

Local Solutions to Improving Outcomes for Girls

This fact sheet summarizes two community efforts to develop and implement local solutions for improving the response to girls who are at risk or currently involved in the juvenile justice system. These two case studies also illustrate how multiple agencies are working together to respond to the individual needs and challenges of their unique communities.

Overview of the Justice for Girls: Duval County Initiative

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) Center for Girls and Young Women, in partnership with Children’s Campaign, Inc., convened and staff the Justice for Girls: Duval County Initiative (JFG: Duval Initiative). Funded by the Women’s Giving Alliance, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, and other private donors, the goal of the JFG: Duval Initiative is to identify and examine policies, procedures, and practices that shepherd girls into the juvenile justice system; and to determine points in the process where girls can be prevented from entering, diverted, or appropriately referred to services based on individual needs and public safety risks.

The proven advocacy model and research from The Children’s Campaign were used as the basis for the project and tailored to result in a focused examination of what is happening to justice-involved girls in Duval County. The components include:

Local Citizen-Driven Leadership Council: This leadership team, which serves as the coordinating body of the initiative, is staffed by Dr. Lawanda Ravoira, director of the NCCD Center for Girls and Young Women, and supported by The Children’s Campaign statewide headquarters in Tallahassee. The leadership council members include citizen leaders who are not part of the juvenile justice system. Their role is to learn about the issues, provide pragmatic recommendations for change, and assume the strategic leadership for advancing the goals and objectives of this initiative.

Local Advisory Board: The First Coast Girls Initiative, whose members have firsthand knowledge and experience with Duval County girls, serves as the advising arm to the Leadership Council, making strategic use of this valuable resource.

Community Conversations: These include a series of roundtable conversations, town hall meetings, and individual meetings with key citizen leaders, stakeholders, and the interested public regarding justice-involved girls. The purpose of the conversations is to seek input regarding recommendations and priorities for systemic change in Duval County.

Consolidation of Research and Recommendations: This will put forward a blueprint for local action and lead to the identification of priorities for justice-involved girls in Duval County.

NCCD promotes just and equitable social systems for individuals, families, and communities through research, public policy, and practice.

Overview of the Stanislaus County Girls Juvenile Justice Initiative

The Girls Juvenile Justice Initiative (GJJI) in Stanislaus County, CA, aims to promote public safety by developing a gender-responsive, culturally competent continuum of care that provides opportunities for girls and young women to lead safe, healthy, and productive lives. The project began in 2009, when the Stanislaus County Probation Department started collaborating with the Prison Law Office, NCCD, and Youth Justice Institute to address the lack of services available to justice-involved girls in the county. In 2010, a community needs assessment, which included analyzing county-level data; developing a needs profile of girls in detention; and collecting information from local stakeholders in the fields of criminal justice, education, child development, and public and mental health, was conducted. Based on the needs assessment, a task force developed a strategic plan designed to improve gender-responsive programming and services in the county.

The GJJI includes five interventions, developed as a result of the strategic planning process: 1) convening a girls' task force of key stakeholders, with representation from probation, juvenile court, public defender's office, district attorney's office, behavioral health, education, community-based organizations, etc.; 2) providing gender-responsive training for probation and other staff; 3) implementing a gender-specific assessment for girls on probation; 4) implementing gender-responsive alternatives to detention programs; and 5) implementing a mentoring program for girls in detention. As of 2012, all interventions are in progress and are being evaluated to identify effective ways to meet the needs of similar populations in other counties. Funding for the initiative has come from various sources, including state and foundation grants awarded to the probation department and Prison Law Office.

These models are being replicated through TTA efforts of the National Girls Institute.