



# Providing a Promising Future for Nevada's Girls:

*A Statewide*



*Gender-Specific*



*Services Plan*



A project funded by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, to the Nevada Department of Human Resources, Division of Child and Family Services, Juvenile Justice Program Office.

Prepared by Sherri Rice & Associates  
in Partnership with the Nevada Women's Fund

**MARCH 2003**

*PROVIDING A PROMISING FUTURE  
FOR NEVADA'S GIRLS:  
A STATEWIDE GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES  
PLAN*

*MARCH 2003*

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JUSTICE ASSISTANCE, TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES,  
DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES,  
JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS OFFICE*

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*THIS PROJECT WAS INSPIRED BY  
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March, 2003

Dear Fellow Nevadans,

I am pleased to present **Providing a Promising Future for Nevada's Girls: A Statewide Gender-Specific Services Plan**. This is the first report of its kind for Nevada and was made possible through a grant by the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, to the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services, Juvenile Justice Programs Office. I would like to thank the Bureau of Justice Assistance personnel for their cooperation with this project.

Today, over a hundred years since the creation of the juvenile justice system, we are reminded that the system was designed to meet only the needs of male juvenile offenders. In order to address issues of fairness, accountability and community safety, we must be aware of the gender-specific issues surrounding both boys and girls. This project was designed to address the gap in gender-specific services for girls in the juvenile justice system and at the same time does not discount the specific needs of boys.

This report provides a brief profile of female juvenile offenders, the problems they present and their needs. It also describes practical policy and program development processes as well as recommendations for action in order to assist communities and the State of Nevada in developing programs that are gender-specific for girls.

The Juvenile Justice Commission encourages and welcomes your personal, professional and community level involvement as we work together to actively promote and implement gender-specific services for girls throughout the state and in Nevada's Juvenile Justice System. It is our hope that by supporting gender-specific planning, policies and programs, we will truly provide a promising future for all Nevada's girls.

Sincerely,  
Nicole Young  
Juvenile Justice Commission, Chair

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**A** project of this magnitude could not be completed without the help and contribution of many. Primarily, we would like to thank the girls who participated in the interviews for their insightful recommendations. Thanks also to all those who participated in the adult interviews and the Key Informant interviews. Their suggestions and recommendations will help Nevada serve its girl population in a more effective manner.

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We would like to thank the following individuals for their commitment to upholding the highest professional standards as they serve the young men and women in our state: Ed Cotton, Administrator of the Division of Child and Family Services; Willie B. Smith, Deputy Administrator for Youth Corrections; Chuck Pyle, Caliente Youth Center; Steve Thaler and Wendy Newman, Aurora Pines Girls Facility; the Family Court Judges, the Juvenile Masters and the Juvenile Justice Commission Members.

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# INTRODUCTION



The Nevada Juvenile Justice Programs Office was awarded a grant from the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance with the intent to develop strategies to initiate and enhance planning for gender-specific programs to address the needs of females in the juvenile justice system, as well as at-risk young women around the State of Nevada. Specifically, three phases were conducted to fulfill the grant requirements: assessment, training and writing the Statewide Gender-Specific Services Plan.

## ASSESSMENT

As a component of the assessment phase, interviews with juvenile court judges and juvenile justice staff from around the state were conducted. Nationally recognized expert on girls in the juvenile justice system, Leslie Acoca, assisted with the assessment phase.

Interviews were held with juvenile justice system professionals as well as young women currently held in state and local facilities. The interviews took place in Washoe County, Clark County, Carson City, Caliente and Winnemucca.

The goal of the interviews for the professionals was to determine current gaps in gender-specific services across the state, the priority of services needed for girls within our state, as well as any other needs within their specific communities.

The goal of the interviews for the young women was to determine how they could have avoided involvement with the juvenile justice system; types of services that would help them from becoming a repeat offender; and what they would change about the specific facility where they were being held.

Key informant interviews were conducted (via e-mail and fax) to determine the top three services needed for girls in the juvenile justice system. Key informants included judges, probation officers and juvenile justice staff.

## TRAINING

To complete the second phase, trainings on gender-specific programming for girls were held for juvenile justice system staff, human services professionals, school district personnel, law enforcement and other community members. The training curriculum focused on the development of the female adolescent; how girls' needs differ from boys'; key components and elements of gender-specific programming; and national and local juvenile justice system statistics and norms. A total of 18 trainings were held across the state.

## WRITING THE STATEWIDE GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES PLAN

The third phase of the project was writing the Plan. Information on national trends provided in the Plan was primarily drawn from six major sources. These included, *No Place to Hide: Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Girls in the California Juvenile Justice System* by Leslie Acoca and Kelly Dedel; *Educate or Incarcerate: Girls in the Duval County and Florida Juvenile Justice Systems* by Leslie Acoca; *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming* prepared by Greene, Peters and Associates; *Justice by Gender* jointly issued by the American Bar Association and the National Bar Association; *Prevention and Parity: Girls in Juvenile Justice* by OJJPD and Girls Inc.; and *How to Implement Oregon's Guidelines for Effective Gender-Responsive Programming for Girls* by Pam Patton and Marcia Morgan. It is important to note that additional sources were utilized as well.

When possible, national trends were compared and contrasted with Nevada statistics based on information provided by the Nevada Division of Child and Family Services and other sources.

Finally, recommendations were made based on careful review of national research on key components of gender-specific programming, local group and key informant findings, and the current status of girls within Nevada's Juvenile Justice System.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**D**uring the late 1980's and 1990's, there was a dramatic increase in the number of girls involved in the juvenile justice system, both nationally and in Nevada. This rise caused legislators, policymakers, researchers and juvenile justice professionals to question why more girls were entering the system and what was happening to them once they got there.

Researchers have determined the path leading to delinquency and have outlined a number of risk factors to take into consideration. Unfortunately, Nevada's national ranking for most of the identified risk factors is alarmingly high. Nevada's ranking is in the top third for almost every category, more specifically:

- 1<sup>st</sup> for men's and women's adult chronic drinking (NYRB, 2001)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> for boys and girls high school drop out rate (Kids Count, 2000)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> for boys and girls deaths by suicide (Kids Count, 2000)
- 7<sup>th</sup> for girls in custody (OJJDP, 1997)
- 8<sup>th</sup> for boys and girls juvenile custody rate (DCFS, 1997)
- 14<sup>th</sup> for boys and girls child maltreatment cases (WCHD, 2002)
- 21<sup>st</sup> for boys and girls living in single-parent homes (Kids Count, 2000)

These high rankings leave Nevada's girls particularly vulnerable and increase their likelihood of entering the juvenile justice system.

Girls receive unintentional biased and unfair treatment through various policies and practices within the juvenile justice system. Both nationally and in Nevada, more girls than boys are referred for status offenses. A status offense is defined as *conduct by a minor that would not, under the law of the jurisdiction in which the offense was committed, be an offense if committed by an adult*. Typical status offenses are curfew violation, truancy or running away beyond parent control. Once in the system, biased policies such as "bootstrapping" affect more girls than boys. Bootstrapping is the escalation of a status offense to a more serious delinquent offense as the result of violating a court order, and leads to more severe consequences for less serious offenses.

In addition, girls are often subjected to outdated thinking about what is appropriate behavior for young women. This can lead to girls receiving harsher punishments as a means of "protecting" them from themselves by placing them in detention. Nationally and in Nevada, the use of detention for girls is on the rise and girls are more often detained for less serious offenses than boys.

In Nevada, and across the nation, there is a serious dearth of alternative placement options for girls, leaving detention centers and deeper-end facilities, as the only options available. Placing low-level offenders in secure facilities does little in the way of rehabilitation and can actually put girls at further risk by exposing them to more serious offenders.

Historically, detention centers and state facilities across the nation have failed to identify and meet the specific needs of girls. Inherently, since significantly more boys have traditionally been in the system, juvenile justice programs have been designed with boys in mind. Since the 1980's, researchers have been identifying the differences between boy's and girl's development and their specific program needs. It has been determined that girl's programming needs differ from those of boy's.

To meet the needs of girls, gender-specific programs have been introduced throughout the country. Gender-specific programs for girls are:

- Programs that acknowledge and address female offenders' core needs such as victimization and abuse issues, substance use, mental health disorders and chronic academic failure;
- Programs that consider female development in their design and implementation;
- Programs that empower young women through education, skills-training and vocational training for jobs that provide a livable wage, and;
- Programs that are family and community oriented.

As more girls enter the system, gender-specific programs are critical to ensure their needs are met. Nevada has recognized this need and has made progress, including the opening of the Aurora Pines Girls Facility in Douglas County. This facility is the first in Nevada to attempt a total gender-specific programming emphasis. In addition, it provides more local and regional placement options.

There have been other positive changes. The Community Corrections Partnership Block Grant (CCPBG) program is providing various intervention programs and can be attributed, in part, to the decreased number of state commitments. Also, from 1998 to 2002, statewide referral rates have only increased slightly, and in Washoe County they have decreased by a staggering 20% for females. The exact factor for these improvements has yet to be determined, yet it could be assumed that programs offered through CCPBG, along with an emphasis on prevention programs on the part of Washoe County juvenile services, can be credited.

More changes need to occur. Nevada needs to focus on creating a “continuum of care” of gender-specific services, ranging from prevention through after-care programs, to focus on **all Nevada’s girls**. During the 2003 session, Nevada’s Legislature should seriously consider gender-specific issues for girls, including the creation of a Nevada Girls Task Force. This Task Force would ensure that the work involved in implementing comprehensive statewide gender-specific services is completed.

The vast majority of girls in the juvenile justice system have a history of physical and/or sexual abuse, low-academic performance, substance abuse issues, as well as physical and mental health concerns. At the same time, the system is severely lacking in its ability to address these complex issues. The task of meeting the girls’ needs, while holding them accountable for their actions, is daunting. Many times their problems are severe and go beyond the scope of what the juvenile justice system is capable of handling alone. It is for this reason that collaboration among public and private agencies is critical.

This report is not intended to encompass the full scope of the issues surrounding at-risk and delinquent girls in Nevada. Nor does it supply all the answers to rectify their problems. However, it is the first step in the fulfillment of a long-range comprehensive gender-specific services plan.



# CHAPTER ONE

## THE ADOLESCENT FEMALE AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

---

*“I know that I am responsible  
for my actions. I keep  
making the same mistakes over  
and over again.”*

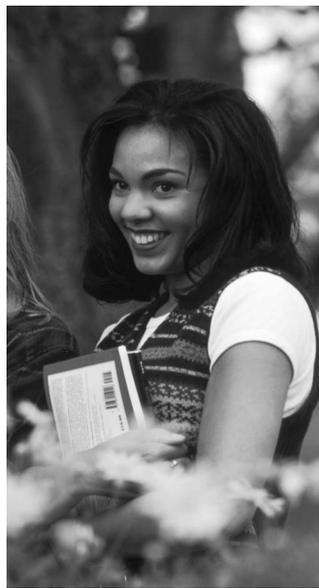
*-Aurora Pines Girls Facility  
Female Offender*

# UNDERSTANDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FEMALE ADOLESCENT



While it is understood that the research surrounding girls' development is incomplete, the one thing we can be certain of is that females and males experience the developmental process differently.

In her book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Carol Gilligan writes that relationships are not only important but also *fundamental* to females' lives. Females tend to look to external sources to gain self-esteem and build a sense of who they are. Relationships give females a sense of connection to themselves and to the world around them. Patton and Morgan (2002) describe "A model that would work best for most females would have a structure where they can build relationships, have time to process and talk about issues, have one-on-one opportunities, and feel connected to people."



In other words, relationships can be defined as a cornerstone in females' lives. In contrast, Patton and Morgan (2002) suggest, "Boys develop their identity in relation to the greater world. In general, they are interested in the rules of that world, their place in the structure of that world, and ways to advance or gain power within that structure."

Inherently, girls and boys view themselves, and the world around them, from different perspectives. Patton and Morgan (2002) suggest that while the following may not be true of every girl and boy, generally speaking it can be assumed that:

- Girls develop their identity in relation to other people while boys develop their identity in relation to the world;
- Girls resolve conflict based on relationships while boys resolve conflict based on rules;
- Girls focus on connectedness and interdependence while boys focus on independence and autonomy; and
- Girls exhibit relational aggression while boys exhibit over-aggression.

Over the past few years, researchers have engaged in the debate over girls and decreased self-esteem during adolescence. Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at the Harvard Project on the Psychology of Women and Development of Girls conducted groundbreaking research in the early 1980's on girls in our society. While Gilligan's work is somewhat controversial among researchers, her work opened the pathway for research on girls and on the developmental differences between boys and girls. Since then, many researchers have followed in Gilligan's footsteps, documenting a decline in girls' self-esteem during adolescence (Search Institute and Beyer). Meanwhile, other researchers (Ward and Phillips) have taken an alternative route by questioning Gilligan's research and documenting a less severe decline in self-esteem.

Gilligan suggests that elementary school age girls seem to have high self-esteem and a perception that they are able to achieve their goals. They eagerly

engage in extracurricular activities such as sports, the arts and community projects (Phillips, 1998). They have friends they play with at school and in the neighborhood but can also occupy themselves while alone. In short, they seem to be intelligent, outspoken, confident and directed toward a promising future.

While Gilligan's research was originally conducted exclusively among privileged white girls, the basic principles and phases of girls' development appear to apply across racial and economic barriers (Acoca, personal communication, December, 2002).

Furthermore, Gilligan concludes that the internal and external world for girls dramatically changes once they enter adolescence. She notes that at about age 13 girls "hit the wall" and "lose their voice" and begin to let go of their sense of self in order to fit in with their peers (Meeting at the Crossroads, 1992 cited in Patton and Morgan, 2002). They experience a shift from internal validation to external validation. Instead of focusing on their goals, they are now more interested in physical appearance, being popular and what their peers think of them (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

According to subsequent research done by the Search Institute, girls' and boys' self-esteem may drop once they enter adolescence, however, girls' self-esteem may decrease more dramatically and recover less

significantly. The Search Institute suggests that girls are 50% more likely to suffer from low self-esteem and a low sense of self-efficacy than boys (Search Institute, 1998 cited in Patton and Morgan, 2002).

In addition, Dr. Marty Beyer, a clinical psychologist, concluded from her research that girls often report significantly lower levels of self-competence than boys as they move through adolescence. Beyer suggests

that girls are more likely to be clinically depressed than boys. This is reflected in their perceived self-worth, physical appearance, social, academic and athletic competence. Some girls avoid competition or purposely decline to excel. Others become preoccupied with perfection. Some girls who previously had been very outspoken are now quiet, not wanting to run the risk of being disliked (ABA & NBA, 2001).

In contrast to the research suggesting that girls suffer from low self-esteem throughout their adolescence, there is further research that may offer a balanced perspective. Harter, et al. (1997) conducted a study that found that

adolescent girls do not "lose their voice" but rather are simply more particular about to whom they will make their opinions known. In fact, Harter found that girls reported higher levels of "voice" with their friends and peers than boys did (Phillips, 1998). Recently, an article in Newsweek Magazine focused on what the author called "Gamma Girls." Girls who are "emotionally healthy, socially secure, independent-minded and just plain nice" (Meadows, 2002). The



article focuses on how girls today, primarily due to Title IX, have so many more opportunities and therefore have higher levels of self-esteem and self-efficacy (Meadows, 2002).

While the research surrounding girls and self-esteem remains unclear, we can be sure that making sense of external messages during this time is extremely challenging for even the most secure young women. In her book *Reviving Ophelia*, Mary Pipher points out that girls are repeatedly told to (Patton and Morgan, 2002):

- Be beautiful, but beauty is only skin deep
- Be sexy but not sexual
- Be honest but don't hurt anyone's feelings
- Be independent but be nice
- Be smart but not so smart that you threaten boys

The culture of adolescence “demands that while young women may achieve, they should be careful not to look too smart or they will not get a boyfriend” (Maryland Department of Juvenile Justice, 1995 cited in Greene and Peters, 2000). Images portrayed in movies, magazines, in advertisements and on television reinforce in young women's minds that in order to be successful they must have the perfect body, the latest trendy clothes, a fashionable hairstyle and a boyfriend (Kilbourne, 2000).

Fortunately, additional research tells us that the brain continues to develop into the adolescent years. “The ongoing brain plasticity gives the teenage brain amazing power to grow and heal through the power

of hope, commitment and intimate relationships” (David W. Willis, M.D., NW Early Childhood Institute, Portland, OR, cited in Patton and Morgan, 2002).

It is important to emphasize that boys and girls develop differently and it is critical to design systems and programs with those differences in mind.

# RISK FACTORS LEADING TO DELINQUENCY

S

*he sits in her 7<sup>th</sup> grade English class, looking outside the window. She's not paying attention to the teacher because she finds English class to be horribly difficult. She can only read at a 2<sup>nd</sup>*

*grade level, never mind write an essay. Instead, her mind wanders to the first time her father forced himself upon her. She was so young that she didn't understand what he was doing. She wondered if all daddies did that to their little girls. Something inside her told her that they didn't. Now that she's 13 she knows it isn't right, but she can't figure out how to get him to stop. Attempts to fight him off, run away and tell her mom have all failed.*

*Her growling stomach interrupts her daydreaming; she hasn't eaten for a couple of days. She tells herself she's too fat to eat and convinces herself to hold off until tomorrow.*

*Most days she wishes she were dead.*

*She waits for English class to end so she can cut school the rest of the day and go get stoned with her 18-year-old boyfriend.*

\*\*\*

Not all female juvenile delinquents have the same life story, yet sadly there are a number who do. A growing body of research on girls in the juvenile justice system indicates that often female delinquents are first victims themselves. An early study conducted by Mary E. Gilfus (1992) found a pattern among young offenders of moving from victim, to survivor, to offender (Belknap and Holsinger, 1998). Additionally, two of the largest studies ever conducted on girl offenders in the United States (Acoca and Dedel, 1998 and Acoca, 2001) reveal the tragic consistency of the relationship between girls' histories of victimization and entry into the juvenile justice system.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) has outlined a profile of a female offender:

- She's 13 to 16 years old
- She's poor and has lived in a neighborhood with a high crime rate
- She's most likely a minority (50% of female juveniles in detention are African American, 13% are Hispanic and 34% are Caucasian)
- She has a history of academic failure
- She's been a victim of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse or exploitation
- She's abused drugs and/or alcohol
- She's gone without medical treatment
- She comes from a highly dysfunctional home
- She's suffering from severe depression and sense of hopelessness

There are many risk factors that may lead to female delinquency. It is not likely that only one of these risk factors will lead to delinquent behavior, rather they tend to build on one another. This snowball effect dramatically increases the likelihood of a female adolescent entering the system (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996; Greene and Peters, 2000).

In her reports, *No Place to Hide: Girls in the California Juvenile Justice System* (Acoca and Dedel, 1998) and *Educate or Incarcerate: Girls in the Duval County and Florida Juvenile Justice Systems*, (Acoca, 2001), Acoca details risk factors leading to delinquency. Additionally, the OJJDP and Girls Inc. collaborative report, *Prevention and Parity: Girls in Juvenile Justice*, as well as the OJJDP report prepared by Greene and Peters, *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming*, outline domains of risk factors for

participation in delinquent behavior (American Psychological Association, 1993; Dryfoos, 1990; Reiss and Roth, 1993; Tolan and Guerra, 1994 cited in above-mentioned reports).

### **SEXUAL AND/OR PHYSICAL ABUSE**

The most common risk factor among incarcerated females is past sexual and/or physical abuse.

National estimates of female delinquents with a history of abuse range from 40% to 73% and go as high as 90% in some facilities (Calhoun, Jurgens & Chen, 1993 as cited in Greene and Peters, 2000).

According to the Washoe County Health Department, the most recent national data ranks Nevada as 14<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation for the number of child maltreatment cases. In a survey given to girls held at Caliente Youth Center in 2002, 80% self-reported emotional abuse, nearly 70% self-reported physical abuse, and almost 75% self-reported sexual abuse (Edwards and Pyle, 2002).

Daly (1992) identified a clear link between childhood victimization and criminal behavior. In Acoca's (1998) California study, *No Place to Hide*, 92% of girls interviewed revealed that they had been physically, sexually or emotionally victimized. A high proportion of these victimizations were violent and 25% of the young women reported that they had been shot or stabbed on one or more occasions. Abuse has a devastating effect and can lead to serious mental and physical health issues, academic failure and ultimately behaviors such as running away and substance abuse (Acoca, 1998).

Running away is the only behavior where girls have a higher arrest rate than boys. Nationally, 57% of all run-aways are girls (FBI, 1995, cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). For many girls, running away is the cause of their first encounter with the juvenile justice system. Often times, girls run away to escape an abusive situation at home, and unfortunately, because of a lack of understanding of

the underlying issues, are told to return to the abusive situation by the authorities (Chesney-Lind, 1998; Federle and Chesney-Lind, 1992; Reed, 1994; Robinson, 1994 cited in Weiss, Nicholson and Cretella 1996). Research shows that sexually abused girls who run away are more likely to prostitute themselves in order to have money to pay for food and shelter, and sometimes buy drugs and alcohol to escape their emotional pain (Bergsmann, 1994 cited in Weiss, Nicholson and Cretella, 1996).

### **POOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE**

The most significant risk factor relating to early onset of delinquency is poor academic performance (Dryfoos, 1990; Yoshikawa, 1994; Greenwood, et al., 1996 cited in Greene and Peters, 2002). In 1998, Nevada ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the nation for the number of high school dropouts (Kids Count, 2002). In 2000, Nevada's rank dropped to 1<sup>st</sup>, with the highest national percentage of teenage residents who are high school dropouts (Kids Count, 2000). In 2002, Nevada's ranking rose slightly to 2<sup>nd</sup> (Kids Count, 2002).

A significant number of female juvenile offenders experience problems in school. In her Florida study, *Educate or Incarcerate*, Acoca (2001) found that middle school failure for girls between 10 and 13 years old was the single greatest risk factor underlying girls' repeat offending as well as their serious and violent offending.



One study documented that the majority of female offenders (girls and women) left school because they were bored and could not get along with teachers (American Correctional Association, 1990; Snyder and Sickmund, 1995 cited in ABA & NBA, 2001). Twenty-seven percent of juvenile female offenders dropped out of school because they were pregnant, with another 20% leaving due to the demands of parenting (ABA & NBA, 2001).

Other studies document the issue of “push-outs”- young women from low-income or minority families who are ignored or actively pushed out by teachers and school policies. (Fine and Zane, 1989 cited in ABA & NBA, 2001). Finally, many studies have confirmed that a disproportionate number of girls in the juvenile justice system have learning disabilities that too often go unrecognized (Acoca and Austin, 1996; Calhoun et al, 1993; Hugo & Rutherford, 1992 cited in ABA & NBA, 2001).

## **SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

Substance abuse and delinquent behavior have been linked by some studies. A number of girls admit to using drugs or alcohol prior to committing crimes and a large number of female delinquents report using or abusing alcohol, tobacco and illegal drugs (Sommers & Baskin, 1994 cited in Greene and Peters, 2000). While substance abuse alone may not lead to a life of crime, it certainly exacerbates other issues and can put girls further at-risk.

According to the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (2000, February), Nevada has the highest prevalence of adult chronic drinking in the nation (Soule and Sharp, 2001). This is significant for Nevada’s youth because children model behaviors of trusted adults, i.e. parents. In Nevada, 43% of high school seniors report binge drinking (5 or more drinks in a two hour period), and 67% report using marijuana at least once (Soule and Sharp, 2001).

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

The vast majority of female juvenile offenders are suffering from mental health disorders (ABA & NBA, 2001). In 1999, Nevada ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> highest in the country for juvenile deaths by suicide (Kids Count, 2000). In addition, the rate of attempted suicide by Nevada teens is twice the national average (Soule and Sharp, 2001).

*“I need counseling. My family needed counseling, but there was never any place to get it.”*

*- Aurora Pines  
Girls Facility  
Female Offender*

Acoca and Dedel’s 1998 study indicated that 88% of girls in California’s Juvenile Justice System were experiencing between one and three serious mental health and/or physical problems. They concluded that these issues may well become the most prominent challenge facing the juvenile justice system nationally.

Over half of the girls in training centers nationwide have reported trying to commit suicide while 64% of those have tried more than once (Bergsmann, 1994 cited in Greene and Peters, 2000). Most often, the girls’ delinquent behavior is the focus of treatment rather than the real issues of depression, isolation, and hopelessness brought on by a lifetime of negative experiences (ABA & NBA 2001).

## **FAMILY CIRCUMSTANCES**

Girls who live in poverty and come from single-parent homes are at a higher risk of becoming involved with the juvenile justice system than girls living with two parents and above the poverty line (ACA, 1990; Adolescent Female Subcommittee, 1994; Bergsmann, 1994; Daniel, 1994; Robinson, 1994 cited in Weiss, Nicholson and Cretella, 1996).

Nevada's 1999 national rank for children living in a single-parent home was 21<sup>st</sup> highest. Also in 1999, Nevada ranked 39<sup>th</sup> highest for children living in poverty (Kids Count, 2000).

Girls who come from families with insurance or private financial resources to place them in private mental health and drug treatment facilities often do not end up in the juvenile justice system. Ironically, the only way girls from low-income or poverty backgrounds can access some of these same services is through involvement in the child welfare or juvenile justice systems (ABA & NBA, 2001).

### **INDIVIDUAL AND PEER CHARACTERISTICS**

The OJJDP study found that girls who associate with peers who engage in delinquent behaviors are more likely to become involved in delinquency themselves. Nevada ranked 11<sup>th</sup> highest for the number of girls detained, 7<sup>th</sup> highest for overall number of girls in custody, 9<sup>th</sup> highest for girls committed to public facilities (OJJDP, 1997), and 25<sup>th</sup> highest for juvenile violent crime rate (Kids Count, 2000).

If drug abuse is present in the peer group, there is an even higher likelihood of incarceration. (Krohn, Huizinga and Van Kammen, 1993 cited in Greene and Peters, 2000). Peer pressure is well known as a major factor in adolescent behavior and is even more dangerous when applied to girls with low self-esteem who may be easily manipulated.

Concerned Nevadans should take note of the state's disturbingly high ranking across the board regarding the above-identified risk factors. Nevada ranks in the top third in almost every category.

| <b>Risk Factor</b>           | <b>Nevada's National Ranking</b><br><i>(for males and females combined)</i> |
|------------------------------|---|
| Substance Abuse              | 1st for adult chronic drinking (2001)                                       |
| Academic Failure             | 2nd for high school drop out rate (2002)                                    |
| Mental Health Disorders      | 2nd for teen deaths by suicide (1999)                                       |
| Sexual and/or Physical Abuse | 14th for child maltreatment cases   |
| Family Circumstances         | 21st for children living in single-parent homes (1999)                      |
| Peer Characteristics         | 7th for girls in custody (1997)   |



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*“I am in here because I hit my stepfather. Then, he handcuffed me and hit me in the face over and over. I was the one arrested. I’m not going back there.”*

*- Las Vegas Detention Center  
Female Offender*

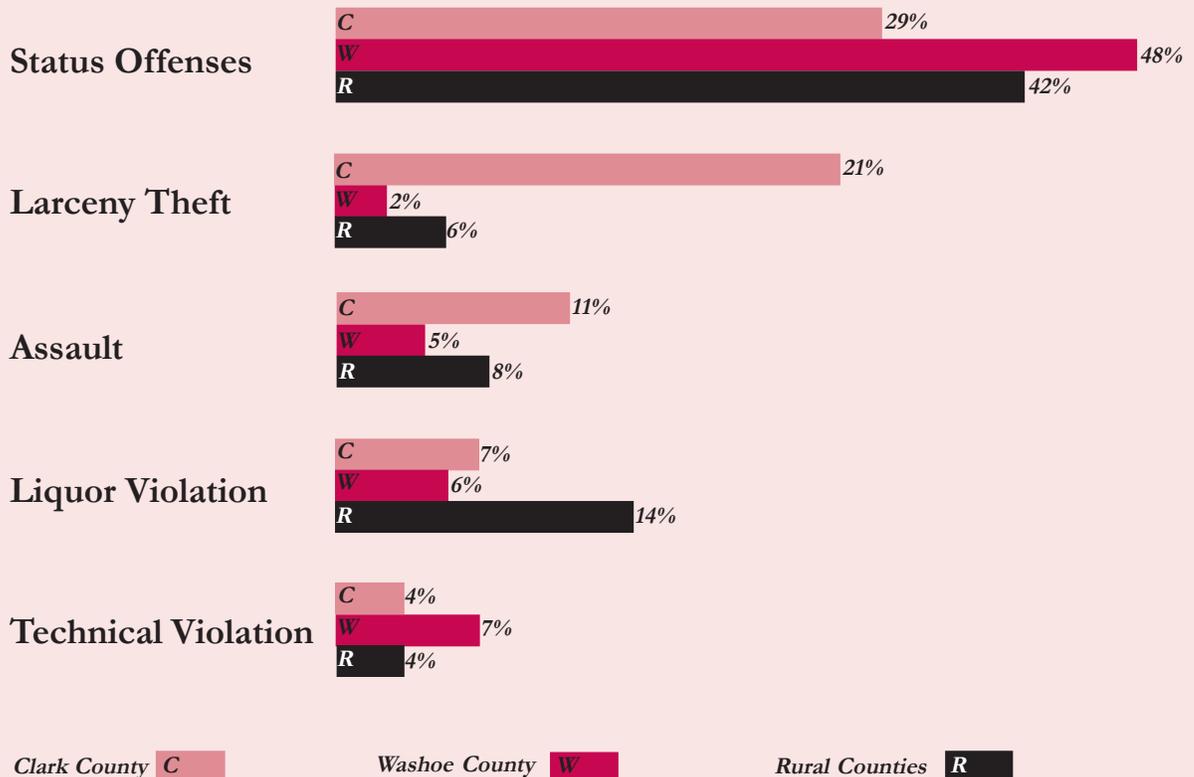
# ENTERING THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

**A** ccording to *Girls: Delinquency and Juvenile Justice* by Meda Chesney-Lind and Randall Shelden, “Girls in trouble, particularly those in the juvenile justice system, share many problems with their male counterparts. They are likely to be poor, to have come from disrupted and violent families and to be having difficulties in school.” Yet, the research shows that while they may have similar histories, girls react differently than boys.

## MOST COMMON OFFENSES

Across the country, the traditional route to involvement in the juvenile justice system for girls is through arrests for a status offense (truancy, running away, curfew violation, incorrigibility). For girls in Nevada, status offenses accounted for 29% of offenses committed in Clark County, 42% in rural Nevada, and 48% in Washoe County (DCFS, 2002). Nationally, and in Nevada, girls are far more likely to enter the juvenile justice system for status offenses, especially running away from home which nationally accounts for 57% of all arrests (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). In Nevada, 32% of females were charged with running away (DCFS, 2002).

### Top Offenses for Nevada Females

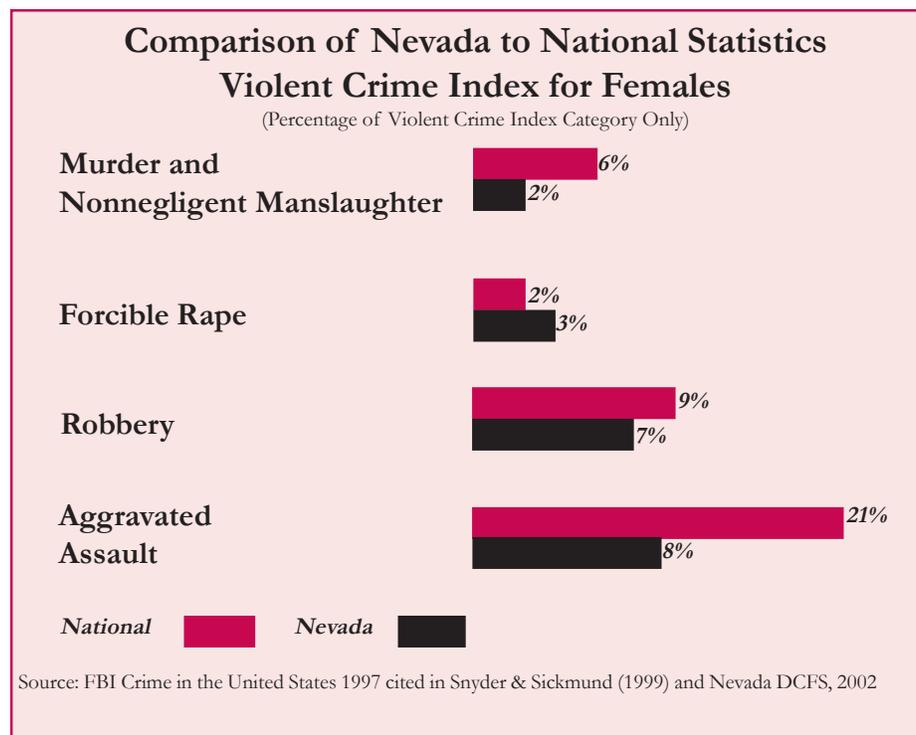


Source: Nevada DCFS, 2000

## VIOLENT OR PERSON OFFENSES

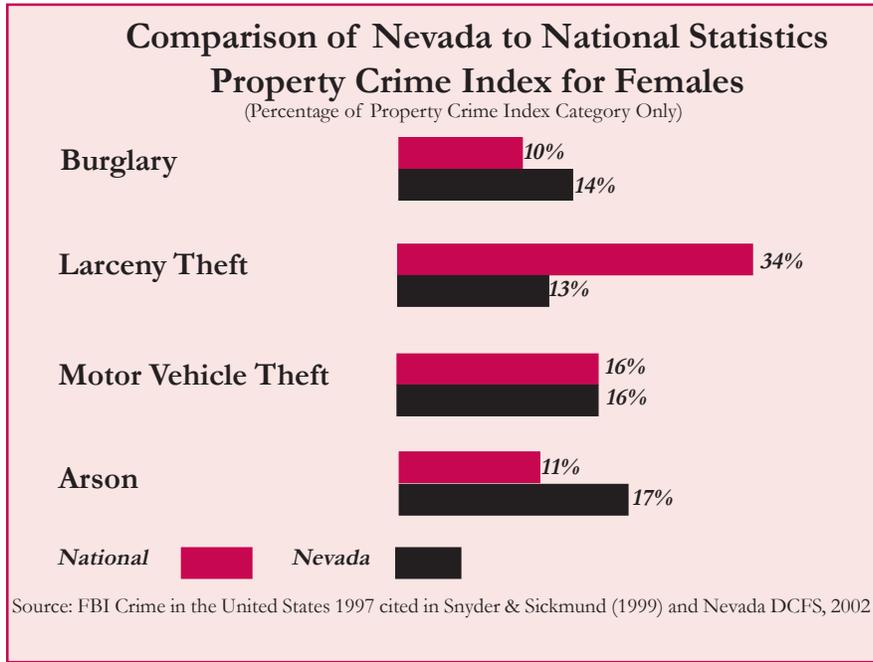
Although violent crime arrest rates over the last decade for girls have outstripped rates of increase for boys, girls are still less likely to become involved in violent crimes; the male-to-female ratio for violent crimes (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, aggravated assault) is 9:1 (Maniglia; Belknap and Holsinger, 1998).

Girls have traditionally been involved in less than 15% of the juvenile arrests for violent offenses, although there is a growing trend upward in this category (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). The significance of the rising trend of girls' serious and violent offending remains an area of dispute among researchers. Most believe that it is the result of a combination of factors, including an increasing willingness on the part of law enforcement and the Juvenile Justice System to criminalize girls. In addition, decreasing early intervention and prevention programs for girls, and increasing availability of weaponry and a willingness to use them by girls are cited as possible reasons for the upward rise (Acoca, personal communication, December, 2002).



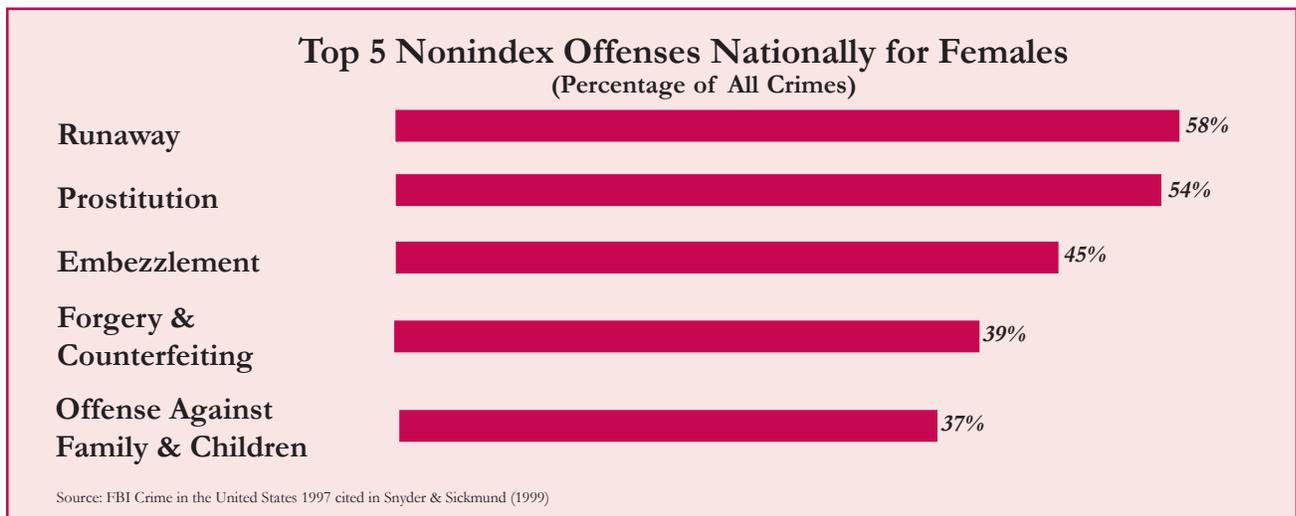
A similar trend has been documented in youth gangs. Acoca and Dedel (1998) noted that a high proportion of detained girls in California reported having gang affiliations. However, the nature of girls' gang involvement, whether their gang activities are still ancillary to that of boys, or whether they are becoming more independent, is still unclear (Acoca, personal communication, December, 2002).

*Nationally, a large percentage of girls, between 25% and 35% of all juvenile arrests, are charged with delinquent offenses such as larceny and theft (shoplifting), liquor law violations, and fraud (bad checks) (Weiss, Nicholson and Cretella, 1996). Still girls are less likely than boys to become involved in property crimes; the male-to-female ratio for serious property crimes (burglary, vehicle theft, and arson) is 11:1 (Maniglia; Belknap and Holsinger, 1998).*



## NONINDEX OFFENSES

Typically, girls come into custody for nonviolent offenses that do not represent a risk to others. In fact, many if not most girls behave in such a way that they could be engaged by the juvenile justice system for being “incorrigible” or “in need of supervision” (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 2001). Much of girls’ violent behavior is directed against family members (Bergsmann, 1994), many times related to an abusive home life. In addition, girls often run away to escape abuse. Once they are on the streets, they resort to prostitution, forging checks and embezzling money from employers in order to survive.



## CHARACTERISTICS OF GIRLS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

According to Acoca and Dedel's (1998) report, *No Place to Hide*, there are a number of distinct characteristics shared by girls involved in the California juvenile justice system, including:

- **Family Fragmentation:** Often, the families of delinquent girls are fragmented by numerous, serious stressors including poverty, death, violence, and a multigenerational pattern of incarceration.
- **Victimization Outside the Juvenile Justice System:** It is quite common for girls in the system to have a history of violent victimization.
- **Victimization Inside the Juvenile Justice System:** It is also very common for girls to be victimized after they enter the system especially in terms of physical and sexual abuse.
- **Serious Physical and Mental Health Disorders:** The majority of girls in the juvenile justice system have one or more serious physical and/or mental health disorders.
- **Separation of Incarcerated Mothers from Their Children:** A significant number of delinquent girls are mothers who already have been separated from their young children.
- **Widespread School Failure:** Girls in the juvenile justice system have experienced education failure almost universally. These failures include suspension or expulsion from school, repeating one or more grades and/or placement in special education.
- **The Breaking Point of Early Adolescence:** Girls are most vulnerable to their first experiences of academic failure, pregnancy, involvement in the juvenile justice system and out-of-home placement between the ages of 12 and 15.
- **Non-Violent Offenders:** A majority of girls in the system are non-violent offenders charged with relatively minor status, property or drug offenses. Although the fastest-growing segment of offenders are girls charged with assault, their "violent" offense may actually be based on conduct with an origin of intra-familial conflict.
- **Resiliency:** Despite these significant obstacles, girls in the juvenile justice system have demonstrated remarkable strengths that may be utilized to overcome these multiple stressors.

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*" On my first offense, I fought with my mother. I pled guilty because they always take the parents side. I had no evidence that my mother was beating on me."*

*-Las Vegas Detention Center  
Female Offender*

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# A BIASED SYSTEM

**T**he juvenile justice system, like other public systems, reflects our society's views and assumptions about girls and delinquent behavior. The system must be understood through the prism of adolescence in general, and the development of girls in particular, while also acknowledging society's bias towards girls and their behavior. Generally, our society assumes we need protection from delinquent boys, while delinquent girls need protection from themselves (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1992 cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996).

Nationally, over the past 15 years we have seen a rise in the number of girls involved in the juvenile justice system as well as a rise in violent crimes committed by girls. Snyder (1999) reports that the number of female delinquency cases rose 76% between 1987 and 1996, as compared with 42% for males. In addition, the national Juvenile Violent Crime Index arrest rate doubled for females between 1987 and 1994 (Greene and Peters, 2000).

In Nevada, the data available from the Department of Motor Vehicles and Public Safety shows a significant growth in juvenile arrests of girls. Between 1994 and 2000, there was a 44% increase in arrests of girls, as compared with 33% for boys. It is important to note that Nevada experienced unprecedented population growth during this period.

Within the past few years, there has been a drop in juvenile crime overall. In Nevada, statewide referral rates for females have only increased by 7.7% since 1998, and in Washoe County they have decreased by over 20% (DCFS, 2002).

Yet, there are still more girls in the system than there were 15 years ago. The rise in offenses committed by girls has caused state legislators, policy makers and juvenile justice professionals across the nation to take a closer look at the reasons more girls are becoming involved with the system.



As Acoca and Dedel aptly stated, *“The reality behind the statistics is now hotly disputed by academics and policymakers. Are girls becoming more violent, or are recent trends partially an artifact of the lower base rate of girls’ arrests and delinquency cases since the 1970s. Are girls, traditionally drawn into the juvenile justice system for less serious crimes than their male counterparts, being penalized twice, once for breaking the law and a second time for transgressing societal definitions of femininity?”* (Acoca and Dedel, 1998).

In Nevada, as is the case throughout the nation, **girls are referred at a higher rate than boys for status offenses** (running away, truancy, incorrigibility, curfew violations). A status offense is often the gateway into the delinquency system (DCFS, personal communication, December, 2002).

Researchers have attributed the overrepresentation of

girls in status offenses to bias in discretionary decisions by law enforcement, probation, prosecutors, and judges. Girls are more likely to be processed as status offenders for violations of valid court orders, contempt proceedings, probation and parole revocations, misdemeanor charges associated with running away, and charges of escape (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). In 1987, Nevada began compliance with the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core requirement of the Juvenile Justice Act and since then does not commit girls for status offenses (DCFS, personal communication, January, 2003).

However, once in the system as a status offender, continued defiant behavior leads to the practice of “bootstrapping” whereby behavior that would have been characterized as a status offense is increasingly characterized as delinquent behavior, leading to detention and more severe consequences. In other words, repeat status offenders are likely to be found “in contempt,” and by definition become delinquent offenders and may be punished more harshly than the seriousness of their initial status offense would warrant (Bishop and Frazier, 1992 cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996).

Girls are more likely than boys to be “bootstrapped” (Bishop and Frazier, 1992; Chesney-Lind 1995; Poe-Yamagata and Butts, 1996 cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella 1996). There are a number of reasons girls are more often “bootstrapped” than boys,

including limited placement options for girls and the differing mind-sets about what is appropriate behavior for girls and boys. Over 25 states no longer allow bootstrapping (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). In Nevada, only Washoe County has a policy against bootstrapping (DCFS, personal communication, December, 2002).

### **INCREASED USE OF DETENTION FOR GIRLS**

Another disturbing trend is the increase in the use of detention for girls. Between 1988 and 1997, nationally there was a 65% increase in the use of detention for girls, as compared with a 30% increase for boys (ABA & NBA, 2001). Girls are twice as likely to be detained as boys, and on average they are detained three to five

times as long (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). In Clark County, girls are detained at a disproportionate rate (Siegel et al., 2001). In Washoe County, girls represent a growing number of detainees. At Wittenberg Hall in Reno in May 2000, more than one-third



of all detainees were girls (Siegel et al., 2001). While the use of detention for girls may be on the rise, in Nevada the number of girls committed to correctional facilities (Caliente Youth Center) is

decreasing. Since the implementation of the Community Corrections Partnership Block Grant (CCPBG) program, state commitments for girls have dropped by 25.6% (Carter, 2002). The CCPBG program is funded by the Nevada legislature and is designed to provide a variety of intervention methods including intensive supervision, substance abuse interventions, life skills classes, electronic monitoring, and counseling (Carter, 2002). However, discrepancies still exist. For example, in the Fifth Judicial District more females are committed to state facilities than male offenders, yet male juvenile offenders outnumber females by nearly 2:1 (Siegel et al., 2001).

A corresponding finding is that **girls are being detained for less serious offenses than boys**, perhaps most significantly, for technical violations of probation. In fact, according to data collected in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, nationally more girls than boys are detained for minor offenses such as public disorder, probation violations, status offenses and traffic offenses (29% girls versus 19% boys) (ABA & NBA, 2001). The National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) (2001) found the same to be true in parts of Nevada. They report: “Clark County continues to detain some cases that do not meet local detention screening criteria. These include a surprising number of girls detained for traffic and truancy violations” (Siegel et al., 2001).

Among the results of the increase in the use of detention for girls are overcrowding and a poor level of housing services such as double or triple-bunking, use of floor mats instead of beds and chronic overcrowding in common rooms is widespread (ABA & NBA, 2001).

In March 2002, nationally recognized expert on crime and delinquency, Leslie Acoca, toured Wittenberg Hall in Washoe County. In her preliminary report Acoca (2002) states, “The utilization of the old facility represents some of the core biases operating within the juvenile justice system, not just in Nevada, but nationally, that silently work to the disadvantage of girls.

The existing facility is constructed with both a unit for girls and one for boys. Because there are more boys than girls requiring detention (statistically, boys are more likely to commit more serious offenses), and because boys are considered to pose a higher risk to security when overcrowded, the boys have taken over much of the girls’ unit. The boys are housed one or two to a room as per the original plan of the facility. To accommodate the higher number of boys, the girls are packed 4, 6, and 8 to a room because they are considered less likely to become violent when overcrowded. This severe overcrowding not only poses health and safety risks but also violates girls’ greater need (according to research conducted with incarcerated women and girls) for physical privacy.”

Fortunately, the need for a larger detention center in Washoe County was recognized. The Jan Evans Juvenile Justice Center is expected to be completed in the summer of 2004. This new facility should alleviate the overcrowding of Wittenberg Hall.

The strain on the detention centers carries over to the services provided. Detention centers often lack substance abuse and mental health treatment services adequate to meet the needs of the large numbers of detained youth (ABA & NBA, 2001). The NCJJ found this to be true in Nevada as well. They note that a high proportion of detainees in detention

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*“Most of us have been using drugs since we were 12 or 13 years old. We get it from older guys or from our own homes.”*

*-Las Vegas Detention Center  
Female Offender*

centers across the state have diagnosed mental disorders (Siegel, et al., 2001). In addition, the NCJJ states “detaining youth with mental health disorders increases suicide risks and does not provide them with the treatment they need” (Siegel et al., 2001).

According to the needs assessment conducted by the Nevada Mental Health Consortia, over 43% of the youth in juvenile probation and parole are in need of mental health services (Carter, 2002). In addition, according to the Nevada Institutional Survey (1999), 69% of girls held at the Caliente Youth Center reported having a substance abuse issue. Furthermore, Nevada exceeded the national average for juveniles committed to public facilities for drug offenses by 210% (Carter, 2002).

### **A LACK OF ALTERNATIVES DESIGNED FOR GIRLS**

One of the reasons juveniles are detained in state and local facilities is a lack of community-based options. Unfortunately, at the Caliente Youth Center girls stay longer because of a lack of alternative placement options (Siegel et al., 2001). In addition, the lack of sufficient placement options leads to girls with various levels of involvement in the system being mixed together inappropriately (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996; ABA & NBA, 2001). The NCJJ report identifies this as a major problem within Nevada’s detention centers. They note that the inability of staff to segregate chronic and serious offenders from less serious offenders can lead to an increase in “youth-on-youth” assaults, and “can contribute to criminalizing effects of minor offenders who learn anti-social behaviors through interactions with chronic delinquents” (Siegel, et al., 2001).

There is a disturbing national trend of limited placement options for girls who are often inappropriately placed in programs with a focus on

security, not intervention (Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996; ABA & NBA, 2001). In Nevada, there are very few community-based placement options leaving detention centers and correctional facilities as the only options available. “The absence of community-based programs specifically designed to meet the needs of female offenders continues to be a critical shortcoming” (Siegel et al., 2001).

The NCJJ report sites SageWind and the McGee Center in Washoe County and the First STEP program in Clark County as the only viable options available. The Nevada Regional Youth Center in Silver Springs is an additional alternative. However, it should be noted that SageWind and the Nevada Regional Youth Center are substance-abuse treatment centers, and therefore, are not an appropriate placement option for all girls.

More than ever, there is agreement that a **continuum of services** is needed to meet the specific needs of particular girls, many of whom have been physically, sexually, or emotionally abused, or who need special education or health programs. (ABA & NBA, 2001). The NCJJ report also recommends the development of a Comprehensive Community Care Network within Nevada (Siegel, et al., 2001).

## RACE DISPARITIES WITHIN THE SYSTEM

National research generally recognizes there are race disparities in the processing of girls' cases throughout the juvenile justice system. Some of the findings from recent reports issued by the *Building Blocks for Youth Initiative* demonstrate this position (as cited in ABA & NBA, 1996):

- African-American youth are six times more likely to be incarcerated in public facilities than white youth, even when charged with the same offenses and having no prior commitment history;
- Latino youth are three times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated for comparable offenses;
- Minority youth are significantly more likely to be detained, formally charged, tried as adults, and locked up in state and federal facilities than white youth who commit comparable crimes;
- Minority youth represent 34% of the nation's population, but represent 67% of youth committed to its public facilities.

Unfortunately, the same is true in Nevada. In 1997, minority youth represented 35% of the state's juvenile population, yet 50% of juveniles in state facilities and 39% of juveniles in detention centers were minorities (Siegel et al., 2001).

In response to the overrepresentation of minority youth in Nevada's juvenile justice system, in 2001 Governor Guinn signed into law Senate Bill 232 which "provides for collection of information on economic background of each child referred to system of juvenile justice and requires each juvenile probation department to determine whether children of racial or ethnic minorities and children from economically disadvantaged homes are receiving disparate treatment in the system of juvenile justice" (Carter, 2002). The intent of the legislation is to determine critical

decision points regarding arrest, intake, detention, adjudication and disposition to determine if bias exists within those areas.

The 2001 Data Analysis was the first compilation of judicial district referrals by economics and race and was submitted to the Legislative Council Bureau in the fall of 2002. Each juvenile probation office is currently reviewing data collected to determine what, if any, action needs to be taken and what conclusions can be drawn (DCFS, personal communication, December, 2002).

Nationally, ethnic bias has been well documented for both genders. According to a study by the American Bar Association, African-American girls comprise nearly half of all girls in secure detention while Latinas make up 13% of the detention population. Caucasian girls account for just 34% of the girls in detention although they comprise 65% of the population of at-risk girls. **The study showed that seven of every ten cases involving white girls are dismissed while just three of every ten cases involving African American girls are dismissed** (ABA & NBA, 2001).



One classic example of a lack of cultural sensitivity when interpreting behavior of minority girls is the belief that African-American girls are aggressive and do not show remorse when they act in an assertive manner, often resulting in harsher punishments (Mann, 1993 cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996). Conversely, Latina, Asian-American and Native-American girls who show deference to authority, as they have been taught, may be perceived as guilty because they do not meet an official's gaze. (Mann, 1993 cited in Weiss, Nicholson, and Cretella, 1996).

# CHAPTER TWO

## GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING

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*“Kids want to have a good time.  
We need positive places to go.”*

*- Aurora Pines Girls Facility  
Female Offender*

# GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING DEFINED



Girls engage in different types of delinquent behavior than boys and do so for different reasons than boys. It would make sense then to design and implement programs that address both girls' and boys' specific needs. Gender-specific programming aims to do just that.

According to Greene and Peters (2000), "Gender-specific programming refers to program models and services that comprehensively address the special needs of a targeted gender group, such as adolescent girls."

Acoca and Dedel (1998) state, "Simply providing all-girl environments, pictures of accomplished women on the walls, and time for "processing" are not sufficient for a gender-specific classification. Additionally, first and foremost, programs must actively nurture the development of multiple competencies, particularly academic, vocational and life management skills. These skills are essential to girls' capacity to initiate and maintain themselves economically, socially and as parents."

Patton and Morgan (2002) describe how boys and girls respond differently to programming. For example, in general boys tend to like the rules of the program to be clear and compartmentalized while girls like program rules to be consistent for reasons of safety and stability. Boys like to work in teams while girls need one-on-one time as well as team time. Girls communicate to build relationships and trust and when problem-solving need time to process. On the other hand, boys use communication for problem-solving and prefer to solve their problems quickly and by themselves (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

Gender-specific programs are not programs that were originally designed for boys that girls attend because of a lack of alternatives. Furthermore, equality of service does not mean the same service. **Gender-specific programs address the specific needs of each gender and provide direct services to meet those needs.** Therefore, treatment services may look very different for girls and boys (Patton and Morgan, 2002).

# COMPONENTS OF GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

**G**ender-specific services should be provided for *all* girls, at *all* programming levels, and across *all* disciplines, within the State of Nevada. This increases the likelihood of providing a “seamless continuum of care”, reaching all girls within Nevada’s communities. More specifically, to be most effective, programs must be provided for *all* girls, those considered not-at-risk, at-risk, high-risk, and those involved in the juvenile justice system.

To achieve the goal of providing a “seamless continuum of care,” gender-specific services should be provided across disciplines. The educational, health, social services and judicial systems should work collaboratively to provide programs appropriate to their field and specialty, collaborating when necessary.

Additionally, gender-specific programs should be provided at all programming levels, including primary prevention, early intervention and treatment and aftercare (primary, secondary and tertiary) (Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, 1993 cited in Greene and Peters, 2000).

All girls living within a community would find a primary prevention gender-specific program useful in building resiliency, identifying key risk factors and strengthening protective factors. Primary prevention programs should be open and available to the general population of girls within the community and focus on preventing problems before they occur.



Early intervention, or secondary prevention programs, target those girls who may be identified as at-risk because of participation in one or more risk-related behaviors. Special care should be taken to provide programs for girls attending “at-risk” schools or those in low-income neighborhoods. In addition, communities should reach out to girls who are struggling academically, have serious domestic issues and show signs of possible abuse as these are all key indicators leading to delinquent behaviors (Greene and Peters, 2000).

Treatment and aftercare programs are provided for girls who engage heavily in risk related behaviors and are in need of formal intervention. These programs can help girls identify the risky behaviors that resulted in the need for treatment and can also help the girls establish protective factors in their lives. Additionally, treatment can help girls deal with mental health concerns, educational and developmental setbacks and assist in developing appropriate life-skills. Aftercare should be built into any treatment program to prevent recidivism (Altshuler & Armstrong, 1994 as cited in Greene and Peters, 2000).

Certain key aspects of program design and implementation set apart gender-specific programs from those programs that simply serve girls. Gender-specific programs are, at their core, designed with the female in mind. Girls Incorporated stresses the importance of valuing, celebrating, and honoring the “female perspective” in program planning and design (Girls Inc. 1996 as cited in Greene and Peters, 2000). Effective gender-specific programs carefully consider the risk factors facing all girls and the protective factors that are most effective in keeping girls out of trouble. They understand the process of female

development, placing special emphasis on positive relationship building. They apply a strength-based approach and give girls opportunities to build skills that will provide hope for a promising future.

The following Guiding Principles are excerpted from Acoca and Dedel's 1998 report *No Place to Hide: Understanding and Meeting the Needs of Girls in the California Juvenile Justice System*. Additional Best Practice approaches are outlined in Appendix A.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The following approaches are critical to the development of truly gender-competent programs. The literature is clear in its criticism of the “add-girls-and-stir” approach. Programs must also attend to the developmental tasks and unique characteristics of girls, blended with the larger societal context of growing up female in America, and must be informed by documented effective practices in working with young women offenders. In the words of Chesney-Lind and Shelden (1998) “We must begin to imagine ways of responding to [girls’] troubles that do more than add to their problems” (p. 210).

Chesney-Lind and Shelden (1998) presented a service provider’s basic approach to working with girls. Although not service specific, it is an excellent example of the underlying tone of acceptance and responsibility that is the essential starting point for working with young women.

- Don’t throw them out. Communicate to them that if they want help, you will not turn them away.
- Don’t allow them to fail. Emphasize even the smallest of successes.
- Don’t leave them to their own resources, or they will return to the life that brought them to the system in the first place.
- Provide a 24-hour hotline. Girls need to feel connected and to know that help is always accessible.
- Don’t try to rescue them. Making mistakes is part of learning.
- Change their relationship to the police. Help them to realize that the police can be helpful in escaping difficult situations.
- Understand their subculture, their values and lifestyles. It is important to listen to their experience of being female in today’s society. (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998)

Not only must a gender-competent program provide acceptance and support, it must also have structural and philosophical integrity that crosses academic, vocational, family, and peer group boundaries.

The following guiding principles provide the foundation for comprehensive gender-competent services (*excerpted from No Place To Hide by Acoxa and Dedel*).

### **CREATE A BALANCE BETWEEN RISK-FOCUSED AND STRENGTH-ENHANCING APPROACHES**

Using a public health approach to preventing violence,



programs for girls should not only attend to the risk to public safety (the primary focus of OJJDP's

*Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Offenders*), but

should also attend

to the unique strengths and successes that are present in every girl's life. Similar to the foundation of solution-focused therapeutic approaches (see Kim-Berg and Miller, 1992; Miller, Hubble, and Duncan, 1996), focusing on what the young woman does well and creating the opportunity for her to do more of it develops effective living strategies and helps her to detach from problematic behavior patterns. Further, programs need to encourage girls to understand and value the experiences of their lives, to understand the strength inherent in their survival, and to use it to their benefit. The failure to strike this balance between risk and strengths will result in programs that are crippled by their inability to target behaviors for change or by their ignorance of healthy replacement behavior patterns.

The extensive analyses of the interview data and the thematic findings presented in the previous chapter indicate that there are certainly specific situations that put a young woman at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system (and other negative outcomes). The extraordinary rates of educational failure, serious and entrenched polysubstance abuse, and histories of victimization offer clear suggestions about the necessary focus of any program that hopes to positively impact the growth and development of young women in the juvenile justice system. Further, because of the high rates of adolescent pregnancy in girl offender populations, the positive intergenerational impact of programs that provide intensive interventions for the mother-child pair cannot be underestimated. Not only will the effective delivery of developmentally sequenced mother child services prevent young women from entering the justice system due to the abuse or neglect of their own children, but these programs can also promote the neurological potential of the infant, protecting against future involvement in delinquency.

The literature in the juvenile justice field overflows with data that identify the presence and severity of risk factors (which *is* an important consideration in program development). However, the same literature is imbalanced in its dearth of reference to the individual strengths of the young women in the system. Aside from global discussions of protective factors that include opportunities for bonding, exposure to healthy beliefs and clear standards, and situations that provide opportunity, skill development, and recognition, few studies attend to the individual strengths and coping mechanisms that have encouraged girls to persevere in the face of adversity. For example:

- 20 percent of the girls in this study were receiving grades that were above average in high school;
- 50 percent of the girls in the sample were functionally bilingual;
- 75 percent said their ability to read and write is "strong;"

- 47 percent said their ability to do math is “strong;”
- 23 percent of the girls in the study attended A.A. or N.A. prior to being incarcerated, and 26 percent had participated in a drug treatment program prior to being incarcerated;
- 52 percent identified their families as a source of positive influence and guidance; 35 percent were involved in sports;
- 40 percent of the girls in the study felt they have leadership qualities; 29 percent of the girls were involved with an organized religion;
- A large number of girls felt they had special talents in music (50 percent); art (40 percent); and fashion (55 percent).

It is precisely these qualities, talents, and strengths that must be harnessed to provide young women in the system with programming that is truly responsive to their needs, and respectful of their individuality.

### **FOCUS ON THE FAMILY**

As documented previously, many of girls’ offenses are related to conflict in the home, usually involving a verbal altercation over a normal adolescent issue that escalated to violence. Other researchers have noted the “critical role that family relationships play in the generation and labeling of female delinquency” (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998, p.19). Therefore,



involvement of the family in the treatment of girls issues is critical to help parents to develop a developmental context for their child’s misbehavior,

to improve communication, and to teach more effective parenting strategies. Unfortunately, family involvement in treatment may also lead to the

determination that the family is not equipped to adequately care for the young woman, given the prevalence of girls special problems with the family (primarily physical and sexual abuse). In situations where young women are placed out of home, consistent engagement with the family remains useful to the treatment process.

### **ATTEND TO VICTIMIZATION ISSUES**

The literature of female delinquency is impeccably consistent in its assertion that the most common unifying factor in girls’ involvement in the system is a history of violent victimization. While the rates of actual prevalence vary depending on the type of survey instrument that is used, there is widespread agreement that victimization is *the* critical dynamic underlying girls’ involvement in crime and other problem behaviors. Moreover, interventions and treatment for the effects of victimization must be carefully integrated into the context of other modalities, such as substance abuse and mental health treatment, in order for these services to be successful. For example, within the context of substance abuse treatment, the girls’ histories of victimization must often be addressed *after* they have established sobriety. Otherwise, the emotional distress that accompanies the exploration of victimization can destroy or undermine girls early efforts to establish recovery.

Unfortunately, the focus on victimization sometimes has the unintended consequence of casting the girls potential for adjustment in a fairly hopeless light. Stated best by a young resident of the Capella Center in Oregon, “They always see us as victims, not as survivors.” Indeed, coping with this issue dominates much of young women’s development, yet a programmatic focus should incorporate positive role models of girls and women who have recovered from the effects of abuse while developing their identities beyond the experience of victimization. With sustained support, many girls have been able to heal these wounds, and to draw strength from their ability

to assimilate their experiences into a positive approach to their future. Therefore, while addressing victimization is central to effective intervention with girls, especially in its relevance to health, substance abuse, school failure, early pregnancy, and disrupted family relationships, the approach to working with this issue must be two-fold, including both habilitation and empowerment.

### **PROVIDE SAFE ENVIRONMENTS**

Because of the many experiences of young women in the system that would indicate that the world is, indeed, not a safe place, it is absolutely critical that a program environment provide physical and emotional safety from abuse, hurtful interactions, and lack of attention. Safety from physical violence is common sense and need not be elaborated upon at length. Girls also need to be confident that their thoughts, ideas, and wishes are safe from criticism and that their voices will be respected. Unfortunately, not only do girls risk such maltreatment from other girls, but also from staff. Treatment settings that permit gender-stereotyping, hurtful verbal exchanges, or sexualized interactions are devastating to young women, who are already struggling with issues of gender inequity, objectification, and harassment.

### **PROMOTE STAFF TRAINING AND INTEGRITY**

The safety issue has serious implications for the quality and frequency of staff training. The staff culture communicates more to young women about appropriate interaction and the relative safety of the program than any processing group. Program administrators must recruit staff who are both appropriate in their demeanor and boundaries and conscious of the subtleties of human communication. Staff must closely attend to the messages they send about their expectations for girls, and their own behavior must be consistent with the values and

morals they are trying to instill in young women. Programs must provide opportunities for staff to become aware of and discuss their experiences of gender identity and how these experiences and biases are applied to the young women they are serving (Maniglia, 1998).

Staff mastery and competence in adolescent development is also critical to creating an opportunity for success. An understanding of the complex transition process between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood is critical to providing services that enhance the overall development and potential of young women. These issues are discussed more thoroughly below.

### **BE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE**

Recent research suggests that girls of different cultures experience their gender differently (AAUW, 1992; Maniglia, 1998). Not only is it important to integrate racial and ethnic differences into the programmatic approach, but differences in expectations, stereotypes, and interpersonal relationships from girls of different socioeconomic statuses; from urban and rural environments; and from heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles must be considered.

Additionally, programs must be able to attract and serve girls whose primary language is not English. Attempting to treat subgroups within individual cultures as though they are the same is as misguided as treating all cultures the same way. One size does not fit all...inside the justice system or out. The value of culturally responsive interventions lies in the discovery of the impact of each individual girl's culture on her own perception of her gender identity.

## **PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS**

One of the key differences between male and female development is the role of interpersonal relationships as the central organizing principle in girls' experience of the world. Girls use their relationships with others to create meaning, to solve problems, for comfort, for guidance, and as the basis for moral decision making. Therefore, it is critical for programs to offer the opportunity to develop positive relationships with peers and staff, both male and female. These relationships must contain a variety of roles for young women, that of friend, confidante, mentee, mentor, caretaker, daughter, and sister.

A key to program success is to create an emotionally and physically safe environment that bears a strong resemblance to the opportunities available in the real world, while providing necessary structure, so that young women can learn to develop relationships and practice the use of skills that have strong relevance to their independent living. Therefore, programs must help young women to effectively initiate and maintain cross-gender relationships with peers and adults. A program's ability to provide such interaction often depends on the strength of recruiting practices for male staff, female staff's ability to actively engage male staff in all relevant program discussions (including issues of gender identity, stereotypes, and sexuality), and on the female staff's underlying acceptance of male staff as valuable contributors to the treatment of adolescent girls.



## **INCLUDE CONCRETE SUPPORTS**

Services for girls in the justice system should not only be risk-focused and strength enhancing, but should also include a broad spectrum of supports that may not be included under the traditional rubric of "justice system interventions." Such services include shelter, transportation, clothing, food, and medical treatment, as we know that justice system involvement is often the most dominant of the young women offenders' contact with public agencies.

Further, not only do communities need to develop a full continuum of services that include differing levels of restrictiveness and intensity of treatment, but each level of restrictiveness must also have several alternatives to respond to distinct behaviors. For example, communities need to have an array of immediate sanction or diversion programs that can effectively respond to specific service need areas such as school failure, substance use, or family dysfunction. Most importantly, services for girls need to have built-in flexibility that can respond to a diversity of needs and that can honor the essence of each girl's individuality.

## **PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE INTERVENTIONS**

Central to effective treatment is the understanding that adolescents must accomplish identifiable, developmentally specific tasks, including the formation of a unique and independent identity, the establishment of a comfortable sexual role, and identification of the place she wishes to occupy in the adult world with respect to work and lifestyle (Acoca, 1996).

In order to master educational, vocational, and social skills, an adolescent must build on the sense of competence and self-worth developed at home and in school during childhood. As has been stated earlier in this report, Carol Gilligan and other scholars studying girls development have said, “Effective treatment must include assisting the adolescent to complete the tasks of childhood in order to help them to face those of adolescence” (Acoca, 1996, p.8).

Specific goals must include the development of an allegiance between the young woman and a positive adult role model, and attention to the development of key cognitive abilities that will promote healthy and independent living. Absent attention to these tasks and understanding of child development theory, programs for young women offenders will face difficulty in designing interventions that are both meaningful and appropriate.

### **PROVIDE SAME-GENDER LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND SMALL TEACHER-STUDENT RATIOS**

Recent research has shown that girls perform better academically when placed in all-girl classrooms (Sadker and Sadker, 1995; Ornstein, 1995). Gottman and Mettetal (1996) describe early adolescence as a period of change for both boys and girls, where they find themselves embroiled in psychological, social, and physiological changes. During this period, the “salient developmental task is achieving intimate relationships with youths of the same sex” (Gottman and Mettetal, 1986).



Given that the average girl in the justice system is several grade levels behind expected performance levels and has experienced multiple abuses at home, on the streets, and in school, the best opportunity for young women to excel in the classroom is provided by small, structured, girl-only learning environments. The latest research from the AAUW (1998) detailed some of the positive results found in all-female educational programs such as heightened regard for math and science, increased risk taking, and increased confidence as a result of improved academic skill.

The debate among researchers about whether these results can be attributed to same-gender environments or to practices that simply promote good education (e.g. small classes, intensive academic curricula, and controlled and disciplined environments), highlights the key issue in gender-specific programming. Simply creating an all-girl environment is not sufficient; it is essential to develop educational programs with integrity, focus, and intensity and with a curriculum that both challenges and promotes the competencies of its girl students.

### **VIEW SERVICES IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIETY**

“Of equal importance to how a person views the world, is how the world views them” (DAY, 1994). A gender-competent program for girls must include a critical perspective of the status of women, expectations, gender-roles and morals that are present in society.

Programs need to recognize the connection between women’s roles in society and societal barriers to women’s growth and development” (Maniglia, 1998). Girls acting-out behavior often has its underlying causes in societal conditions of poverty, discrimination, and the secondary status of women in society. Helping young women to decode the messages and barriers common to the female experience provide insight, understanding, and pathways to positive behavior change.

## **PROVIDE COMPETENCY-BASED PROGRAMMING**

A developmentally-sequenced approach to working with girls recognizes that the primary task of adolescence is skill mastery. Young women offenders should be provided every opportunity to develop a diversity of skills, competencies, and talents in educational, vocational, social, and family settings. Material included in academic curricula should have practical significance to girls' lives and should strive to integrate skills sets across topic areas. While preparation for employment is a key component to any program, "employment is not an automatic cure for delinquency" (Girls, Inc., 1996).

Young women need to be prepared for and assisted in securing jobs that pay a living wage and that provide real and tangible career advancement opportunities. The AAUW (1997) issued a report that emphasized two areas that are critical to a program's ability to provide responsive gender-competent services: 1) encouraging girls to pursue non-traditional jobs must be a conscious goal of education if we are to increase the earning power of women; and 2) education programs must provide child care and other concrete services if they are to encourage participation.

It should be noted that every gender-specific program will not encompass all key components mentioned above. Programs should be designed with the target population in mind, and should meet the specific needs of that population, while also incorporating the appropriate best practice components.

## CHAPTER THREE

# NEVADA'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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*“We need better public defenders. They tell us to plead guilty because it is easier for them that way.”*

*- Las Vegas Detention Center  
Female Offender*

# OVERVIEW OF NEVADA'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The following is an excerpt taken from the *Overview of Nevada's Juvenile Justice System*, written by Larry Carter (2002, Fall), except for the Aurora Pines Girls Facility and Caliente Youth Center descriptions.

**N**evada's formal juvenile justice system is established for the most part by Chapter 62 of the Nevada Revised Statutes (N.R.S.). With the following exceptions, Chapter 62 applies to any person less than 18 years of age or any person less than 21 years of age who commits an act of delinquency before reaching the age of 18 years.

Nevada's law also provides that a child 14 years of age or older who is charged with an offense which would be a felony if committed by an adult may be certified for treatment as an adult, but no child under the age of 14 may be so certified (N.R.S., sec. 62.080).

As a practical matter, children under the age of eight are diverted to a wide array of services provided by the Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) of the Nevada Department of Human Resources. Children between the ages of 8 and 12 may be committed to the custody of DCFS for suitable placement in a public or private institution or agency authorized to care for children or otherwise placed by the juvenile court. It is not until a child reaches the age of 12 that they may be committed to one of the two staff secure institutions operated by the State. Summit View Youth Center opened in June of 2000 but was closed in January of 2002 when the private contractor was terminated. It is uncertain when the facility will reopen due to the state's budget cuts.

Children coming under the provisions of Chapter 62 are classified as either delinquent or in need of supervision. A delinquent child is one who commits a delinquent act, i.e., an act designated a crime if committed by an adult (except murder or attempted murder), or an act that constitutes a violation of a county or municipal ordinance or any rule or regulation having the force of law. A child is in need of supervision if he is a habitual truant from school; if he habitually disobeys his parents or guardian and is unmanageable; or if he is a runaway (N.R.S., sec. 62.040). Many provisions of Chapter 62 also cover non-offenders, such as dependent or neglected children.



A full understanding of Nevada's juvenile justice system requires an appreciation of what the State seeks to accomplish through the system. The State seeks the realization of its policy "to rehabilitate offenders, to effect a more even administration of justice and to increase public welfare of [all of its citizens]" (N.R.S., sec. 213.220 (1)). To this end, Chapter 62 of the Nevada Revised Statutes is to be liberally construed so that:

*"Each child coming within the jurisdiction of the court shall receive such care, guidance and control, preferably in his own home, as will be conducive to the child's welfare and the best interests of the state, and that when such child is removed from the control of his parents, the court shall secure for him care as nearly as possible equivalent to that which should have been given him by them."* (N.R.S., sec. 62.031 (1)).

The system is also designated to promote programs to prevent persons under the age of 18 from coming under the jurisdiction of the State's juvenile courts. To underscore its commitment to a fair, impartial, and effective juvenile justice system, Nevada makes it the duty of every public official and department to render all assistance and cooperation within his or its jurisdictional power which may further the objectives of the system (N.R.S., sec. 62.033). The State of Nevada also mandates training at the National Judicial College in Reno for judges handling juvenile matters (N.R.S., sec. 62.040).

## YOUTH CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Nevada has three juvenile correctional institutions and a Youth Parole Bureau. Youth Correctional Services is coordinated by a Division of Child and Family Services Deputy Administrator and consists of the following facilities and programs:

### CALIENTE YOUTH CENTER

The following excerpt on the Caliente Youth Center was taken from the *Caliente Youth Center Biennial Report*, written by Charles Pyle (2002, September).

Since its establishment in 1962, the Caliente Youth Center has provided correctional services for female juvenile offenders between the ages of 12 and 18. During the 1988-89 fiscal year, Caliente Youth Center opened the doors to males of the same age who were transferred from the Nevada Youth Training Center. Today, it remains coeducational with three cottages of female offenders and four cottages of male offenders. The institution is designed for 140 youth. Sixty-nine persons were employed by the Center during the biennium.



The staff and cottage milieu “provide a secure, caring environment where students are able to develop competencies, accountability and concern for others.”

With increasing numbers of students committed for crimes in Nevada and a shortened length of stay, staff and administration at Caliente Youth Center have intensified the “Therapeutic Community” of the facility. In addition, students participate in camping, fishing, and hiking trips to the local state parks and recreational areas. On the campus, basketball, volleyball, softball, football, soccer, swimming, and other intramural activities are enjoyed by all.

Community service is given special emphasis. Cottages performed 4,649 hours of service during FY 00-02. In the spring of 1997 the Caliente Youth Center developed a youth Wildfire Fighting Crew. Prior to this time, the only “kids” fire-fighting crew in the nation was that of the Nevada Youth Training Center. Youth who are involved in this program receive intensified fire training, physical conditioning, team development training, and a variety of life-skills exposure. In the typical fire season, each youth earns two to four thousand dollars for their services.

Beginning in 1999, the Caliente Youth Center initiated the nations first “All Girl’s Fire Fighting Crew.” Recognizing the benefits and growth of the boy’s fire fighting crew, it was decided that the girls could also benefit from this innovative program. The girls receive the same training, pass the same physical agility preparation and testing, and endure the same hardships on the fires as the boys. Both of these programs have proven to be extremely valuable in assisting the youth to develop into positive, productive, and caring young adults.

In addition, the center contracts with Lincoln County School District for educational services.

C.O. Bastian High School (COB), under the supervision of the School District, provides comprehensive educational and vocational services to both Jr. High and Sr. High School Students. The services are provided by the high school principal, sixteen academic teachers, and eight support personnel for a total of twenty-five persons.

### **NEVADA YOUTH TRAINING CENTER**

Located in Elko, this is a 160 bed staff-secure facility reserved for adjudicated delinquent boys. Programs include education, vocational training, recreation, drug and alcohol abuse counseling and individual and group counseling.

### **SUMMIT VIEW YOUTH CORRECTIONAL CENTER**

Located in Las Vegas, this State-owned facility was privately contracted to operate 96 beds for the serious and/or chronic offender. This facility opened on June 1, 2000 and subsequently closed in January 2002 as the private contract was terminated. No reopening date has been scheduled.

### **YOUTH PAROLE BUREAU**

This agency consists of a Chief, with offices in Las Vegas, and three unit managers, one in Reno and two in Las Vegas. Also, satellite offices are located in Fallon, Carson City and Elko. In June 2002, there were 522 juveniles on parole statewide resulting in caseloads of 289 in the southern part of the state and 233 in the north and rurals. There are currently 22 Youth Parole Officers statewide.

The Youth Parole Bureau supervises all youth released on parole from the facilities at Nevada Youth Training Center, Caliente Youth Center, Summit View Youth Correctional Center, and all youth released by other states and placed on juvenile parole in Nevada pursuant to Interstate Compact.

### **JUVENILE JUSTICE PROGRAMS OFFICE**

This office operates grant funded projects throughout the state and provides juvenile justice technical assistance to State and local entities. The State's Juvenile Justice

Programs Office is responsible for day to day liaison with the counties, who are generally the sub-grantees for JJDP pass-through; Title V, Challenge, Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant, Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws, and the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws Discretionary Grant. The Juvenile Justice Specialist also serves as the staff to the State Juvenile Justice Commission and monitors jails, lockups, and juvenile detention centers located in the State.

## **COUNTY FACILITIES**

### **AURORA PINES GIRLS FACILITY**

The Aurora Pines Girls Facility opened its doors to the first female residents on July 5, 2002. The facility is located 6.5 miles south of Gardnerville, in Douglas County, Nevada, on the same grounds as China Spring Youth Camp.

The Aurora Pines Girls Facility is dedicated to helping female, mid-level offenders between the ages of 12 and 18 develop skills, knowledge and experience to promote health and resiliency, arrest progression of problems caused by delinquent behavior and interpret and avoid high-risk behavior patterns in an emotionally safe, comforting, challenging and nurturing environment.

Aurora Pines uses a female gender-specific approach. The program offers opportunities for positive female development and considers the developmental needs of girls at adolescence. The facility is a girl only environment (apart from staff) and is set in a "wilderness environment."

Aurora Pines Program is divided into four stages. Each successive stage must be mastered before advancement to the next stage is granted. Within the program, called the Youth Development System, the stages are specifically defined and mastery of the stages described in detail. By defining the stages, both youth and staff can easily identify where a youth is in the program and easily plan what still needs to be accomplished for successful release. Determination

of the length of stay depends on a youth's ability to demonstrate mastery of the stages.

Programming offered within the facility includes: community management, drug and alcohol intervention, mental health services, health assessment and education, family counseling, parenting classes, wilderness education, and mentoring. Additional programming includes a high school and special education curriculum provided by Douglas County School District.

To date, the facility has served 26 residents. The facility should be able to accommodate 32-48 female youth in a year's period. Currently the average length of stay for a female youth committed to the Aurora Pines Program is estimated to be between 120 and 150 days.

### **CHINA SPRING YOUTH CAMP IN DOUGLAS COUNTY AND SPRING MOUNTAIN YOUTH CAMP IN CLARK COUNTY**

These regional facilities receive support by the State but are operated by Douglas County and Clark County. Each county in Nevada (except Clark County) is assessed to help pay for the operation of the China Spring facility by means of a statutory formula set out in N.R.S., sec. 62.327. China Spring has a capacity for 40 boys and accepts boys from all counties except Clark County and Spring Mountain has a capacity of 100 boys and only accepts boys from Clark County.

### **JUVENILE DETENTION CENTERS**

The primary purpose of the detention centers is to provide for the temporary care, custody and control of juvenile offenders in a secure, and as much as possible, homelike environment.

### **ZENOFF HALL**

Located at Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services, this is a secure facility for delinquent boys and girls in Las Vegas. It accepts juveniles referred from the Eighth Judicial District. It has a recommended capacity of 235 beds. An expansion project was completed in 2001 that expanded capacity from 112 beds.

### **LEIGHTON HALL**

This is a secure facility located in Winnemucca. It accepts delinquent boys and girls from the Sixth Judicial District and portions of the Seventh Judicial District. Additionally, this facility may hold juveniles from other jurisdictions under contractual agreement. A new 24-bed facility became operational in the spring of 2000. This replaced the antiquated 14-bed facility.

### **WITTENBERG HALL**

Wittenberg Hall is Washoe County Department of Juvenile Service's detention center, accepting juvenile delinquent offenders from the Second Judicial District. Youth alleged to have committed an offense may be detained at Wittenberg Hall pending further investigation by the probation department and/or disposition by the juvenile court. It has a recommended capacity of 51 beds. The 1999 Nevada Legislature awarded 3 million dollars to assist in the process of developing a new facility. The new facility, the Jan Evans Juvenile Justice Center, is scheduled for completion in summer 2004 with a capacity of 108 beds.

### **MURPHY-BERNARDINI HALL**

This secure facility is located in Carson City. It has a recommended capacity of 18 beds, and accepts delinquent boys and girls from the First Judicial District and portions of the Third, Fifth and Ninth Judicial Districts.

### **NORTHEAST NEVADA DETENTION CENTER-ELKO**

A new 24 bed facility opened in March 1997, replacing a 12 bed co-located facility, accepting delinquent juveniles from the Fourth Judicial District.

### **DOUGLAS COUNTY**

On July 1, 1998, Douglas County opened a 15 bed co-located facility at the Lake Tahoe Jailsite. Juveniles being detained are taken to this site. Juveniles arrested in the valley areas and not detained are processed at the Minden law enforcement facility.

### **LYON COUNTY**

In July of 2000, Lyon County opened a 27 bed staff secure facility that has 2 secure beds. This facility operates short-term substance abuse programs. This program serves a five county region (Carson, Churchill, Douglas, Lyon and Storey), with shared operational costs.

### **MINERAL COUNTY**

The 12 bed non-secure facility in Hawthorne has been established since September 1995. It has operated at or near capacity since opening. The county later received funding to refurbish the National Guard Armory creating expanded capacity, to a 30 bed staff-secure facility, fully operational in 2001.

### **COURTS**

The State of Nevada is divided into nine judicial districts; these districts often cross county lines.

| Judicial District | Counties                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st               | Carson City, Storey         |
| 2nd               | Washoe                      |
| 3rd               | Lyon, Churchill             |
| 4th               | Elko                        |
| 5th               | Nye, Esmeralda, Mineral     |
| 6th               | Humboldt, Pershing, Lander  |
| 7th               | White Pine, Eureka, Lincoln |
| 8th               | Clark                       |
| 9th               | Douglas                     |

## CHAPTER FOUR

# DISCOVERING NEVADA'S GENDER-SPECIFIC NEEDS

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*“We need more low-level alternative placements in the form of therapeutic foster homes, alternative living, independent living and group homes.”*

*-Larry Carter  
Juvenile Justice Programs Chief*

# DESCRIPTION OF GENDER-SPECIFIC TRAINING

**F**rom November, 2001 through December, 2002 a total of 18 training sessions were held on Gender-Specific Programming for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. The trainings were held in Winnemucca, Elko, Reno, Carson City, Las Vegas, Caliente Youth Center and Aurora Pines Girls Facility. Each training averaged 30 participants. Participants were from a variety of human service areas that work with youth and approximately 60% were juvenile probation or parole officers.

In Winnemucca, over half of the participants were from the school district, mental health office and the District Attorney's Office. In Reno, training was mandatory for all County juvenile probation professionals. In all trainings, management and line staff were in attendance. Only one or two attendees had previously had any training on gender-specific services for girls.

The trainings were facilitated by several professionals at each location, utilizing a nationally recognized curriculum. The curriculum's design encourages participants to challenge their thinking about how the needs of adolescent girls are being addressed in their communities.

The Goals of the one-day workshop follow:

- Participants will understand what is meant by gender-specific programming and why targeted services are necessary.
- Participants will better understand the current status of girls in the juvenile justice system and the developmental needs of those girls.
- Participants will understand the components of promising programs for girls.
- Participants will perform a self-assessment to determine readiness to implement gender responsive programming.

Topics covered in the workshop centered around female adolescent development, perceptions of differences between boys and girls, statistics on female juvenile offenders, gender bias in the processing of female offenders, risk factors, social context, strengths and challenges of the juvenile justice system, and information about gender-specific programming.

Participants were provided with concrete examples to consider when revising their agency's programming for girls to be more gender responsive. Best practices were discussed along with physically and emotionally safe environments, how to manage a gender responsive group, and relationship-based programming. At the end of each workshop, participants were asked to complete a self-assessment to determine specific areas where changes were needed in order to be more gender responsive.

Pre and post-tests and training evaluations were used to determine effectiveness. The improvement in knowledge base can be seen from the pre and post-test evaluation. Overall the average increase in comprehension based on increase in scores from pre-test to the post-test was 206%. The discussions revolving around why girls needed programs geared to their needs seems even more relevant than the increase in test scores. The response at the end of the day by a district attorney indicates the value of the training, as his response was not unique. He said, “I have so much to do. I never thought about how our office victimizes girls and re-victimizes them. I can make simple changes in our office environment to make it easier for girls/women. This has opened a whole new set of ideas for me.” Many participants asked for more training. Handouts were abundant as were sources to go for more information.

# SUMMARY OF ADULT INTERVIEWS



our interview groups were conducted several months after the initial workshops as follow-up sessions to determine how the gender-specific training information had been utilized in each geographic region. The interviews were generally conducted by the same people who had provided the original workshops in order to provide continuity. The interview groups were held in Carson City, Reno, Las Vegas, and Northeast Nevada.

Each interview included management and line staff in order to obtain differing perspectives on four general questions:

- 1) What changes have occurred since the gender-specific training in thinking or behavior?
- 2) Is more gender-specific training needed?
- 3) What are the priority needs for services for girls?
- 4) Are there other related needs in your community?

## KEY FINDINGS

The Key Findings from the adult interview groups are summarized below. Individual interview group reports are located in Appendix B.

1. There have been some definite changes in practice since the gender-specific workshops including the creation of gender-specific counseling and support groups. Staff report a greater awareness of gender issues, including the importance of relationships to girls and the need for female mentors and role models. The most common recognition of need is for separate programming designed to meet the unique issues of girls.
2. There appears to be strong support for more training on gender-specific programming. One group expressed desire for a regular support group for staff on how to work more effectively with incorrigible girls. Several mentioned the need for training for male staff on how to set boundaries with girls.
3. There is unanimous agreement on the need to have programs that address self-esteem and self-worth for girls.
4. School failure is mentioned often as an underlying problem of at-risk girls with a corresponding need for programs to ensure school success, vocational training, and employment opportunities.

5. The most common needs for adjudicated and pre-adjudicated girls are access to health care, and mental health and substance abuse treatment for girls and their families. Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse are major sources of trauma.
6. There is strong support for mentoring and role-model opportunities for girls along with a corresponding concern about how to secure money to staff these programs and how to motivate adults to volunteer for them.
7. There is also strong support for teen pregnancy prevention programs as well as programs to address pregnant and parenting teen issues such as access to quality, affordable child care.
8. There is support for programs addressing domestic violence between girls and boyfriends and girls and family members.
9. There is agreement that much more programming is needed at the middle school level and some agreement on the need for programming at the elementary school level, as early as third grade.
10. General training on gender-specific issues and the juvenile justice system is needed in the broader community, i.e. law enforcement, child welfare workers, and foster care providers. Judicial training was also mentioned as some judges appear to be biased at times by “pretty young girls.”
11. Diversity and cultural issues are addressed often by interview groups.
12. There is fairly strong support for a statewide assessment tool.
13. There is strong support for a continuum of care concept in every community meaning services are available from prevention through after-care. There is no shortage of program ideas.
14. No one seems happy with their current ability to deal with sexual identity issues.
15. Several groups mentioned the need for longer stays in residential programs in order to develop relationships and trust with girls.
16. Neighborhood and community-based programs are mentioned often as the most effective program delivery mechanism.
17. There is a strong belief that there are not enough intermediate placement options for girls – it’s “Caliente or nothing.”
18. More funding is needed to create new programs and more placement options for girls. Some communities believe “if only we had a grant writer,” funding would follow.
19. Increased partnerships between public and private agencies are mentioned often as a method of broadening support and increasing resources.
20. A statewide coordinated public awareness campaign regarding gender equity issues has strong support.

# SUMMARY OF YOUNG WOMEN INTERVIEWS

**F**our interview groups were conducted with young women in Nevada to glean information as to needed services in each geographic region from their unique perspectives. The interviews were conducted by several trainers, including national expert on girls and the juvenile justice system, Leslie Acoca. The interviews were held in four locations: Aurora Pines Girls Facility, Caliente Youth Center, Zenoff Hall the Clark County Detention Center, and Wittenberg Hall the Washoe County Detention Center .

Each group of young women were asked two essential questions:

- 1) What would have helped you not to get in trouble?
- 2) What services would keep you from coming back here?

## KEY FINDINGS

The Key Findings from the young women interviews are summarized below. Individual interview reports are located in Appendix B.

### WHAT WOULD HAVE HELPED YOU NOT GET IN TROUBLE?

1. Every group of young women mentioned stronger relationships with family members as a key prevention factor. Several mentioned absent parents, substance-abusing parents, and violence-prone parents as barriers to their success.
2. Three of the four groups mentioned relationships with older boyfriends as a factor that influenced their problem behavior.
3. Truancy, substance abuse, and a lack of accessible youth activities were cited often as factors.
4. Foster family issues were also mentioned often as a problem area.

### WHAT SERVICES WOULD KEEP YOU FROM COMING BACK HERE?

1. Counseling around family issues and substance abuse problems was the service most desired by the young women.
2. Alternative placements to avoid returning to a troubled home environment was a common need.
3. Well paid employment opportunities are needed for young women.
4. Education and after care activities were also mentioned as priority services.
5. More program structure and clearer boundaries between staff and young women.



# OBSERVATIONS & OPINIONS

## BY LESLIE ACOCA,

### PRESIDENT, IN OUR DAUGHTERS' HANDS, INC.

1. Preliminary Observations based on site visits to the Girls Components of the State Caliente Youth Center in Caliente, Nevada and the Clark County Juvenile Detention Facility in Las Vegas, Nevada.

2. Draft recommendations to the Nevada State Legislature in forming the development of gender-specific legislation.

Between March and August of 2002, Leslie Acoca visited the girls' components of the State Caliente Youth Center, Zenoff Hall, the Clark County Juvenile Detention Center in Las Vegas and more informally, Wittenberg Hall, the Washoe County Juvenile Detention Center in Reno.

The immediate objective of these visits was to assess whether or not these institutions were providing effective girl-specific services for the growing population of girl offenders in Nevada.

The longer range objective of the visits was to inform the development of gender specific legislation that will guide the design, implementation and funding of measurably effective services for at-risk girls, their children and families throughout the State of Nevada. Ultimately, the goal of this investigation and report is to improve girl-specific services in Nevada and prevent this and future generations of girls from entering and re-entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

Leslie Acoca was chosen to conduct these site visits based on her work with the National Office of

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. As well as her previous research on girls in the California and Florida Juvenile Justice Systems, her experience designing, implementing and evaluating programs for girls nationwide, and on her assistance in drafting and enacting girl and women-specific legislation in these states and in Oregon.

The methods used in this evaluation included two site visits and structured interview groups with both girls and staff at the Caliente Youth Center and with girls at the Las Vegas Detention Center. The visit to the Reno Detention Facility and the community based continuum of services for girls there involved informal tours only.

Additionally, Ms. Acoca reviewed existing documents describing the characteristics of programming for girls and boys at Caliente as well as some data describing juvenile justice trends in the State of Nevada over the last three years. It is important to note that this report refers to the "observations" that emerged from the site visits and interviews rather than formal "results". This terminology reflects the limitations of time and funding for the investigation but also, very importantly, the reality that our interviews with both girls and staff at Caliente were observed at all times by the facility director or his administrative staff. This failure to grant confidential research access undermines the formal validity of the interview process and is, of course, a critical finding in and of itself.

## OBSERVATIONS OF THE CALIENTE FACILITY

### GEOGRAPHICAL ISOLATION

Like many state facilities for youth of both genders, but especially girls, (given the fact that there are fewer programs proportionately for girls at every level of the juvenile justice system) the Caliente Facility is geographically isolated. It is located outside of the aptly named and tiny town of Caliente which is an arduous



two-hour plus drive into the desert from the city of Las Vegas. On July 9, 2002 when this visit took place, the temperature outside was approximately 116 degrees. The physical isolation of the program means that access to the girls by their families as well as by most outside observers and service providers of all types is limited.

The grounds are well-landscaped and maintained. This green, campus-like atmosphere is infinitely preferable to the stark high security detention center in Las Vegas which, with its razor wire and restraint chairs, mimics maximum-security adult prisons and jails. One notable feature is an outdoor landscape project built by the girls that includes small running waterfalls and attractive plantings.

### CALIENTE STAFF INTERVIEW GROUP

The first set of structured group interviews included line, educational, therapeutic and medical staff. The staff interview group included approximately approximately 23 staff and took place over a one hour and forty-five minute time period.

## CONCERNS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. The most critical observation that emerged from the site visit, as a whole, was that many of the girl residents at the facility often arrive with physical and/or mental health problems that could not be addressed by the program. One of the serious medical problems mentioned was the high incidence of multiple sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). The center employs only one nurse who has assistance from the State Health Department as well as assistance from a part-time visiting physician. Residents are treated off-site as necessary. Adequate, comprehensive resources are needed to address the physical and mental health needs of the girl residents.
2. Some staff reported limited professional educational backgrounds and limited exposure to gender specific training and research. The relative dearth of training would appear to leave the majority of staff seriously underequipped to address the complex characteristics and needs of the girl residents and their families.
3. While staff obviously displayed a caring attitude towards the girls, they also revealed some serious gaps in their professional boundaries. For example, some staff reported taking individual girls to their homes for the weekend or on individual rather than group outings. This overly personalized approach could foster a greater than desirable dependence by the girls on individual staff as well as an unhealthy role reversal where inappropriate emotional intimacy is serving the needs of adult staff rather than those of the adolescent girls in their charge. The most serious consequence of the lack of definition re: the boundaries between staff and girl residents could be a heightened potential for abuse of the girls and an increased risk of the appearance of same.
4. Another concern was the peer interactive model which is reportedly the core of the programming at Caliente. This model relies very heavily on the girls to

evaluate each others behavior and reprimand each other for infractions. Given the immaturity and high prevalence of mental health disorders among the girl offender population, expecting the girls to essentially police each other is, at best, unrealistic and at worst, can lead residents to feel emotionally and physically unsafe.

5. The Girls Fire Fighter program appears to be successful in several respects. It gives the girls a sense of advancement, skill mastery and belonging to a positive peer culture as well as physical fitness and potential entry into the vocational/work world. This element of the program is positive and highly unusual. Few programs for girls nationally offer similar avenues for girls to develop such high levels of physical and professional skill.

### ***CALIENTE GIRLS INTERVIEW GROUP***

The second set of structured group interviews involved approximately nine girls between the ages of 13 and 18. These young women had been at the program for varying lengths of time. Their racial and ethnic diversity and offense type roughly corresponded with that described in the most recent Biennial Report. This interview group was also closely monitored by the facility staff contrary to our specific request to interview the girls without staff present.

### ***CONCERNS AND OBSERVATIONS***

1. A majority of the girls reported a strong loyalty to the program and its staff. Tellingly, one young woman said Caliente was not a “facility” but more like a true family for her. The girls echoed both the advantages and disadvantages of the close and possibly ill-defined staff/client relationships reported by the staff during their interviews.

On the one hand, the girls appreciated feeling cared for by staff in a way that some had never or rarely

experienced before. On the other, girls reported some confusion as to the role of staff in their lives. This confusion, particularly when expressed by a population of girls with strong reported histories of prostitution for money and/or drugs could contribute to their continued inability to discriminate between damaging and positive relationships in the future.

2. Several girls reported that program privileges-such as off-campus activities- and discipline were meted out unfairly due to staff preferences for individual girls. Others felt that their peers were not fair and appropriate monitors of their behaviors and progress in the program.

3. A majority of girls reported that they had been placed at Caliente for low-level repeat offenses such as running away and prostitution. Generally, girls who commit these types of offenses do so as the result of histories of abuse, neglect or school failure which could be better addressed in their home communities.

4. A majority of the girls who were in the fire fighting program expressed a profound appreciation for the opportunity. Generally, membership in this program is viewed positively as a reward for good behavior.

5. Girls expressed the desire to have better self-care products for their skin and hair.

### ***CLARK COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY INTERVIEW GROUP***

Observations at the Clark County Juvenile Detention Facility in Las Vegas:

On July 10, 2002, an interview group including approximately 18 girls ages 13 to 18 was conducted within the girls’ unit of the detention center. Staff were cooperative and helpful in gathering all the available girls for the interview group and did permit the group to be held without staff present as had been requested.

The architecture and environment of this facility, as mentioned above, mirrored that of an adult facility. It was new and constructed in pod-like wings around highly secure cement, wire enclosed yard. Facilities such as these represent a national trend toward constructing juvenile facilities that resemble adult-male correctional facilities. Environments of those facilities are antithetical to both the developmental and gender-specific needs of young women.



Upon entering the girls' unit a full restraint chair with straps was immediately visible. The effect of this chair was chilling to the researcher as was the site of a slight girl, apparently about

15 years old, standing passively while being cuffed with her hands behind her back for transport outside the facility. The research on the characteristics and behaviors of girl offenders indicates that these extreme physical controls are generally unnecessary and unduly threatening.

## CONCERNS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. Several of the girls reported serious health and mental health disorders. Some girls reported past pregnancies and separations from their infants and toddlers. One girl recalled being placed in wrist and ankle restraints while she was detained during her pregnancy. There do not appear to be any locally accessible, effective mother-infant programs for pregnant and parenting teens. One young woman, apparently severely depressed, asked to meet with a counselor immediately. Several girls said that they needed mental health counselors.
2. Girls reported personal histories of family fragmentation, domestic conflict and violence and school failure.
3. Girls raised questions about the quality of their legal representation and the fairness of their processing through the juvenile justice system. Many were lower level offenders involved with drugs and prostitution. By their report, there are few if any programs in Nevada, and especially Clark County, that address these issues.
4. Many girls reported being repeat offenders. Lack of intervention programs to prevent the girls' re-entry into the system appear to be minimal or non-existent.

See page 25 for observations of the Washoe County Juvenile Detention Center.

## LESLIE ACOCA'S RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for gender-specific legislative action based on site visits, interviews and literature review.

1. An automated data collection system must be established in all jurisdictions in Nevada and at the State level that allows data to be collected, separated and cross-referenced at least by gender, race/ethnicity, age, offense and juvenile court history. A blueprint for the development of a gender specific data collection system is provided in the report “No Place to Hide: Girls in the California Juvenile Justice System”(Acoca and Dedel, 1998). This system will benefit both boys and girls and is an essential underpinning for any effective juvenile justice system planning.
2. Needs based Gender Specific assessments should be administered and re-administered at regular intervals to girls who have entered formal probation, detention or placement in Nevada. A standardized health assessment must be part of this assessment and must trigger medical attention when warranted. A prototype for a girls’ needs based assessment tool is also provided in the above mentioned report.
3. A Nevada Girls’ Task Force including legal and program professionals should be immediately convened to accomplish the following goals: 1. Evaluate the fairness and effectiveness of juvenile justice processing for girls at every point in the system. 2. Identify the program and service needs of girl offenders, their children and families, and identify the gaps in existing gender responsive services. Areas of critical need that have already been established such as girls’ need for health, mental health, substance abuse and parenting services must be addressed as part of this effort. 3. Develop and begin implementation of a gender and culture responsive continuum of services.
4. A statewide gender specific evaluation and monitoring plan that would encompass all detention and placement facilities housing girls should be developed and implemented immediately. A key provision of the plan must be the requirement that outside evaluators be permitted to interview staff and youth independent of facility administrators.
5. The characteristics and needs of girls must be specifically taken into account during the architectural design process for new facilities and programs.
6. An ongoing gender specific training curriculum should be developed and delivered for all line, program and administrative staff in the juvenile justice system. Completion of gender specific coursework should be mandatory.
8. Gender responsive and humane policies must be developed for girls in the juvenile justice system. For example, pregnant teens who do not pose any immediate danger to themselves or others must not be restrained.
7. Gender responsive legislation which includes mandated fiscal allocations for the gender specific programming recommended under item #3 by the Girls’ Task Force should be drafted and enacted.

# KEY INFORMANT RESPONSES



Key informants are juvenile court judges and juvenile justice staff from around the state. They were asked (via e-mail and fax) to respond to the following questions. Their input is extremely valuable as they are the leaders of Nevada's juvenile justice system and have first-hand direct experience with the current needs of the delinquent, status offenders, and abused/neglected populations. Key informant responses are reproduced verbatim.

## WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE SERVICES NEEDED FOR GIRLS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM?

- (a) an effective after-care program for Caliente graduates
- (b) mental and emotional health counseling
- (c) individualized and in-depth exploration of adolescent girls as sexual beings

**- Judge Charles McGee**  
**Family Court, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) residential specific treatment which is being enhanced with the opening of Aurora Pines. We may need an increase in this type of service or a step approach between detention/probation and Aurora Pines.
- (b) programs for pregnancy prevention and youth mothers
- (c) temporary or shelter care for CHINS issues that offers family counseling

**- Fernando Serrano**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

“We’d like to see more community-based residential treatment, mental health services, and responsive treatment designed to address sexual abuse, trauma and substance abuse for girls. We’d also like to see additional training for staff working with female offenders. You’re doing a great job in this area and I’d like to make it a regular fixture about 2 – 3 times a year in Clark County.”

**- Kirby Burgess**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

“Services needed for girls in the juvenile system include group homes, Aurora Pines-type programs, alcohol and drug treatment programs, vocational training, programs for pregnant girls.”

**- Sheila Bannister**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) programs regarding sexuality issues
- (b) programs regarding self-esteem
- (c) programs for females who are pregnant but are still in need of services within the system

**- De Vere Karlson**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) an intensive supervision program for females to include competency development programs designed specifically to address issues such as relationships, self-confidence and self-esteem, dealing with stress, trust, physical safety, health, cultural strengths, etc.
- (b) counseling groups for female offenders
- (c) substance abuse counseling groups for female offenders – focus on self- medication and related issues (victimization, violence, conflict resolution, relationships, etc.)

**- Leonard Pugh**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) low-level alternative placements in the form of therapeutic foster homes, alternative living, independent living and group living
- (b) probation services that recognize and strive to deliver services on a gender equitable basis
- (c) two coupled into one: mental health and substance abuse services

**- Larry Carter**  
**Juvenile Justice Programs Chief,**  
**Nevada Division of Child and Family Services**

- (a) peer counseling
- (b) drug and alcohol counseling
- (c) family counseling

**- Karen Labarry**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 7th Judicial District**

- (a) programming to address issues as they are developing, not waiting until they have an addiction problem, runaway, legal issues or have an unwanted pregnancy before they receive help
- (b) aftercare available everywhere, especially in the rural communities for girls out of placements
- (c) affordable family counseling programs

**- Sandra J. Oberhansli**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 5th Judicial District**

## ***HAVE YOU SEEN GENDER-BIAS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM?***

“The lack of effective programming means that girls often do more punitive time than boys. Issues such as pregnancy and sexual abuse also mean that girls have different needs to be addressed.”

***-Sandra J. Oberhansli***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 5th Judicial District***

“Yes, but it’s often either subtle on one hand or stereotypical on the other, and I believe, not widespread except in the paucity of tailored programs.”

***- Judge Charles McGee***

***Family Court, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District***

“Prior to the opening of Aurora Pines, girls may have been committed to a state institution sooner than boys due to no intermediate sanctions. We should commit all the resources necessary to ensure a ‘state of the art’ program.”

***- Fernando Serrano***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District***

“We continue to see gender bias in our system. It’s an ongoing occurrence whereby girls are treated more punitively by the system than boys. Additionally, societal changes in how girls are raised are creating a strong need for change in how we provide service to them and their families. Girls continue to be placed more quickly in a correctional setting and there are fewer family services available. Lastly and unfortunately, girls are perceived as being more difficult to treat and in need of greater protection in the system. Ironically, we “protect” them so well that they end up being more unduly punished than boys.”

***- Kirby Burgess***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District***

“In our local juvenile system every attempt is made to ensure equity for females and to avoid any type of gender bias.”

***- Sheila Bannister***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District***

“I have not seen gender bias within the system that I have been exposed to. I do believe girls require specialized services and sometimes they do not receive them due to lack of training on the part of the staff. It has been my experience that girls require twice the amount of work and effort, that their issues are far more complex and often times are not properly identified.”

***- De Vere Karlson***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District***

“I do believe that gender bias still exists. There still is a tendency to want to protect females from participating in certain behaviors that results in females occasionally receiving stiffer consequences than males for similar behaviors. Many times this is done in an effort to stop or prevent victimization but, regardless, the treatment is different.”

***- Leonard Pugh***

***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District***

“Unintentional bias as the result of not understanding the specific needs of girls.”

***- Larry Carter***

***Juvenile Justice Programs Chief,  
Nevada Division of Child and Family Services***

## WHAT ARE THE TOP THREE SERVICES NEEDED FOR PRE-ADJUDICATED GIRLS?

“We need to beef up the McGee Center program for girls and we need more buy-in from the community, i.e. schools, churches, and resource centers.”

**- Judge Charles McGee**  
**Family Court, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) pregnancy prevention to include building healthy relationships with males
- (b) violence prevention to include self-esteem enhancement
- (c) substance abuse prevention

**- Fernando Serrano**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 6<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

“The top three services needed for pre-adjudicated girls are front-end, individualized, and community-based. Areas of focus should be strength-based (protective assets) and skill-building, education, mentoring, vocational and meaningful community involvement in activities such as school, church, sports, service clubs, etc.”

**- Kirby Burgess**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 8<sup>th</sup> Judicial District**

“Services needed for pre-adjudicated girls would include group homes, local shelter care, vocational training, alternative education.”

**- Sheila Bannister**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 1<sup>st</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) education services on physical and emotional wellness
- (b) programs designed to elevate self-esteem
- (c) support groups where they can freely discuss issues common only to girls

**- De Vere Karlson**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 3<sup>rd</sup> Judicial District**

- (a) asset building for females
- (b) programs that focus on developing trust, team building, and athletic opportunities
- (c) group counseling

**- Leonard Pugh**  
**Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 2<sup>nd</sup> Judicial District**

“Mental health, substance abuse, alternative living.”

**- Larry Carter**  
**Juvenile Justice Programs Chief,**  
**Nevada Division of Child and Family Services**

- (a) family counseling
- (b) time out locations to allow explosive situations to cool down
- (c) teen pregnancy/vocational programs

***-Sandra J. Oberhansli***  
***Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, 5th Judicial District***

- (a) evaluations
- (b) counseling
- (c) family crisis assistance

***-Karen Laberry***  
***Chief Probation Officer, 7th Judicial District***

# RECOMMENDATIONS

After careful review of national trends, literature written by leading experts in the juvenile justice field, Nevada's current juvenile justice system, and Nevada's legislative approach, the following are recommendations to improve the status of girls involved with or likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.

## ***I. IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS GENDER-BIAS WITHIN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM***

1. Evaluate current policies and practices affecting female offenders. Juvenile justice agencies throughout Nevada should implement changes as needed.
  - a. Are programs oriented more toward boys needs simply because more boys are in the system?
  - b. Are girls' spaces overcrowded while boys' spaces are not?
  - c. Are girls detained to "protect" them?
  - d. Are girls more restricted in their dress than boys?
  - e. Is gender considered when providing nutritional services?
  - f. Are ethnic and gender-appropriate hygiene supplies provided?
  - g. Are secure facilities over-utilized for girls?
  - h. Does the staff reflect the client population in terms of gender, race and experience?
  - i. Does the program provide mandatory training on the trauma of physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and domestic violence?
  - j. Does the program utilize positive female role models and mentors?
  - k. If there is no alternative to co-correctional programming, what is the client ratio of females to males?
  - l. Is the program grounded in solid research and programming theory specifically about girls?
  - m. Does the program utilize gender-specific assessment tools and treatment plans and does it match treatment with the identified needs of the girls?
  - n. Is the agency/program a healthy and safe place for female staff to work?
  - o. Does the program address chemical dependency and mental health issues within a context of trauma related to physical, sexual and emotional abuse, and domestic violence?
  - p. Are there adequate substance abuse, physical and mental health, and academic intervention program components?

## **II. DEVELOP A “CONTINUUM OF CARE” OF GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES RANGING FROM PREVENTION THROUGH AFTER-CARE PROGRAMS WITH EMPHASIS ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS**

1. **Early Intervention:** Provide a wide spectrum of early intervention services as needed throughout the state. Primary prevention programs act as a first line of defense and can contribute to a decreased number of girls becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Every community should offer prevention and early intervention services to all girls.
2. **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services:** Develop accessible substance abuse and mental health services, particularly for girls held in state and local facilities. These same services should be available in community-based settings as well.
3. **Alternative Placements:** Increase the number of alternative placement centers throughout the state. The centers must be community-based, accessible and family orientated. They should provide viable vocational/employment training, educational opportunities, relevant life-skills courses, substance abuse and mental health counseling and should do so using gender-specific programming best-practices.
4. **Role Models and Mentors:** Provide access to positive role models and mentors with whom young women can establish relationships within all levels of programs (primary, secondary, tertiary and after-care).
5. **Health Prevention and Treatment:** Ensure access to health prevention and treatment programs, including a strong emphasis on sex education and teen pregnancy prevention within all levels of programs (primary, secondary, tertiary and after-care).
6. **After-Care Services:** Develop after-care programming that begins with commitment and directly involves the family and local community agencies.
7. **Services for Pregnant/Parenting Teens:** Implement effective, developmentally appropriate services for pregnant and parenting teens and their children.

## **III. OFFER ONGOING TRAINING ON GENDER-SPECIFIC ISSUES TO ALL LEVELS OF STAFF SERVING GIRLS**

1. Develop and fund a gender-specific training plan for Nevada through the juvenile justice staff in coordination with the Juvenile Justice Commission and juvenile justice administrators.
2. The training plan should include training on gender-specific programming for all personnel working with girl populations. This includes community-based program staff, school administrators and teachers, juvenile justice system employees, recreational program staff and medical professionals and judges.
3. Funding must be allocated to ensure training is available on an on-going basis throughout the state.

#### ***IV. NEVADA'S INSTITUTIONS SERVING GIRLS SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED***

1. All facilities (state and county) should incorporate “Best Practices” approaches in the design and implementation of gender-specific programs.
2. Adequately fund, support, monitor and evaluate programs at the Aurora Pines Girls Facility, the Caliente Youth Center and other programs that may be developed to ensure quality, gender-specific services are provided.
3. Implement an appropriate process for independent evaluations of the state’s ability to serve girls in its institutions.
4. Build future facilities near population centers so that girls have greater access to their families and communities.
5. Implement early health screening, assessment and treatment as part of a comprehensive case management plan.
6. Implement video conferencing between the institutions and the local communities for relationship continuation and aftercare planning. This would assist in case management and overcoming the distance and isolation for girls with their families and probation officers.

#### ***V. THE NEVADA LEGISLATURE SHOULD CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING KEY LEGISLATIVE CHANGES.***

1. Fund programs to provide a “continuum of care” for all girls living in Nevada. At a minimum, these must include increased access to gender-specific health, mental health, substance abuse and educational programming. In addition, funding should be provided for community-based alternative placement options.
2. Build on the success of the CCPBG program and mandate that more gender-specific programs be provided.
3. Fund and develop an integrated data collection system to be implemented in each county and at the state level to allow data to be collected, separated and cross-referenced by gender, race/ethnicity, etc.
4. Create a Nevada Girls Task Force composed of juvenile justice professionals, community based service providers and girls in the juvenile justice system to carry on the work involved in finalizing a comprehensive plan and then implementing comprehensive statewide gender-specific services.
5. Separate role and function of the Gender-Minority Subcommittee of the Juvenile Justice Commission. Create separate subcommittees, one specifically for gender issues and one specifically for minority issues, to provide focused attention on both issues. Charge the Juvenile Justice Commission or its staff with the task of overseeing implementation of comprehensive statewide gender-specific services.
6. Eliminate through statute the practice of bootstrapping within all jurisdictions in Nevada.

# CONCLUSION



With more girls in the juvenile justice system than ever before, policies, practices and programs must be tailored to meet their needs. A “one size fits all” approach fails to meet juvenile female offenders core needs (victimization and abuse issues, substance use, and mental and physical health concerns).

As we fail to address their needs, the likelihood of recidivism increases, which further burdens the juvenile justice system and society as a whole. The needs of girls must be incorporated into all aspects of programs, from policymaking to services and program implementation. Judges, juvenile justice professionals and lawmakers must ensure that females are not twice criminalized - once for committing an offense and twice for being female and breaking traditional boundaries of appropriate female behavior.

It must be remembered that girls have traditionally been involved in less than 15% of the juvenile arrests for violent offenses. Girls are most likely referred for a status offense, such as truancy or running away, habitual disobedience, tobacco and curfew violations. Because of the types of offenses juvenile females are traditionally referred for, it is critical that more alternative placement options are available. Research shows that the majority of girls are better served within their own communities, near their families, in therapy-based settings.

Nevada’s responsibility to provide comprehensive services for all girls within the state is a tall order. The challenges presented by the prevalence of a number of risk factors make the task even more daunting. Early intervention and prevention programs that are gender-specific for girls will help to decrease the number of girls within the system. Providing quality gender-specific programs is essential for those girls already involved with the juvenile justice system.

This report provides concrete recommendations for ensuring all Nevada’s girls needs are met. Through funding a “continuum of care” of gender-specific services, providing future gender-specific programming trainings and eliminating biased policies and practices within the juvenile justice system we can be sure that our young womens’ needs are addressed in the most relevant and professional manner possible. It is the obligation of all Nevadans to do so. In fact, our future depends on it.

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# APPENDIX A

## ADDITIONAL BEST PRACTICES

### GUIDELINES AT A GLANCE

*Excerpt from How to Implement Oregon's Guidelines for Effective Gender Responsive Programming for Girls*

*Written by Pam Patton and Marcia Morgan for the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission Juvenile Crime Prevention Program and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families July 2002*

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### THE ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMS

#### **GUIDELINE: POLICIES**

Develop gender-specific policies for programs serving girls. This ensures that administration and staff are informed and follow a similar set of work practices, understand the philosophy and commitment to girls gender-specific services, and create a culture where gender issues are integrated into the organizational structure. Policies need to be in writing and should include guiding principles and program values. It is important that gender-specific policies and practices are integrated into all parts of the program continuum from intake to follow-up/aftercare.

#### **GUIDELINE: COLLECTING DATA ON GIRLS**

Document demographic profile information relevant to the population being served. For comparison, collect parallel information on girls of similar age in the general community. Possessing data on risk and protective factors, or strengths/assets and needs of both populations is also important. This ensures policies and services are targeted and based on data-driven information. If serving both females and males, ensure data can be separated by gender.

#### **GUIDELINE: PROGRAM DESIGN**

Include girls in the design or redesign of programs and services. If appropriate, programs need to review best practices or promising gender-specific programs, and incorporate effective program components. The design should include an understanding of a girl's development including risk/protective factors, resiliency, strengths/assets, independence, self-esteem, life skills, and how girls are socialized within the context of their society and culture.

#### **GUIDELINE: AFTERCARE/FOLLOW-UP**

Ensure that girls get aftercare/follow-up services, and that these services are relationship-based. Girls need stability and relationships in all transitions. Integrate these needs into aftercare/follow-up plans from the moment a girl enters the program, and continue these services until the girl successfully completes her transition into the community.

#### **GUIDELINE: ASSESSMENT TOOLS, SCREENING INSTRUMENTS, AND INTAKE PRACTICES**

Develop instruments and practices that are responsive to the needs of females and are designed to eliminate barriers, cultural bias, and gender bias. Formal and informal decision points throughout the system

(places where decisions are made by staff and other professionals that impact the girl) should also be examined for gender-bias practices.

### ***GUIDELINE: OUTCOME MEASUREMENTS***

Develop outcome measurements and evaluation methodologies that are gender appropriate. Identify goals or outcomes that are meaningful for the girl. The measurement tool you use should be free from bias and accommodate differences in communication, interpretation, and subject sensitivities. Data collection and interpretation should be appropriate for females and include qualitative as well as quantitative methods. It should also incorporate the current research on girls noting a research sample's breadth in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

### ***GUIDELINE: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK LOOP***

Include girls in evaluating service delivery, program content, and program effectiveness through feedback and suggestions. Programs need to support formal and informal feedback processes with staff and clients on a regular basis. The issues and concerns identified should be reviewed and incorporated into program changes and redesigned where appropriate. A program's effectiveness and relevance to girls and their diverse life experiences needs to be continually evaluated.

### ***GUIDELINE: HIRING***

Interview applicants with questions that focus on gender issues. When interviewing potential staff for girls programs, include questions on the applicant's interest in working with girls, their experiences with gender-specific service delivery, and their knowledge of female development.

### ***GUIDELINE: STAFF DIVERSITY***

Maintain staffing that reflects the race and ethnic backgrounds of the girls being served to ensure that multiple perspectives are included and integrated into a program's services. Programs should be inclusive, welcoming, and culturally appropriate for all staff members and girls.

### ***GUIDELINE: TRAINING***

Provide new employees with a program orientation and follow-up training opportunities for all staff, supervisors, and managers on gender-specific issues. This may include, but is not limited to, current research on girls and young women, books on adolescent female development, female issues and needs, unique issues for girls of color, communication, staff boundary issues, sexuality, and gender identity.

## ***PROGRAM CONTENT***

### ***GUIDELINE: ENVIRONMENT, PHYSICAL SAFETY***

Create an environment for girls that is physically safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be safe from violence, physical and sexual abuse, verbal harassment, bullying, teasing, and stalking. Management and staff need to create a safe environment where boundary issues are clear, acting out behavior is consistently addressed, and physical safety is taken seriously.

### ***GUIDELINE: ENVIRONMENT, EMOTIONAL SAFETY***

Create an environment for girls that is emotionally safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be nurturing and safe. This environment should encourage girls to express themselves and share feelings and allow time to develop trust, all within the context of building on-going relationships. Girls need time to talk and to process. They need to feel emotionally safe and free from negative or coercive behaviors, bias, racism, and sexism. When possible, their spaces should be free from the demands for attention produced by adolescent males.

### ***GUIDELINE: ENVIRONMENT, SURROUNDINGS THAT VALUE FEMALES***

Create an environment that values females. Facilities, classrooms, and other program settings should have books, magazines, posters, videos, wall decorations, and other items that celebrate females, current and

historical achievements and contributions to the world. The surroundings should enhance a girl's understanding of female development, honor and respect the female perspective, respond to girls diverse heritages and life experiences, and empower young women to reach their full potential.

### ***GUIDELINE: HOLISTIC PROGRAMMING, ADDRESSING THE WHOLE GIRL WITH A HOLISTIC APPROACH***

A holistic approach to the individual girl addresses the whole girl within the social context of her life, her relationships, the systems she encounters, and the society in which she lives. A holistic approach to programming integrates the contributions each staff member makes in creating a gender-responsive environment and fostering positive identity development for the girls in the program.

### ***GUIDELINE: UNDERSTANDING GIRLS NEED RELATIONSHIPS***

Develop programs that embody an understanding of the significance of relationships and connections in the lives of young women. Healthy relationships and positive connections should be at the core of a program.

### ***GUIDELINE: TAKING TIME FOR RELATIONSHIPS***

Create opportunities for staff and girls to talk and process their feelings and issues. Formal mechanisms need to be built into a program to enhance relationships and trust through one-on-one interactions.

### ***GUIDELINE: SINGLE-GENDER PROGRAMMING***

Create opportunities for girls-only programming. While there is often resistance on the part of girls to be isolated from boys or participate in programs with solely members of their own sex, girls-only programming is an important part of a gender-specific approach. It gives young women the time, environment, and permission to work on overcoming a value system that commonly prioritizes male relationships over female relationships.

### ***GUIDELINE: SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS WITH CARING ADULTS***

Help girls establish significant relationships with caring adults through mentor programs. Matching a girl with a mentor who has a similar ethnic heritage, culture, and background is encouraged. Mentors can play a significant role in a girl's success, especially with continual, reliable contact that avoids competition with a girl's mother/family. Girls also need adult females who can model and support survival and growth along with resistance and change. Staff members as well as adult mentors can play this role in a girl's life.

### ***GUIDELINE: TEACHING NEW SKILLS BUILT ON EXISTING STRENGTHS***

Create opportunities for girls to learn new skills. Also, teach skills that build on a girl's existing strengths. Gaining competence in new areas can build self-esteem, control, and positive social behaviors. When girls master new skills that are healthy and productive, they expand their opportunities and become less dependent on old, non-productive, and/or harmful ways of behaving.

### ***GUIDELINE: TEACHING PERSONAL RESPECT***

Develop self-esteem enhancement programs that teach girls to appreciate and respect themselves rather than relying on others for validation. Self-monitoring skills can be incorporated into girls programming.

### ***GUIDELINE: GIVING GIRLS CONTROL***

Develop programs that support and encourage girls to have hope, realistic expectations for the future, and the skills needed to reach their goals. Girls need help in developing a plan for the future, and an opportunity to practice the skills that will help them realize their goals. Girls need to be shown that they can affect how things happen in a way that is empowering. Programs need to help girls find their voices and to be expressive and powerful in positive and productive ways. All of these efforts provide girls with a sense of control in their lives.

### ***GUIDELINE: VICTIMIZATION AND TRAUMA***

Develop programs that address the sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional/verbal abuse, trauma, domestic violence, and loss that many girls have faced. These issues deeply affect many parts of a girl's life and how she views herself as a female.

### ***GUIDELINE: PHYSICAL HEALTH AND SEXUAL HEALTH***

Develop programs that address physical health as well as sexual health. (We should care about the whole girl, not just about whether a girl is or is going to get pregnant.) Information needs to be shared with girls about female development, personal care, exercising, physical health, as well as menstruation, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and sexuality.

### ***GUIDELINE: EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH***

Develop programs that address emotional and mental health. Girls need good and accurate information about emotional and mental health, eating disorders, body image, addiction, depression, and self-care. Girls should be assessed for emotional and mental health needs and referred to counseling or therapy with a professional who has experience working with female adolescents.

### ***GUIDELINE: ALCOHOL, TOBACCO, AND DRUG-FREE HEALTH***

Develop programs that address the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The connection between drug use and self-medication by girls to deal with abuse and depression issues is best addressed in single-sex treatment programming. Prevention and intervention programs need to understand female adolescent development and incorporate programming that is specifically responsive to females.

### ***GUIDELINE: SPIRITUAL HEALTH AND RITES OF PASSAGE***

Develop programs that allow time for girls to address their spiritual health. Information needs to be shared and time set aside for girls to explore their spirituality and inner strength; to develop hope; and to become strong, centered, and at peace. This might include time for personal reflection; cultural traditions; and discussions about life, meaning, guidance, values, morals, and ethics. Develop rites of passage celebrations for significant events, or milestones found in a girl's daily routine.

# APPENDIX B

## INTERVIEW GROUP RESPONSES

### CARSON CITY ADULTS

*What changes have occurred since the gender-specific training in thinking or behavior?*

- Counseling and support groups are no longer co-educational. Gender-specific groups are used to create separate space for group discussions. Integrated groups are also used to facilitate feedback and communication between genders.
- There has been an increased staff awareness of the importance of relationships to girls and the need for female mentors and role models.

*Is more gender-specific training needed?*

- Staff indicate the need for regular, perhaps monthly, support groups or workshops to assist them in addressing gender issues with girls including self-esteem and socialization as well as staff stress in dealing with incorrigible girls.

*What are the priority needs for services for girls?*

- more services for abusive relationships geared toward both family and boyfriends
- adolescent domestic violence groups
- pregnancy and sex education, drug and alcohol education
- HIV/AIDS/STD prevention training
- nutrition education and eating disorders
- physical education
- access to general health and dental services
- access to mental health treatment
- access to substance abuse treatment
- vocational education and skill-mastery in job-related issues
- job training for girls

- incentive program with cash for clothing, driver's license fees
- flexible fund to meet other needs on an individual basis
- multi-age mentoring programs

*Are there other related needs in Carson City?*

- stipends for adult mothers to attend programs with their teen daughters
- general education for girls and parents on gender issues, i.e. socialization and sexual harassment
- prevention programming for middle school youth
- funded recreational programs
- statewide standardized assessment tool
- access to funding through grants or other sources
- judicial gender equity training

*Additional notes:*

- Training is needed for law enforcement officers on the juvenile justice system, cultural competency, and gender education. The training could be expanded to include Child Protective Services (CPS) workers, foster care providers, and all juvenile probation officers.
- Revised job descriptions of probation officers should be considered to allow them to have more time to build relationships with girls.
- Communication skills training is needed for girls, especially in the areas of assertiveness and boundary-setting.
- A Teen Court could be an effective mechanism.
- Community collaboration could lead to more resources.
- There is a need to attract girls to

- entrepreneurial and leadership programs.
- There should be a focus on asset-building.
- A community curriculum should be mandated for boys and girls on gender issues.
- There is a need for more placement options, including halfway houses and temporary placements.
- More quality foster care is needed along with more training for foster care providers.
- A Continuum of Care is needed to adequately meet the needs of girls and their families.

- violence/assault prevention programs
- education on safety in the home environment, including foster care
- family systems training with a strong parenting component
- programs that emphasize diversity and cultural respect
- wraparound services
- general community education about gender equity issues
- access to additional funding – federal/state and public/private

## WASHOE COUNTY ADULTS

*What changes have occurred since the gender-specific training in thinking or behavior?*

- More awareness of girls' needs
- More programs for girls
- More emphasis on girls' groups

*Is more gender-specific training needed?*

- There is a need for more training in mental health issues and case management issues as well as gender training to teach men how to work with girls and set boundaries.
- There is a general need for skills-based education for staff on gender-specific issues.

*What are the priority needs for services for girls?*

- additional community-based resources
- therapeutic or residential treatment programs
- intensive supervision (gender-specific)
- more alternative placement opportunities
- resources for pregnant girls
- sex education
- access to general health and dental services
- access to mental health treatment
- access to substance abuse treatment
- self-esteem programs (gender-specific)
- skills-based job programs

*Are there other related needs in Washoe County?*

- additional prevention and early intervention programs

*Additional notes:*

- Barriers to developing a Continuum of Care must be identified and addressed in order to successfully offer the services that girls need.
- Stable funding sources are needed that support programming, research, and evaluation.

## LAS VEGAS ADULTS

*What changes have occurred since the gender-specific training in thinking or behavior?*

- Upper management is very interested in developing gender-specific programming. The separation of juvenile services from child welfare in July 2002 provides a great gender equity development opportunity. A new treatment facility may be developed with a community-based provider, which will provide another gender-responsive opportunity.

*Is more gender-specific training needed?*

- There is a need for more work around collaboration in order to address the many gender equity issues that have been identified.
- More training on gender-specific issues is needed in general, and especially for staff working in group homes.
- More training is needed for staff on cultural competency and sexual identity issues.

### *What are the priority needs for services for girls?*

- more intermediate options are needed besides Caliente
- accessible, neighborhood-based services
- transportation to programs and services
- wider array of front-end services for youth ages 10-13 with separate programs for boys and girls
- more mentoring by community members
- access to health care
- access to life-skills training
- cultural and spiritual programs
- general need for more options to prevent escalation into the system by girls
- transition services between programs
- intensive long-term (after care) services for all phases (not just monitoring/supervision)
- longer stays in placement in order to facilitate “real” change (at least six months)
- smaller, specialized caseloads by gender using male/female staff teams

### *Are there other related needs in Las Vegas?*

- increased partnering with other systems to reach at-risk girls
- increased access to professionals (doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists) in the community and in youth facilities

### *Additional notes:*

- The statewide partnership is developing an assessment tool which should be made gender responsive. More training will be needed for staff to ensure consistency in application.
- Growth continues to be a challenge for Clark County.
- Funding is needed specifically for female offenders. “Soft” money may be used for new program ideas and evaluation and if successful, these programs should be moved to “hard” money.
- A statewide public awareness campaign is needed, i.e. girls in Winnemucca are more like girls in Las Vegas than they are different.
- Front-end, prevention-focused partnerships with other community-based systems is a long term solution leading to a comprehensive Continuum of Care.

## **NORTHEAST NEVADA ADULTS**

### *What changes have occurred since the gender equity training in thinking or behavior?*

- In Elko, separate weekly meetings have been created with both girls and boys who are on probation. Staff reports that the girls are beginning to open up and communicate more with staff as a result of the one-gender groups.

### *Is more gender equity training needed?*

- There is a need for more workshops on gender equity issues throughout Northeast Nevada.
- Gender equity workshops should be offered to law enforcement and other community agencies that work with girls on the ‘outside.’

### *What are the priority needs for services for girls?*

- skills-building programs focusing on self-esteem
- more prevention programs are needed at all levels
- there is no residential program for pregnant teens and few options or safety nets for girls who decide to keep the baby; child care for infants is also an issue
- prevention services for elementary school children
- more mentoring by community members
- sex education, body awareness, maturation issues
- sexual identity education and awareness programs and hotlines
- sexual assault prevention and rape crisis programs
- more access to dentists who accept Medicaid or NV Checkup
- access to mental health services, individual and group
- access to gender-specific substance abuse treatment
- anger management classes

*Are there other related needs in Northeast Nevada?*

- more affordable day care
- access to transportation
- difficulty in getting adults to volunteer to be mentors

*Additional notes:*

- There is a major drug problem in rural Nevada.
- A focus is needed on middle school youth who are not criminals but are at high-risk.
- There are very few summer or after-school programs.
- More funding is needed for:
  - Children, ages 5 – 10 who stay home by themselves
  - Youth, ages 8 –12 who need more to do
  - Youth, ages 14 – 17 who need mentoring programs
- Communities need training in how to access more funding; a fund is needed where agencies could get support “to make what needs to happen, happen.”
- Rural input is needed in designing public awareness campaigns to influence public thinking.
- Cultural issues and barriers are noticeable within White and Hispanic communities, even in church where there are separate masses.
- More male staff should be hired and trained with appropriate boundaries to work with girls.
- We should work with fourth or fifth graders and ensure that funding is available to develop a full Continuum of Care, including community-based prevention and after-care.

## AURORA PINES GIRLS FACILITY GIRLS

*What would have helped you not to get in trouble?*

- a better relationship with my parents
- one-on-one counseling
- classes in school about self-discipline and self-control
- better access to youth programs, including transportation and financial assistance
- more accessible youth groups
- peer groups to help us meet a better group of friends
- having something to look forward to – activities, privileges
- having less access to drugs
- if I had learned from my mistakes the first time

*What services would keep you from coming back here?*

- counseling with my family so that things would be better when I come home
- a job, so I can live on my own
- a healthy lifestyle
- learning from my past mistakes
- drug counseling
- more counseling, group and individual
- making goals and sticking to them
- avoiding my old friends; making new friends
- a better relationship with my mother
- a better place to live than the foster homes that I have had
- learning better morals and values
- never forgetting that I will lose my freedom if I get in trouble again

*What would you change about Aurora Pines?*

- a shade on the bathroom windows
- more time in drug prevention and treatment
- food is too fattening – need a salad bar
- we need counseling groups

- we need a place to talk about our problems
- we need group sessions with our parents
- we focus too much on the negative things – we should also focus on the positive things about ourselves
- we need anger management courses
- we need a balance on time commitments – school and chores leave not enough time for groups, drug counseling
- we have had to wait a month for services to start – that’s too long; we need services right away

### CALIENTE YOUTH CENTER GIRLS

*What would have helped you not to get in trouble?*

- a better relationship with my family
- not getting into trouble the first time
- counseling after I started getting into trouble
- staying away from drugs
- having more things to do that were worthwhile; less hanging out
- a better choice of friends
- a better foster home
- a good role model – someone to look up to
- if I hadn’t gotten an older boyfriend
- if I had stayed in school

*What services would keep you from coming back here?*

- a good job, related to my experience on the fire crew
- services to learn how to be a good parent so I can have my child
- an education; going to college
- job training so I can get a good job
- counseling with my family
- aftercare with individual counseling
- resources to turn to when I get out
- staying away from the gangs
- choosing better friends
- staying off drugs
- not going back to my family
- not going back to my boyfriend

### LAS VEGAS DETENTION CENTER GIRLS

*What would have helped you not to get in trouble?*

- more help from my mother – a relationship with my mother
- a better family – with parents who were home more
- if I had avoided hanging out with the wrong people
- if my stepdad/stepmom would go away
- if there were not drugs everywhere
- if my mom didn’t use drugs
- if there wasn’t so much fighting at home
- if I hadn’t started skipping school
- if I hadn’t gotten involved with an older man
- if someone had cared when I first started skipping school
- if they hadn’t put me in a foster home

*What services would keep you from coming back here?*

- alternative placements to avoid going home
- assistance at school and in finding a job
- more counseling, especially drug counseling

*Note:* Twelve of the girls indicated their first offense was truancy or running away. Three of the girls indicated their first offense was fighting with their parents. Repeat offenses were: running away while on probation, being under the influence, taking a car, battery/assault, curfew violation, fighting in school, shoplifting, burglary.

## WASHOE COUNTY GIRLS

*What would have helped you not to get in trouble?*

- understanding the goals of probation and receiving it
- extracurricular activities to make school more enjoyable (music, tutoring)
- a girls program to give me extra attention
- early help with school (6<sup>th</sup>/7<sup>th</sup> grade)
- help with boyfriend relationships (all had older boyfriends, ages 21-27)
- teachers who are friends
- a relationship with my absent dad
- more money for clothes, makeup so I could fit in
- a job to make me feel good about myself
- staying away from older guys

*What services would keep you from coming back here?*

- drug and alcohol class
- anger management class
- help from professionals
- counselor who worked with my family
- “Back on track” school classes
- friends and roommates at McGee Center

- individual time with staff
- mixed environment with boys (at McGee Center)

*What other help could you use?*

- more outing days
- more phone calls
- help with planning
- assets charts
- help in making consequences for myself
- limited freedom; understanding consequences for misbehavior
- learning how to be more open with boyfriends and family about my feelings
- family counseling to make it easier to go home and help parents to get along
- someone to listen to my problems
- more personal attention and support while in residential care
- more understanding
- more stuff to do
- teen clinic
- meditation and exercise