

GIRLS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM



Understanding Service
Needs and Experiences

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Executive Summary

While overall juvenile crime has experienced a steady decline¹ both in New York State and nationally² over the past decade, the number of female juvenile arrests has increased by 20%³ in New York City during the same period. Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC) uses the term *court-involved girls* broadly to define the population of young women that are arrested and subject to the care and custody of the juvenile justice system.⁴ In New York City, court-involved girls can come into contact with a broad range of city and state agencies during their involvement with the juvenile justice system including the New York City Police Department, Department of Probation,⁵ Department of Juvenile Justice,⁶ and New York State Office of Children and Family Services.⁷

Consider the following statistics:

- The juvenile arrest rate for girls under age 16 increased by 20% between 1992 and 2001 from 6,012 to 7,265 with the greatest increases seen in the following categories of crime: assault, prostitution, larceny, weapons possession and disorderly conduct. Meanwhile, the juvenile arrest rate for boys under age 16 decreased by 20% from 27,897 to 22,215 over the same period.⁸

¹ There was a 13% decline in juvenile arrest rates between 1999-2001. New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), unpublished data, 2004.

² Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Uniform Crime Report, 2003.

³ New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), unpublished data, 2005.

⁴ In New York City, court-involved youth between the ages of 7-15 are adjudicated by the Family Court in the juvenile justice system. Youth aged 16 and over are adjudicated in the adult criminal court.

⁵ The Department of Probation (DOP) conducts investigations and prepares reports for the Family Court that aid in the decision-making process on delinquency, PINS, custody, visitation, neglect and adoption cases. DOP is also responsible for diverting juvenile delinquency cases from the Family Court, and administering alternative to placement programs that allow youth to remain in the community through regular supervision and monitoring.

⁶ The New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) operates 16 non-secure and 3 secure detention facilities and is responsible for the care and custody of alleged Juvenile Delinquents (JDs) and alleged Juvenile Offenders (JOs), along with post-adjudicated juveniles awaiting transfer to state facilities. Youth in DJJ custody are between the ages of 7 through 15.

⁷ The New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) is the state agency responsible for the care and custody of youth who have been adjudicated juvenile delinquents, juvenile offenders and youthful offenders by the Family Court. OCFS operates a range of facilities with varying degrees of security levels and in addition, contracts with private facilities.

⁸ DCJS, unpublished data, 2005. (Most recent available).

- The percentage of girls entering the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) detention facilities between 1990-2005 has increased from 11.3% to 20%.⁹ In 2005, 1,037 girls were admitted to DJJ.¹⁰
- The percentage of girls entering New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) detention facilities has almost doubled from 8.9% in 1991 to 15.7% in 2000.¹¹ In 2004, 392 girls were admitted to OCFS detention facilities.¹²

Recently, media coverage from several high profile delinquency cases involving girls as young as age 9 brought the untold experiences of court-involved girls to the public's attention, highlighting the need for gender-responsive¹³ policies, programs and practice. The lack of focus on the service needs and experience of court-involved girls has in part been explained by the fact that girls continue to make up no more than 20% of the juvenile justice system both in New York City and nationwide. The juvenile justice system has largely been designed to provide care and custody for juvenile male offenders favoring a disciplinary or compliance approach to behavior modification and rehabilitative treatment. As documented by research in female adolescent development behavior and female delinquency, a gender-responsive approach to service provision is necessary to address the marked difference in the pathways, experiences and rehabilitative approaches that best serve court-involved girls. And while some generalizations can be made about the service needs and experiences of all court-involved youth, the literature is also clear in not prescribing a gender-exclusive¹⁴ approach to rehabilitation, emphasizing instead the need for programs and services that

⁹ Citizens' Committee for Children (CCC), 2005 Keeping Track of New York City's Children; DJJ FY05, Admissions by gender. Retrieved from, http://www.ci.nyc.ny.us/html/djj/pdf/adm_gender_charge.pdf.

¹⁰ New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), unpublished data, 2005.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Division of Rehabilitative Services, Youth in Care, 2004 Annual Report.

¹³ Gender-responsive services for girls are those services whose content, delivery, and cultural orientation addresses the unique needs and characteristics of young women and girls.

¹⁴ Rather than consider the individualized service and treatment needs of both young men and young women in the juvenile justice system, a gender exclusive approach draws heavily on gender stereotypes when developing programs, services and policy.

meet the individualized needs of all court-involved youth.

In 2004, CCC created an analytic project with the goal of developing baseline information on the service needs and experiences of girls in the juvenile justice system. Our findings and recommendations are derived from interviews with stakeholders, focus groups with court-involved girls, and a review of best practices and literature.

CCC's major findings include the need to improve data collection and analysis with regard to both the disaggregation of existing data by gender and the creation of meaningful indicators that can measure the service needs and outcomes for court-involved girls across the juvenile justice system.

Additionally, the widespread lack of gender-responsive and developmentally appropriate programs for adolescent women across juvenile justice settings has served to exacerbate existing service needs. More specifically, stakeholders cited the lack of access to comprehensive reproductive health education and mental health services as contributing factors to the high rates of depression, anxiety and substance abuse experienced by court-involved girls. Similarly, gender responsive educational and youth employment opportunities are scarce and few programs have the expertise and capacity to address the specific barriers faced by court-involved girls including school engagement and work force participation.

CCC's findings also cite a need to improve training for all professional staff that come into contact with court-involved girls, from court personnel to attorneys and frontline caregivers in detention and placement settings. At the same time, court-involved girls through focus group interviews also expressed an urgent need to give voice to their experience highlighting the need for self-advocacy and "know your rights" training opportunities for young women entering the juvenile justice system.

Finally, although the media has highlighted a number of high profile delinquency cases involving young women, the specific issue of female juvenile delinquency has largely been insufficiently addressed by city, state and elected officials. Currently, no city or state-wide plan exists to identify and meet the service needs of court-involved girls system-wide. Despite the individual efforts of municipal agencies and community-based service providers to identify service needs

and implement gender responsive programs and services, there is a lack of information sharing and coordination making it difficult to build upon individual successes and improve outcomes system-wide.

CCC's major recommendations include a centralized effort to both collect and synthesize data from various public and private entities that are responsible for serving court-involved girls (i.e. the Family Court, city and state agencies and service providers) to more accurately identify service needs, track population trends, target resources and coordinate planning and service delivery across agencies.

Led by the Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator (CJC) with participation from all of the major city agencies that serve court-involved youth, the city's inter-agency task force to examine juvenile detention use presents an unique opportunity to collect comprehensive demographic data on court-involved girls and develop indicators that track involvement in multiple social service systems (i.e. child welfare, homeless, and juvenile justice).

With regard to improved programs and services for court-involved girls, CCC recommends that the city and state should invest in a continuum of gender-responsive programs and services that address the educational, health and mental health, and youth development needs of girls across juvenile justice settings. More specifically, the city and state should prioritize investments that expand access to health education and services, individualized and group counseling, and programs designed to meet the educational and employment needs of court-involved girls. These programs and services should be developed in accordance to best practice standards and in consultation with court-involved girls and community-based service providers.

While a range of professional associations have provided education and training opportunities with regard to the particular needs of court-involved girls, CCC recommends that professional development be continuous and on-going as the research on female juvenile delinquency matures and best practices are cultivated. Additionally, inter-disciplinary and cross-disciplinary training is essential to enable a range of professionals (judges, attorneys, social workers, direct care staff) to better understand the multiple challenges that court-

involved girls face as they navigate the juvenile justice system. The city and state should also draw upon the expertise of court-involved girls and community-based service providers when developing training curricula and materials.

Similarly, greater effort must be made by professionals who come into contact with court-involved girls to equip court-involved girls with the basic skills and information needed to navigate the juvenile justice system. CCC recommends targeted trainings on topics ranging from how to prepare for and what to expect during court appearances, the visitation rights of young women with children while in detention and placement, and community-based resources for education, employment, health and family support upon return from detention or placement.

Finally, CCC recommends that the city and state develop a coordinated city-wide plan that includes a *program, policy and budget* response that articulates how programming and

resources across city and state agencies can best be used to meet the service needs of court-involved girls. City-wide planning efforts currently underway and led by the Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator present a significant opportunity to meet this goal. CJC's city-wide inter-agency task force on juvenile detention should also draw upon the expertise of stakeholders including community-based service providers, advocates, and court-involved girls themselves to ensure that policy and practice reforms are rooted in the lessons learned from their collective experiences.

Above all, CCC's research and fieldwork highlights the overwhelming need to re-examine juvenile justice institutions and identify barriers and solutions that can be used to stave off population increases and most importantly, help court-involved girls make a successful transition out of the juvenile justice system and into adulthood.

Methodology

In the fall of 2004, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York (CCC) initiated an analytic project to better understand the service needs and experience of girls in the juvenile justice system. Recognizing that the service needs and experience of court-involved girls in New York City were understudied and not prioritized in policy or practice, CCC developed an analytic research project with the goal of using the findings and recommendations to advance policy, program and practice reforms and improve outcomes for girls in the juvenile justice system. CCC acknowledges that while court-involved girls share many of the same risk-factors, service needs and experiences as those of court-involved boys, it is also true that court-involved girls enter, experience and are impacted by the juvenile justice system in distinct ways as a result of gender-specific developmental needs and society's response to female juvenile delinquency.

As part of our research, CCC conducted a literature review, interviewed 14 stakeholders including judges, attorneys, service providers and national experts, held 3 focus groups with court-involved girls, and a series of advocacy meetings over a two-year period. As is with all of CCC's published reports, stakeholders and focus group participants spoke to CCC staff and volunteers on condition of anonymity and were provided an assurance that their names would not be published in the final report.

The fieldwork was completed over a two-year period and divided into two phases. In the 2004-05 program year, CCC convened the Girls and the Juvenile Justice System Analytic Project. CCC staff worked with Task Force chairs to complete a literature review and identify and interview professional stakeholders. Additionally, trained students from YouthAction NYC, CCC's youth leadership program, worked with CCC staff to develop focus group questions and facilitated 2 focus groups with court-involved girls in spring 2004.

The analytic project evolved into an Advocacy Task Force in the 2005-06 program year and focused on the development of preliminary findings and recommendations. CCC launched the second phase of the project with a policy briefing on court-involved girls attended by more than 35 advocates, providers, elected officials, community leaders, policy-makers and other interested New Yorkers. At the policy briefing, presentations on the service needs and

experience of court-involved girls were given by Joan Gabbidon, Senior Deputy District Attorney for Youth Intervention and Prevention Strategies, at the Office of the Kings County District Attorney, Marjorie Singer, Vice President of Programs and Policy, at Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) and Meredith Sopher, and attorney at the Legal Aid Society, Juvenile Rights Division. The policy briefing provided an overview of key issues facing girls in the juvenile justice system and laid the groundwork for the year's advocacy activities. The Advocacy Task Force was composed of staff and 12 trained volunteers who developed a presentation outlining preliminary findings and recommendations and conducted targeted meetings with 7 stakeholders. Additionally, YouthAction NYC members developed follow-up questions and held a third and final focus group with court-involved girls to share preliminary findings and recommendations and solicit feedback.

As data collection and fieldwork began, it became apparent that many of the stakeholder interviewees as well as focus group participants worked in or had experienced both the juvenile (age 7-15) and adult criminal (age 16 and over) justice systems. Although many of the findings and recommendations may be applicable across both systems, it is important to emphasize that this report focuses primarily on the service needs and experiences of girls in the juvenile justice system.

As we interviewed only 14 professional stakeholders who work with court-involved girls and spoke to 22 court-involved girls as part of our 3 focus groups, we do not intend for our findings to be representative of the experience of all court-involved girls and the professionals with whom they come in contact with. Additionally, because this report is intended to provide a baseline understanding of the challenges court-involved girls face, some of the more complex issues that impact their experience in the juvenile justice system such as gender bias, the disproportionate confinement of minority girls, and the special needs and experiences of sexually exploited girls are not discussed in detail in this briefing report and require more in-depth research and focus. Our findings serve to highlight the experiences of court-involved girls, identify systemic strengths and weaknesses, and offer possible solutions.

Background

DEMOGRAPHICS, SERVICE NEEDS, AND BEST PRACTICES

Primary sources of current demographic and service need data on court-involved girls can be difficult to find because many of the systems that court-involved girls come into contact with do not systematically collect, disaggregate and publish data by gender.¹⁵ Those that do, typically collect and disaggregate only the most basic of indicators such as arrest and detention rates, types of charges, and number of cases filed.

While qualitative data on the service needs of court-involved girls has been widely documented in the literature, quantitative data on the education, health and mental health, family and other service needs of court-involved girls is less developed. In years past, few service providers, and city and state agencies, including the Family Court systematically collected data using gender-specific indicators. Among those that did, the data sets are often outdated, making it difficult to use data to target resources in ways which would meet existing and new service needs and demands.

The collection and dissemination of best practices as it relates to serving court-involved girls has more recently been spearheaded by the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) and the American Bar Association (ABA). Nationally, there has been a growing body of literature and research that has helped to inform state and local efforts to better understand the service needs and experience of court-involved girls.

The demographic and service need data and information on best practices presented is derived from a comprehensive literature review and review of existing publicly available statistics. Every effort was made to obtain the most recent data available.

A. DEMOGRAPHICS

Despite an overall drop in juvenile crime, court-involved girls have been the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population for more than a decade.¹⁶ Nationally, the

¹⁵ One of the more detailed statistical portraits of national female juvenile arrest rates can be found in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Report with the most recent edition published in 2004 using data from 1994-2003.

¹⁶ Juvenile arrest rates (youth under age 18) declined by 17.5 % between 1994 and 2003. FBI, Uniform Crime Report, 2003.

number of female juvenile arrests¹⁷ experienced a 40% increase from 269,578 to 378,895 between 1990-2003.¹⁸

Between 1999 and 2003, the exponential growth of the female juvenile arrest rate slowed resulting in a 4.6% decline for girls under the age of 18.¹⁹ However, a closer look at the data suggests that female juvenile arrest rates have continued to increase within a number of offense categories including assaults, weapons possession, and drug abuse violations during that same period.²⁰ By contrast, juvenile males experienced a 12.9% decrease in the total number of arrests in addition to significant decreases within those same offense categories.²¹

Experts suggest that while the data demonstrates a marked increase in female juvenile delinquency. Upon closer inspection this upward trend has less to do with increased aggression or delinquency among girls but rather a change in the way society has responded to their behavior over the years.²² For example, the American Bar Association suggests that changes in policing methods (i.e. more aggressive response to domestic violence and zero tolerance policies in schools), gender bias in the processing of girls' cases, and most significantly, the lack of a comprehensive program, practice and policy response to the service needs of court-involved girls have all contributed to the population increase.²³ Many of these findings were echoed in CCC's own fieldwork and are explored in greater detail in the Findings and Recommendations section of this report.

¹⁷The term "juvenile arrests" is used to define youth under the age of 18 in the FBI Uniform Crime Report.

¹⁸ FBI, Uniform Crime Reports, 1999 & 2003.

¹⁹ Between 1999 and 2003, the number of girls arrested under age 18 declined by 4.6% from 357,907 in 2003 to 375,254 in 1999. FBI, Uniform Crime Report, 2003.

²⁰ Drug abuse violations increased by 11.2% from 16,409 in 1999 to 18,240 in 2003. Assaults increased by 13.5% from 40,121 in 1999 to 45,519 in 2003. Weapons possessions increased by 9.3% from 2,225 in 1999 to 2,432 in 2003. Ibid.

²¹ Drug abuse violations decreased by 5.7% from 96,734 in 1999 to 91,173 in 2003. Aggravated assaults decreased by 10.5% from 30,562 in 1999 to 27,342 in 2003. Weapons possessions decreased by 7.8% from 21,199 in 1999 to 20,273 in 2003. Ibid.

²² Joanne Belknap and Kristi Holinger, *An overview of delinquent girls*. In Zaplin, R.T. (Ed.). *Female Offenders: Critical Perspectives & Effective Intervention*. (Gaithersburg, MD: Aspen Publishers Inc., 1998), 46-48; American Bar Association (ABA) and the National Bar Association (NBA). *Justice by Gender: The Lack of Appropriate Prevention, Diversion and Treatment Alternatives for Girls in the Justice System* (Washington, DC, 2001), 3.

²³ Meda Chesney-Lind and Randall G. Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice* (3rd ed., Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2004), 2-7.

Female Juvenile Arrests

Between 1992-2001, the number of female juvenile arrests in New York City increased by 20% from 6,012 to 7,265.²⁴ Conversely, the male juvenile arrest rate decreased by 20% from 27,897 to 22,215 over the same period.²⁵ Similarly, while female juvenile arrest rates experienced the greatest increases for assault, larceny, prostitution,²⁶ weapons possession and disorderly conduct, male juvenile arrest rates experienced the greatest decreases in some of the same categories.²⁷

Juvenile Arrest Offense Categories For New York City 1992-2001	Boys		Girls	
	1992	2001	1992	2001
Simple Assault	2,496	1,747	954	1,038
Larceny	2,246	1,627	761	960
Robbery	4,024	1,980	582	331
Criminal Mischief	1,950	1,372	134	189

Female Juvenile Detention

Between 1992 and 2005, the number of girls admitted to the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) detention facilities increased steadily from 772 or 11.8% to 1,037 or 20% of the total youth population. Conversely, the number of male juveniles admitted to DJJ decreased by 30% from 5,769 to 4,023 over that same period. A look at the

demographics of the 1,037 girls admitted to DJJ custody in 2005²⁸ reveals that:

- More than half were girls of color: 570 Black,²⁹ 203 Hispanic,³⁰ and 11 Asian.
- Approximately 40% or 416 girls were re-admitted to DJJ within 12 months of release.
- Girls entering DJJ custody are primarily from Brooklyn (236), Manhattan (235), Queens (210), and the Bronx (269).³¹ Within these boroughs, Brooklyn saw an increase in the number of girls admitted to DJJ from 209 in 2004 to 236 in 2005 while Manhattan experienced a slight decrease from 244 in 2004 to 235 in 2005.
- The majority of girls were charged as juvenile delinquents (861).³²

Female Juvenile Placement

Youth who are adjudicated juvenile delinquents can be placed by the Family Court in a number of residential settings including state detention facilities operated by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Between 1995 and 2004, the number of girls admitted to OCFS custody decreased from 415 to 392.³³ In 2004, more than half of the girls in OCFS custody were placed in residential settings.³⁴

OCFS also reports one-day population totals for December 31st of each calendar year which provides a snapshot of the total number of girls in OCFS facilities on a given day. This number is typically higher than the number of annual admissions because it also includes girls who may have

²⁴ DCJS, unpublished data, 2005. (Most recent data available from source.)

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Although DCJS' Uniform Crime Reporting System does indicate an increase in the number of female juvenile arrests for prostitution, from 3 in 1992 to 33 in 2001, these numbers do not accurately reflect the number of girls actually involved in child prostitution. (DCJS, unpublished data, 2005). According to the non-profit advocacy group, End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes-USA (EC-PAT USA), an estimated 5,000 youth, (male and female) are involved in prostitution in New York City. It is widely known that girls under the age of 16 who are picked up for prostitution and related offenses routinely falsify their identification in an effort to avoid Family Court's delinquency proceedings that most often result in longer-term detention and placement as compared with adjudication in adult Criminal Court. Additionally, child prostitution can take place in a variety of settings including private clubs, and/or transient locations making it difficult for police surveillance. Mia Spangenberg, *Prostituted Youth in New York City: An Overview* (New York, NY: ECPAT-USA, 2001), 1-3.

²⁷ DCJS, unpublished data, 2005. (Most recent data available from source.)

²⁸ DJJ, unpublished data, 2005.

²⁹ This does not include an additional 20 girls who self-identified as Black Hispanic. Ibid.

³⁰ This does not include 38 girls who self-identified as White Hispanic. Ibid.

³¹ Additionally, 50 girls were from Staten Island and another 37 from out-of-state. Ibid.

³² The remaining number of girls in the custody of DJJ were charged as OCFS release violators (57), AWOL from OCFS custody (42), juvenile offenders (19), and other (58). Ibid.

³³ New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS), Division of Rehabilitative Services, *Youth in Care, 2004 Annual Report*.

³⁴ A total of 385 were placed in out-of-home residential services in 2004. Of that number, 262 girls were placed in OCFS operated facilities including 11 secure, 74 limited secure, and 177 in non-secure facilities. Ibid.

been transferred between placement settings or received an extension of placement. Data from OCFS's 2004 Youth in Care annual report indicates a slight but steady increase from 536 in 1995 year to 542 in 2004 year with a high of 575 girls in 2000.³⁵

OCFS also provides what it refers to as "day" programs which includes a range of community-based aftercare services from electronic monitoring and evening reporting centers to Evidenced-based Community Initiatives (EbCI). EbCI includes family focused interventions such as Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) and can be used both in lieu of residential placement. In 2004, of the 909 youth enrolled in "day" programs, 138 were females with the majority enrolled in electronic monitoring or evening reporting centers. Only 3 females were admitted to EbCI.

B. SERVICE NEEDS OF COURT-INVOLVED GIRLS – LESSONS FROM THE LITERATURE

Research indicates that the pathway to the juvenile justice system for court-involved girls is paved with multiple stressors such as family fragmentation, exposure to abuse and violence, victimization, academic failure, substance abuse, and the influence of negative peer groups and relationships.³⁶ Court-involved girls often lack the typical protective factors such as stable parental supervision, positive adult role models and peer relationships and community supports that help girls successfully navigate adolescence and prevent delinquency.³⁷ It must be emphasized that although both court-involved girls and boys generally experience many of the same risk factors and service needs, research does demonstrate a distinction between male and female juvenile delinquency that is influenced by gender-based developmental needs, as well as society's perception of and response to female juvenile delinquency as demonstrated through program, policy and practice.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ A National Council on Crime and Delinquency study of girls in California's juvenile justice system found that more than 54% of the girls reported having mothers and 46% of fathers who had been arrested or incarcerated. Barbara J. Pariente, Annette Boyd Pitts, and Jodi Wilkof, *Teaching Them a Lesson*. (Florida Bar Journal, June 2003), 5 (citing Leslie Acoca, *Investing in Girls: A 21st century strategy* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), IV(1), 6).

³⁷ Faedra Lazar Weiss, Health Johnson Nicholson, Maria Magdalena Cretella, *Prevention and Parity: Girls in Juvenile Justice* (New York, New York: Girls Incorporated, 1996), 7-15.

Below is a summary of some of the most prevalent service needs for court-involved girls identified in the literature. A survey of the literature suggests that over the past decade, the greatest unmet service need for court-involved girls continues to be in the area of health and mental health both with regard to inaccurate diagnoses and treatment options. Based on the literature, very few coordinated efforts currently exist to address these needs.

Health and Mental Health

Research indicates that female juvenile delinquency is rooted heavily in the unmet developmental needs of adolescent girls that are further compounded by histories of physical or sexual abuse, exposure to familial substance abuse and domestic violence.³⁸

Girls typically enter the juvenile justice system between the ages of 14-16, at a time when they are most vulnerable to delinquency. Research indicates that between the ages of 8-11 girls are generally resilient to societal pressures to conform to gender norms, and have a high level of self-confidence and self-esteem. As girls enter puberty, not only do they experience an internal struggle to understand the physical and emotional changes they are going through, they must also manage external pressures and expectations from peer groups and society around their appearance, actions, and decisions. For many of the girls who enter the juvenile justice system, the external manifestation of this struggle results in delinquent behavior while the internal struggle manifests itself in increased incidences of suicide, depression and self-destructive behavior.³⁹ Prevalence studies done across state juvenile justice systems indicate that females have higher rates of mental health needs than their male counterparts. A study of juvenile offenders in Georgia Youth Detention Centers, for example, revealed that nearly 60% of girls met criteria for anxiety disorders (versus 32% of boys) and 59% met criteria

³⁸ ABA, *Justice by Gender*, 10.

³⁹ Christy Sharp and Jessica Simon, *Girls in the Juvenile Justice System* (Washington, DC: *Child Welfare League of America*, 2004), 16. (citing M. Chesney-Lind and R. Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency and Juvenile Justice* (New York: West/Wadsworth, 1998) : Greene, Peters, & Associates, *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998)

for mood disorders (versus 22% of boys).⁴⁰

Adolescent girls who come into contact with the juvenile justice system also report extraordinarily high levels of abuse and trauma. Research has shown the strong link between childhood abuse and neglect, and delinquency.⁴¹ One longitudinal study revealed that “being abused or neglected as a child increased the likelihood of arrest as a juvenile by 59 percent, as an adult by 28 percent, and for a violent crime by 30 percent”.⁴² In one study, as many as 92% of girls in detention report having been victims of abuse.⁴³ More than one third of girls (34%) incarcerated in probation camps and detention centers in Los Angeles County reported sustaining an injury as a result of physical punishment as a child, while more than half (56%) reported witnessing the homicide of a close friend or relative. Although research on female delinquency continues to develop, the literature clearly indicates that “victimization-physical, sexual, and emotional is the first step” and can often place girls on the path to female delinquency.⁴⁴

Repeated exposure to multiple forms of violence and trauma increases the incidence of Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among adolescent girls in the juvenile justice system, with nearly 50% meeting diagnostic criteria for the disorder. This was particularly true for girls who had been involved in assaults within school settings. In interviews with court-involved girls, researchers found that 81% had a history of trauma.⁴⁵ However, in a 2003 study, researchers

found that girls are often misdiagnosed with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) focusing on their aggressive or violent behavior rather than the underlying problem of maltreatment or exposure to traumatic events when PTSD would be more appropriate.⁴⁶ A review of their case files found that many of the girls had an Axis 1 diagnosis for oppositional defiant disorder (ODD) with no mention of PTSD. Researchers note that misdiagnosis makes it even more difficult to provide court-involved girls with appropriate treatment for their mental health needs.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, girls interviewed by NCCD researchers report that the physical and emotional abuse followed them into the juvenile justice system from the point of arrest through detention, with high incidences of verbal abuse from staff, inappropriate touching, pushing or hitting, isolation and deprivation of hygiene supplies.⁴⁸ The National GAINS Center noted that the norms, rules, and protocols of confinement negatively impact adolescent girls and exacerbate pre-existing mental health needs. For example, common behavioral management methods used in detention which include seclusion, forced disrobing and restraints, frequently have the unintended effect of causing increased stress and the recreation of traumatic experiences.⁴⁹

Despite the overwhelming documentation of the specific health and mental health needs of court-involved girls nationally, few localities have acknowledged the need and developed gender-responsive programs and treatment settings. In New York, the literature explains that the state “sorely lacks residential home placements where girls can live in a safe

⁴⁰ Frederick Marsteller, Donna Brogan, Iris Smith, et al. *Prevalence of Substance Abuse Disorders Among Juveniles Admitted to Regional Youth Detention Centers Operated by the Georgia Department of Children and Youth Services* (Rockville, MD: Center for Substance Abuse Treatment Final Report, 1997), 15, Retrieved from, <http://www.behav.com/projects/juvoff.pdf>; National Mental Health Association (NMHA), *Mental Health and Adolescent Girls in the Justice System*. Retrieved from, www.nmha.org/children/justjuv/girls/jj.cfm.

⁴¹ Bonita Veysey, *Adolescent Girls with Mental Health Disorders in the Juvenile Justice System* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2003); Cathy Widom and Michael G. Maxfield, *An Update on the “Cycle of Violence”* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 2001).

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Leslie Acoca, *Outside/Inside: The Violation of American Girls at Home, on the Streets, and in the Juvenile Justice System* (Crime & Delinquency, 1998), 44: 561-589.

⁴⁴ Leslie Acoca, *Investing in girls: A 21st century strategy* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), IV(1).

⁴⁵ National Mental Health Association (NMHA). *Mental Health and Adolescent Girls in the Justice System*. Retrieved from, www.nmha.org/children/justjuv/girls/jj.cfm.

⁴⁶ Anne Marie Ambrose and Sandra Simkins, *Improving Conditions for Girls in the Justice System, The Female Detention Project* (Washington, DC: National Juvenile Defender Center), Retrieved from, www.njdc.info/pdf/factsheetgirls.pdf#search=%22Ambrose%20and%20Simkins%2C%20Improving%20Conditions%20for%20Girls%20in%20the%20Justice%20System%2C%20The%20Female%20Detention%20Project%22.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Leslie Acoca and Kelly Dedel, *No place to hide: Understanding and meeting the needs of girls in the California juvenile justice system* (Oakland, CA: National Council on Crime and Delinquency, 1998).

⁴⁹ Laura Prescott, *Improving Policy and Practice for Adolescent Girls with Co-occurring Disorders in the Juvenile Justice System* (The National GAINS Center, June 1998), 4, Retrieved from, http://www.ncmhjj.com/pdfs/publications/GAINS_Improving_Policy.pdf#search=%22Laura%20Prescott%2C%20The%20National%20GAINS%20Center%22.

environment while receiving intensive treatment.”⁵⁰ Besides the lack of treatment options, the programs that are available are typically not tailored to meet the developmental needs of girls. As a result, girls “may be self-medicating with illegal substances in an attempt to cope with stress or mental health difficulties, such as anxiety or depression.”⁵¹ A 1990 American Correctional Association study found that 60% of girls in detention facilities demonstrated a need for substance abuse treatment at intake and more than half were addicted to more than one drug.⁵² Research has also shown a strong connection between exposure to trauma and abuse (e.g. sexual abuse and family violence) and substance abuse among girls.⁵³

Pregnancy and Reproductive Health

In 1998, the Office of Justice Programs examined national statistics and found teenage pregnancy and parenthood to be a “major delinquency risk factor for female juvenile offenders and teenage girls.”⁵⁴ Although it is widely known that teen pregnancy generally increases the risk factors associated with poverty (and by extension, poor health, future incarceration, and child abuse and neglect) for both parent and child, these risks increase exponentially for court-involved girls.

For girls who have children prior to entry into the juvenile justice system, researchers suggest that the link between teen pregnancy and delinquency stems from the need to ensure “economic survival”, and at times “this perceived economic necessity can lead girls to commit crimes.”⁵⁵ Although it is true that the majority of court-involved youth come from low-income families, parenting girls are subject to a more intense economic burden as they struggle to provide for their children.⁵⁶ A 1990 study of pregnant or parenting teens in Hawaii revealed that the primary concerns of

parenting girls in priority order included 1) medical care for their children, 2) financial assistance and 3) child care.⁵⁷

Once girls enter the juvenile justice system, judges, attorneys, and court-involved girls themselves identified the lack of education around sex and sexuality, and reproductive health as *the* most significant service gap for court-involved girls in detention and placement.⁵⁸ A NCCD study of girls in the California juvenile justice system found that 29% of the girls had been pregnant at least once, with 16 % pregnant while in detention. Of those who were pregnant while in custody, 23% miscarried.⁵⁹ In a similar study of female juvenile offenders in Baltimore, 14% of the girls were pregnant while in detention, a third of whom had chronic health problems.⁶⁰

Finally, research also indicates that court-involved girls with children are typically separated from their children for long periods of time while in detention and placement without regular opportunities to have meaningful contact and visits with their children. This is particularly devastating for girls who give birth while in detention and placement. Researchers discovered that “an alarming 83 % of the young women interviewed who were mothers reported that they had been separated from their infants within the first three months of their children’s lives, [during] a pivotal developmental stage.”⁶¹ Further 54% of girls who were mothers did not have a single visit with their child or children while in detention or placement.⁶²

Education and School Failure

Academic failure and a lack of commitment to school are significant risk factors related to female delinquency. These behaviors are often linked with chronic truancy and/or dropping out of school, and subsequently with a young woman’s

⁵⁰ Nancy Ginsburg, *Girls and The Juvenile Justice System* (New York: Practicing Law Institute, Children’s Law Institute: Legal and Social Welfare Issues of Girls & Adolescents, 2001).

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Chesney-Lind and Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 264.

⁵³ National Mental Health Association (NMHA). *Mental Health and Adolescent Girls in the Justice System*. Retrieved from, www.nmha.org/children/justjuv/girlsjj.cfm.

⁵⁴ Chesney-Lind and Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 265-67.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Francine Sherman, *Girls in the Juvenile Justice System: Perspectives on Services and Conditions of Confinement* (Boston, M.A., Girls’ Justice Initiative, 2003), 7-11.

⁵⁹ Leslie Acoca. Investing in girls: A 21st century strategy (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), IV(1). Retrieved from, www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjjjournal1099/invest1.html.

⁶⁰ Marian D. Daniel. The Female Intervention Team (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1999), IV(1), 15. Retrieved from, www.ncjrs.gov/html/ojjdp/jjjjournal1099/fem1.html.

⁶¹ Acoca and Dedel. No place to hide: Understanding and meeting the needs of girls in the California juvenile justice system.

⁶² Ibid.

first involvement with the juvenile justice system.⁶³ Court-involved girls typically enter the juvenile justice system with a significant number of school suspensions or expulsion in addition to having repeated grades.⁶⁴ In 1990, the American Correctional Association found that 78 percent of female juvenile offenders nationally had neither completed high school nor obtained a GED. Other studies have found that a staggering 12 percent had not even gone beyond elementary school⁶⁵ and that middle school failure in particular is a strong predictor of future delinquency.⁶⁶ Studies also indicate that a disproportionate number of girls involved with the juvenile justice system have learning disabilities, which often go undiagnosed and contribute to widespread experiences of academic failure among court-involved girls.⁶⁷

In a survey of girls and adult women in the criminal justice system, the majority of offenders said that they left school because they were bored and could not get along with teachers. As noted earlier, teen pregnancy is also commonly associated with school drop-out rates for court-involved girls as they struggle to balance the demands of school and parenting.⁶⁸ A 1990 study found that 27 % of female juvenile offenders dropped out of school because they were pregnant, while 20% dropped out because they were parents and needed to care for their children.⁶⁹ Similarly, the Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services' (CASES) in New York City noted that of the girls enrolled in GirlRising, a gender-responsive alternative-to-incarceration program, 15% had children of their own, 31% were responsible for caring for siblings, and 23% had been pregnant in

the last twelve months.⁷⁰ CASES' noted that half of the girls enrolled in GirlRising were neither in school nor in a GED program upon admission.⁷¹

C. BEST PRACTICES – PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT⁷²

Model programs for court-involved girls are first and foremost rooted in an understanding of female adolescent development and behavior. These are often referred to as “gender-responsive” programs and include components that are designed to recognize both the risk and protective factors that can be used to encourage resiliency and develop the life skills needed to make a positive transition from adolescence to adulthood and prevent future delinquency.⁷³

Researchers from OJJDP identified the following essential features and program components in a review of model gender-responsive programs for court-involved girls:

- **Organization and Management:** The use of a team approach to service delivery and case management is most effective when working with court-involved girls because it models positive relationship-building skills and problem-solving strategies that can help to mitigate family conflict and fragmentation within their own families. Depending on the size and organization of the program, each young woman is supervised by a case manager who works closely with activity specialists to monitor participation in services and progress. Any conflicts or issues that arise are then discussed with a supervisor and resolved in a collaborative setting.
- **Staff Training:** All staff must receive on-going training and have a firm understanding of the developmental stages and service needs of adolescent females.
- **Staffing Pattern:** The development of positive relationships with staff members, whether male or female is

⁶³ Chesney-Lind and Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 150.

⁶⁴ Pariente et al., *Teaching Them a Lesson*, 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Sharp and Simon, 17.

⁶⁸ Chesney-Lind and Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 274 ; Melissa Beck, Ana Bermudez, and Martha King, “Because everybody thought that I wouldn’t be able to do it”: Gender-responsive services for court-involved girls and the first year of the GirlRising program. (Wisconsin Women’s Law Journal, 2003, 18(1)), 6.

⁶⁹ Chesney-Lind and Shelden, *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*, 274; Greene, Peters, & Associates, *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998), Retrieved from, www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/principles/contents.html.

⁷⁰ Beck, et al., “Because everybody thought that I wouldn’t be able to do it”: Gender-responsive services for court-involved girls and the first year of the GirlRising program, 7.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² A sampling of model programs can be found in Appendix A.

⁷³ Greene, Peters, & Associates, *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices*.

noted as a key component of effective programs for court-involved girls. While research does not exclusively support an all-female staffing pattern, the availability of positive female role models increases the likelihood of active program participation and completion.

- **Program components:** A review of model programs for court-involved girls indicated that they shared the following characteristics:
 - **A comprehensive counseling component** to address the psychosocial and treatment needs of court-involved girls, particularly those who have been traumatized by sexual abuse and violence.
 - **Educational programming that goes beyond core academic subjects** and that addresses one or more of the following areas:
 - Female health and hygiene
 - Sex and sexuality education
 - Pre-natal, post-natal care, and parenting skills
 - Healthy relationships to model and provide girls with the skills to engage in and maintain healthy

relationships with family and friends through positive encounters with staff and peer groups.

- Career exploration, job readiness and training that does not limit employment to stereotypically gender-appropriate jobs but that encourages girls to assess interests, develop a plan and create a pathway to achieving those goals.⁷⁴
- **Independent living skills tailored to the developmental needs of adolescent girls in order to prepare them for the transition to adulthood.** Support services should include assistance with daily living skills, safe and affordable housing, access to appropriate education, health and mental health, and employment services, as well as opportunities for positive adult and peer engagement. This is particularly important for court-involved girls who are aging out of foster care and who may not be able to remain with their families.

⁷⁴ Jeanne Weller, *Girls and Violence* (ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education New York, ERIC Digest Number 143 New York), Retrieved from, www.ericdigests.org/1999-4/girls.htm.

Findings And Recommendations

The findings and recommendations below are based on data collected from stakeholder interviews, advocacy meetings, and focus groups with court-involved girls. Stakeholder interviews and advocacy meetings were conducted with Family Court and Supreme Court judges, city agencies including the Department of Juvenile Justice and the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator, local and national experts, elected officials and community-based service providers. CCC partnered with community-based service providers to recruit both court-involved and formerly court-involved girls to participate in focus groups.

A. FIELD RESEARCH FINDINGS

Data on Court-Involved Girls

Finding: Beyond basic arrest and detention rates, much of what we know about the service needs and experiences of court-involved girls in New York City has been largely anecdotal. Existing demographic and service need data on court-involved girls typically resides within each individual city or state agency (for example, DOP, DJJ, and OCFS) creating a silo effect making it difficult to accurately identify service needs, target scarce resources, and implement program, policy and practice that is data-driven.

Additionally, many of the data sources are outdated and do not accurately reflect current trends in female juvenile delinquency. For example, although female juvenile arrest rates for New York City are available and further disaggregated by arrest type, the most recent year data available is 2001.⁷⁵ The latest recidivism rate for girls leaving OCFS placement was documented in a 1999 study by the New York State Comptroller's office.

Furthermore, the response to interview questions and data requests made to city and state agencies, the courts, legal service and community-based service providers produced mixed results as many did not collect or did not have the capacity to disaggregate data by gender in a comprehensive manner that would include demographic and service need indicators for court-involved girls.

Finding: While many stakeholders were able to provide point in time data on the number of court-involved girls served by examining current caseloads, there is no standardized tool or on-going reporting and data coordination effort used to collect and track case-load patterns, service needs and dispositional outcomes across city and state agencies, the courts, and community-based service providers. Overall, stakeholders agreed that improved data collection and coordination along with on-going analysis would aid their understanding of delinquency patterns and how best to serve court-involved girls system-wide.

Only recently have there been efforts both by individual city agencies and the Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator to collect and synthesize data from the various public entities that are responsible for serving court-involved girls. Both the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and the Department of Probation (DOP) have implemented new information and case management systems⁷⁶ which would enhance their capacity to collect and manipulate a broad range of data including the ability to disaggregate data by gender. Additionally, immediately following the closure of the city's alternative-to-detention program in December 2005, the Mayor's Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator convened a city-wide Task Force with participants from the major city agencies⁷⁷ serving court-involved youth as well as Family Court judges to examine the use of detention in New York City with the goal of developing a range of detention alternatives for court-involved youth. The Task Force in its initial phase will collect and synthesize data on detention use from the major city agencies that serve court-involved youth to track and identify population trends and is expected to have the capacity to examine trends in female juvenile delinquency.

Finding: Community-based service providers in particular stated that while they recognized the importance of rigorous data collection and program

⁷⁵ The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) provided juvenile arrest data for 1990-2001 that was disaggregated by gender. In October of 2005, CCC filed a Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) request with the New York City Police Department (NYPD) for more recent data on female juvenile arrests. As of September 2006, the FOIL request is still pending.

⁷⁶ DJJ's new information management system, Juvenile Access Support System (JASS) and DOP's Reusable Case Management System are expected to be implemented in 2007.

⁷⁷ Participants on the Task Force include representatives from the New York City Department of Probation, Department of Juvenile Justice, Administration for Children's Services, Department of Education, the Mayor's Office, Corporation Counsel, Family Court judges, and the Vera Institute for Justice which provides technical assistance.

evaluations efforts, funding constraints forced many to concentrate the bulk of their spending on direct services. While many service providers were able to provide anecdotal portraits of female participants, few systematically tracked service needs and outcome data. As a result, many providers spoke of the difficulty of securing funds to maintain or expand gender-specific programming because they did not have the capacity or were just now beginning to develop the capacity to collect comprehensive data for program evaluation purposes. It is also important to note that many service providers discussed a need to develop outcome measures that more closely reflected the delinquency patterns of court-involved girls. Stakeholders emphasized that success for court-involved girls is particularly fragile and cannot be accurately captured by traditional outcome measures such as school graduation, re-arrest or even program completion rates. Traditional youth development goals and timeframes for achievement do not account for the chaos and complexity that can surface unexpectedly, even when court-involved girls are meeting program expectations. This is particularly true for girls who have been sexually exploited or do not have a stable home environment and as a result may not have continuous contact with a program or service. More appropriate indicators of success particularly for court-involved girls would include the number of overall program contacts (rather than daily attendance rates), the number of on-going positive youth and adult relationships sustained, quality of program participation, and engagement in harm reduction behavior.

Pathways to the Juvenile Justice System for Court-Involved Girls

Finding: Focus group participants and stakeholders alike reported that a majority of court-involved girls faced multiple stressors prior to their entry into the juvenile justice system. Stakeholders reported that a majority of the court-involved girls they came into contact with lived in single parent homes with female heads of household and often had experienced a range of familial stressors including poverty, and domestic violence, in addition to alcohol and substance abuse, and homelessness. In many cases, girls also experienced a rise in family conflict particularly when mothers bring boyfriends into the household thereby increasing tensions and making some girls vulnerable to emotional and physical abuse. This finding was

substantiated by focus group participants who recounted complex family histories and spoke extensively about the struggle to meet their own basic needs in the midst of familial dysfunction and chaos.

On the other end of the spectrum, several focus group participants talked about living in stable, two-parent households, being an honor student and enjoying academic success with positive influences until they reached their teen years when they rebelled and wanted more freedom than their parents would allow. Focus group participants reported that the three most common catalysts that led them to involvement with the juvenile justice system included: 1) the negative influence of a boyfriend, 2) associations with negative peer groups at school, and 3) the deterioration of their relationship with parents as they struggled to become more independent and make their own decisions.

Finding: Overall, stakeholders and focus group participants talked specifically about two major factors that contributed to female juvenile delinquency:

- **Stakeholders emphasized the adverse impact of male peer relationships in the lives of court-involved girls.** For example, although several stakeholders noted that court-involved girls typically entered high school with better reading and math skills than that of court-involved boys, persistent truancy is common and in their experience is often due to the negative pressure from male peers or boyfriends not to attend school. As one service provider suggested, by the time court-involved girls enter the juvenile justice system, education is low on their list of priorities and many believe and vocalize the commonly held belief that their financial and emotional well-being was dependant upon whether they could find the right boyfriend. Stakeholders also believed that the lack of positive male role models and relationships makes it particularly difficult for court-involved girls to understand how to interact positively with male peers and be resilient in the face of negative peer pressure.
- **Stakeholders also identified the adverse impact of on-going family conflicts and strained relationships with parents as a major contributing factor to female juvenile delinquency.** Many of the focus group participants recounted complex and difficult family histo-

ries that included repeated exposure to domestic violence, abuse and neglect, and substance abuse. Despite the adverse impact of these experiences, focus group participants expressed a strong desire to re-build damaged family and personal relationships. The majority of focus group participants were willing to do “whatever was necessary” (for example, attend individual and family counseling, and family mediation) to achieve positive relationships with family members. These girls believed that long-term deterrence from involvement in the juvenile justice system required consistent positive support and guidance from their families. Less than half of the remaining focus group participants abandoned hopes of reconciliation with family members and believed that their long-standing differences were irreconcilable. These girls resolved to start over and wanted to build on newly formed positive relationships with adult mentors and peers, as well as obtain the independent living skills needed to “make it on their own”.

Finding: Stakeholders reported that girls typically did not commit crimes against strangers. This finding is consistent with literature that suggests that the majority of crimes committed by girls are relational in nature. The three most common pathways to involvement in the juvenile justice system cited by stakeholders and focus group participants included:

- Involvement in prostitution, assault or drug-related crimes as a result of relationships with boyfriends (both male peers and older men).
- Involvement in an on-going domestic dispute between family members that leads to an assault charge or other violence within the home.
- Involvement in a schoolyard or neighborhood fight that results in an assault or robbery charge that typically arises from a conflict between two groups of girls over material possessions or boyfriends.

Experience in Court

Finding: Among stakeholders there is a distinct impression that court-involved girls are treated differently in court due in part to a lack of knowledge and/or training about their unique experience, service needs,

and availability of appropriate service options. Responses to questions asked about the experience of court-involved girls in the court room were largely subjective based upon the role that the stakeholder interviewee played in the court room (whether a judge, attorney, or service provider). Attorneys and providers believed that there was a marked difference in the way court-involved girls were expected to present themselves before the judge as opposed to boys. These stakeholders felt that a young woman’s ability to present a demure or remorseful demeanor and accept the court’s “paternalistic” tendencies were valued in the court room. Many reported that girls who did not present themselves in this way often had a more difficult time getting the judge to “hear her story” and increased their risk for detention or placement. All stakeholders, including judges, acknowledge that the developmental differences between boys and girls inevitably created pre-conceived notions of the way court-involved girls and boys should present themselves in the court room. At the same time, all stakeholders interviewed felt that these perceptions had more to do with a lack of training rather than an intentional disregard. Many suggested that more could be done to help all court room personnel better understand the full spectrum of female adolescent behavior and reduce the risk of gender bias with specific emphasis on the developmental experiences and service needs of court-involved girls.

Finding: Focus group participants did not feel adequately prepared for court appearances and expressed a need for a better understanding of the basic terminology used in court, the consequences of the decisions made on their behalf, and greater participation in the decision-making process.

Focus group participants spoke about the sharp learning curve that they experienced during the life of a case. When asked what advice they would give to newly court-involved girls, looking back, focus group participants talked specifically about the need to get the attention of judges and their attorneys by telling them the “story of your life” and getting them to understand the “why” or the motivation behind their actions. Focus group participants also felt it was easier to convey their “story” to judges but much more difficult to do the same with attorneys. The girls did note however that the stigma attached to a prostitution charge made it nearly

impossible to get the judge and others to take into account the circumstances behind the charge. When asked to describe their relationships with attorneys, focus group participants overwhelmingly felt that attorneys “didn’t care” or “didn’t have the time” to explain the nature of court proceedings or language used in the court.

Stakeholders also added that based on their experiences with court-involved youth, girls were much more aware of and prioritized the need for self-expression and self-advocacy more often than boys, a finding which is consistent with literature on female adolescent development and delinquency. Many of the focus group participants believed that the outcomes of their cases could have been more favorable had they fully understood the decision-making process and played a bigger role in their own defense. While these expressions of frustration are common among court-involved youth and cannot be attributed solely to the experience of court-involved girls, stakeholders did acknowledge that these comments were indicative of the need to conduct on-going training and more closely examine case practice.

Finding: Stakeholders suggested that on average, court-involved girls, particularly girls of color, were arrested, detained and incarcerated in greater numbers than court-involved boys, and for less serious crimes. Again, many stakeholders believed that this phenomenon results from a combination of inadequate training and vigilance on the part of law enforcement, the courts, and attorneys to prevent and identify racial and gender bias, as well as a lack of gender-responsive diversion and community-based alternatives-to-detention and incarceration system-wide. Attorneys and judges alike spoke of the frustration they experienced and their efforts to find appropriate community-based alternatives, particularly for court-involved girls with mental health needs. In their experience, many of the court-involved girls sent to detention and placement could have been safely supervised in the community if not for the lack of appropriate housing, health and mental health services.

Similarly, stakeholders believed that greater efforts are necessary to divert girls from the justice systems at the outset. Anecdotally, many stakeholders believed that the city’s shift to aggressively reduce quality of life crimes has unwittingly resulted in an increase in the number of female juvenile

arrests, particularly for assault charges. A typical scenario of this kind would involve an initial noise complaint made by a neighbor to a local precinct. The police arrive on the scene and find a girl involved in an altercation with a family member or acquaintance and an arrest is made. Stakeholders believed that in these scenarios, greater efforts could be made to resolve the conflict through family counseling, mediation or restorative justice practices prior to an arrest. While this finding is also reflected in a review of arrest and case processing data as documented in research and literature, a more thorough examination of recent arrests and case patterns is warranted.

Experience in Detention

Finding: Stakeholders and focus group participants cited the lack of adequate and appropriate gender-responsive staff training, and health and mental health, and educational programs and services as primary concerns for girls in detention. Additionally, stakeholders cited the need to improve quality control measures and increase the capacity of facilities to respond to youth complaints to ensure that girls in detention receive high quality services and are protected from abuse.

- **Lack of gender-responsive training for staff in detention.** Stakeholders suggested that the lack of gender-responsive supervision and training for staff in detention facilities often exacerbated existing health and mental health issues, particularly for girls with a history of sexual or other abuse. While there are few reported incidences of staff-on-youth sexual assaults, anecdotally, stakeholders and the focus group participants suggested that girls in detention are at a greater perceived risk for sexual assault when supervised in settings with all male counselors. Several stakeholders suggested that ironically, girls may sometimes feel more comfortable around male staff members because they feel that they “know” how to deal with men. However, oftentimes, girls fall into familiar but negative relationship patterns with male staff making them more vulnerable while in facility care. At the same time, stakeholders were careful to not prescribe an all female staffing pattern because girls are just as likely to engage in unhealthy relationships with female staff

members. Stakeholders suggested that the same conflicts that the girls experienced at home with their mothers or female guardians are often reflected in the relationships with female staff members. More specifically, stakeholders believed that girls who had experienced sexual or other abuse were most vulnerable because of an imbalance in power between staff and resident that can exist when youth are placed in a facility setting. Stakeholders and focus group participants again identified a need for gender responsive training for all staff and suggested that a mixed gender staffing pattern be used to supervise girls in detention at all times. Additionally, stakeholders suggested the implementation of on-going conflict resolution trainings and workshops to help staff and girls better understand and address the dynamics of power and gender within a facility setting.⁷⁸

- **Lack of adequate health and mental health services.** Stakeholders and focus group participants overwhelming cited the need for improved and expanded health and mental health services for girls in facility care. Specifically, their comments focused around two major issues: 1) safety concerns and 2) need for comprehensive reproductive health services.
 - All of the focus group participants talked about an overwhelming sense of fear for their own physical safety while in facility care. One of their greatest sources of anxiety was the perceived lack of supervision and treatment for girls with mental health needs. Despite the use of special support dorms⁷⁹ in DJJ secure detention facilities for youth with diagnosed mental health needs, many of the focus group participants described having to be hyper-vigilant in order to feel safe whether in the classrooms, dorms or at mealtimes. Similarly, focus group participants talked about the stress of having to maintain a “survival

instinct” and discussed at length the intensity of their fear and depression and the lack of emotional safety while in facility care.

- Both stakeholders and girls emphasized the need for more comprehensive, high-quality pre-natal care and health services for pregnant girls.⁸⁰ In particular, focus group participants who had been pregnant while in detention or placement reported having a difficult time getting enough food and not being able to rest properly as they were further along in their pregnancy. When asked to identify the kinds of programs and service that would be helpful to pregnant girls in a facility setting, focus group participants expressed a strong desire for information on basic pre-natal and post-partum care, as well as counseling to help girls better manage the stress of being pregnant, in addition to the frustration, guilt and depression many parenting girls experience as a result of being separated from their children. According to focus group participants, the lasting and negative impact of that separation is experienced each and every day as they struggle to form positive and strong attachments with their children post-release.

Stakeholders also emphasized the need to introduce girls to community-based organizations that provide gender responsive health and mental health services prior to their release and as part of comprehensive discharge planning. Providers who regularly went into facilities to conduct outreach found this to be the most effective way to connect and engage court-involved girls in services upon their release.⁸¹

- **Lack of gender-responsive educational programming.** Stakeholders and focus group participants also identified the lack of gender-responsive educational programming in facility care as a major shortfall. Both stakeholders and focus group participants defined educational services to include both academic services and programs that

⁷⁸ Beginning in 2005, the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) took steps to address these concerns by providing conflict resolution training to both in-service and newly hired juvenile counselors. Similarly, DJJ also provides both in-service and newly hired juvenile counselors with training around the developmental needs and behavior of adolescent youth.

⁷⁹ DJJ operates two special support dorms, one for boys and one for girls in secure detention. The dorms provide intensive supervision and services for youth with diagnosed mental health needs. Each support dorm is staffed by a team that consists of a mental health clinician, case manager, discharge planner and juvenile counselors.

⁸⁰ In fiscal year 2005, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) reported that 7% (or 72) of the girls admitted to facility care were pregnant. DJJ, unpublished data, 2006.

⁸¹ DJJ contracts with SisterLink, a project of the Hunter College Center for Community and Urban Health to provide a rotating curriculum on female health and hygiene, including pregnancy prevention and teen sexuality, violence prevention in domestic and peer relationships, and self esteem building and life skills. This program is supported by funding from the New York City Council.

promote social and emotional health.

With regard to academic services, focus group participants found classroom materials to be of little relevance to their daily struggles and life experiences. Girls also expressed great frustration over the experience of repeating the same curriculum each time they returned to detention or placement and as a result found little motivation to actively engage in the classroom. Focus group participants expressed a need for enhanced opportunities to participate in the creative arts, job readiness and vocational training, and youth leadership classes. As one young woman noted, court-involved girls need “more to do than just sit there, be angry and start fights.” Stakeholders too expressed the urgent need to develop and implement gender-responsive curricula that encourages and makes available educational and vocation opportunities that are not limited by gender stereotypes. For example, course work should include a broad range of classes including computer training and automotive repair skills.

With regard to the lack of educational programs that address the social and emotional health of court-involved girls, stakeholders noted that while confinement negatively impacts both boys and girls alike, the scarcity of gender responsive programming for girls often exacerbates existing mental health needs especially as it relates to depression. Using the developmental needs of adolescent girls as a foundation for program development, stakeholders recommend the use of a comprehensive curriculum including topics such as female health and hygiene, self-esteem building, conflict resolution training, and family and relationship health and safety.

- **Lack of an effective quality control mechanism to ensure that the service needs and concerns of girls in detention and placement are responded to in a timely manner.** A majority of the focus group participants talked about feeling like they had no one to advocate for their day-to-day needs and concerns while in facility care. When asked if they had ever talked to a staff person or an Ombudsman about their concerns, many focus group participants said that they did not feel comfortable engaging in conversation with an adult who they perceived to be part of the facility staff or administration. Stakeholders also emphasized the lack of access to

an independent body outside of the facility setting that would be responsible for hearing complaints and working with the girls to resolve conflicts. Despite the existence of an ombuds function in city and state operated facilities, these bodies are typically under-resourced, and under-utilized. For example, in recent years, the Office of the Ombudsman has operated with only one Ombudsperson responsible for responding to youth complaints and visiting all OCFS facilities in New York State. In New York City, the Ombudsman Review Board only operates in secure detention facilities. Girls in detention and placement must be afforded regular and multiple opportunities to share complaints and concerns including timely access to an Ombudsman as well as regular contact with family members, and access to law guardians when needed.

Aftercare Experience

Finding: While the majority of the focus group participants were optimistic about their chances for achieving success post-release, girls found that they were ill-equipped and did not have the knowledge or tools needed to access basic education, employment, health and mental health services nor the emotional support and guidance needed to achieve success and minimize setbacks upon return home.

When asked about their goals post-release, focus group participants recalled a myriad of positive goals including finishing high school, getting a job, and becoming a better parent. However, shortly after returning home, many of the focus group participants felt “lost” and were unsure of where to turn for help with achieving their goals. The girls were frustrated to find that although they were ready to make a positive change in their own lives, few service supports were in place. Furthermore, a majority of the focus group participants were disappointed to learn that while they were away from home “nothing had changed.” Family and friends continued to struggle with poverty domestic violence, and substance abuse and were unable to provide the positive guidance and support that the girls needed to meet their goals and achieve success post-release. One girl remarked that, “...even though I changed, nobody else did. Everything is still the same.”

Additionally, focus group participants believed having a mentor, for example a formerly court-involved girl or an

adult female role model to share lessons learned would substantially improve their chances for success post-release. Focus group participants explained that what they wanted and needed was both practical day-to-day advice (for example, how to access school, health and mental health, and employment services) as well as the emotional support needed to better deal with the trauma of confinement, separation from family and friends, and the challenge of maintaining success and minimizing setbacks.

Despite the challenges of navigating life post-release, stakeholders note that many court-involved girls do ultimately take positive steps towards achieving their goals. However, they also caution that success post-release is fragile and oftentimes sabotaged by the girls themselves and/or their families and friends. Stakeholders explained that although many girls work hard to achieve educational and other personal goals post-release, family members, peers, and boyfriends in particular, often undermine these efforts by dismissing newfound academic success, or discounting new relationships with mentors and community-based organizations.

Stakeholders and focus group participants both agreed that without a safety net of family, peer and service supports in place post-release, girls in the juvenile justice system will continue to struggle to overcome setbacks and maintain long-term success.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations have been developed based upon an examination of available data, a review of best practice literature, interviews with a range of professionals who come into contact with girls in the juvenile justice system in addition to focus groups with court-involved girls. These major recommendations outline six key areas of action that when taken together begin to address and better respond to the service needs and experiences of court-involved girls. Within each of the areas outlined, more targeted recommendations should be considered to more adequately address the challenges that girls face in the juvenile justice system.

The city should conduct a comprehensive city-wide needs assessment that collects basic demographic data on court-involved girls and tracks involvement in multiple social service systems in addition to pregnancy

rates, education, mental health and housing needs. Within the context of the city-wide task force on juvenile detention led by the Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator, the city has a unique opportunity to address data gaps with regard to the experience of court-involved girls by disaggregating existing data by gender and developing new indicators that would enable the city to more accurately identify service needs, and gaps in services and service coordination as well as monitor trends in female delinquency.

Collection and synthesis of data from community-based service providers who have frontline expertise is integral to developing a comprehensive understanding of the service needs and experiences of court-involved girls. Contracts awarded by public and private funders should take into account the additional resources (for example, staff time, training and technological infrastructure) needed by community-service providers to engage in data collection and analysis efforts.

The city should develop a coordinated city-wide plan that includes a program, policy and budget response that reaches across the city and state agencies responsible for meeting the service needs of court-involved girls and at each stage of court involvement (from initial contact with law enforcement to aftercare).⁸² The plan must articulate a coordinated vision and approach for a comprehensive needs assessment, on-going data collection and tracking, program development and staff training goals for gender responsive services in community-based and residential settings, in addition to strategies for improved service delivery and coordination. The Office of the Criminal Justice Coordinator's on-going data analysis efforts should be used to inform the city-wide plan as well as resource allocation and policy and practice reforms. Additionally, the city should draw upon the experiences of court-involved girls, along with the collective expertise of service providers, community leaders and advocates as part of any planning process.

The city and state should invest in a continuum of gender-responsive programs and services that minimize out-of-home placements, reduces the negative impact of confinement, and provides on-going support services for girls returning home from facility care. More specifically,

⁸² See Appendix B for a sampling of local and national reform efforts to better serve court-involved girls.

because a majority of court-involved girls enter the justice system with unmet health and mental health needs, the city and state should invest in a range of diversion, alternative-to-detention and placement programs that prioritize the treatment of health and mental health needs in a community-based setting when appropriate. Best practice suggests that these programs need to be available at multiple and critical intervention points along the justice continuum in order to ensure timely and continuous treatment.⁸³ Similarly, expanded educational programming should be made available to address both the physical and social and emotional health of adolescent court-involved girls using a strengths-based approach that promotes female reproductive health, self-esteem and empowerment through education, youth development, and positive peer and family relationship building.

The city and state should invest in on-going training for professionals (judges, attorneys, agency personnel and service providers) that come into contact with court-involved girls to ensure that decision-makers and service providers have a better understanding of their unique service needs and experiences. Best practice research requires all professionals (judges, court personnel, attorneys, and community-based and city and state agency providers) that come into contact with court-involved girls across the justice system have both an understanding of the developmental needs as well as the therapeutic approaches that are most effective across service settings. However, it must be emphasized that training be conducted in an on-going basis rather than as a one-time effort in order to inform policy and practice long-term.

The city and state should develop and invest in self-

⁸³ In June 2006, the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice released, *A Blueprint for Change: Improving the System Response to Youth with Mental Health Needs Involved in the Juvenile Justice System* which called for access to gender-specific mental health services for court-involved girls in community-based settings at multiple critical intervention points including upon initial contact with law enforcement, probation intake, during the judicial process, and upon their return home during aftercare. Best practice program examples include the Cook County, Illinois Juvenile Court Clinic which provides a multi-disciplinary in-house staff of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers and lawyers who provide consultation regarding requests for clinical assessments and information regarding community-based mental health resources. Additionally, a clinical coordinator is present in the court room to provide guidance to judges and probation staff about whether an evaluation is needed and whether a young person's need can best be met in a community-based program setting. Available online: http://www.ncmhjj.com/Blueprint/pdfs/ProgramBrief_06_06.pdf

advocacy and mentoring programs that provide court-involved girls with the knowledge, tools and support needed to navigate the justice system (in the courtroom, detention, placement and during aftercare).

Although training plays an important role in ensuring that the service needs and experiences of court-involved girls are adequately addressed, the opportunity for court-involved girls to develop the tools necessary to become better self-advocates is equally as important. While self-advocacy and “know your rights” programs exist for youth in the foster care system⁸⁴ there are few formal programs for delinquent youth and even fewer with the capacity to meet the particular needs of court-involved girls. More specifically, court-involved girls must be better equipped with a range of basic information as they enter the juvenile justice system including a working knowledge of legal and court room terminology, how to prepare for a court appearance, basic information regarding their rights to education, health and mental health and other services while in detention or placement, and resources for community-based services upon their return home. Additionally, greater investments in mentoring programs for court-involved girls can help to provide the structured support and guidance needed to help meet the day-to-day challenges associated with navigating the juvenile justice system. Adolescent girls in particular thrive on strong female adult and peer relationships and mentoring programs provide a concrete opportunity to engage in positive relationship-building opportunities. Mentors provide an important source of strength, comfort and encouragement when court-involved girls suffer a setback and need help getting back on track.

Taken together, youth advocacy and mentoring programs can help provide court-involved girls with some of the basic tools and knowledge needed to successfully navigate the juvenile justice system and move towards safe and productive lives.

The city and state should improve its capacity to respond to youth complaints and implement greater quality control measures in order to improve oversight and accountability and better meet the services of all youth in detention and placement. A system of checks and balances should be developed to ensure that youth complaints

⁸⁴ Youth Advocacy Center (YAC), a non-profit organization in New York City provides youth in the foster care system with the practical tools necessary to become effective self-advocates while in care.

are responded to in a timely manner and the lessons learned from individual complaints are used to inform improvements in system-wide policy and practice. On the state-level, a restructuring of the Ombudsman's Office and additional staff resources would greatly improve its independence and oversight capacity. Additionally, greater use of the Independent Review Board, which consists of experts in the field and meets with the Ombudsman and agency personnel on a regular basis to identify system-wide challenges and discuss possible solutions is needed. At the city-level, DJJ should expand its existing Ombudsman program to include oversight and monitoring of non-secure detention facilities. As a complement to

strong internal quality control measures, New York State should amend and adopt legislation to create an independent New York State Office of the Child Advocate with oversight and investigatory authority of child welfare and juvenile justice services. Greater attention should be paid to how the proposed New York State Office of the Child Advocate would interact with existing local oversight and monitoring bodies such as DJJ's Ombudsman Review Board and the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Child Fatality Accountability Review Panel in addition to its authority and process for working with city and state agencies.

Conclusion

Each year more than 5,000 youth enter New York City's juvenile justice system. Approximately 20% of these youth are court-involved girls who struggle to get their stories heard and service needs met in a system that does not employ a gender responsive approach to programs and services. Although both court-involved girls and boys generally experience many of the same risk factors and service needs, research demonstrates a distinction between male and female juvenile delinquency that is influenced by gender-based developmental needs, as well as a society's perception of and response to female juvenile delinquency as demonstrated through program, policy and practice.

What was once considered a small population has now grown exponentially in size and scope, and moved squarely into the conscience of advocates, service providers, and elected officials as court-involved girls continue to find new opportunities to bring their experiences to light. However, despite some media coverage, the service needs and experiences of court-involved girls have not yet become a priority among decision-makers at the city and state level.

CCC's findings highlight the need to address gaps in data and research, expand the availability of gender responsive

programs and services, and provide staff training to all professionals that come into contact with court-involved girls and most importantly, the need to develop of a city and state-wide plan to better understand service needs and develop and implement policy, program and practice reforms

Recommendations that can begin to address these shortfalls include improved data collection and coordination between city and state agencies, and community-based service providers, greater resource allocation for gender responsive programs and services across the juvenile justice continuum, expanded opportunities for court-involved girls to connect with positive peer and adult female role models and on-going staff training as the research and best practice literature is further developed in this field. Ideally, these individual recommendations can be incorporated into a strategic city and state plan to stave off population increases, lower recidivism rates and improve outcomes for court-involved girls.

The effort to establish gender-responsive services and practices within the juvenile justice system must be a part of a larger effort – one that values and seeks to provide developmentally appropriate services and practices for all court-involved youth.

Appendix A

MODEL PROGRAMS FOR COURT-INVOLVED GIRLS

The **PACE (Practical and Cultural Education) Center for Girls** was established in 1985 and offers a non-residential, gender-responsive alternative-to-incarceration and prevention program for at-risk adolescent girls in Jacksonville, Florida. PACE has been successfully replicated in 18 cities throughout Florida. Girls attend for 12 to 18 months, with a follow-up program of up to 3 years for girls enrolled in the daily program for at least 30 days. The P.A.C.E. program is holistic in nature and focused on providing both core educational services, as well as life management skills, that uses a curriculum that builds self-esteem through community service, career development, counseling, and responsible health choices. A 2004-05 evaluation indicated that 91% of the girls sustained no new contact with the juvenile justice system a full year after program completion.

Website: <http://www.pacecenter.org/>

The **Center for Young Women's Development (CYWD)** offers a number of gender-responsive programs serving at-risk and court-involved girls in San Francisco, California. Through the Girls Detention Advocacy Project (GDAP), CYWD offers weekly educational workshops in San Francisco's Juvenile Hall as well as post-release support groups that are facilitated by both program staff and the court-involved girls themselves. GDAP uses a three-month, recurring curriculum called *Lift Us Up, Don't Lock Us Down*. The curriculum explores topics including self-care, self-advocacy, political education and cultural history. GDAP also provides one-on-one support, court accompaniment and case advocacy for young women facing California Youth Authority commitment or trial as adults. Additionally, CYWD publishes *Know Justice: Your Rights in the Juvenile Justice System* a first of its kind handbook and resource for youth involved in the juvenile justice system in California. Available in both Spanish and English, the handbook provides explanations of legal terminology and user-friendly information about juvenile justice processes. Know Justice was born out of questions posed by young women incarcerated in Juvenile Hall and developed in collaboration with the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights. Finally, *Young Mothers United* is a support group that grew out of the lack of resources and advocacy for incarcerated pregnant young women and mothers. *Young Mothers United* meets regularly at

the offices of CYWD where young women receive diapers, baby wipes and baby clothes donated to CYWD. *Young Mothers United* is currently developing *Not Without Our Babies*, a survival guide for incarcerated teen parents.

Website: <http://www.cywd.org/>

Girl Talk is a weekly program for girls ages 12-17 at the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in Chicago, Illinois. Girl Talk provides girls in detention an opportunity to engage in workshops and discussions about their health, well-being and life concerns. Girl talk activities and topics include: video-making, poetry, conflict resolution, teen health, sexuality, mural making, quilting, women's history, media literacy, body image, decision-making, African dance, parenting, career choices, yoga, and stress management. The project is facilitated by a part-time coordinator and a group of volunteers who work together as partners to run the program. The partner organizations include: the Northwestern University Children and Family Justice Center, Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health, Insight Arts, Chicago Women's Health Center, Chicago Legal Aid to Incarcerated Women (CLAIM), Prison Action Committee, and Southwest Youth Collaborative.

Website: <http://www.beyondmedia.org/girltalk/mission.html>

Girls Advocacy Project (GAP) was initiated by Judge Cindy S. Lederman, Administrative Judge of the Juvenile Division of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court of Miami-Dade County, and is funded by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. It is the only comprehensive intervention/education project in the State of Florida specifically serving girls while they are in detention. GAP is staffed by a project director, two coordinators and a researcher. Since its inception, over 2,000 girls have voluntarily participated in this program. GAP facilitates 2-hour discussion groups every other day (excluding weekends) with girls in detention on topics ranging from physical health, sexuality and reproductive health, abuse and victimization, substance issues, gang affiliation, and grief counseling. The girls also engage in one-on-one individual counseling sessions and contribute to a GAP journal in which they record messages for the girls who come after them into the system. An evaluation of the program has shown enhanced learning in areas such as conflict resolution, substance abuse, sexuality and health, and the dangers of gang affiliation. GAP is supported by a community advisory board consisting of prominent

female leaders who visit the girls while in detention and engaging in direct service including collecting books, donating computers and exercise equipment for the girls' wing of the detention center and providing tote bags filled with toiletries and clothing for the girls as they are released.

SisterLink is a program of the City University of New York's Hunter College Center for Community and Urban Health. SisterLink provides health education and supportive services to young women in secure detention facilities operated by the New York City Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). SisterLink delivers its curriculum through weekly discussion and educational groups for girls while in detention. The program also provides discharge planning and community-based case management services for girls upon their return to the community from detention. Sisterlink is staffed by a Senior Case Manager/Project Director, one case manager, and a social work intern and is funded by the New York State Office of Criminal Justice Programs.

Website:http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/health/aidshp/prj.sister_link.html

Girls Educational and Mentoring Services (GEMS) is a non-profit organization that provides preventive and transitional services for sexually exploited girls ages 13-21. Participants engage in programs and services both on a voluntary basis and/or are court mandated to attend. GEMS provides case management, outreach, individual and group counseling, and youth leadership programs as well as community referrals for other essential services. GEMS is a founding member and steering committee member of the U.S. Campaign to Stop the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children. As part of its work with the national campaign, GEMS organized and hosted the First National Summit of Commercially Sexually Exploited Youth entitled Breaking the Silence in July, 2003. GEMS is the only service provider offering sexually exploited girls with a comprehensive range of services in New York City since 1999 and is funded by private foundation grants.

Website:<http://www.gems-girls.org/>

Center for Alternative Sentencing and Employment Services (CASES) is a non-profit organization that provides alternative-to-incarceration programs for both adults and youth. Since 2001, CASES has operated a non-residential alternative-to-incarceration program for adolescent female offenders. GirlRising has worked with participants referred

from Supreme Court and Family Court in Brooklyn, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Queens. Court representatives accept referrals from judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys, and then screen potential participants for program eligibility on a case-by-case basis. Supreme Court participants (ages 16-21 at the time of offense) are referred for a six-month program of intensive supervision and services. Family Court participants (ages 13-15 at the time of offense) are referred for a 9-month program, with an emphasis on educational support. Judges are kept apprised of progress through regular written reports and updates from our court representatives. GirlRising offers the following services:

- *Case management, counseling and art therapy:* Case managers select services that are most likely to benefit the participant and help her meet her court obligations. Case managers and art therapists work with girls to address relationship and family issues, experiences with trauma, anger management, and substance abuse, both individually and in groups.
- *Education and intellectual development:* Girls-only homework help is offered daily along with after-school workshops, which stress critical thinking skills, in science, writing and poetry, current events, civil rights and community organizing.
- *Vocational preparedness:* CASES offers computer instruction, resume writing, job search exercises, and the Career Exploration Project, a job readiness program that includes paid internships, and the Youth Enterprise Project, a T-shirt and greeting card business run by participants.
- *Health and well-being:* Participant-responsive services include peer-led reproductive health education, visits from a range of medical professionals, and workshops on domestic violence and physical and sexual abuse, in a girls-only space to encourage young women to take a proactive role in their physical and sexual health.
- *Enrichment workshops:* In addition to the structured services offered to participants, GirlRising has a series of elective classes that resulted, in part, from participant input. These girls-only classes include dance, weekly open mic sessions, and video, doll-making and mask-making projects. Young women also take part in periodic

weekend retreats, which build community, trust and a sense of belonging among participants.

Website: http://www.cases.org/cep_girls.html

Girls Re-entry Assistance Support Project (G.R.A.S.P.)

is a faith-based re-entry initiative for court-involved girls ages 13-18 established by Charles J. Hynes, District Attorney of Kings County in partnership with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). The program provides comprehensive services for court-involved girls who have been placed in OCFS placement facilities and/or other placement settings and are returning home to Brooklyn and Staten Island. Specific programs and services include case management, anger management and conflict resolution,

educational support, career readiness, job placement and retention and parent support. A hallmark of the program is the team mentoring approach in which a committee from a local church congregation (made up of 2-3 members) are matched with each youth participant. The participant meets with a mentor at least 1-3 times per week. The program addresses many of the challenges court-involved girls face including sexual and physical abuse, teen pregnancy and parenthood, low self-esteem and depression, and substance abuse by offering programs and services that are gender appropriate.

Website: <http://www.brooklynda.org/Grasp/Grasp.htm>

Appendix B

A SAMPLING OF ADVOCACY EFFORTS FOR COURT-INVOLVED GIRLS

The Florida legislature passed comprehensive legislation in May 2004 which requires the state to provide gender specific programs and services and appoints the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Affairs to conduct a study to identify the offending patterns of girls, services offered and recommendations for gender responsive alternatives to incarceration. This report would then drive the development of effective gender specific services for court involved girls in Florida. This would align the state of Florida with a 1992, JJDP A mandate which required states receiving federal juvenile justice funds to prepare an analysis of gender specific services for court-involved girls.

The Maryland Female Population Task Force was established in 1992 to meet the growing need for services to girls entering the juvenile justice system and in response to the Reauthorizations of the Juvenile Justice Act 1992. The Task Force is made up of staff from the Department of Juvenile Services, staff from programs that provide gender responsive services to girls and those interested in the well-being of girls. The formation of the Task Force led to the establishment of the Female Intervention Team (FIT) in Baltimore City. FIT has been in operation since 1992 which is staffed with 13 probation officers who have been specifically trained to understand and meet the service needs of court-involved girls. Probation officers in this unit work exclusively with female juvenile offenders. The success of FIT has been duplicated in jurisdictions throughout Maryland. FIT has also been recognized nationally for its successful programming for girls. Activities include facilitated groups by case managers or volunteers and student interns who have experience meeting the service needs of court-involved girls. Speakers are also invited to come to the groups to motivate the girls or speak on a variety of subjects. The girls are also exposed to social and cultural outings that will help them develop into productive young women.

The Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force was formed in 1995 by the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning (CJJP) to bring together key stakeholders in Iowa's juvenile justice system with the goal of improving gender equity for court-involved girls and young women. In 1998, CJJP received funding from the Iowa Commission on the Status of Women to provide staff support to the Task Force. Major activities of the Task Force include an annual training conference for girl-serving professionals; publication and distri-

bution of *Female Juvenile Justice*, a study that provides a demographic profile of female offenders in the state's juvenile justice system; publication and distribution of a desk guide to gender-responsive programs and services in Iowa; and finally, in 1999, Iowa's legislature allocated funding for day treatment and after-care services for court-involved girls and mandated the use of gender-responsive approaches to service delivery.

Michigan's Female Gender Specific Task Force was formed in 2000 as a result of state legislation which required Michigan's Family Independence Agency to develop community based alternatives to public and private residential placements for delinquent youth with Class IV and V offenses. Over time, the Task Force has grown to include concerned professionals from across the state with established committees on advocacy, resource development and community education. The goal of the Task Force is to develop, coordinate and advocate for gender-specific programming for at-risk girls and court-involved girls statewide. Recently, the Task Force developed a five-year strategic plan including the development of public education tools such as policy briefs, a speaker's bureau, publication of research papers to highlight best practices, the development of program evaluation tools, and on-going outreach and development efforts to fund gender-responsive programming.

The Juvenile Justice Coalition of New York led efforts to end the prosecution of sexually exploited youth (under age 18) for prostitution with the introduction of the **Safe Harbor for Sexually Exploited Youth Act** (A. 6597/S.4423) in both the New York State Assembly and Senate. The legislation would require the state to implement the following measures to better serve sexually exploited youth:

- De-criminalize prostitution for youth under age 18
- Conduct a needs assessment to better understand the size and scope of their service needs
- Provide training for all professionals who come into contact with sexually exploited youth
- Establish a continuum of services for sexually exploited youth including specialized crisis intervention, as well as short and long-term safe houses and treatment services.

While the legislation has not been enacted, the state fiscal year 06-07 Adopted Budget requires OCFS to conduct a needs assessment study to better identify the scope and service needs of sexually exploited youth.

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About CCC

Since 1944, Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc. (CCC) has convened, informed and mobilized New Yorkers to make the city a better place for children. CCC's approach to child advocacy is fact-based and combines the best features of public policy advocacy with a tradition of citizen activism. Our focus is on identifying the causes and effects of vulnerability and disadvantage, recommending solutions to problems children face and working to make public policies, budgets, services and benefits more responsive to children. Our mission is to ensure that every New York City child is healthy, housed, educated and safe and to *Secure Every Child's Birthright* to economic, housing and developmental security. Our work aims to:

- Increase Opportunities for Achievement and Success
- Prevent Child and Family Crisis and Displacement
- Shore Up the Safety Net for Children and Families
- Enhance Child Well-Being and Quality of Life
- Advance Policies that Reward and Support Working Families

Casting light on the issues, engaging allies, fueling civic discourse, identifying improvements and envisioning alternatives has helped CCC make children a priority in New York City. CCC is a non-profit organization supported by individuals, foundations and corporations.

CITIZENS' COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN OF NEW YORK, INC.

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