

Media contact:

Blythe Zayets, [bzayets@seethegirl.org](mailto:bzayets@seethegirl.org), 904-423-1575

**New reports unveil unchecked crisis among Florida girls  
Duval County Community Briefing**

***February 7, 2020, 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.***

***Jessie Ball duPont Center, 40 E. Adams St., Jacksonville, FL 32202***

***Open to Public***

Duval County, Fla. (Feb 6, 2020) — A community briefing will be hosted by the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center and The Children’s Campaign to highlight new research regarding the health and well-being of Florida girls. The research was recently released by the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center and includes data both statewide and by county, including Duval. Speakers from the Policy Center include the vice-president of research and planning - Vanessa Patino Lydia – and senior vice president Vicky Basra. Roy Miller, president of The Children’s Campaign, will moderate.

Although reform for girls in Florida’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems has advanced over the past 10 years, this new research has uncovered significant rates of violence and victimization among certain segments of girls, particularly girls of color and those identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or unsure. Girls living in rural areas also experienced more reports of bullying, less access to a safe parent or teacher and an increased frequency of below average or failing grades. The findings are relevant to resolving chronic failures by child-serving systems and organizations and to address teen substance abuse, sexual and commercial trafficking exploitation, suicide and other poor health and justice outcomes.

“It’s an unchecked crisis because although Florida leaders have access to a multitude of child well-being data, it is often siloed, stated Dr. Lawanda Ravoira, President & CEO of the Policy Center. “This leads to a disconnect between children’s needs and programming and policies that are best aligned to meet those needs.”

According to Ravoira, the two-part *Status of Florida Girls* research reports are the first nationwide to identify Florida’s most vulnerable girls – not just broad trends— by disaggregating a broad spectrum of child well-being data at the intersection of gender, geography and race/ethnicity.

The reports examined educational attainment and disparities, as well as girls’ overall well-being in relation to school connectedness; safety; access to safe adults including parents and teachers; freedom from violence and victimization in their homes, schools, and communities; and emotional well-being. National and state data that were analyzed include those from the U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Disease Control’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System, Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Children and Families, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, as well as survey data of 27,000 girls in middle and high schools collected by the Florida Department of Health. It was funded by the Florida Women’s Funding Alliance, an affinity group of Florida Philanthropic Network.

Overall, while most Florida girls are faring well, significant numbers are suffering serious traumas and safety compromises:

- One in 10 girls report having been raped, although there are differences by race/ethnicity

- Regardless of whether they were in middle or high school, 13% of girls do not feel safe in their neighborhood; one in three do not feel safe in school.
- Two in three girls in high school reported being verbally bullied (63%); nearly one in three have experienced physical bullying (30%); and one in three have experienced cyber bullying (35%).
- One in five girls (18%) in school (compared to 10% of boys) has seriously contemplated attempting suicide. This rises to one in three girls who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual or unsure of her sexual orientation.
- More than one in three girls experience depression (38%) compared to 18% of their male peers.

In Duval County, significant numbers of girls are in crisis:

- **1 in 5 girls** don't feel safe in their neighborhood.
- **2 in 5 girls** don't feel safe in school
- **1 in 3 girls** do not have access to talk to a teacher
- 1 in 7 girls reported forced sexual intercourse to 1 in 10 statewide
- One in four girls (25%) reported suicide ideation (statewide is 18%)

As for the statewide number of calls: In 2018, there were 2, 592 calls made to report cases of commercial sexual exploitation.

Of particular concern are the girls and young women who have been victims of sex trafficking. Florida has made progress in passing the Safe Harbor law but still struggles with services at the local level. In 2018, 2592 calls were made to the hotline statewide. Since the Policy Center launched our signature Open Doors Outreach Network to serve trafficking survivors, 163 individuals have been referred for services our services locally.

“Every day we see girls with serious unaddressed mental health issues related to violence and victimization who end up locked away in detention centers where their needs are being exacerbated,” stated Vanessa Patino Lydia.

Three additional research studies highlight the use of secure detention, and policies and practices that entrap girls and young women into poverty (i.e. housing and court fees).

- *Girls in Secure Detention in Florida*, funded by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund
- *Breaking the Cycle: Policies and Practices Creating Barriers that Trap Young Women into Poverty*, funded by Women's Giving Alliance of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida and The Remmer Family Foundation.
- *Addressing Barriers to Using Respite Beds for Girls Charged with Domestic Violence*, funded by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund.

Community Briefings are made possible with support from The Women's Giving Alliance, Jewish Women's Foundation of the Greater Palm Beaches and the Remmer Family Foundation.

**Research Available At:** <https://www.seethegirl.org/what-we-do/research/>

**About Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center**

Established in 2013, the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, a not-for-profit 501 (c) 3 is the outgrowth of the Justice for Girls Movement. The mission is to engage communities, organizations, and individuals through quality research, advocacy, training and model programming to advance the rights of girls and young women and youth who identify as female, especially those impacted by the justice system. For more information, visit [seethegirl.org](http://seethegirl.org).

**About The Children's Campaign**

Founded in 1992, The Children's Campaign is a non-partisan, nonprofit organization that initiates systemic reform for Florida's children through responsive public education campaigns and responsible public policy. The organization engages diverse citizens, stakeholders and experts in consensus-oriented dialogue, establishes a policy framework with specific recommendations, and then takes action while stressing accountability. The Children's Campaign in partnership with the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, has led the Justice for Girls Movement, which has achieved significant system reforms over the past two decades beneficial to all Florida youth but especially justice-involved girls. More information about The Children's Campaign is available at [iamforkids.org](http://iamforkids.org).

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