably for their commitment to the youth of Florida.

The purpose of the *Justice for Girls Initiative* is to spearhead systemic reform in the care and treatment of girls in Florida's juvenile justice system. The impetus for this initiative and the blueprint stemmed from two research studies conducted by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency: *Educate or Incarcerate* (2000) and *A Rallying Cry for Change* (2006). Funding for these research studies was provided through the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, a national leader in the support of research on girls and young women in the justice system.

The Children's Campaign also expresses its appreciation to members of the national advisory committee who participated in an intense strategic planning session and who continued to provide advice and counsel over the past two years. The members of the national advisory council include: Leslie Acoca, Dr. Yitzak Bakal, Leslie Balonick, Marion Daniel, Dr. Barbara Guthrie, Steve Casey, Charles Chervanik, Catherine Craig-Myers, Dr. Mimi Graham, Tamara Gray, Cassandra Jenkins, Deborah Schroth, Judge James Seals, Jodi Seigel, Barbara Stepanik, John Turcotte, Karen Waddell and Sue Reyes (facilitator).

We are grateful to the Florida Juvenile Justice Association and the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services for their participation in numerous meetings and for providing invaluable input into identifying the challenges and recommendations for systemic change.

Special acknowledgements are extended to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice for their support of the development of a blueprint and for their input into the process.

Additionally, we would like to thank the many stakeholders across the state who participated in the numerous summits, community briefings and town hall meetings.

Most importantly, we want to express our gratitude to the girls in the juvenile justice system for their contribution to this endeavor. We have sought to create a blueprint that will ensure public safety while providing the opportunity for all justice involved girls to lead safe, joyful, healthy and productive lives.



JUSTICE FOR GIRLS BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION



About the Children's Campaign

Children's Campaign, Inc. is a citizen driven organization devoted to making children's issues a top priority locally and statewide while staying within the well-documented boundaries of permissible activities for a charitable 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to improve public policy for children. Our platform, a result of consensus building from a county and state perspective and supported by state-of-the-art public opinion research, establishes a vision aimed at ensuring that *5 Promises* to parents and children are made and kept: (1) Balance, fairness and accountability in Florida's Juvenile Justice System; (2) Improved child welfare and child protection; (3) High quality early learning; Pre-K and child care; (4) After-school services; and (5) Maternal and children's health care. Children's Campaign's proven model generally establishes a citizen led local council advised by a coalition of experts, providers, and interested groups for each advocacy effort. This model provides the framework for moving from *reacting* to external events and policy shifts to *actively creating* the future for Florida's youth by strategically building a sustainable campaign focused on systemic change.

About the Children's Campaign Founder & President

Roy Miller, Founder and President of Children's Campaign, Inc. has served as the chief strategist and advocate for the *Justice for Girls Campaign* as well as the *Justice for Juveniles* statewide reform initiative. As chief strategist and advocate, he has led the multi-year fight to preserve gender specific programs throughout Florida. Beginning in October 2001, with the state facing severe revenue shortfalls as a result of the impact of September 11th on Florida's tourism industry, legislators met in a special session to amend the state budget and institute cuts in funding to community-based juvenile services. The debate intensified from 2002 to 2003 as public safety and youth advocates across Florida were distressed by the Department of Juvenile Justice's recommendation to expand large, regional prison-type institutions and probation supervision by state employees at the expense of closing or seriously downsizing day treatment and prevention services to youth including gender responsive programs for girls. As the crisis was escalating, Miller envisioned the systemic changes that were needed to preserve a balanced, fair and equitable juvenile justice system. He pushed for a new mission and vision for the Department of Juvenile Justice and conceived and called for the convening of the Blueprint Commission to reform the juvenile justice system. He has tirelessly worked to ensure the development and execution of the blueprint and called for this more comprehensive girls' blueprint.

About the Author and Project Director

Dr. Lawanda Ravoirra is a national expert, researcher, published author and trainer on issues specific to justice involved girls and systemic reform. She is the Director of the NCCD National Center for Girls and Young Women as well as a consultant with Children's Campaign, Inc., Office of Justice (OJJDP) and Health and Human Services (OAPP), Washington, DC and numerous state and local jurisdictions and youth servicing agencies throughout the country. Her work includes the provision of training and consultation services



in numerous states including California, Illinois, Iowa, Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Texas.

Dr. Ravoira serves as the Vice Chair of the State of Florida Blueprint Commission convened by Governor Charlie Crist and Secretary Walt McNeil and she was appointed to co-chair the State of Florida's Girls Advisory Council.

Funded by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, she co-authored and served as one of the primary researchers for the National Council on Crime and Delinquency recently released research report entitled, *A Rallying Cry for Change: Charting a New Direction in the State of Florida's Response to Girls in the Juvenile Justice System*. Additionally, she authored, *Social Bonds and Teen Pregnancy*, Greenwood Publishing, that includes her original research on homeless and runaway pregnant and parenting teenage girls. Dr. Ravoira wrote and worked for the passage of HB1989 which amended the State of Florida's juvenile justice statutes to mandate gender specific services. Florida became the second State in the nation to pass this groundbreaking legislation.

For over 13 years, Dr Ravoira served as the President & CEO of PACE Center for Girls, Inc., a state-wide not-for-profit organization that provides gender responsive, comprehensive educational, therapeutic and transitional support services to 4,500 at risk girls annually. Prior to her tenure at PACE, she was the Director of Program Services for the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services in Washington, DC and she served as an administrator with Covenant House/Florida, Ft. Lauderdale, an international child-caring agency that provides residential and non-residential services to homeless and runaway youth. Previous experience includes working as a social worker with inner city youth in New York City with Catholic Guardian Society.



JUSTICE FOR GIRLS BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION



February 21, 2008

Dr. Lawanda Ravoira
2580 Herschel Street
Jacksonville, FL 32204

Dear Dr. Lavoira

I note with great interest and support your efforts to bring forward a policy document around the issue of "Girls on the Edge." Trends around the country suggest that there has never been a greater need for clear thinking on this important issue of public safety and human development. I would also note that Florida voters are increasingly aware of this issue and can be expected to demand solutions that make sense.

You may remember that our firm measured public opinion in Florida in August of 2005 on a statewide survey of some eight hundred likely Florida voters. Among our findings:

- 64% agree (24% "strongly") that "Girls who get into trouble present a different challenge to society than boys who do."
- 76% agree (28% "strongly") that "Specially-targeted programs should be developed and funded for young women who get into trouble."
- As you will remember, given a simple choice between "lower taxes" and "a strong state effort on Juvenile Justice issues," 76% chose a "stronger effort" as opposed to 17% who preferred "lower taxes."

This confirms a long-established trend in public sentiment involving the state's inattention to this special challenge. As far back as a statewide research conducted in 2001, 59% of Florida voters agreed with the statement "... there is significant lack of programs to help troubled girls in Florida." Florida voters have consistently looked upon the state's Juvenile Justice system as failing both the needs of citizens and the needs of Florida's youth, and the public focus of the issue of girls in the juvenile justice system will only increase.

Please accept both my support for your work and my best wishes on the course of it.

Sincerely,

Barcelo&Company



Bruce E. Barcelo
Principal



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Children's Campaign Inc. Leads the Way for Girls At-Promise

Children's Campaign, Inc. is the catalyst and statewide voice for a reform movement that is reshaping Florida's response to children. Children's Campaign, Inc. operationalizes its mission *to improve public policy for children* by defining and galvanizing multiple constituencies to work together to set an agenda and to develop a progressive approach built on valid research, innovative solutions and citizen engagement.

The Florida Bar Foundation provided funding to partially underwrite the *Justice for Girls* project and to develop a comprehensive blueprint that will guide Florida's response to girls in or at risk of entering the justice system. The *Justice for Girls' Blueprint for Action* is a culmination of two years of work and is designed to position the State of Florida as the leader in gender responsive legislation, policies, processes, programs, services and training.

The recommendations were developed over two years with guidance from national experts, a diverse group of Florida stakeholders and in partnership with multiple entities including:

- ❖ National Advisory Committee comprised of national and state experts;
- ❖ State of Florida Girls Advisory Council called for by the Children's Campaign and convened by the Department of Juvenile Justice;
- ❖ Florida Juvenile Justice Association comprised of private providers throughout Florida;
- ❖ Florida Network of Youth and Family Services;
- ❖ Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA);
- ❖ National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD);
- ❖ Girls in both residential and non-residential programs throughout Florida;
- ❖ Participants of the *2006 Girls Summit* held in Jacksonville, Florida to solicit input from multiple stakeholders including courts, state attorney, public defenders, education, health, prevention, diversion, detention, probation, residential, aftercare, business, service providers, parents and youth;
- ❖ Participants of the *2007 Justice for Girls Summit* held in Jacksonville, Florida convened to review, amend and reach consensus on the draft blueprint recommendations;
- ❖ Report of the Blueprint Commission, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice: *Getting Smart About Juvenile Justice in Florida* (2007);
- ❖ Participants of the 2007 Allegheny Franciscan funded *Girls on the Edge Summit* held in Miami-Dade

Underlying Principles

Approximately 125 stakeholders throughout Florida including representation from direct service providers, state attorneys, public defenders, judicial, legal, education, mental health, prevention, detention, probation, residential, aftercare, community release, health, business, women's organizations, parents, youth, and concerned citizens came together to identify the challenges and opportunities for addressing the needs of girls in Florida. This diverse group of stakeholders identified a list of underlying fundamental principles for ensuring a fair, balanced and equitable gender responsive approach to girls in Florida.

These principles were endorsed by the nearly 125 stakeholders who participated in the subsequent *2007 Justice for Girls Summit* facilitated by Children's Campaign, Inc. to review, amend and reach agreement on the blueprint recommendations set forth in this report.

These principles were used to guide the recommendations put forth in this blueprint report and will be used to guide this work as we move forward.

Girls have a fundamental right to

- ❖ Fair and equitable treatment
- ❖ Freedom from violence and exploitation
- ❖ Be valued and respected by those who interact with them
- ❖ Be able to trust the system
- ❖ A system advocate

Services and Interventions will

- ❖ Encompass a strength-based approach in the least restrictive setting
- ❖ Blend accountability with mercy and compassion
- ❖ Promote self esteem, self worth, self confidence, self love, and self hope
- ❖ Celebrate the uniqueness of girls and young women



Key Findings

Florida's Juvenile Justice System

- ❖ The types of offenses girls commit generally do not pose the same threat to public safety as those committed by boys.¹
- ❖ The use of detention for girls has increased and there is evidence that too many girls are being detained who do not pose a public safety or flight risk. Further, girls are detained for less serious offenses than boys.²
- ❖ There is serious concern regarding the validity of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument. Questions have been raised regarding whether this instrument is gender responsive and/or culturally competent and if this assessment instrument accurately distinguishes between those youth who do not present a public safety or flight risk and those who do pose a public safety or flight risk thus requiring secure detention.³
- ❖ The waiting time in detention requires serious review with the average number of days for girls waiting in detention for placement in a residential program ranging from 19 to 50 days. While not the norm, some girls spend 6 months in detention. Time spent in detention does not count as time served.⁴
- ❖ Girls are more likely to be admitted to residential commitment programs for less serious offenses than are boys.⁵
- ❖ There is an immediate need to review the additional charges girls are receiving while in residential placement to determine the accuracy of these charges. A particular focus is needed to determine the validity of additional charges when received at facilities that have subsequently closed or are facing closure due to poor performance, failed quality assurance reviews, inappropriate management, founded abuse, or other unacceptable circumstances.



¹OPPAGA, 2006, No. 06-13

²OPPAGA, 2006; Patino, Ravoira, Wolfe, 2006, Rallying Cry for Change; Vicki Lukis, Girls Advocacy Project, Presentation at the 2008 FJJA/FADAA Conference

³Report of the Blueprint Commission, 2008, page 21.

⁴Patino, Ravoira, Wolfe (2006), Rallying Cry for Change, NCCD; Florida Commission on the Status of Women, 2001.

⁵In 2004-05, 16% of girls were committed to residential programs for on-law violation of probation such as staying out after curfew and not attending school and 36% were committed for misdemeanors, compared to 9% for boys and 25% for boys, respectively. Over one-half (59%) of boys admitted to residential programs in 2004-05 had repeated felony convictions, compared to only about 35% of girls and 21% of girls had not prior felony adjudications or recent felony charges compared to 9% of boys (OPPAGA Report No. 06-13)

- ❖ Large cost savings could be realized over time if girls who do not pose a public safety threat were diverted from costly residential programs to gender responsive community based programs and services.⁶
- ❖ Some of the increase in girls incarcerated for violent offenses (e.g. aggravated assault and battery) may be due to the unintended effects of new policies on mandatory charging in domestic violence cases. In some instances, family disputes are re-labeled as criminal events.⁷
- ❖ The proviso establishing redirection currently excludes youth from programs who are being committed to residential programs for misdemeanors, as well as youth with a prior charge for a violent misdemeanor or felony. Girls who have been committed for less serious offenses, including domestic violence charges, should not be excluded from the Redirection Program based on their prior history.⁸
- ❖ There appears to be a mismatch between the level of available treatment services and the identified treatment needs of girls in residential programs (e.g. specialized mental health services, after care support services). If these needs are not met, both in treatment and by systemic policy changes, girls will continue to penetrate deeper into the system by picking up more new charges while in placement, re-offending after release, or violating probation.
- ❖ Florida's juvenile justice system is not adequately equipped to address the multiplicity and intensity of behaviors and needs of girls currently in the system.
- ❖ In both residential and non-residential settings, the lack of appropriate funding and resources are at a critical point and are negatively impacting the wellbeing of girls.
- ❖ There is no single solution to effectively address the needs of girls in or at risk of entering the juvenile justice system. Significant changes are required in the following broad focus areas: (1) Legislation; (2) Policies; (3) Processes; (4) Services; (5) Programs; (6) Training.

⁶ OPPAGA, 2006, No. 06-13

⁷ In Florida, 10.5% of total referrals of girls were for domestic violence. Florida statutes {FS985.213 (2) (6) (3)} allows juvenile justice personnel to detain youth involved in domestic violence disputes who otherwise would not meet detention placement criteria.

⁸ The proviso states "Youth who have been adjudicated or convicted of a violent crime or first degree felony, or otherwise have a criminal history of such offenses, shall not be eligible for placement in the pilot project."



Call to Action

1. **Convene a legislative work group to review the needs of girls in juvenile justice.**
2. **Eliminate the overuse of secure detention.** Immediately review the validity of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument to determine its accuracy in assessing public safety and flight risk and to determine if the instrument is gender and culturally responsive. Provide alternatives to secure detention for those girls who do not pose a public safety or flight risk.
3. **Immediately review and develop recommendations** to address the circumstances of girls in residential programs who have received additional charges while in placement to determine the accuracy of these charges when received at facilities that have subsequently closed or are facing closure due to poor performance, failed quality assurance reviews, founded abuse, inappropriate management or other unacceptable circumstances.
4. **Provide access to legal counsel** at the first point of entry into the juvenile justice system and ensure access to legal counsel during transfer hearings.
5. **Expand the Re-Directions Program** to (a) include domestic violence charges to divert girls who do not pose a public safety threat into community based treatment programs; (b) serve girls who are at risk of residential commitment for a misdemeanor; (c) serve girls as appropriate with a prior history of violent crimes based on a thorough assessment.
6. **Re-examine and revise state statutes, policies, procedures and practices** that shepherd girls into the juvenile justice system specific to (a) domestic violence charges when there is mutually combative hitting taking place in the home, (b) impact of violations of probation or conditional release whereby girls receive additional charges without having committed another criminal act; and, (c) the use of detention for girls who do not pose a public safety threat.
7. **Review current placement of girls in residential programs** and determine if beds are being utilized properly based on the needs of girls and the public safety risk. Determine which girls could be stepped down to a lower level or less restrictive environment.
8. **Develop a position in each commitment area** that targets girls who continue to cycle in and out of the system due to violations of probation and/or charges obtained while in residential placement. On a case by case basis, determine the public safety risk and if girls could be served in a less restrictive placement.
9. **Convene a statewide summit and ongoing workgroup** that includes participants from the Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, courts and legal system, health services, mental health services and private providers to increase coordination, problem-solving and to promote a unified, consistent response to girls.
10. **Develop and implement a uniform gender responsive training protocol** that is integrated into the Department of Juvenile Justice training curriculum.

11. **Facilitate an annual statewide training conference** specific to justice-involved girls that includes the latest research, skills building, resources, new materials and vendors.
12. **Incorporate gender specific requirements** in contracts and program monitoring and quality assurance standards to ensure that programs are designed to meet the needs of girls and young women.
13. **Invest in an adequately funded continuum of community based alternatives** to detention and residential commitment programs.
14. **Implement small (no more than 20 beds) gender-responsive, culturally competent residential facilities** that are staff secure for girls who require residential placement.

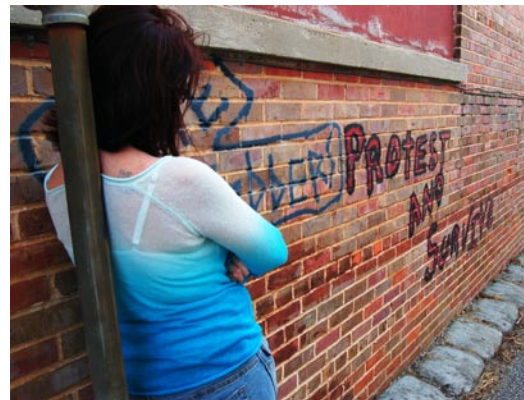


Facts About Girls in Juvenile Justice

Introduction

Girls in the juvenile justice system were once referred to as the “forgotten few”. That picture has changed dramatically over the last decade as the number of girls arrested has significantly outstripped that of boys (Bloom & Covington, 2005, Chesney-Lind, 2001).

Despite declining crime rates, more adolescent girls are arrested and incarcerated than ever before. Girls account for 26% of the total juvenile arrests nationally; yet, appropriate services that are designed to meet their unique needs are lacking and in some communities are non-existent. Despite research and evidence documenting gender differences in offending and pathways to delinquency, girls have been considered a low priority and historically are often inappropriately placed in facilities and programs that were designed for boys or that emphasize security over prevention, intervention and treatment.



Trends in Florida

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice statistics mirror this national trend. In Florida, almost one out of three youth referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice is a girl. On an average day, Florida has 1,000 girls committed in residential placements – the highest rate in the nation (172 per 100,000 girls). This is larger than any other state and almost double the national average (95 per 100,000).

More disturbing, while the crime rate in Florida is dropping, admissions of girls into the juvenile justice system increased by 10% (OPPAGA, 2005) between Fiscal Years 1998-99 and 2003-04, while admissions for boys decreased by 12%. Further, between 1993-94 and 2002-03, the rates of arrest per 1,000 youth decreased; however, boys’ arrest rates have decreased by 23%, whereas girls’ rates of arrest have decreased only by 6%. Between those same years, the number of boys referred for violent felonies increased less than 2%, while the number of girls referred for violent felonies increased 24% (Department of Juvenile Justice, 2006).

Profile of Girls

The findings of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency research report, *A Rallying Cry for Change* (2006), paint a haunting portrait of girls in the Florida system:

- ❖ Girls are getting arrested at young ages (40% of girls reported committing their first offense before the age of 13);

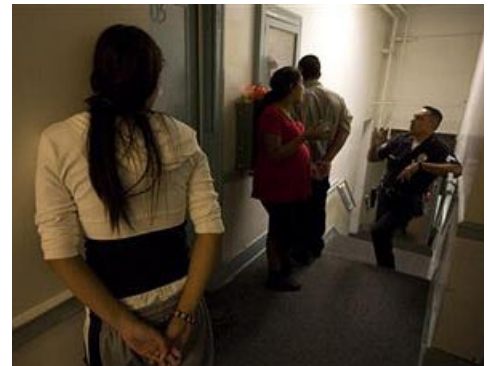
- ❖ 79% have emotional/mental health issues (Depression, trauma, anger, self destructive behaviors, or other mental health/clinical diagnoses);
- ❖ 70% experience family conflict and/or history of family problems;
- ❖ 46% have substance abuse/addiction issues;
- ❖ 64% reported prior abuse;
- ❖ 49% self mutilate;
- ❖ 34% have history of suicide attempts;
- ❖ 35% have a history of prior pregnancy;
- ❖ 10% have children;
- ❖ 25% have or are recovering from a major illness.

Systemic Issues

For the first time in their history, the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association issued a collaborative report, *Justice by Gender: The Lack of Appropriate Prevention, Diversion and Treatment Alternatives for Girls in the Justice System* (2001). This groundbreaking report underscored the urgency in addressing the escalating numbers of girls entering the system and identified the significant impact of gender bias throughout the system from arrest through disposition.

Domestic Violence

What factors have contributed to this alarming trend? The Bar Report along with numerous researchers notes that the increase is partially society's response to the girls' behavior, not necessarily an increase in violent and aggressive behavior in girls (Sherman, F, 1999; Lederman, C., 2000; Acoca, L, 2000; Bloom, Covington, 2005). There has been a re-labeling of family conflicts as violent offenses and changes in police practices regarding domestic violence. In some cases, family disputes are re-labeled as criminal events. This is critical, given that, in Florida, 16% of girls are committed for aggravated assault and/or battery compared with only 10% of boys (DJJ, 2005). For non-aggravated offenses, the difference between girls and boys who are committed is slightly greater than for aggravated battery (16% of girls vs. 9% of boys) (DJJ, 2005).



Status Offenses

Additionally, the Bar Report found girls are disproportionately charged with status offenses. Running away (often from an environment of abuse) ushers them into the delinquency system and may ultimately drive them deeper into the criminal justice system. Many more girls than boys are detained for minor offenses such as public disorder, probation violations, status offenses, and traffic offenses.



Use of Detention & Assessment

The use of detention for girls has significantly increased and there is evidence that girls are detained for less serious offenses than boys. Increase in detention for girls has resulted in overcrowding, poor conditions of confinement, and reduction in appropriate services. In Florida, girls spend anywhere from 19 days (lowest) to 50 days (highest) in detention awaiting placement (DJJ, 2005). While not the norm, there are a number of girls that spend more than 6 months in detention. Time spent in detention does not count as time served in Florida (Florida Commission on the Status of Women, 2001). In comparison to males, female juvenile offenders may spend over three times longer in detention.

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Bootstrapping

Further, the Bar Report found that the practice of “bootstrapping,” charging girls with a delinquent offense for violation of a court order, is applied disproportionately to girls and results in harsh and inequitable treatment especially of girls charged with status offenses. Although girls’ rates of recidivism are lower than those of boys, the use of contempt proceedings and probation and parole violations make it more likely that, without committing a crime, girls will return to detention or a residential commitment program. This is particularly troubling in Florida, given that most girls who are detained represent a very low risk to public safety in terms of violence or further re-offending. The recidivism rate for girls is significantly lower than for boys. For youth released FY 2003-2004, 41% of girls compared to 63% of boys was re-arrested. Similarly, 26% of girls were adjudicated compared to 43% of boys (DJJ, 2005).

Systemic Impediments to the Legal System

According to the National Institute for Crime (Bloom & Covington, 2005), gender differences have been found in all stages of the justice system processing, including crime definition, reporting and counting, types of crime, level of harm, arrest, sentencing, community supervision, incarceration, and reentry into the community. The increasing numbers have also made evident the lack of appropriate interventions

and options designed to meet the needs of girls and young women that are available to the courts. According to Francine Sherman, Director of the Juvenile Rights Advocacy Project at Boston College Law School, girls arrive in the juvenile justice system often through paths marked by sexual and physical abuse, mental illness, substance abuse, family disconnection and special education. They are disproportionately involved in the justice system as status offenders (e.g. runaways), are exploited as prostitutes, and often violate terms of probation and parole. To make sense of these complex and multi-system pathways, legal representation must be flexible, contextual, and consistent over time (Sherman, 1999).

... legal representation must be flexible, contextual, and consistent over time.

In an analysis of access to counsel and quality of legal representation for juveniles in the delinquency system, the American Bar Association, in partnership with the Youth Law Center and Juvenile Law Center, released a report entitled *A Call for Justice: An Assessment of Access to Counsel and Quality of Representation in Delinquency Proceedings* (American Bar Association, 1996). The report identified disposition and post-disposition as areas of critical need for juveniles requiring cross-system strategies and interdisciplinary understanding. Most girls in the justice system also have been involved in the dependence, special education and/or mental health systems. Disposition planning and access to gender specific services require collaboration with related state and county systems and community based programming.

In this survey, lawyers representing girls consistently identified systemic impediments to collaboration between dependency and delinquency agencies as leading to extended incarceration and inadequate services for young female clients (American Bar Association, 1996). In Florida, OPPAGA found judges may commit youth in order to obtain treatment services that are not available or are inadequate in lower security programs (OPPAGA, 2005).

The available research indicates that many young women in the justice system possess very high profiles for treatment needs and judges are frustrated by the lack of community based placement options. Judge Cindy S. Lederman (Miami) notes that the juvenile justice system has been caught unaware and ill-equipped to deal with the influx of girls in the system. The response by the juvenile justice system is to treat them like boys, an unworkable solution that can result in more harm than good (Lederman, 2001).

Opportunity for Systemic Reform in Florida

The increase of girls and the inability of the system to effectively collaborate and respond effectively highlight both the need to better understand the dynamics of female delinquency and the need to tailor the juvenile justice system's response to girls. The need for reform is great, and Florida is poised to lead the nation in addressing the unique needs of girls and young women in the juvenile justice system. A look at the significant advances in the girls' reform movement underscore the opportunity that currently exists for meaningful systemic reform of Florida's juvenile justice system:

- ❖ Passage of HB1989 in 2004 mandating gender responsive services for girls, making Florida only the second state in the nation to pass such groundbreaking policy;
- ❖ OPPAGA at the direction of the legislature has completed and published research findings in two separate reports: *Gender Specific Services for Delinquent Girls Vary Across Programs, But Help*



Reduce Recidivism, Report No. 05-13, March 2005 and *Gender Specific Services for Delinquent Girls Vary Across Prevention, Detention, and Probation Programs*, Report No. 0-56, December 2005;

- ❖ The Legislature took bold action in the 2005 session and closed the girls' maximum secure prison (Florida Institute for Girls) which had been plagued for 5 years by allegations of physical abuse, neglect, sexual misbehavior and management problems which resulted in a Grand Jury investigation;
- ❖ Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Secretary Anthony Schembri called for the removal of razor wire at Sawmill Girls Academy in October 2005;
- ❖ Called for by the Children's Campaign, DJJ convened the Girls Advisory Council to oversee the closing of the girls prison and to leverage resources and broker community partnerships to enhance services to girls in Florida;
- ❖ NCCD partnered with DJJ to facilitate the JAIS assessment with girls transitioning from the girls prison to promote appropriate placement and supervision/treatment strategies;
- ❖ Girls Advisory Council hosted the *Girls in Juvenile Justice Summit*, January 19-20, 2006 in Jacksonville to examine services for girls and to develop an action oriented statement of need for services based on feedback from providers, state leaders, court personnel, experts and girls with history in the juvenile justice system;
- ❖ Children's Campaign, Inc. hosted the *Justice for Girls Summit*, January, 2007 to review the draft blueprint recommendations;
- ❖ *Faces of Courage*, the first DJJ national conference on girls in Florida was held in May, 2007;
- ❖ NCCD partnered with DJJ to pilot the Juvenile Assessment Intervention System (JAIS) in five girls' residential programs;
- ❖ DJJ implements an all girls probation unit modeled after the FIT program in Baltimore;
- ❖ Allegheny Franciscan Ministries funded the *Girls on the Edge Project* to address the health needs of girls in Miami-Dade's juvenile justice system;
- ❖ Women's Giving Alliance funds the *Justice for Girls: Duval County Initiative* to review and develop a strategic plan to address the needs of justice involved girls;
- ❖ Called for by the Children's Campaign, Governor Charlie Crist and Secretary Walt McNeil convene the Blueprint Commission in 2007 with girls identified as a priority issue.

Defining Gender Responsive

Starting with a clear definition of gender responsiveness is critical when creating or evaluating juvenile justice programs designed for girls. The National Institute of Crime's report (2005) provides the following definition:

Gender-responsiveness means creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's lives and addresses the issues of the participants. Gender-responsive approaches are multidimensional and are based on theoretical perspectives that acknowledge women's pathways into the criminal justice system. These approaches address social (e.g. poverty, race, class, gender inequality) and cultural factors, as well as therapeutic interventions. These interventions address issues such as abuse, violence, family relationships, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders. They provide a strength-based approach to treatment and skills-building. The emphasis is on self efficacy.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (1998) recommends the following guidelines when establishing services for girls:

- ❖ Programs should be all female whenever possible;
- ❖ Girls should be treated in the least restrictive environment, whenever possible;
- ❖ Programs should be close to their home so as to help maintain family relationships;
- ❖ Programs should be consistent with female development and stress the role of relationship between staff and girl;
- ❖ Programs should be prepared to address the needs of parenting and pregnant teens.



According to the National Mental Health Association, programs are needed that focus on building healthy relationships, addressing victimization, and improving self esteem of girls:

- ❖ Adolescent girls have multiple and unique programming needs, including: health care, education, mental health treatment, mutual support and mentoring opportunities, prenatal care and parenting skills, substance abuse prevention and treatment, job training, and family/support strengthening services;
- ❖ Adolescent female offenders have complex and sometimes conflictual relationships with family mem-



bers, boyfriends/relationship partners, and children which present special challenges for their reintegration and rehabilitation. Appropriate treatment of adolescent female offenders must address these kinds of family issues as well as issues such as violence and conflict in dating relationships;

- ❖ Many adolescent girls will not seek mental health treatment or other forms of support for themselves, instead relying on internalization, avoidance, and self harm as coping strategies. Juvenile personnel and mental health professionals must be cautious not to re-traumatize girls who have been abused or victimized while they are encouraging them to learn appropriate coping strategies and to constructively explore and resolve their feelings.



Making the Connection

Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action & Blueprint Commission Report:

Getting Smart About Juvenile Justice in Florida

Children's Campaign, Inc. in partnership with the Florida Juvenile Justice Association and the Florida Network of Families and Youth called for the convening of an independent commission to develop recommendations for improving the juvenile justice system. In the summer of 2007, Governor Charlie Crist and former Secretary Walt McNeil appointed the 25-member Blueprint Commission and charged them with the task of developing recommendations for reforming Florida's juvenile justice system.

Roy Miller, President of the Children's Campaign served as a senior advisor to the Commission. Dr. Lawanda Ravoira was appointed as Vice-Chair and also served as an advisor. The Commission held public hearing throughout Florida and listened to public testimony from a diverse group of stakeholders. The final report contains 52 recommendations for change, organized under seven guiding principles and 12 key goals.

The Commission's final report was released February 5, 2008 and is intended to guide and support the Department of Juvenile Justice and the State of Florida in *getting smart about juvenile justice*. For a complete copy of this report go to www.DJJ.STATE.FL.US/BLUEPRINT.

The recommendations of the Blueprint Commission Report are aligned with this more comprehensive *Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action*.

Specific to girls, the Blueprint Commission Report (2008) outlines the following findings and recommendations.

Key Finding

Though the state law calls for provision of gender-specific programming for girls in the juvenile justice system, there is inconsistency in the degree to which girls programs are gender specific and in the availability of gender-specific programs for all girls across the continuum.

Recommendations

- ❖ **GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES** – All girls across the DJJ continuum shall receive adequate gender specific services. These services shall be delivered by state or contract provider staff that is trained and receiving ongoing training in gender specific and culturally competent programs. Gender specific services will include gender specific screening and assessment processes for girls entering the DJJ system or already in custody to determine appropriate placement. The goal is to ensure maximum services are received in minimally restrictive environments, inclusive of community-based services and day treatments.



- ❖ **STAKEHOLDER TRAINING** – DJJ shall establish and provide an on-going training program for key stakeholders regarding the needs of girls, gender specific sanctions and services
- ❖ **GENDER-BASED AFTERCARE SERVICES** – The Department shall require community-based, gender-specific aftercare services for girls transitioning from DJJ programs. Such programs shall include, but are not limited to, mental health, substance abuse, family counseling and crisis intervention, education and vocational training, and independent/transitional living alternatives. Where staffing permits, the department shall endeavor to provide that girls be placed under the supervision of a female probation/conditional release case manager and, where the number of girls (25-30) justifies, a female caseload supervision team shall be established.

Key Finding

Women and girls are more likely to successfully complete programming during incarceration and less likely to recidivate if they are able to maintain healthy contact with children and families.

Recommendation

- ❖ **PREGNANT GIRLS AND MOTHERS** – To maintain healthy contact between mother and child, where appropriate, committed girls who are pregnant, and/or mothers with infant children, shall be placed in small family-style community-based programs, taking into account the safety risk to girls, the fetus, or infant, and the public.



It is noteworthy that additional recommendations specific to all youth in Florida’s system support a number of the recommendations in this **Justice for Girls: A Blueprint for Action**. These recommendations address the need to reform detention services; address the over representation of youth of color; invest in a continuum of services including community based options; develop alternatives at the community level to keep kids out of trouble; provide smaller residential commitment programs; provide adequate resources to address mental and physical health needs; an invest in the human resources that provide direct care services to youth; and develop a more professional and stable workforce.

Children’s Campaign staff and board will continue to work with the elected officials, the Department of Juvenile Justice and key stakeholders and citizens to coordinate efforts in bridging the Blueprint Commission’s recommendations and the recommendations outlined in this *Blueprint for Action*.



Six Essential Focus Areas:

Challenges, Goals and Recommendations for Action

Focus Area One - Legislation

Challenge

Most girls in the justice system also have been involved in the dependence, special education and/or mental health systems yet there is little or no coordination between these systems. Lawyers representing girls as well as service providers have consistently identified systemic impediments to collaboration between dependency and delinquency agencies as leading to extended incarceration and inadequate services for young female clients. This lack of coordination is exacerbated by state statutes, policies, procedures and practices that shepherd girls into the system (i.e., impact of violations of probation or conditional release; domestic violence laws, use of detention; zero tolerance). The practice of “bootstrapping,” charging girls with a delinquent offense for violation of a court order, is applied disproportionately to girls and results in harsh and inequitable treatment especially of girls charged with status offenses. Although girls’ rates of recidivism are lower than those of boys, the use of contempt proceedings and probation and parole violations make it more likely that, without committing a crime, girls will return to detention or a residential commitment program. Services available through Florida’s Juvenile Justice System reached a breaking point in 2005. A \$100 million budget hole has developed over the past 12 years spurred by a lack of significant rate increase to private providers even though the cost of living increased by 40%. The legislature provided \$20 million in increased funds to address the rate issue in 2006; however, there has been no additional increase in the past two years. This year, providers are facing additional cuts despite the escalating cost of living in Florida.

As the costs significantly increased, agencies including the already limited number of girl-serving organizations have been forced to reduce or eliminate critical service such as specialized therapeutic interventions, trauma recovery, family therapy, and transitional support services to simply provide basic shelter, food, and security.

Legislation: Recommendations for Action

1. Develop and implement a coordinated advocacy strategy to reform Florida’s response to girls in the justice system
 - a. Develop and implement a coordinated advocacy campaign aimed at engaging support from diverse stakeholders to change state statutes, policies and practices that negatively impact girls and increase resources to enhance and expand gender responsive services throughout the State of Florida;
 - b. Identify and re-examine state statutes, policies, procedures and practices that shepherd girls into the system (i.e., impact of violations of probation or conditional release; domestic violence



- laws, use of detention; zero tolerance) and develop a strategic legislative agenda that includes specific recommendations to address the identified needs of girls in Florida’s system in the context of the threat girls pose to public safety;
- c. Present testimony to the Women’s Caucus, Black Caucus, and respective committees regarding the unique needs of girls and specific funding and/or policy recommendations;
 - d. Collaborate with the Florida Juvenile Justice Association, Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, Children’s Campaign, Girls’ Advisory Council, state attorney association, public defenders, and other key stakeholders/partners.
2. Develop an adequate funding base for a coordinated continuum of gender responsive services
 - a. Develop a solid funding base for a coordinated continuum of gender responsive services including prevention, diversion, day treatment, probation, conditional release, residential, and aftercare/re-entry designed to meet the multiple needs of girls in or at risk of entering the justice system;
 - b. Advocate for legislature to ask OPPAGA to study the true cost of providing gender responsive services utilizing focus groups with providers, national literature search, etc.;
 - c. Establish and advocate for allocation of appropriate per diem rates for critical services to address the multiplicity of needs of girls in the juvenile justice system;
 - d. Identify and apply for gender specific grants (federal, private, corporate) in collaboration with Department of Juvenile Justice and providers;
 - e. Secure commitment from Department of Juvenile Justice leadership to include gender responsive services as a priority in the Department of Juvenile Justice legislative budget request;
 - f. Advocate for increased funding and mandate smaller caseloads for public defenders.
 3. Research the feasibility of a legislated overarching authority to oversee the needs of girls in juvenile justice
 - a. Facilitate meetings with Askew School (FSU); Enterprise Florida; Florida Tax Watch to discuss feasibility and process for the development and implementation of a “Girl’s Authority.”
 - b. Determine efficacy of strategy
 4. Promote cross agency collaboration
 - a. Advocate for the assignment of a legislative work project to determine strategies that promote cross-agency collaboration between the Department of Education, Department of Children and Families, mental health, public health, courts, police, public defenders, state attorneys, and the Department of Juvenile Justice.
 5. To promote and advocate for legal initiatives that reduce the number of girls entering and penetrating the system and that protects the legal rights of girls by developing the following legislated mandates
 - a. Expand the Redirections program to include domestic violence charges to divert girls who do not pose a public safety threat into community based treatment;

- b. Provide access to legal counsel (assign a lawyer) at the first point of entry into the juvenile justice system;
- c. Ensure access to legal counsel during a transfer hearing;
- d. Prevent commitment to residential placement upon first offense for non-violent felony;
- e. Credit time served in detention (awaiting placement) toward the youth's sentence;
- f. Provide automatic seal and expunging of juvenile records upon completion of commitment and sentence.

Focus Area Two - Policies

Challenge

Historically juvenile justice systems have been designed for boys and girls have been considered a low priority. The first national recognition of the necessity of providing services designed to meet the unique needs of girls did not occur until 1992 with the reauthorization of the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974* which required states to prepare an analysis and develop a plan for providing gender specific services in the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency. This legislation recognized that a comprehensive, integrated approach to dealing with the multiplicity of issues that are present in the lives of girls was essential. In 2004, Florida became the second state in the country to pass legislation, *HB 1989*, mandating gender specific services for girls in the juvenile justice system. Despite the passage of *HB1989*, Florida has not adequately responded in making the necessary policy changes that promote a culture that is gender responsive and that effectively addresses the multidimensional needs of girls and young women. In research studies and public forums throughout Florida, stakeholders identified numerous policies that negatively impact the delivery of gender responsive programs and services.

Policies: Recommendations for Action

1. Promote a culture within the Department of Juvenile Justice that values, honors and respects all girls and young women
 - a. Create a clear vision, mission and values statement that is adopted by the Juvenile Justice Department that promotes a culture that values, honors and respect girls and young women;
 - b. Align vision, mission, values, and program models with operation(s) manuals, policies, procedures, practices and training throughout the system.
2. Foster positive relationships with Department of Juvenile Justice and private provider community
 - a. Select a provider advisory committee to the secretary to meet twice a year to propose changes and/or make recommendations for appropriate gender specific policies and procedures to be incorporated



into policies, Quality Assurance standards, Mental Health manuals, etc.;

- b. Develop a support team to assist residential programs in crisis versus responding by requiring additional paperwork and reports and/or sanctions that take staff away from direct service with the girls (Convene a joint meeting with Florida Juvenile Justice Association executive committee and Asst. Secretary of Residential Services to develop a plan);
 - c. Create opportunities to strengthen relationships between DJJ departments (prevention, detention, probation, day treatment, residential, aftercare) and private providers;
 - d. Establish a provider ombudsman to address conflicts and concerns between Department of Juvenile Justice and providers.
3. Promote efficiency, creativity and flexibility through changes in administrative practices
- a. Review and streamline paperwork and policies with the goal of ensuring that all paperwork and/or policies are designed to complement programming and services (FJJA members develop recommendations and submit to DJJ designee for review and coordination);
 - b. Promote creativity and services driven by girls' needs versus requiring/mandating specific number of groups; specific group topics, etc.;
 - c. Provide the opportunity for providers to design programs and measure success against projected outcomes, rather than prescribed uniform DJJ standards;
 - d. Re-write scopes of services/contacts to mandate that private agencies provide gender specific and culturally sensitive services.
4. Ensure quality services
- a. Develop standards for girls programming (with input from national experts and providers). These should emphasize evidence based practice and gender responsive services. Conduct a cost analysis of standards to address the impact of unfunded mandates;
 - b. Develop a task force to provide technical assistance for developing, implementing and monitoring the delivery of gender responsive services statewide.
5. Improve current classification and placement protocols
- a. Develop a gender responsive classification system for girls that is integrated with an evidenced based (researched based) comprehensive assessment;
 - b. Review and make changes to policies that mandate pre-determined length of stay in residential placements and develop a protocol for transferring girls to community based services based on individual needs and assessed public safety risks;
 - c. Revise the point/level system at commitment programs recognizing the natural balance and degrees of girls' behavior within the context of her individual circumstances and identified treatment needs;
 - d. Improve continuity of care by developing a policy whereby girls would have the original program provider deliver conditional release services when she is transferred from residential placement.

6. Promote policies that strengthen family relationships
 - a. Identify and eliminate policies/rules that discourage visitation with family members (i.e., such as siblings under 18 years old cannot visit girls in placement; teen mothers are separate from children);
 - b. Provide transportation funds as appropriate to enable family members to visit when facilities are located away from local communities.

Focus Area Three - Processes

Challenge

Specific to addressing the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system, there continues to be a number of internal processes that hinder the effective delivery of programs and services. These processes warrant review and further discussion.

Processes: Recommendations for Action

1. Ensure appropriate placement of girls based on needs and public safety risks and better utilize limited resources
 - a. Review current placement of girls in residential programs and determine if beds are being utilized properly based on needs of girls and public safety risk;
 - b. Determine which girls could be stepped down to a lower level or less restrictive environment based on needs and public safety risk;
 - c. Develop a position in each commitment area that targets girls who have been in the system because of probation violations and charges obtained while in programs. On a case by case basis determine if these girls could to be moved to a lower level of supervision. Give them the ability to cut through the bureaucracy and change the placement;
 - d. Re-allocate funding saved through proper placement of girls to provide higher per diem rates for residential programs which would allow providers to hire additional and/or qualified staff to provide comprehensive treatment and/or supervision services for girls presenting with a constellation of intense/acute needs.
2. Effectively Address Acute Mental Health Issues in Residential Programs
 - a. Identify short term specialized crisis stabilization placement options for girls with *acute* mental health needs that are beyond the scope and/or expertise of the residential service provider where the youth is placed. The purpose of the hospitalization would be to stabilize behavior, establish appropriate medication regimes and do the assessments necessary to develop a comprehensive treatment plan and recommendations for the remainder of the girls' placement. To achieve this consider the following options:



1. Re-allocate funds and refer girls in moderate and high risk facilities with identified mental health issues who are presenting acute needs to a contracted psychiatric hospital;
 2. Per Diem rates would be keyed to the DCF Statewide Inpatient Psychiatric Program rates;
 3. Hospital will operate under JCAHO and AHCA standards and would be same sex only;
 4. Anticipated length of stay would be 6 – 8 weeks, with the girl then returned to her original program with a detailed treatment strategy unless otherwise recommended.
- b. Identify opportunities to network with the DCF to determine opportunities to maximize resources to better serve girls with acute mental health issues.
3. Develop protocol/criteria for transfer of girls under special circumstances that is immediate and swift.
 - a. Protocol would provide process by which a provider can report to the Department when they do not have the resources to adequately serve a girl placed in their facility. *Note: Per provider feedback, this is typically as a result of severe mental health problem they are not equipped to handle;*
 - b. Refer the youth to the contracted psychiatric hospital for immediate assessment and placement, if warranted.
 4. Increase cross system collaboration and coordination between the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Children, Family and Youth Services (DCF), public health, mental health and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to improve services to girls and their families.
 - a. Convene a taskforce with key decision makers at DOE, DCF, public health, mental health and DJJ to address the issues that impede the delivery of effective services;
 - b. Convene a summit and an ongoing workgroup that includes participants from DJJ, DOE, DCF, legal, judiciary, public health, mental health (others) to increase coordination and problem-solving and promote a unified, consistent response to girls.
 5. Develop processes/mandates whereby local mental health providers must accept referrals for appointments from residential program staff to ensure a seamless transition and the availability of mental health services/treatment when girls return to their home community.
 6. Investigate and develop procedures whereby children in DJJ placements receive priority placement in other systems of care (DCF, Agency for Disabled Persons; Department of Education, etc.).
 7. Revision of the Department of Juvenile Justice Contracts and Quality Assurance Monitoring
 - a. Develop and include gender specific requirements in contracts;
 - b. Incorporate gender specific contract requirements into program monitoring forms and quality assurance standards to ensure that they are adhered to
 - c. Train inspectors on the new instruments;
 - d. Monitoring tools and standards should be designed to assure that programs must meet gender specific requirements.

Challenge

Administrators and line staff in programs across the continuum report that the treatment needs of girls are becoming more complex and they are not equipped to intervene effectively. Girls require individualized services based on varying levels of needs and the threat that they pose to public safety. Research findings specific to Florida's system showed that placement of girls did not match the level of intervention needed and services at all program levels were found to be inadequate to appropriately address the multiplicity and intensity of needs presented by girls in the juvenile justice system. Of particular note, the NCCD study (2006) found that the level of need presented by girls did not significantly differ by program levels (prevention, low, moderate, high risk). This indicates that the majority of girls served in both residential and non-residential settings require intensive and specialized services to address the common factors related to their delinquency. Across all DJJ risk levels, girls demonstrated a significant number of needs. These include emotional/mental health due to trauma and victimization, family conflict, ineffective parental supervision, family incarceration; substance abuse/addiction; social inadequacy, school inadequacy, critical health issues; self defeating behaviors. The lack of appropriate gender specific services has reached a critical point and is negatively impacting the wellbeing of girls and young women.

Services: Recommendations for Action

1. Implement a uniform, gender responsive screening and assessment process that includes an interview protocol utilizing an instrument that identifies risk level, intervention needs, and supervision strategies to determine appropriate placements for girls who pose a public safety risk and those who would be better served in a less restrictive environment.
 - a. Design an *early* assessment tool for girls (before they enter the system) that takes into account gender, race, ethnicity, disability, special needs and public safety risk;
 - b. Assess risk level of girls currently in residential placement (and prior to placement) to determine if the level of assessed risk warrants placement in a facility or a lower risk, less costly community based option;
 - c. Immediately assess girls currently in residential placements and ensure that girls are appropriately placed based on needs and public safety risks;
 - d. Improve pre-screening to identify girls with serious mental health problems to ensure appropriate placement.
2. Ensure adequate funding for gender responsive services for girls recognizing the need for specialized services that address physical health, mental health; alcohol and substance abuse; pregnant and parenting girls; high rates of self harming; and strengthening family relationships; traditional and non-traditional vocational training opportunities and transitional housing for girls who lack family support systems.



3. Expand and enhance pre-vocational and vocational services that promote traditional and non-traditional career options
 - a. Develop a career curriculum utilizing community people to share their vocation, experience and requirements to enter the field;
 - b. Make online college courses available for girls with diploma/GED at no cost to the girls.
4. Develop systems for coordinating services for both the teen mother and her child(ren) through partnerships with Healthy Start (healthcare); Healthy Families/Infant Services (Child Welfare/Protection); Universal Pre-K (childcare); Medicaid (mental health counseling).
 - a. Health services such as pregnancy screens, gynecological care, prenatal & post partum care for pregnant girls;
 - b. Provide a continuum of services for pregnant and parenting girls to ensure family unification;
 - c. Provide resources for pregnant girls with mental health needs to have access to appropriate qualified professional with particular emphasis regarding medications during pregnancy and breastfeeding;
 - d. Ensure each pregnancy is nurtured with adequate nutrition, appropriate pre-natal care, pre-natal parenting preparation, child birth education classes, counseling, birth planning, and aftercare planning and job training to stop the cycle of recidivism.
5. Provide staff with a tool for understanding differences of girls, such as the NCCD recommended supervision strategies groups which can assist with supervision planning and individual treatment case planning.
6. Expand mental health and substance abuse services throughout the entire continuum.
7. Contract with mental health provider for inpatient beds and Crisis Stabilization Unit admissions as needed.
8. Expand aftercare services for girls who are transitioning from day treatment, probation and residential facilities to provide the needed wraparound services including mental health services; family counseling and crisis intervention; and, education.
9. Create a statewide resource book of services that includes information/knowledge about aftercare contact, programs, resources, i.e., names, programs' phone numbers, etc. that can be used by staff, family members, and girls.

Focus Area Five - Programs

Challenge

Despite research documenting gender differences in offending and pathways to delinquency, juvenile justice systems have been slow to implement programs designed to target the needs of girls. The use of



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detention for girls has increased and there is evidence that too many girls are being detained who do not pose a public safety or flight risk. Further, girls are detained for less serious offenses than boys. There is serious concern regarding the validity of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument. Questions have been raised regarding whether this instrument is gender responsive and/or culturally competent and if this assessment instrument accurately distinguishes between those youth who do not present a public safety or flight risk and those who do pose a public safety or flight risk thus requiring secure detention. The waiting time in detention requires serious review with the average number of days for girls waiting in detention for placement in a residential program ranging from 19 to 50 days. While not the norm, some girls spend 6 months in detention. Time spent in detention does not count as time served.

In public forums involving diverse stakeholders as well as in numerous research studies, the need for detention reform as well as the serious lack of adequate programs across the continuum is cited as seriously impacting the State of Florida's ability to effectively address the escalating numbers of girls entering the juvenile justice system.

Programs: Recommendations for Action

1. Keep Girls Out of the System “No Entry”
 - a. Create a high level task force charged with identifying strategies, programs and services designed to keep girls out of the system including representatives from traditional juvenile justice decision makers such as district attorneys, police, judges, service providers as well as representatives from other systems that touch girls lives (education, mental health, churches, community based programs, etc);
 - b. Determine points in the judicial process where girls could be diverted prior to formal intake into the system;
 - c. Provide legal representation prior to entry into the system.
2. Develop and adequately fund alternatives to detention.
 - a. Eliminate the overuse of secure detention by immediately reviewing the validity of the Detention Risk Assessment Instrument that is currently utilized to determine its accuracy to assess public safety and flight risk as well as whether the instrument is gender and culturally responsive;
 - b. Provide alternatives to secure detention for those girls who do not pose a public safety or flight risk including such options as home detention;
 - c. Develop and implement shelter placement as an alternative to detention by investigating resources available through private philanthropy, Department of Juvenile Justice, Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, Florida Juvenile Justice Association providers, juvenile justice legislative committees.
3. Develop and adequately fund community based diversion and intervention options that are gender responsive
 - a. Expand the Redirection Program to serve girls who are at risk of residential commitment for a misdemeanor; appropriate youth with prior violent crimes could also be included;



- b. Expand community based services to address family conflict and domestic violence including evidenced-based models such as Functional Family Therapy, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care and Multi-systemic Therapy;
 - c. Expand non-residential, community based options for nonviolent youth or girls who are assessed as low or moderate risk to re-offend that promote positive interactions between family members, girls, and their community.
4. Develop and implement a female offender probation/parole unit modeled after the Female Intervention Team (Baltimore, Maryland).
- a. Reorganize caseload so all girls would be supervised under one unit and probation/parole officers would have all girl caseloads;
 - b. Reassigned probation/parole officers working in this unit would receive specialized training in how to work with girls.
5. Develop and adequately fund a continuum of alternatives to residential commitment
- a. Expand non-residential, community based options for nonviolent youth or girls who are assessed as low or moderate risk to re-offend;
 - b. Develop capacity for Family Functional Therapy, Multi-Systemic Therapy, Multidimensional Family Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy and other in home family-based alternatives to residential treatment/sanctions for violation of probation or aftercare;
 - c. Create a pilot project for girls with self destructive and aggressive behaviors, mood disorders, and substance abuse.
6. Ensure adequate funding for gender responsive residential programming for girls who require out of home placements
- a. Implement small (no more than 20 girls) residential facilities using Rhode Island, Connecticut, Massachusetts models that are staff secure (not hardware secure) and that are located in the community where the youth/family live;
 - b. Develop and fund small family style group living for pregnant and parenting committed girls that promote unification with the child (whenever possible allow girls to be housed with the child or promote meaningful contact with/visitation with the child—with extensive safeguards to ensure the well being of the child).
7. Develop and adequately fund community-based pilot projects to address:
- a. Mental health and abuse issues that specializes in working with families;
 - b. Domestic violence offenses and/or to address family conflict and domestic violence including evidenced-based models such as Functional Family Therapy, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care and Multi-systemic Therapy;

- c. Those who continue to cycle through both the non-residential and residential programs. The pilot would be designed to specifically address the significant factors that contribute to girls' delinquency (emotional factors, parental family problems, and substance abuse, etc.);
 - d. Self destructive behaviors (self mutilation, suicide ideation, self defeating behaviors);
 - e. Services for younger children of incarcerated parents as an effort to reduce intergenerational incarceration.
8. Expand conditional release and aftercare services for girls who are transitioning from residential facilities to provide the needed wraparound services including health, mental health services; family counseling and crisis intervention; and, education and job training to stop the cycle of recidivism.
 9. Create independent living programs for girls who lack family and community support systems.
 10. Develop and implement a continuum of meaningful vocational programs that promote long term economic self sufficiency for girls
 - a. Increase job skill readiness, internship and job shadowing programs that prepare girls for employment success (how to be a productive employee, timeliness, job protocol, addressing conflict, communication skills, etc.);
 - b. Expand vocational programs which provides for certification;
 - c. Develop relationships with local workforce boards to assist in job placement/training programs.

Focus Area Six - Training

Challenge

Research and experience tell us that training on gender specific issues can have a strong positive effect on both program quality and improving outcomes for girls in juvenile justice. Yet, a common thread that runs through the entire spectrum of juvenile justice is the lack of available gender specific training. The key to effective intervention lies with availability of a highly trained and committed workforce. In order to reduce the numbers of girls involved in the justice system and to improve the outcomes for girls, we must invest in providing the juvenile justice professionals, including frontline staff, the skills they need to keep pace with girls' intensifying needs and to provide gender responsive interventions based on valid research and an evidenced based assessment and screening tool.

Currently, juvenile justice agencies do not have a uniform training protocol and too often training is a "learn as you go" or "pass it along" strategy where new employees are paired with more experienced staff members. With a 40-80% estimated annual worker turnover in the nation's juvenile justice programs (e.g., juvenile corrections, residential caseworkers, substance abuse, and behavioral counselors), this "pass it along" mentorship strategy is problematic at best. Staff can become immobilized and feel inadequate to deal with the intensity of complex needs presented by girls. Their education and prior experiences have not prepared them for this profession. This is further exacerbated due to the culture of most juvenile justice



systems that focus on control and compliance instead of evidenced based assessments and sound gender responsive treatment services that are properly evaluated.

Girls may be unintentionally further victimized or re-traumatized when staff seek to control the acting out behaviors because they do not understand the seriousness of the girls' trauma and untreated histories of victimization that are driving the behaviors.

Specialized training is needed for judges, state attorneys, police departments, public defenders, private providers and the Department of Juvenile Justice staff in order to reduce the numbers of girls entering and/or further penetrating the juvenile justice system.

Training: Recommendations for Action

1. Develop and implement a uniform gender responsive training protocol for Department of Juvenile Justice
 - a. Mandate meaningful gender responsive training as part of the Department of Juvenile Justice required training plan;
 - b. Develop and implement uniform gender responsive and culturally competent training for all staff working with girls along the entire continuum of services;
 - c. Research, develop and disseminate specialized training that includes the following:
 1. Dealing with high risk behaviors including self mutilation, self injurious behaviors;
 2. Strategies for creating a gender responsive culture/environment;
 3. Appropriately addressing and redirecting sexual relationships that develop when girls are in placements;
 4. De-escalating behaviors;
 5. Trauma and victimization;
 6. Effective intervention and treatment strategies;
 7. Specialized training for direct care staff;
 8. Substance abuse;
 9. Mental health;
 10. Effective communication;
 11. Effectively working with families;
 12. Same sex relationships.
2. Increase knowledge and understanding of key stakeholders in the judicial system regarding the needs of girls and gender responsive sanctions and services

- a. Develop and implement a comprehensive mandatory training regarding the needs of girls including topics of female development, mental health, special education, cross system collaboration and gender responsive sanctions and services that match the needs of girls for State Attorney/Assistant State Attorney; Judges; Public Defenders by developing partnerships with Female Intervention Team, Baltimore, Maryland; National Council of Juvenile Court Judges; Florida Prosecutors Associations, National Public Defenders Associations;
 - b. Develop and facilitate training for police departments, state attorney, judges to utilize diversion alternatives and eliminate inappropriate referrals. (Where would we send girls if detention did not exist?);
 - c. Identify strategies to educate law enforcement, schools (SROs) to decriminalize girl's behavior.
3. Facilitate an annual training conference specific to girls that includes vendors to share new materials, curriculums, resources, and latest research
 4. Develop specialized training curriculums and facilitate a training of trainers program targeted to specific professionals
 - a. Direct care/line staff in order to increase skill sets;
 - b. Juvenile probation officers on how to work effectively with girls addressing trauma, PTSD and the implications of girls behavior on the family dynamics;
 - c. Administrators to ensure the development of gender responsive policies and processes.
 5. Create a gender specific curricula that could be implemented in juvenile justice programs to improve, enhance or provide a framework for services and provide a training of trainers program to teach staff how to effectively implement.



Specialized Focus Area Supplemental

Cross-Over Girls Caught Between the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems

Challenges

When the juvenile court was established in 1899, child abuse and neglect and juvenile delinquency were officially recognized as related social problems. Yet, today we do not effectively respond to youth who are victims of child abuse and neglect and who get caught up in the delinquency system⁹. Research in this area is sparse. Findings from the NCCD research study, *A Rallying Cry for Change* (2006), underscored the urgency of effectively addressing the needs of girls caught between the foster care and the delinquency systems. NCCD researchers found that one in three (37%) of girls in Florida's juvenile justice system indicated being abused by their parents. Half (50%) reported their parents had been reported to DCF for abusing or neglecting them. Of those girls whose parents had been reported to DCF, 58% had been in at least one non-DJJ out of home placement, including foster care. Further, the girls who were in the most restrictive commitment facilities were more likely to have experienced out of home placements including foster care.

A presentation by the Miami Chapter of Florida Youth SHINE (Striving High for Independence & Empowerment) in May 2007, underscored the need for systemic change in addressing the needs of young people in the foster care system. Youth SHINE is an advocacy organization comprised of current and former foster care youth. The following Recommendations for Action noted below are based on the priorities outlined in the Florida Youth SHINE publication, *Seeing Through Our Eyes: Foster Youth Share Our Voices, Our Experiences, Our Solutions*.

Specialized Focus Area: Recommendations for Action

To work collaboratively with Youth SHINE to promote the following priorities:¹⁰

1. Access to services and runaway prevention assistance;
2. Safety in foster care and quality of foster care placements;
3. Attendance at court hearings and knowledge of legal rights;
4. Involvement in normal activities;
5. Receipt of monthly allowance and receipt of social security/SSI benefits;
6. Provision of independent living skills training assistance for teen parents and teen pregnancy prevention;

⁹ Child Welfare League of America, *The LINK*, Summer 2006, Vol. 5, No. 1

¹⁰ *Seeing Through Our Eyes: Foster Youth Share Our Voices, Our Experiences and Our Solutions*

7. Provide an avenue for foster care youth's voice to always be heard and included in the decision making process that impacts them;
8. Allow access to information that will help the foster care youth;
9. Develop procedures to establish accountability to make sure the system works for foster care youth.



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