



Justice for Girls Blueprint:

The Way Forward
for Florida

JULY 2022

DELORES BARR WEAVER —
POLICY CENTER
— SEE THE GIRL®

“I strongly believe research is the primary building block in strategic philanthropy. Once you know the need, you are on your way.”

— Joan Amery Van Vleck

The *Justice for Girls Blueprint for Action 2022* and Report Card will be issued every five years and will be fully funded in perpetuity by the Joan A. Van Vleck Justice for Girls Endowment. The permanent Designated Endowment Fund is held at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. Joan Van Vleck’s gift is her enduring commitment to the power of having thoughtful, timely research on which to base advocacy for better policies and practices to benefit girls.

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About the Policy Center and American Children's Campaign

As a result of our dynamic partnership, groundbreaking legislation is now in place in Florida to address the disparate treatment of girls. Together, we have developed best-practice, girl-centered programs that are being replicated statewide and nationally.

The Policy Center's multifaceted research is central to its successful advocacy and programming initiatives. To monitor and deeply understand the experiences of justice-involved girls in Florida, the Policy Center research team conducts in-depth interviews and focus groups with girls in the community, in detention, on probation, and in juvenile jails. Additionally, through focus groups, surveys, community briefings, and one-to-one meetings, the research team collects information from both staff and stakeholders who interact with girls—sheriff, state attorney, public defender, juvenile justice, education, child protection, behavioral health, service providers, families, and caregivers. The team routinely monitors data trends, collaborates with experts, and reviews existing policies, statutes, processes, and proposed legislation to assess the potential impact on girls. The research considers differences by gender, race, ethnicity, age, and region.

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Established in 2013, the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center is an outgrowth of the Justice for Girls Reform Movement in the State of Florida. The Policy Center's 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.** The Center's core services are grounded in rigorous research with justice-involved girls, which informs the advocacy platform, the Girl-Centered Practice Training Institute®, and the development and implementation of Girl Matters® direct service model programs across the justice continuum (prevention, diversion, intervention in elementary and middle schools, in court, detention, pre-trial adult jail, probation, and re-entry services).

AMERICAN
CHILDREN'S
CAMPAIGN
BE the change

Established in 1992, American Children's Campaign's mission is to be the change for complex social problems through education, advocacy, and community activism. In service to this mission, the organization has earned a sterling reputation of its results-oriented, leading-edge advocacy to improve the well-being of children. American Children's Campaign works to educate and engage diverse citizens, stakeholders, and experts in a non-partisan way to initiate strategic change for Florida's children and families.

www.seethegirl.org
www.seethegirl.org/research
www.iamforkids.org

For a history of the Justice for Girls movement visit:
<https://www.seethegirl.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/The-Justice-for-Girls-Movement.pdf>

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Glossary

The Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center adopts a gender framework beyond the gender binary. Throughout this Blueprint Report, the terms *girl, young women, youth who identify as female, Black girls, girls/young women of color* are used interchangeably and include cisgender, gender-expansive youth, and transgender young women.

We are deliberate in using the term “girls/youth who identify as female” because the Policy Center’s data comes directly from youth surveys where youth are asked to self-identify and often these data findings are different than when reported by system level data.

Cisgender (cis) describes a person whose gender identity aligns with the sex they were assigned at birth.

Gender-expansive describes someone with a more flexible gender identity than might be associated with a typical gender binary.

Transgender (trans) is an umbrella term that describes someone whose gender identity and/or expression is different from cultural expectations based on the sex assigned at birth. Being transgender does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Transgender people may identify as straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.

Nonbinary describes people who do not see themselves or their genders as fitting into the categories of man or woman. A range of terms are used to refer to these experiences; nonbinary and genderqueer are sometimes used.

*Definitions from Human Rights Campaign and NPR: A Guide to Gender Identity Terms.

LGBU/LGBTQ In some areas of this report the term “LGBU” is used due to the limitation of survey data. The answer options on the Youth Risk Behavioral Survey (YRBS) were limited to heterosexual, gay or lesbian, bisexual, or “unsure” of sexual identity. LGBU is not intended to exclude any individual and refers specifically to data used from the YRBS. Similar data are not collected for trans youth. In other areas of this report, the term “LGBTQ” youth is used to describe the experience of youth who are gay or lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning of their gender/sexual identity.

Additionally, we use *Black, Indigenous, and girls of color* to describe girls who identify as Black, African American, Native American, American Indian, Indigenous Americans, Hispanic, Latina, Latinx, Hawaiian Native, Alaska Native, Pacific Islander, Asian, or Caribbean. These terms are used to combat invisibility and erasure that girls and communities of color often face. Not all communities of color experience the same levels of injustice and inequity. Black and Indigenous communities are consistently the most deeply impacted by systemic injustices. In addition, these terms are used to convey the race and ethnicity of all girls of color; they are meant to be inclusive while still recognizing that not all girls have the same historical or lived experiences, even within the same race or ethnicity.



Executive Summary

Alarming numbers of girls in Florida are experiencing sexual victimization, interpersonal violence, unaddressed mental health issues, homelessness, and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Perhaps most shocking, in Florida, police have arrested girls as young as six years old. *The Justice for Girls Blueprint: The Way Forward for Florida (2022)* is a renewed call to action that addresses the unfinished reforms identified in the first Blueprint published in 2008 and identifies where reforms are urgently needed now. The strategies included in the report outline the way forward to create a healing community system of care for girls in Florida. The Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center’s extensive research coupled with girls’ voices, lived experiences, and wisdom informs every aspect of the reforms outlined in this Blueprint. Lasting change starts with enacting policies that dismantle systemic disparities for girls and replace them with sustainable and forward-thinking methods—now and for generations to come.

The Justice for Girls Movement has achieved significant reforms—ranging from expanding the juvenile justice statutes to mandating gender-specific programming, banning shackling of girls during childbirth, expanding confidentiality laws and expunction of juvenile records, to passing safe harbor laws to protect the rights of sex trafficking survivors. We also applaud the significant reduction in arrest, detention, and lockup of girls over the last decade. Yet this is not enough to ensure the well-being of girls in our state. There is still much to accomplish.

From 2005 to 2007, over 125 diverse Florida stakeholders partnered with justice-involved girls, and reached consensus on the fundamental rights of girls. These served as the basis for the recommendations set forth in the initial *Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action* (2008). Girls have a fundamental right to:

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

Despite our successes, we have failed to safeguard these rights for thousands of Florida girls. The needs of girls continue to show that we must do more to ensure their well-being. Community-based services and alternatives to incarceration continue to be limited.

Being a teen girl is not easy at all. We've been through a lot more than people think we have. We've experienced really bad things. We know things we shouldn't. We want to share it's not easy being us. Not easy being me."

— Girl incarcerated in residential program

The Policy Center's Status of Girls research series (2019—21) highlights the intensive needs of girls in every county across Florida. The research further emphasized troubling facts about girls' safety and well-being. **Approximately one in ten girls report being a victim of rape, and one in three girls report that they do not feel safe in school with wide variation by race/ethnicity and by region.** Girls in middle and high school across the state are experiencing high rates of sadness, hopelessness, depression, and suicide ideation.

This research called out the several populations of girls who warranted priority attention based on indicators of well-being: girls of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or girls unsure of their sexual identities, girls with differing abilities (developmental delays), and survivors of sexual violence, exploitation and/or trafficking. Additional research revealed concerning statistics about Black girls specifically, as they are overrepresented in arrest and incarceration (based on their proportion of the general population across 15 counties). Over 3,000 youth are identified yearly as potential victims of sex trafficking.

It is critical for decision makers to understand how girls' exposure to trauma and violence impacts their behaviors and results in juvenile justice system involvement. Too often, instead of addressing the trauma that is paving the pathway into the justice system, the system's punitive and uninformed response causes further harm and derails girls' futures.

A girl-centered approach called for in this Blueprint ensures that girls' lived experiences (of safety, interactions/treatment by adults, traumatic experiences) guide policy, services, and interventions in strong partnership with decision makers, stakeholders, and communities.

Policies, services, and interventions deliberately developed and implemented through a **girl-centered lens within all systems (education, mental health, child protection, courts, justice) can positively alter the trajectory of a girl's life.**

This approach shifts the focus from responses that blame or penalize to responses that build connection and address the root causes that are driving girls' behaviors.

Improving the lives and outcomes for the most vulnerable girls has a positive ripple effect that expands far beyond girls and their families. Through policy and practice reform to divert girls from justice system involvement we save the state money, we prevent harm to future generations, and we improve the social environment for all youth.

Elected officials, decision makers, and citizens have the opportunity to support and pass bold policies and invest in a continuum of care that responds to what girls truly need.

BLUEPRINT STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: **Stop the entry into the justice system.**

Enact legislation to immediately reduce the numbers of girls entering the justice system and divert them to more appropriate and effective programs. We already know these include prevention, early intervention, improvements in civil citation and more diversion. Specifically, we call for:

- Ban arresting girls age 12 and younger unless for violent offenses. We call for expanding the Kaia Rolle Act to include youth up to the age of 12. The current law protects children up to age 7.
- Ban arresting girls for family disturbances; support and help them through child welfare and community services instead of law enforcement interventions.
- Stop arresting girls eligible for a civil citation and ensure equal access to alternatives.

Strategy 2: **Stop institutional traumatizing of girls - overhaul conditions of confinement**

- Reform practices in detention, probation and court to stop the cycling in/out of the system (e.g. ban violating and detaining girls for domestic disturbances, not going to school, etc.)
- Fourteen states have created an independent ombudsperson position; this is needed in Florida to oversee abuses, conditions of confinement and advocate for girls' rights and protections.

Strategy 3: **Continuously monitor data; build levels of community accountability and attention to girls' needs.**

- Utilize existing committees and workgroups (e.g., State Advisory Group (SAG), Children and Youth Cabinet, Circuit Advisory Boards) to collect data, examine data by gender and race/ethnicity, report on regional needs for interventions and programming, and advocate for girls' rights and protections.

Strategy 4: **Mandate training and girl-centered standards.**

Educate and train practitioners, court personnel, police, and the broader community.

- Support and train the staff that work with girls in girl-centered, trauma-informed practice.
- Mandate that Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and Department of Children and Families (DCF) implement a Gender-Responsive Certification Program as part of the required training courses.

Strategy 5: **Fund specific and essential girl-centered services.**

Allocate recurring funding specific to an essential set of girl-centered services; allocate funds for prevention, early intervention, intervention, intensive intervention, out-of-home treatment, and community reintegration.

- Earmark recurring state funding for the development, implementation, and evaluation of community-based, girl-centered prevention, intervention, and re-entry programs and services.
- Pilot programs that specifically address the needs of girls of color, girls from rural areas, LGBTQ girls, victims of sex trafficking, girls with differing abilities (developmental delays), and girls experiencing family disturbances.
- Require DJJ and DCF to develop gender-responsive program standards in all contracts and quality assurance standards.
- Employ known solutions such as counseling, respite, substance abuse treatment and mentoring from a girl-centered lens.



**Girls are counting on us to turn
our knowledge into ACTION.**



Introduction

Every year in Florida we continue to fail thousands of justice-involved girls and put their futures in jeopardy. The persistent gender and racial inequities, the impact of outdated policies and practices, and the lack of girl-centered, community-based programs create a revolving door. Many girls cycle in and out of a justice system ill-prepared to address their complex needs. This response further deepens the trauma that pushed them into the justice system in the first place.

A LOOK BACK

The first official national recognition of the need to provide gender-specific services occurred in 1992, with the reauthorization by Congress of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA). The 1992 Reauthorization required states to prepare an analysis and develop a plan for providing gender-specific services in the prevention and treatment of juvenile delinquency.

Simultaneously, the Florida Justice for Girls Movement was born in the late 1990s when policymakers faced a critical crossroads in the state's approach to treating justice-involved youth. Dr. Lawanda Ravoira, one of the nation's leading experts on justice-involved girls and young women, joined forces with Roy Miller, Founder/President of the The Children's Campaign (now American Children's Campaign), to lead the girls' reform work in Florida. ([See Appendix A](#))

A combination of political, legal, economic, and other factors threatened to dismantle front-end prevention services for Florida's justice-involved youth. Florida was about to embark on building one of the nation's first maximum-security prisons for girls. On its heels was a proposal from Florida Governor, Jeb Bush, asking lawmakers to approve \$10 million in cuts for PACE Center for Girls (essentially zeroing out all funding) and another \$52 million in cuts for other at-risk youth programming.

The advocacy efforts led by Ravoira and Miller were successful in stopping the proposed budget cuts for PACE Center for Girls, Associated Marine Institutes, Florida Network of Youth and Families, and other day treatment programs.

What first began as Ravoira and Miller's joint effort to save girls' treatment programs from being zeroed out of Florida's state budget in 2000 morphed into the Justice for Girls Movement. It shifted from reacting to legislative and policy changes to proactively questioning the status quo.

In 2004, Florida passed legislation mandating gender-specific programming, authored by Ravoira. It was the second state in the nation to do so. The bill's most critical supporter was then-Senate President Jim King, a Republican from Jacksonville, Florida.

On the heels of leading the country in gender-specific legislation, the Florida Legislature closed the Florida Institute for Girls maximum security prison in 2005—five years after it opened—amid grand jury allegations

of abuse, neglect, and sexual misconduct. Under the leadership of state representative Gus Barriero, Chair of the House Public Safety and Crime Prevention Committee, state funding for the prison was eliminated. The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) convened a Girls Advisory Council to oversee the transition of the 67 girls locked up at the Florida Institute for Girls. Ravoira was appointed to co-chair the Girls Advisory Council with then-Assistant DJJ Secretary Charles Chervanik. The council was an important step in solidifying a partnership between the state and advocacy community and resulted in their hosting together the first-ever Girls in Juvenile Justice Summit the following year.

In 2006, *A Rallying Cry for Change: Charting New Direction in the State of Florida's Response to Girls in the Justice System*, the largest research study conducted in the country specific to justice-involved girls, was released by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD). Co-authored by Ravoira with Vanessa Patino and Angela Wolf, this research described the risks and needs of girls in Florida and identified the essential services and policy initiatives required to respond to the need.

At the urging of Miller (American Children's Campaign), in 2007, Governor Charlie Christ authorized the creation of the Blueprint Commission charged with developing recommendations to improve Florida's Juvenile Justice System. Chaired by Former Lieutenant Governor Frank Brogan, Ravoira served as Vice Chair of the Blueprint Commission. With input from citizens and juvenile justice stakeholders, the Blueprint Commission findings were published in a report, *Getting Smart about Juvenile Justice in Florida*. This report was used as a guide for the DJJ strategic plan.

Ravoira and Miller were concerned that the Blueprint Commission's recommendations did not specifically address the critically needed reforms for girls called for in the 1992 JJDP Reauthorization and the findings of the NCCD, *Rallying Cry for Change research report*. To ensure girls' issues received the attention that was warranted, Ravoira and Miller co-authored the *Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action* (2008). It spelled out specific policy and practice reform recommendations agreed to by a diverse range of stakeholders during its two-year vetting and development process.

With input from over 125 diverse Florida stakeholders and in partnership with justice-involved girls, a set of core principles were developed and endorsed that served as the foundation for the recommendations set forth in the initial *Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action* (2008).

Girls have a fundamental right to:

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

WHERE WE ARE NOW

We have failed to safeguard these fundamental, basic rights for thousands of girls in Florida. Although the Justice for Girls Movement has achieved significant reforms—ranging from expanding the juvenile justice statutes to mandating gender-specific programming, banning shackling of girls during childbirth, to passing safe harbor laws to protect the rights of sex trafficking survivors—much remains to be done to ensure their fundamental rights. (See [Justice for Girls Blueprint: Report Card](#) and [See Appendix A](#))



2 in 3
girls are arrested
for **non-felony**
offenses

Girls comprise one in four youth referred to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. Over the last 5 years, police arrested approximately 40,000 girls, judges placed more than 12,000 in secure detention, 10,200 girls on probation, and committed almost 1,400 to juvenile lock up. Judges and state attorneys transferred another 250 girls into the adult system.¹ (See [Key Facts](#)) In Florida, police have arrested girls as young as 6 years old.

Generally, girls commit less serious offenses yet receive harsher sanctions than boys. **In 2021, two in three (63%) girls were arrested for non-felony offenses, compared to 38% for boys.** Even though the trends

are improving, girls continue to be incarcerated for less serious offenses than boys. In 2020–2021, girls were locked up for misdemeanors and for non-law violations of probation (38% and 16%, respectively) as their most serious offense. In contrast, the majority of locked up boys are charged with felony offenses (82%).²

Black girls are at extreme risk. They continue to be overrepresented at all points along Florida’s justice continuum. Statewide, Black girls make up only 21% of girls ages 10–17, but they represent 45% of the girls who were arrested, 52% of girls on probation caseloads, 47% of the girls incarcerated, and 52% of the girls transferred into the adult criminal justice system.³

Trauma is prevalent among girls in the justice system and paves the way for justice system involvement. Research and direct experience show that girls have high rates of neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, witnessing violence, mental health diagnoses, self-mutilation, suicide ideation, suicide planning, somatic problems, and out-of-home placements. Most justice-involved girls are growing up in under-resourced communities and in families grappling with intergenerational poverty and trauma.⁴

The Policy Center’s Status of Girls research (2021) clearly shows that girls of color, girls from rural areas, and girls who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or unsure of their sexual identity (LGBU) are at the greatest risk for trauma, mental health challenges, exploitation, and system involvement compared to their peers. In addition, victims of sex trafficking, girls with differing abilities, and girls experiencing family conflict or violence require specific safeguards to keep out of the justice system. These inequities are important because they call for different practices and interventions.

Unfortunately, community-based interventions and services are non-existent or inadequate statewide, and staff across systems report that they are ill-prepared to address the complex needs of justice-involved girls.⁵ Once they encounter the justice system, the system re-traumatizes and re-victimizes the most vulnerable girls. **Life for many becomes increasingly precarious.**

Young girls who could turn their lives around wind up in ill-conceived lock-up facilities costing an average of \$77,000 per girl (for a nine-month stay).⁶ Ineffective interventions contribute to a host of problems in adulthood including poor physical and mental health, substance dependence, and future arrests and incarceration. The effect is intergenerational. Girls who struggle become mothers who struggle.

We can do better. We must do better.

THE WAY FORWARD

This Blueprint is grounded in advancing the fundamental rights set forth in the first *Justice for Girls: Blueprint for Action* (2008), and it outlines the way forward. We recognize that there are multiple avenues that can lead to juvenile justice reform. The recommendations in this Blueprint reflect what we have learned from justice-involved girls and their families and caregivers, and the staff and stakeholders who interact with them. Their voices are augmented by the latest research, the monitoring of data trends, a systematic review of policies and statutes, and input from system experts.

The context for the girl-centered recommendations in this Blueprint include:

- **What Girls Want Adults to Know** — Quotes and recommendations from girls in Florida’s juvenile justice system.
- **Key Facts** — Best available data specific to girls.
- **Evolution of the Reform Work for Justice-Involved Girls** — Milestones from the 1992 Reauthorization of the federal JJDP Act to the development of the Girl-Centered Practice Principles[®].
- **Moving Towards a Healing Community System** — Therapeutic Relational Response[®] which outlines the core components of well-being that need to exist in the communities where girls live.

This Blueprint spells out exactly how to create a healing community system of care for girls in Florida. We have studied the issues long enough, and we know what to do. **Elected officials, decision makers, and citizens are in an important position to support and pass bold policies and invest in a continuum of care that puts it all into practice.**

Moving forward, this Blueprint details five specific strategies to reform policy and practice. Short-term Blueprint Strategies are designed to immediately reduce the numbers of girls entering the justice system, shut the revolving door of girls cycling in and out of the system, increase accountability, and improve outcomes, ultimately mitigating the negative impacts of arrest, detention, violation of probation, and exposure to institutionalized trauma. Longer-term Blueprint Strategies outline the elements of a girl-centered, community-based continuum of care from prevention to re-entry. Each strategy includes an overview of the issues, references to applicable Florida Statutes in the appendix, and specific recommendations.

Perspectives, Frameworks, and Principles

This section provides the perspectives, frameworks, and principles related to the evolution of the reform movement. Included are the voices of girls, key facts, evolution of the reform work, principles for working with girls, and a therapeutic vision for creating a healing community system of care. Through a girl-centered lens, the Blueprint recommends specific reforms that will improve girls' outcomes and well-being. (See Justice for Girls Blueprint Results)

What Girls Want Us to Know: Recommendations for People Who Work with Girls

We asked girls what they wanted the world to know. Girls are the experts of their own lives. Their voices, lived experiences, and wisdom inform every aspect of the reforms outlined in this Blueprint.

“Encourage them, they have trauma.
Listen to them and know it’s not their fault.”

“Everybody does the same thing—they should let girls talk to them. Girls should tell what they need, not adults trying to tell them what they need.”

“We need to be heard and not abused.”

“We are not all bad, all fast. There is a lot behind the girl you can see and look at. Just because we look a certain way doesn’t mean we are that way. They should read our history or talk to us because that is what they will know. Listen to their story, it will change you.”

GIRLS WANT THE WORLD TO UNDERSTAND BEHAVIORS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR LIFE EXPERIENCES, AND TO RECOGNIZE THAT CHANGE IS A PROCESS.

“Put yourselves in our shoes. You don’t know what we’ve been through. Then you could work better with us.”

“Being a teen girl is not easy at all. We’ve been through a lot more than people think we have. We’ve experienced really bad things. We know things we shouldn’t. We want to share it’s not easy being us. Not easy being me.”

“Take your time getting to know a girl, let her develop trust, build a relationship with her so she feels safe to open up. Be patient.”

“Each girl is different, some heal fast, some don’t. Some understand, some don’t. Some are respectful, some aren’t. It is up to you to have patience to help them. All girls have personal issues.”

WHEN ASKED ABOUT RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS, GIRLS EXPRESSED A MAJOR THEME THAT CENTERED ON STAFF AND PRACTICES.

“Needs a lot of changing. More supportive staff, more activities and someone to help the girls.”

“Staff – they need to hire staff that is less childish and in it for the youth, not the money. How they treat good kids ... they should be rewarded. Stop rewarding the bad kids.”

“...Staff should respect girls and not threaten girls, one staff beat up a girl, one staff threatened to stab a girl.”

“Being able to hold less than 18 girls, better background checks on staff, no males at all, and separate ages.”

“Being searched all the time is wrong. I hate to be touched.”

“Let all us complete probation and then start over with a clean slate.”

“Shoving someone in jail all the time isn’t always the best option.”

WHEN ASKED ABOUT WHAT THEY NEED, THEY SAID THE FOLLOWING:

“Girls need mentors who won’t give up on them.”

“Regardless of your situation, you need at least one person to believe in you.”

“I don’t want to be a statistic (AIDS/HIV, Pregnant). We need sex education that is real. In fifth grade, I was a target. Men would talk to me and want to make me their girlfriend.”

“We need an opportunity to stay busy: church, sports, volunteering, somewhere to belong.”

“Girls need support groups. Create support groups for girls that cater to girls who have made the wrong decisions and those going through similar things. It is easier when you are with girls who are going through the same things.”

“Make a “chat-line” for girls to talk to other girls who are not in the neighborhood.

This will help us to meet girls who can talk about positive things.”

“Increase the awareness of programs that are available. We don’t know where to go.”

“Family counseling, I believe that’s where every problem has started and that instead of punishing me every time, we could resolve the issues with a more positive alternative.”

“Find ways to get parents involved like a mother/daughter quality time.”

“Family counseling, talking and meetings. Needed policy and systems reform.”



Key Facts

The goal of the Policy Center’s girl-centered research inquiry is to ensure that policies, programs, and services are informed by the best available data and are grounded in the experiences of girls and young women.

Every year, our communities are losing girls to school dropout, suicide, sex trafficking, or juvenile justice system involvement. The framework for understanding the data begins with a macro view of girls’ experiences within their communities, schools, and homes. It is through this context that the indicators of well-being can be better understood. This flips the narrative from putting the responsibility on girls and instead focuses on the environments and on the experiences of girls in these important settings. The data show that the safety of many girls is compromised and that there are alarming rates of violence and victimization experienced by girls in their communities, schools, and homes. We know these rates of trauma, hopelessness, suicide ideation, and substance use to be even more significant among girls impacted by the justice system. The differences for and among girls are important, as they suggest different interventions for engaging girls who are falling behind.

Summary data presented below are extracted from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Dashboard, Florida Department of Health Youth Substance Abuse Survey, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey and are further analyzed by the Policy Center. These data allow us to monitor girls’ experiences and critical system-level indicators.

KEY FACTS: GIRLS IN THE FLORIDA JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Girls are one-fourth

27%

of arrested youth

Over the last five years, almost **40,000** girls were arrested.

12,000 went to secure detention.

10,000 were put on juvenile probation.

1,400 were sent to residential lock-up.

LESS SERIOUS OFFENSES

result in harsher punishment

Two-thirds (66%) of girls are arrested for non-felonies (38% for boys).

Two-fifths (40%) of girls are locked up for non-felonies (18% for boys).

OVERREPRESENTATION of Black girls

Black girls make up 21% of the general population, yet they account for:

45% of arrests.

52% of probation cases.

45% of incarcerated girls.

52% of girls transferred to the adult system.

UNADDRESSED NEEDS of girls in lock up facilities ARE MORE SIGNIFICANT than male peers

- Neglect
- Abuse
- Trauma
- Witnessing violence
- Mental health diagnoses
- Self-mutilation
- Suicide ideation
- Somatic problems

UNCHECKED **CRISIS** AMONG FLORIDA GIRLS

Bullying

Verbal



Cyber



Physical



Feel Unsafe

At School



In their Neighborhood



Rape



Depression



Suicidal Thoughts

All Girls



LGBU



Evolution of the Reform Work for Justice-Involved Girls

GENDER-SPECIFIC SERVICES

In the 1992 amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act, the U.S. Congress instructed states to analyze their systems' provision of "gender-specific services" to female offenders. Gender-specific services were defined as those "designed to address the needs unique to the gender of the individual to whom such services are provided." To apply for federal formula grants, states were required to develop a plan for the delivery of gender-specific services. At that time, over 300,000 girls were referred to juvenile courts, making girls 20% of the total delinquency court population. States and local jurisdictions were ill prepared to address the complex needs of girls entering the justice system.⁷

During the 1990s, the OJJDP provided states and local jurisdictions extensive resources, training, and technical assistance to support their efforts to develop gender-specific services. In 1998, OJJDP funded and distributed the *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming: An Inventory of Best Practices*. This publication outlined the following Guiding Principles:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND BEST PRACTICES

- 1** Whenever possible, young women should be treated in the **least restrictive programming environment**, considering both treatment needs and concerns for public safety.
- 2** Whenever possible, young women should be treated in **program environments that are closest to their homes**. This ensures maintenance of key family relationships—including female offenders' relationships with their own children—and allows for more effective transitional services.
- 3** All treatment programs in the continuum should focus on **treatment modalities based on or consistent with specific principles of female development**. Furthermore, they should all stress the role of the relationship between staff and young women and contain elements of societal advocacy.
- 4** Whenever possible, treatment programs at all levels of the continuum should be **prepared to address the unique needs** of parenting and pregnant young women.
- 5** Whenever possible, programs and individual treatment components should be **single gender or all female**. When coed services are provided, an effort should be made to keep the number of young women equal to the number of young men.

GENDER-RESPONSIVE PRACTICE

Over time, practitioners and researchers expanded the terminology from gender-specific to gender-responsive. Bloom and Covington define gender responsiveness as *“creating an environment . . . that reflects an understanding of the realities of women’s lives and addresses the issues of the women.”*⁸

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

In 2001, when the U.S. Congress and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) established the National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, there was a focus on the impact of trauma on individuals, families, and communities. This led to the implementation of trauma-informed care approaches across multiple systems including education, mental health, and juvenile justice. Trauma-informed care shifted the focus from the medical model of, “What’s wrong with you?” to, “What happened to you?” The principles of trauma-informed care are safety, choice, collaboration, trustworthiness, and empowerment.

HEALING-CENTERED APPROACH

Shawn Ginwright, PhD recognized the limitations of trauma-informed care and called out how this modality focused only on harm, injury, and trauma. It did not take into account the totality of the experience and was analogous to saying, “You are the worst thing that ever happened to you.” The healing-centered approach views trauma not only as an individual experience but highlights how trauma and healing are experienced collectively. It challenges us to move from the question of, “What happened to you?” to, “What is right with you?” The approach is holistic involving culture, spirituality, civic action, and collective healing.

RELATIONAL CULTURAL THEORY

Developed in 1976 by Dr. Jean Miller, the Relational Cultural Theory (RCT) focuses on building relationships and connection at the forefront of the therapeutic relationship. Healing takes place in the context of growth-fostering relationships and mutual empathy. RCT explores the impact of an individual’s racial, cultural, and social identities and aims to reduce sources of disconnection such as isolation and social injustice.

GIRL-CENTERED PRACTICE PRINCIPLES®

Building on this work, the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center in partnership with Barbara Guthrie, PhD, a founding board member and the Independence Foundation Professor of Nursing at Northeastern University and former Associate Dean for Academic Affairs at the Yale University School of Nursing, researched and published the Girl-Centered Practice Principles®. These principles are grounded in past and current research, best practice, and most importantly, the lived experiences and voices of justice-involved girls across the justice continuum.



Girl-Centered Practice Principles®

The Girl-Centered Practice Principles® provide the foundation for system reform and community transformation. These principles are grounded in relational cultural theory created in late 1970's by Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver, Janet Surrey, and Judith Jordan. Relational Cultural Theory posits that growth fostering relationships are the source of meaning and empowerment. The Girl-Centered Practice Principles® help clarify how the constructs of relational cultural theory are used to see *the girl* in or at risk of entering the justice system. They inform policies, processes, practices, programming, and staff training.

WHY THIS MATTERS

A girl-centered approach ensures that girls' lived experiences guide policy, services, and interventions in strong partnership with decisionmakers, stakeholders, and communities. Policies, services, and interventions deliberately developed and implemented through a girl-centered lens within all systems (education, mental health, child protection, courts, justice) can positively alter the trajectory of a girl's life. This approach shifts the focus on controlling behaviors to addressing the root causes that are driving the behaviors.

This approach provides adults with the extraordinary opportunity to positively affect girls' lives. Instead of sending them to detention or juvenile jail, a more productive remedy is referral to a community-based intervention that can provide support services.

GIRL-CENTERED PRACTICE PRINCIPLES®

Core Principles

- **Girls as Experts:** Acknowledge that each girl is an expert on her life and her relationships.
- **Lived Experiences:** Honor and value each girl's lived experience, knowledge, culture, ethnicity, and language.
- **Mutuality:** Sit where a girl sits and see what she sees.

Elements

- **Theory:** Ensure that programs are guided by gender-relevant theories.
- **Connections:** Focus on the importance of girls' connections—family, friends, schools, and others.
- **Community:** Recognize the dynamic community in which girls live, play, and learn.
- **Intersectionality:** Focus on the intersectionality of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, ability, religion, class, and education.
- **Reflection:** Use reflective practice to create a safe space, and listen without judging.
- **Activism:** Promote activism and informed advocacy.

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POLICY CENTER
 ——— SEE THE GIRL®

Moving towards a healing community system.

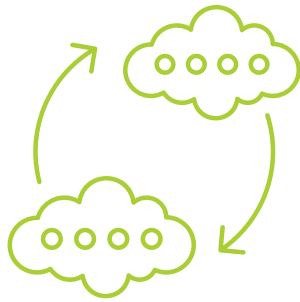
THIS BLUEPRINT DETAILS THE NECESSARY STEPS TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL AND HEALING COMMUNITY SYSTEM.

Often, our community's response to girls, young women, and youth who identify as female, is one that disconnects, blames, and penalizes them for what we see as their failures. We rarely stop to reflect on how our systems set girls up for failure, especially once they are in the system. Too rarely, we stop to reflect on the strengths of girls and what is "right" with them.

Understanding the impact of trauma, isolation, and violence is important when we create model programs specific to girls' strengths and needs. It is equally important to consider these lived experiences as we develop policies, practices, and training standards for adults who will engage with girls so the adults do not perpetuate more trauma. The Policy Center's research underscores the importance of relationships for girls. To engage girls at a deeper and more responsive level, we must recognize that relationships are at the center of girls' needs, and that trauma creates disconnection.

The Therapeutic Relational Response®

Building on the girl-centered principles and the healing-centered approach, the Therapeutic Relational Response® outlines the core components of well-being that need to exist in the community where girls live, play, and learn. This response challenges us to see girls as important members of their community and as part of the healing process—from a girl-centered, strength-based perspective rather than as victims of trauma. The following domains of well-being are the basic needs and experiences that are essential to girls' healthy development, growth, and future success:



**Social connectedness,
mutuality, and trust**



**Stability, safety, and
lived experiences**



**Individuals as the experts
of their own lives**

OPERATIONALIZING A THERAPEUTIC RELATIONAL RESPONSE IN THE COMMUNITY⁹

The following chart details the domains of well-being that are necessary for all girls and compares the characteristics of a failing system to a healing system.

DOMAINS OF WELL BEING	FAILING SYSTEM	HEALING SYSTEM
SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS, MUTUALITY, AND TRUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distrust of systems and authority Not getting support services, not attending meetings Sense of failure Shame and stigma Lack of belonging Powerlessness, hopelessness Not feeling that systems were created to protect or serve their needs Not trusting or engaging services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebuild severed relationships Create new and healthy relationships Use informed consent Build trust Rely on girls' voices to build, design, and measure programs Use organizational and personal history Honor the rights of girls Use the principle of mutuality Share power with girls vs. power over
STABILITY, SAFETY, AND LIVED EXPERIENCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High rates of turnover = lack of stability High rates of violence = distrust and fear Blindness to individuals Lack of true safety Anxiety, hyper-vigilance Does not recognize the whole identity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sit where the girls sit, see what they see Include the voices of girls Understand their lived experiences
INDIVIDUALS AS THE EXPERTS OF THEIR OWN LIVES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childhood trauma goes unheard, minimized, or silenced Cultural norms that shame and blame Power and privilege are not recognized in the community, organization or in relationships Retaliation for control creates fear Power over 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize trauma Allow freedom of movement, choice, and voice Let the community embrace its girls Adults must build trust and connection Honor girls' definitions of connection Honors the community, family, and connections as defined by the girl Promote a healing, engaged community Respect goals determined by the girls

This Blueprint uses a girl-centered approach to critically assess the potential positive and negative effects of proposed and existing legislation and to identify the current gaps in services, staff training, and data monitoring.

JUSTICE FOR GIRLS BLUEPRINT RESULTS

CALL TO ACTION



Enact Laws



Reform Systems



Monitor Data



Mandate Training



Fund Services

SHORT TERM RESULTS



Reduced disparities for girls by age, race/ethnicity, geography and differing abilities



More appropriate community services for girls



Reduced number of girls in justice system

LONG TERM RESULTS



Improved health, well being, and educational attainment



Improved access to opportunities



Reduced intergenerational trauma and poverty



State cost savings



Justice for Girls Blueprint: Report Card

COLOR CODING KEY:



Substantive progress



Insufficient progress



Ignored/no progress

DATA TRENDS

Specific to Girls

- ✓ **66%** reduction in arrest between 2008-09 and 2018-19
- ✓ **67%** reduction in incarceration between 2008-09 and 2018-19
- **Reduced lockup for technical violations of probation** (TVOP) 36% in 2011, compared to 16% of girls in 2020. Boys consistently around 9%.
- **Consistent overrepresentation of Girls of Color in the past decade:** Black girls comprise 21% of girls ages 10–17, but represent 45% of girls' arrests, 52% on probation, 47% incarcerated, and 52% transferred to the adult system.
- **68%** reduction in arrests in schools 2016-2021
- **Increased use of civil citation** from 26% in 2011-12 to 59% in 2020-21.

TRAINING NEEDS

- ✓ **Convened a statewide training conference** specific to justice-involved girls including the latest research, skill building, resources, and materials in 2017.
- **DJJ establish and provide an on-going training program for key stakeholders** addressing the needs of girls, gender specific sanctions and services.

POLICIES

Impacting Girls

- ✓ **Anti-shackling laws** for incarcerated pregnant girls during labor.
- ✓ **Safe Harbor Law** recognizing trafficked children as victims and not criminals.
- ✓ **Safe Harbor laws** to ensure CSEC victims were not detained in secure confinement.
- ✓ **Expunction of Juvenile Records** to clear arrest charges and convictions at age 21 to promote access to education and job opportunities.
- ✓ **Confidentiality of Juvenile Records** to keep records from being publicly available.
- **Use of Civil Citations** as an alternative to arrest.
- **Implementation of school code of conduct policies** for issuing civil citations or referrals to pre-arrest diversion programs.
- ✗ **Amend policies regarding the use of detention** for girls who do not pose a public safety threat.
- ✗ **Amend domestic violence policies** regarding charges related to family disturbances or family violence.
- ✗ **Amend policies regarding impact of violations of probation** or conditional release whereby girls receive additional charges without having committed another crime.
- ✗ **Amend policies to address girls who pick up new charges** while are in residential commitment despite founded allegation of staff abuse and misconduct.

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Justice for Girls Blueprint: Report Card

COLOR CODING KEY:



Substantive progress



Insufficient progress



Ignored/no progress

PRACTICES / PROCESSES

Harming Girls

- **DJJ validate Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI)** to determine accuracy in assessing public safety and flight risk. Modifications made in 2019 should result in fewer youth detained and more community-based detention options.
- **A gender responsive training protocol** was integrated into the DJJ training curriculum in 2015.
- **Gender specific requirements integrated into contracts**, program monitoring and quality assurance standards to ensure programs are designed to meet the needs of girls. however, review and modification process based on best practices is unclear.
- ✗ **Provide access to legal counsel** at the first point of entry into the juvenile justice system and during transfer hearings.
- ✗ **Develop a position in each circuit** that targets girls who cycle in and out of the system.
- ✗ **Convene a legislative work group**, and a statewide summit to review the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system, increase coordination, problem-solving and to promote a unified, consistent response to girls. Include DJJ, DCF, DOE, courts and legal systems, physical and mental health services, and private providers.

PROGRAMMING SERVICES

For Girls

- ✓ **New programming initiatives funded** (e.g. PACE Center for Girls, Girl Matters® Continuity of Care, Statewide Open Doors Outreach Network for Victims of trafficking, Girls Court, etc.)
- ✗ **Adequately fund community-based alternatives** to detention and commitment programs.
- ✗ **Implement small (no more than 20 beds) gender-responsive, culturally competent residential facilities** for girls who require residential placement.
- ✗ **Require community-based, gender-specific aftercare services** for girls transitioning from DJJ programs (including mental health, substance abuse, family counseling, crisis intervention, education, vocational training, and independent/transitional living alternatives).
- ✗ **Place girls under the supervision of a female probation/conditional release case manager** and, where justified, an all female caseload for officers
- ✗ **Provide specialized, small family style community-based programs** for girls who are pregnant and/or parenting to maintain healthy contact between mother and child.

Blueprint Strategy 1: Enact legislation to STOP entry into the juvenile justice system.

The following policies are immediate priority recommendations. They can significantly reduce the number of girls entering the justice system. This single strategy can interrupt girls' trajectories and protect an entire generation from exposure to the justice system. The clear place to start is to stop arresting children age 12 and younger, girls who are experiencing family disturbances, and girls who are eligible for a civil citation.

STOP ARRESTING CHILDREN AGES 12 AND YOUNGER.

In Florida a child can be arrested, charged, and adjudicated delinquent at age seven. Prior to the passing of the “Kaia Rolle Act” legislation in 2020–2021, Florida had no age limitation (FL Statutes 95.031). The arrest, handcuffing, and transport in a police car to the detention center of Kaia Rolle, a six-year-old at the Lucious and Emma Nixon Academy in Orlando, Florida, made national headlines.¹⁰ This is not an isolated event. In 2020, Florida **law enforcement arrested 500 girls who were 12 years or younger**. Young Black girls are most at risk. Of the 500 girls age 12 or younger who were arrested, 55% were Black.¹¹ Of those under age 10, 83% were Black. Police arrested seven girls under age 10 and charged them with felony offenses; all seven were Black girls.¹² In comparison to White and Hispanic girls, Black girls in lock-up facilities are significantly more likely to have experienced their first arrest by age 12. ([See Appendix D, Strategy 1](#))

Specifically for Black girls, the data show criminalization of their behaviors in schools and demonstrate conclusions from the latest literature on the adultification of Black girls. Adultification bias means that Black girls as young as five are held to different expectations and standards because they are perceived by the authorities to be older and thus more accountable. Stereotypes of Black girls and adultification bias are linked to harsher treatment from educators and authorities.¹³ **Adultification bias is a major contributor to the disparate treatment of Black girls in Florida's justice system.**

The Kaia Rolle Act

The Kaia Rolle Act legislation created the first age limitation in Florida (See Appendix D, Strategy 1). It is applauded for going in the right direction. However, Kaia Rolle herself is no longer protected by the law with her name, as she is now eight years old. Additional reform is needed to align with research and best practice. The practice of arresting children is counter to developmental research. Most nations and many other states in the U.S. have set more humane minimum ages for criminal responsibility.¹⁴ The *UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty* recommends that all UN member states set a minimum age of criminal responsibility no lower than age 14.¹⁵ Adultification bias and a lack of community-based alternatives fuels the use of the juvenile justice system. Such policies and practices disproportionately impact girls with less serious offenses.

Solutions

- **Increase the minimum age limit for arrest.** The current law protects children up to age 7. Amend Section 985.031, Florida Statutes, the Kaia Rolle Act to set age limitations to 12 and younger for delinquency arrest unless forcible felony as defined in s. 776.08.
- **Support pre-arrest diversion components of the school safety bill SB7040** (2020—not passed), which includes implementation of school code of conduct policies to include criteria for assigning a student to a civil citation or similar pre-arrest diversion program as an alternative to expulsion or referral to law enforcement agencies. All civil citation or similar pre-arrest diversion programs must comply with s. 985.12.



STOP ARRESTING GIRLS EXPERIENCING FAMILY DISTURBANCES.

Family disturbances often occur in chaotic homes where girls experience physical and sexual abuse, neglect, and exposure to violence by adults living or visiting the residence. Law enforcement describes responding to domestic disturbances involving multiple family members, including parents, but routinely charging the teenage girl rather than the adults because there were younger children in the home who required adult supervision, and someone has to be removed from the home. When we fail to understand the lived experience of girls growing up in chaotic homes, and no other alternatives are available, the system's response is to "blame the child," which results in further trauma and victimization.

When the police show up at the home where family violence has occurred, the law describes arrest policy. Many officers engage in adultification bias, seeing the girl as old enough to instigate the violence while others realize when there are other children in the home, it is easiest to remove the child. In this way, girls are arrested and detained for family disturbances (domestic violence charges). Few, if any, services are mobilized to address what is happening in the family, so when the girl is returned home she is returned to a chaotic family in which the violence and family dysfunction has not been addressed.¹⁶

These situations involving girls pose significant challenges to the justice system and to the girls themselves. An unintended consequence of mandatory and pro-arrest domestic violence laws designed for adult intimate partner violence is the arrest of girls experiencing family violence. Instead of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) becoming engaged, these girls are arrested and seen as the responsible party in the situation. One in three girls in lock-up (31%) report physical abuse in their home on the DJJ Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) assessment.¹⁷ Because police officers are trained to remove someone from the home when they see the situation from a domestic violence lens, detention is often over-used as a de-escalation response or respite for girls who are eligible for diversion programs, including civil citations.

In 2020–2021, over 1,000 girls who were eligible for a civil citation came in contact with law enforcement for a family disturbance, where law enforcement responded to a domestic related incident (e.g., fighting with a family member). **Rather than being diverted from the system, over 700 girls were arrested unnecessarily in Florida.**¹⁸ This represented two of three girls with domestic violence (DV) charges, in contrast to one in three girls arrested for non-DV charges. Therefore, the protections afforded in Florida statutes for pre-arrest diversion through civil citations are not being used for family related incidents. This contributes to disparate rates of girls' initial system involvement.

Understanding family dynamics requires a family-systems approach instead of a criminal justice response, which punishes girls for living in fractured homes and unsafe environments. These environments are characterized by social isolation, abuse of power and control, substance abuse, and intergenerational trauma. In fact, one study of incarcerated girls from northeast Florida found that 41% of girls in lock-up had a domestic violence-related offense in their delinquency history. The girls reported that these incidents involved mother/mother figure (50%), followed by siblings (31%), other relative (25%), and father/father figure (13%). "Other relative" was identified as grandmothers and parental partners.¹⁹

Many of the girls arrested for domestic violence charges have significant histories of involvement with child protection systems, where appropriate community-based services are limited or non-existent.

Florida policymakers sought to address this critical issue by implementing the Florida Domestic Violence Respite Care Services Program in existing local runaway shelters statewide. Implementation has remained challenging due to limited bed space, a 14-day mandated length of stay, children not qualifying for the beds or not wanting to utilize the beds and the struggle for shelters to connect with families and develop trust.²⁰ (See Appendix D, Strategy 1)

► Solution

- **Amend Florida Domestic Violence Statutes:** Amend Florida state statutes to redefine domestic violence to exclude cases of family disturbances/home-based conflict by minors (including biological and foster care parents). Eliminate mandatory arrest and detention provisions for domestic violence by minors, and mandate that home-based family disturbances be handled first through the Department of Children and Families before a youth is charged with domestic violence.



STOP ARRESTING GIRLS WHO ARE ELIGIBLE FOR A CIVIL CITATION.

Current statute mandates that all circuits have a civil citation program, this creates inequities in usage across the state where some counties do not use civil citation, which creates an environment where girls are unfairly pushed into the system. During, 2020-2021 **almost 4,000 girls came into contact with law enforcement.** Though they were all eligible for a civil citation, **two in five (41%) were arrested.** Arrest of civil citation eligible girls varied by whether girls were in school or in the community. **Half (51%) of girls who encountered law enforcement in the community were arrested compared to 16% of girls who encountered law enforcement in school.** In the community, police arrested the majority of girls for assault and/or battery (64%), misdemeanor alcohol offenses (13%), petit larceny (11%), disorderly conduct (3%), misdemeanor obstruction of justice (3%), and vandalism (2%). Included in the arrests for assault and battery 994 girls (71%) are arrests marked as “domestic” for family disturbances in the home.²¹

**“IT SHOULDN’T MATTER
WHERE YOU LIVE”**

— A girl talking about access to services and alternatives to lock-up.

Solutions

- **Amend Florida statute 985.12** to mandate that all counties must implement a civil citation or alternative to arrest program.
- **Improve reporting guidelines for the use of civil citations,** including data for second and third time issuances.





Blueprint Strategy 2: Stop institutional traumatizing of girls - overhaul conditions of confinement

While we are passing policies to stop entry into the justice system, we must also attend to the girls who are in locked facilities (detention or residential commitment programs) who are being harmed by the experience of institutionalization itself. The negative consequences that result from lockup include increased recidivism, pulling youth deeper into the juvenile and criminal justice system, exacerbating mental illness, and interrupting education and future employment. This section calls for 1) probation, detention, and juvenile court reforms to stop the cycle of locking up girls for noncriminal offenses and 2) immediate oversight and overhaul of conditions of confinement. Girls need therapeutic, safe places designed to promote healing. Institutional settings and lock-up facilities are not conducive to healing.

STOP THE CYCLE OF PUNISHING GIRLS FOR NONCRIMINAL BEHAVIORS THAT RESULT IN RETURN TO SYSTEM.

There is a critical link between probation and the overuse of detention and commitment. It is crucial to assess the overuse of detention for girls who do not pose a public safety risk and—of equal importance—to review how probation practices can feed the overuse of detention and commitment. **Approximately 2,000 girls are admitted to probation each year and stay on probation for an average of one year in Florida.**²² Around 21% of Florida probation caseloads are girls, and Black girls are overrepresented among these; of all girls on probation, 52% are Black.²³ One study showed that girls stay on probation longer than boys—and Black girls stay the longest.²⁴

The profile of girls on probation suggests high exposure to trauma; one in five has a history of sexual abuse, and one in five has a history of physical abuse.²⁵ What we learned from the five-year probation study in Duval County is that the girls who were committed for technical violations of probation had the most extensive trauma histories, and the girls who were committed for new law violations of probation were more likely to have experienced mother or mother figure incarceration and domestic violence-related offenses.²⁶ Aside from domestic violence charges (e.g. family disturbances), the majority of girls on probation end up back in secure detention for non-law violations of probation.

Non-law technical violations:

Non-law violations, also known as technical violations, occur when a youth is noncompliant with the technical conditions of their probation (e.g., running away from home, not going to school, violating curfew), but has not committed a new violations of law.

The current justice system response exacerbates and results in deeper system involvement. Practices such as the threat of secure detention, issuing warrants for arrest, expanding the eligibility criteria for detention, and probation sanctions that are not informed by risk and needs for an individual child and their motivations contribute to a failing system.

Current probation sanctions do not account for a lack of resources. Additionally, probation sanctions and court fees are imposed without providing resources to girls and family members or caregivers who do not have the financial means, access to transportation, or the support systems necessary to comply. This sets them up for failure. A deeper look at the violations of probations reveals a lack of access to resources and services, unmet mental health needs of girls and family members/caregivers, as well as racial and gender disparities.

It is not uncommon for conditions of probation to include a host of requirements such as curfews, community service, routine drug testing, attending counseling, participation in anger management classes, attending school, and meeting weekly with the probation officer.

A family has to meet the expectations. The responses to violations of these sanctions often fail to understand what is at the root of a girl's behavior (what is driving the behavior). Therefore, the response is punitive, because it does not account for the circumstances of "noncompliance." **Using a girl-centered lens, we understand that when girls don't feel safe or included in the process, many will not be "successful" on probation.**

Our research and experience working with girls underscore that the reasons girls "fail services" are that the services such as substance abuse treatment are not responsive to girls' lived experiences. It fails to consider how trauma may impact substance use and with whom they are using, such as older peers. Many girls may not go to school, but we are not asking why that is so. The data suggest that girls do not feel safe in school. Similarly, we are not asking them why they are leaving home. Again, we know that girls run from abusive or unsafe situations. **Girls report not trusting the system and feeling silenced, set up to fail, not believed, punished for gender nonconformity, punished for caregiving responsibilities, punished for their sexuality, pregnancy, or detained in order to keep them "safe" when they are victims of human trafficking.**²⁷

Of immediate concern are the changes to Statute 985.26: Length of detention authorizing a court to extend the length of secure detention care for an increased amount of days under specified circumstances. In addition, it extends ankle monitors which increases cost to the family. This was enacted during the 2022 Florida Legislative Session.

Changes to detention criteria will have a detrimental impact on populations of girls. Victims of sex trafficking who may not score for secure detention but who may be at risk of returning to their trafficker, or may run if they are released, will be more easily detained at the discretion of the court. Girls who are arrested for domestic violence offenses but the family is not willing or ready for them to return can now end up in secure detention. Girls who leave or run away from home as a way of staying safe will be impacted. Girls in the child welfare system experiencing conflict in foster care homes or unaddressed mental health needs may also be disparately impacted by this new legislation.

Detention is not meant to be a long-term holding facility. Time in detention does not count as time served. Instead, time is lost from school, community, and family. Secure detention does not provide appropriate programming services or supports. More harm is caused with harsh conditions inside detention centers.

The way forward is to support practices and pass legislation that not only reforms probation but limits the use of secure detention.

Guided by research and best practice, we can enact reforms to address the critical link between probation practices and the overuse of detention and commitment. We can also begin to address the real issue, which is lack of community-based prevention, intervention, and treatment services. This will lead to better outcomes for girls and replace a revolving door with real best practice oriented services.

Solutions

► **Amend the detention criteria Florida Statue 985.255 Detention Criteria.**

- Ban the use of secure detention for domestic violence charges. (See also legislation recommendation to stop arresting girls for domestic violence changes in the first place)([See also Appendix E, Nevada Law](#)).
- Protect the intent of legislative statutes regarding use of secure detention. Ensure there is no disparate impact of new legislation expanding use of detention on girls. Specifically, related to known pathways of girls into the system (e.g., not being safe, victim of CSEC, child welfare crossover), ensure the focus is on detaining youth who are a public safety risk.

► **Review the juvenile criminal justice code.**

- Amend or expand the definition of absconding and other family-related offenses.
- Phase out the use of detention for valid court orders that result in technical violations of probation and commitment.

► **Support the differential warrant concept.**

- Allow options for judges when a child fails to appear in court. Courts can consider situations outside of the youth's control and the circumstances that prompted issuance of the warrant. For low risk youth who did not "willfully" fail to appear in court, use of secure detention and court appearances can be reduced.

► **Amend probation practices.**

- Eliminate the use of technical violations for low-risk girls.
- Phase out the use of detention for valid court orders that result in technical violations of probation (TVOP) and commitment.
- Implement probation response grids.²⁸

 **Ban detaining girls for technical violations of probation.**

- Provide guidance on statute 985.435 regarding technical violations of probation for eligibility for commitment.
- Require probation programs to implement alternative consequence components to disposition orders, especially with regard to family disturbances and running away from home (e.g., respite options).

 **Implement or modify Department of Juvenile Justice probation policy regarding Youth Empowered Success (YES) Plans.**

- Individualized safety plans should be created for each girl that identifies safe places where she can be in the community and safe people she can go to. Incorporate strategies that anticipate needs and behaviors based on trauma.
- Incorporate options when there is family conflict, curfew violations, runaway behaviors, substance use, and truancy.
- Training to address adultification and biases that impact judicial decisions.

 **Eliminate court fees.**

- Eliminate fees imposed on juveniles to reduce disparities, length of supervision, and long-term barriers.
- Eliminate fees imposed on young people, up to age 18 and their families, and extend protections for youth in the foster system, up to age 21, who are especially vulnerable to the impacts of court costs.
- Reinstate driving privileges for those who lost them due to failure to pay.

 **Establish a mechanism to review and release girls from detention.**

- Release girls who do not pose a public safety risk.
- Provide appropriate community-based services. (See Strategy 5, Essential Services)

STOP INSTITUTIONAL TRAUMATIZING OF GIRLS – OVERHAUL THE CONDITIONS OF CONFINEMENT.

Institutionalized trauma refers to the practices and conditions of confinement in secure detention and residential lock-up facilities that use isolation, physical restraint, body cavity searches, supervised showers, and other practices that trigger, re-traumatize, and re-victimize girls. This incarceration trauma has a health impact—including long-term trauma and suicide ideation—and can also derail a girl’s future.

The girls who are detained or locked up present with high rates of trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, and other mental health issues. One in three (30%) who are locked up have histories of sexual or physical abuse.²⁹ The use of solitary confinement or medical confinement (e.g., due to COVID pandemic) lock children in their rooms for more than 23 hours a day—the equivalent of solitary confinement—and ban outside visitors, including support services. These practices exacerbate existing trauma, increase suicidal thoughts, and cause long-term trauma.

The data show that over half of girls in lock up are Black, one in three is a girl with previous child welfare system involvement, one in four are LGBTQ, and at least one in five has differing abilities or low IQ. These data points must inform the building of equitable system responses to account for failures to effectively address the needs of these girls.

It is the community’s fragmented response and lack of quality mental health services that contribute to many girls being sent away to lock-up “for services.” **Devastatingly, it is not uncommon for judges to incarcerate girls under the misguided notion that they will receive “treatment” for their mental health needs. Locked facilities are triggering by nature.** Therapy cannot happen in a locked facility. Any attempt to work through the complex trauma and victimization that results from lock-up is a disservice to girls because it leaves them emotionally vulnerable. Healing is unlikely while a girl is locked in an unsafe space—a space where she cannot use her voice without fear of retaliation, where she is at risk of being restrained, and where she has no sense of privacy even while showering. Girls may continue to exhibit explosive behavior without the tools to cope with their complex trauma and victimization. System involvement adds a layer of disconnection, loss, and feeling unsafe. It is detrimental to an individual’s well-being. In locked facilities, girls learn to follow the rules and survive in the environment which can look like “success,” but when we do not address the circumstances that led to lock-up in these facilities, they often return.

Girls are not safe in these facilities (see Key Media Headlines graphic). Over the years, numerous girls’ facilities have shut down due to abuse. Staff continue to violate girls inside of institutions. The trauma is often perpetrated by those who are charged with guarding safety and well-being. (See Appendix B)

WHAT GIRLS SAY

Interviewed girls in locked facilities highlight facility uncleanliness, inadequate and low-quality food, lack of hygiene products, shared undergarments, overuse of medication, very cold facilities, lack of response to grievances and complaints, fear of staff, inconsistency among staff, use of restraints/take down, hardship of being pregnant while locked up, and getting time added.

Key Media Headlines Exposing Abuse

Sex Allegations at Girls' Prison Prompt Inquiry

Sun Sentinel (FIG), July 17, 2003

Lehigh Teen Raped by Guard in Juvenile Center (Pasco Girls Academy)

Fox 4 News, September 7, 2018

Florida Closes Scandal Ridden Girls Facility, Takes Over Control of Another Juvenile Facility March 15, 2006

Florida Deputy Charged with Child Abuse After Slamming Teen Girl to the Ground by Her Throat NBC News, November 5, 2019

State to Shut Troubled Girls' Facility (Umatilla)

Orlando Sentinel, August 17, 2006

Sexual Abuse Fears at Florida Detention Centers

Orlando Sun Sentinel, July 13, 2020

Shocking Video Shows Girl, 15, Battered in Florida Juvenile Jail (Milton Girls Juvenile Residential Facility)

Daily Mail News, December 13, 2012

Manatee Juvenile Detention Center Sergeant Charged with Child Abuse After Surveillance Video Shows Response to Girl's Death in Detention

Bradenton Herald, August 10, 2021

Investigation Shows Widespread Abuse in Florida Juvenile Justice System

PBS News hour, November 4, 2017

Sounding the Alarm: Criminalization of Black Girls in Florida

Youth Today, March 17, 2021

Solutions

- **Use girl-centered principles and healing centered service delivery approaches within FL Statute 985.02** (See [Appendix D](#)). All policies, procedures, and standards for detention, residential lock up facilities need to be compliant and aligned with the intent of the law. Privately funded facilities must also comply by submitting their policies and operating procedures.
- **Ensure that specialized services are available** for girls with differing needs including developmental delays.
- **The Legislature must establish system accountability measures and oversight by creating an independent and autonomous Ombudsperson that functions in the best interest of the child** (See [Appendix D for more information on 14 states that have established in statute](#)). This office would have oversight of juvenile justice system practices related to preventing, intervening, and protecting girls from detention incidents and conditions of confinement that are harmful or abusive (e.g., staff-on-child physical abuse or sexual abuse, extension of time, additional charges).³⁰

CREATE AN OMBUDSPERSON POSITION

The Ombudsperson would be charged with establishing a DJJ system accountability mechanism and recommending system-wide improvements to benefit children, investigate complaints of wrongdoing, and notify public and relevant government agencies of the findings.

We call for the Ombudsperson to be guided by the fundamental rights of girls highlighted in this Blueprint (fair and equitable treatment, freedom from violence and exploitation, valued and respected, a trustworthy system, and system advocates).

An Ombudsperson will be responsible for ensuring that policies and practices prevent, intervene, and protect girls through the following:

Assess the system to determine how it contributes to girls' involvement and recommend positive changes.

- Establish a mechanism to identify girls who do not meet the criteria to be detained (not scoring on the DRAI, eligible for civil citation, bench commitments) and advocate or advise for more appropriate community settings.
- Establish a mechanism to ensure equity in access to alternatives, including civil citation and identify locations where there are disparities in the use of secure detention, days in detention, time on probation, and disposition to commitment by gender, race, ethnicity, and county. Publish these findings.
- Provide oversight for girls entering the juvenile justice system who are also part of the child protection system (crossover) and the practices that result in commitment of girls for technical violations of probation.
- Review and advocate for protections for youth who are aging out/extended foster care who also have previous system involvement and will be barred from public housing.
- Advocate for victims of sex trafficking who are being arrested or detained. Ensure that they have access to an attorney ad litem to assist with the appeals process and due process rights. Ensure equity in Safe Harbor access regardless of Department of Children and Families status, and oversee Safe Harbor placements.

Advocate for girls' rights and protections.

- Review and advocate for proper placements and accommodations to ensure safety and fair treatment for LGBTQ youth.
- Oversee grievances and complaints by girls, discrimination across the continuum regarding safety, fighting in a program, and treatment by facility staff.
- Oversee conditions of confinement, including all allegations of abuse, use of restraints, and the use of solitary confinement in detention and residential programs. Ensure that girls have basic necessities (food, clothing, personal undergarments, maxipads and hygiene products, medication).
- Review and report all staff incidents by location and justifications for extended stay in residential programs.
- Ensure alternative placements for girls who are pregnant or parenting being able to see their children.
- Review all direct file petitions to ensure protections and rights of the child.

Blueprint Strategy 3: Ensure accountability and monitor data continuously.

Numerous committees and workgroups exist to review data and make recommendations for improved services for youth. However, few specifically review gender differences and racial or geographic differences for girls. We are calling for these entities to collect and examine data specific to the disparate impacts explained in this document. This strategy identifies existing workgroups that can add this layer to their initiatives. It calls out additional data points to be monitored through existing system-level data collection and reporting structures.

ESTABLISH MECHANISMS THROUGH EXISTING STRUCTURES TO CONTINUOUSLY MONITOR DATA AND BUILD LEVELS OF COMMUNITY ACCOUNTABILITY AND ATTENTION TO GIRLS' NEEDS.

- **The State Advisory Group (SAG) must develop and submit a state plan and budget specific to regional needs for girls' programming and essential services.**
- **The Children and Youth Cabinet must establish a girls' workgroup to develop an interagency plan specific to girls who are under-supported and unseen, with particular attention to Black girls.**
- **The Juvenile Justice Circuit Advisory Board's role is to advise and guide DJJ on program improvements and policy changes needed to address emerging and changing needs of youth at risk of delinquency. These boards consist of a state attorney, public defender, chief judge, and their designees, representing each of the 20 judicial circuits. They need to include recommendations specific to girls as part of their annual reports.**

System-level data are collected and exist across a multitude of databases. Unfortunately, they are not available where it counts. Policies that provide necessary data to staff or judges who make probation or commitment recommendations, or that require needs assessments for specific types of trauma (e.g., parent incarceration, death of parent, sexual abuse) are critical to developing program models and interventions. The following data points are recommended for continuous monitoring and accountability.

Solutions

- **Monitor data to help stop entry into justice system.**

- Monitor local law enforcement/sheriff's data related to school incidents and arrests.
- Continue collecting and disaggregating the relative rate index (RRI) data created to monitor disproportionate minority contact (DMC) by gender and within race and ethnicity so that arrests, petitions, secure detention, etc. can be monitored specifically for girls.
- Oversee compliance and mandate that the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) report the number of youth arrested for domestic violence (both those eligible for civil citation and those not eligible for alternative to arrest) to understand its prevalence. Require that—similar to the civil citation dashboard—the DJJ include this DV indicator on the delinquency profile dashboard.
- Expand demographic options to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) identifiers.

- **Monitor secure detention and juvenile court trend data.**

- Mandate that DJJ report secure detention data, similar to Department of Corrections Average Daily Population admissions reports. Include who is awaiting trial, who is there for 21 days or longer, and who is awaiting a commitment bed—by center, gender, race within gender, and differing abilities.
- Mandate that OPPAGA monitor the detention risk assessment data (DRAI) and bench commitment data for the use of secure detention.
- Mandate an entity, such as DJJ or clerk of courts, to systematically collect and document the number and percent of youth who incur court fees and other juvenile justice-related costs. The data should be available to analyze by gender, race, ethnicity, county, age, point in juvenile justice system, and total amounts. This will allow for more accurate estimations of costs per youth at each point along the system and who is most impacted.

- **Monitor conditions of confinement and rights violations through annual reporting.**

- Mandate that OPPAGA assess and report on problematic and harmful practices addressed in this report on an annual basis. The following should be reported:
 - How much time girls spend in solitary confinement for a COVID-19 response.
 - Residential program use of extension of time in lock-up (reasons, how long, “who” profile, demographics, including IQ) by program.
 - The number of youth by gender who are direct filed and pick up new charges against staff or law enforcement officers inside facilities.
 - The use of PAR (physical restraints) by facility.
 - The number of staff incidents, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) violations by program.
 - The contract violations for each provider.
 - The number of youth by gender “upcharging” and use of waivers to adult court.

Blueprint Strategy 4: Mandate training and girl-centered standards for stakeholders.

Training is a critical component to ensure that system personnel have a clear understanding of the impact of incarceration on youth who have experienced trauma and to prioritize practices, making incarceration the option of last resort.

Training is urgently needed at every point in the justice system to develop appropriate prevention, intervention, treatment, and graduated sanctions through a girl-centered lens.³¹ Both research and direct experience underscore that professionals are often uninformed about gender differences, pathways, and service needs.³² Opportunities lie in translating the current knowledge and research into practical applications for professionals who are committed to improving outcomes for girls. Specialized training and practical resources for staff, decision making tools, gender-specific assessment tools, technical assistance, and resources are lacking or inaccessible in many communities. Today's juvenile justice professionals recognize that a different approach is needed; however, they are still grappling with how best to effectively address the needs of girls.

When girls impacted by the justice system across the country were asked in listening sessions about who should receive training, the most common response was school personnel, followed by law enforcement, then judges and attorneys. Interestingly, this reflects the key gatekeepers, in order, to the typical ways girls enter the justice system.³³ Juvenile justice and social service professionals were named secondarily as staff who should receive training.

In *Making Girls a Priority in Florida* (2021), specific training was a priority recommendation for all systems—educators, community-based providers, child welfare investigators, law enforcement, probation officers, state attorneys, public defenders, judges, resource officers—and in multiple areas—predatory males, coercion tactics, adultification, racial bias, data trends, historical and racial trauma, family disturbances, crisis management, and de-escalation techniques.

Current Florida Statutes 985.66 outline requirements for juvenile justice training. Aligning training with the other strategies presented in this Blueprint can have widespread benefits, including leadership development, improved services, decreased staff turnover, decreased sexual misconduct, increased environmental safety, and improved policies and outcomes. (See Appendix D, Strategy 4)

Solutions

- **Mandate a comprehensive effort by the DJJ and the DCF to improve training and technical assistance.** Training must recognize the unique needs of marginalized girls and apply to judges, law enforcement, and juvenile justice and child protection staff.
- **Mandate that DJJ and DCF Implement a Gender-Responsive Certification Program as part of the required training courses.**
 - Contract for such training courses—for employees and private providers for all service types, including residential facilities.
 - Certification should ensure that programs are gender-responsive, trauma-informed, relational, safe, strengths-based, and culturally competent. Existing services and programs can have time to become certified as gender-responsive programs.
 - Certification would become a requirement for all DCF and DJJ services and programs that serve girls and their families.



Blueprint Strategy 5: Invest in a girl-centered, community-based continuum of care.

Juvenile Justice Statute 985.02 outlines the intent of the Florida Legislature to provide effective treatment to address physical, social, and emotional needs, regardless of geographical location. Further, this statute includes provisions for trauma-informed, gender-specific programming and services. Despite the intent of the Legislature, the State of Florida has failed to adequately fund and implement these essential services. The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and the Department of Children and Families must develop a plan to implement a continuum of community-based care and Gender-Responsive Program Standards. The Legislature must earmark annual state funding for the development, implementation, and evaluation of community-based, girl-centered prevention, intervention, and re-entry programs and services, including pilot-programs. The elements of a girl-centered, community-based continuum of care are included in a guide for best practices. (See Appendix D, Strategy 5)

The benefits of quality, girl-centered, community-based services far outweigh those of institutional lock-up facilities.

Girls are more likely to have experienced sexual assault, rape, or physical victimization. These abuse histories may be linked to unaddressed mental health issues. Victimization and trauma often lead girls to run away from unsafe homes, which increases homelessness and can put them on a path to justice system involvement.

Research and direct experience continue to show that the benefits of quality, girl-centered, community-based services far outweigh

those of institutional lock-up facilities. Yet, in most communities across Florida, quality services are woefully inadequate or non-existent.

Community-based services are more cost effective and yield lower recidivism rates than residential commitment facilities. A secure girls' placement has an average length of stay of 294 days, which costs \$72,618 and has a recidivism rate of 35%.

In comparison, the Girl Matters®: Continuity of Care program, which has served girls in northeast Florida since 2013 has a 0-6% recidivism rate and costs approximately \$5,000 for the same length of time a girl would be in lock-up.

“BEING PLACED IN CONFINEMENT EXACERBATED MY TRAUMA. I SUFFERED MIGHTILY BECAUSE NO ONE PROVIDED THE ADEQUATE MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES I NEEDED TO HEAL. NO ONE TOOK THE TIME TO ASK ME WHAT HAPPENED TO ME.”

— Survivor of sex trafficking who was charged as an adult at age 16

More alarming, incarceration in juvenile facilities is itself re-traumatizing. It damages girls whose pathways into the system are paved by histories of trauma and unaddressed mental health challenges. Lock-up facilities are inherently counterproductive to girl-centered, trauma-informed interventions. The environment is riddled with trauma triggers such as pat downs, strip searches, physical restraints, use of isolation rooms, and lack of privacy in the bathroom and in showers.

The Policy Center's Status of Girls (2019–2021) research shows that certain cohorts of girls are at greatest risk and warrant specialized interventions. These priority populations include girls of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual girls or youth unsure of their sexual identity (LGBU), girls with differing abilities (developmental delays), and survivors of commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

GIRLS OF COLOR

Girls experience their communities in different ways. The *Sounding the Alarm* report found 15 counties where Black girls were overrepresented in arrest and incarceration based on their proportion of the general population of that county (See Appendix C, Table 1). The *Status of Girls Wellbeing* report found that one in three girls report that they do not feel safe in school with wide variation by race, ethnicity, and region. Girls in middle and high school across the state are experiencing high rates of sadness, hopelessness, depression, sexual violence and suicide ideation. (See Appendix C, Table 2)

LGBTQ

National estimates indicate LGBTQ and gender non-conforming persons represent 4–6% of the general population and are 15% of youth detained in the justice system.³⁴ These data are not available specific to Florida. Data are not available for trans youth in Florida either. However, from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance survey (YRBS), we know that lesbian, gay, bisexual, or girls who are unsure of their sexual identity (LGBU) experience high rates of victimization; one in five bisexual girls report forced sexual intercourse (rape), and two in five lesbian, gay, and bisexual girls report suicidal ideation in the general population.³⁵ We estimate these indicators are significantly higher among the justice-involved population.

GIRLS WITH DIFFERING ABILITIES

The lock-up of girls with differing abilities is a hidden but significant problem in Florida. Because specialized services are virtually non-existent for these girls, they are placed in facilities ill-equipped to address their special needs. Juvenile justice staff in girls' residential programs are challenged to provide services, because the girls struggle with understanding the program requirements and expectations due to their developmental delays. This often results in negative outcomes, such as new charges while in confinement, increased use of restraints, longer stays in inappropriate settings, and potential transfer to the adult system. Of note, Florida has four designated facilities for boys with developmental delays but no specialized programs for girls.³⁶

SURVIVORS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC)

Florida passed Safe Harbor laws (2012) designed to treat CSEC youth as survivors of trauma who should receive rehabilitative services rather than be treated as criminals. Despite the law, in practice, CSEC youth continue to be arrested, detained, or committed to residential lock-up. Data shows that, between 2013 and 2019 for CSEC youth who could be tracked, 48% had an arrest within the year following their first verification; of these 71% had multiple arrests. **Survivors were subsequently sent to detention (37%), probation (25%), diversion (10%), and residential commitment/lock-up (9%).**³⁷

To interrupt the pathways of girls entering, going deeper, and cycling in and out of the justice system and to promote public safety, it is imperative that Florida build a robust continuum of community-based services staffed by highly trained professionals equipped to address the specific needs of girls, especially the cohorts of girls who are at greatest risk.

Solutions

- **Mandate that Florida DJJ and DCF develop a plan** to implement, and monitor a continuum of girl-centered, community-based prevention, intervention, and re-entry services.
- **Require the Florida DJJ and DCF to develop Gender-Responsive Program Standards based on the philosophy and principles provided in this Blueprint.** Incorporate the standards in all funding proposals, contracts, and quality assurance standards. (See Appendix E)
- **Earmark recurring state funding for the development, implementation, and evaluation of community-based, girl-centered prevention, intervention, and re-entry programs and services.** Include pilot-programs that specifically address the needs of girls of color, girls from rural areas, LGBTQ youth, survivors of CSEC, girls with differing abilities (developmental delays), and girls experiencing family conflict or violence.

ELEMENTS OF A GIRL-CENTERED, COMMUNITY-BASED CONTINUUM OF CARE

The following continuum model is adapted from the recommendations cited in the *Florida Female Initiative* (1993), *Rallying Cry for Change* (2006), *Breaking New Ground* (2015), and *Research to Action: Making Girls a Priority in Florida* (2021).

A coordinated continuum of care must contain the following programmatic stages: Prevention, Early Intervention, Intervention, Intensive Intervention, and Re-Entry. This continuum functions as a circle rather than as a linear process, allowing young women to access services at any point on the continuum to effectively address their assessed needs.

This continuum emphasizes the principle of the least restrictive alternatives. It supports services located in and reflective of girls' communities. It is gender and culturally responsive and deliberately addresses girls' developmental needs and lived experiences. Special attention is paid to the priority populations—Black, Indigenous, Girls of Color, girls from rural areas, LGBTQ girls, victims of sex trafficking, girls with differing abilities, and girls experiencing family disturbances or violence.

With today's COVID-19 pandemic, many girls feel more isolated due to physical distancing and increased fear. Current data shows an increase in child removals from home for reasons such as parents' inability to cope, parental drug abuse, physical abuse, and domestic violence. In addition, one in four report not having access to a teacher or a parent if they had a personal problem to talk about. It is vital that we continue to monitor the impact of COVID-19 on girls' well-being and their existing struggles with suicide ideation, depression, victimization, and lack of support and family connection. We must demand girl-centered services that take these findings into account.



TOWARDS AN ESSENTIAL SET OF GIRL-CENTERED SERVICES	
PREVENTION	<p>Eliminate or minimize environmental, social, and economic factors that increase risk.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase access to services that promote well-being • Sex and adolescent girls health education • Effective prenatal care for all pregnant young women • Access to affordable and quality daycare and Head Start programming • Real-time access to trained and informed counselors in schools • Recreational activities
EARLY INTERVENTION	<p>Provide early detection and intervention regarding risk. Prevent more problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment services • Parent support groups • Individual/family counseling • Remedial/tutorial education in the context of specific learning styles • Sanctuary spaces inside schools for girls that promote connectedness and safety • Civil citations • Pre-trial diversion programs • Mentoring • Programs for young children of incarcerated parents • Prenatal and postpartum care • Comprehensive programming to address the needs of teenage mothers and babies • Well baby and day care • Respite placements
INTERVENTION	<p>Comprehensive, assessment including history and the dynamic factors of individual and family strengths and interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral and placement protocol that indicates that the best interests of the girls are the priority • Treatment and services that identify historical, structural, and internalized racism • Family-focused intervention and treatment that responds to individualized lived experiences • Real-time access to mental health professionals in schools • Comprehensive care management • Real time crisis intervention services • Day treatment services • Girls-only unit, opportunity-based probation • Probation alternatives and graduated sanctions prior to violating probation (community service and mediation) • Medical and related services for pregnant and parenting teens • Career counseling, job training & employment services • Legal services • Mentoring services • Recreational activities • Referral linkages to community resources
INTENSIVE INTERVENTIONS	<p>Provide specialized services aligned with assessed needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24/7/365 crisis intervention services • Comprehensive care management • Behavioral health services (Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care, Functional Family Therapy, and Multisystemic Therapy) • Adolescent psychiatric services • Specialized substance abuse treatment services that recognize and respond to girls' interconnected problems of addiction, trauma, and victimization and offending behaviors • Reception center (in areas with high arrests for DV) focused on providing immediate interventions to families where home-based assault and battery are present by offering 24/7 crisis intervention and respite care (Multnomah County, Oregon, model) • Girl experts and advocates onsite in identified elementary, middle, and high schools with high rates for truancy, referrals, and suspension for girls to provide real-time individualized interventions • Remedial and special education services • Specialized girls court aligned with girl-centered principles • Advocates in multidisciplinary staffing's (court, school) • Legal services • Housing options (shelters, therapeutic foster care placements, extended foster care) • Independent living services that include short- and long-term housing alternatives and support services
RE-ENTRY	<p>Address girls' needs. Put services in place to prevent return to system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transitional programs and services that take into account relational and service issues; designed to effectively reintegrate young women into the community • Telemental health sessions with a therapist from the local community for girls in residential placements for continuity of services • Comprehensive care management/system navigators • In-home services for parents, families, and girls during and after girls are placed back in their family's home • Housing options for transitioning youth to reduce homelessness and multiple system involvement • Transportation • Specialized behavioral health and substance abuse services • Education, career, and job placement services

Conclusion

This Blueprint recommends a girl-centered approach and specific reforms to create a healing community system of care for girls. It calls for accountability and courageous action by decision makers and citizens for policies and practices that interrupt the flow of girls into Florida's juvenile justice system.

The solutions actively create a brighter future for Florida's girls, offering them the support they need and deserve to safely heal and thrive. The five strategies set the reform course for the next five years.

The background and justification is clear. The research has been done. The recommendations are sound. It is time for policymakers, community leaders, and citizens to do their part to implement and move this reform work forward.

**GIRLS ARE COUNTING ON US TO TURN
OUR KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION.**

Appendix A.

The Justice for Girls Movement in Florida

A BRIEF HISTORY

- ▶ **Late 1990s** — The Justice for Girls Movement began when a rare combination of political, legal, economic, and other factors threatened to reverse the progress made on behalf of justice-involved girls in Florida. Five years after the state opened the nation's first maximum-security prison for girls, it closed due to abuse, neglect, and sexual misconduct by staff. The mistreatment of girls became a further catalyst that fueled reform.
- ▶ **2006** — *A Rallying Cry for Change* was released. It profiled the needs of girls across 13 residential programs throughout Florida.³⁸ This study by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) built upon *Educate or Incarcerate*,³⁹ which documented the disparate treatment of girls and recommended specific reforms.
- ▶ **2008** — Release of *Justice for Girls Blueprint for Action*. During its two-year vetting and development process, input came from diverse stakeholders, including girls in the juvenile justice system at all levels, national experts, the Girls Advisory Council, and many others from the earliest days of the Movement. This included NCCD, PACE Center for Girls, The Children's Campaign (now the American Children's Campaign), the Florida Juvenile Justice Association, the Florida Network of Youth and Family Services, participants in the Girls Summit, the courts, attorneys, probation officers, educators, service providers, and others.
- ▶ **2009** — National Center for Girls and Young Women, in partnership with NCCD, was funded by the Jessie Ball duPont Fund in Duval County, Florida, and led by Dr. Lawanda Ravoira. The Center had remarkable success developing research-based curricula, providing training and technical assistance throughout the country, establishing the OJJDP National Girls Institute, and developing and implementing research-based direct service programs for girls.
- ▶ **2013** — The Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center was established as an outgrowth of the Justice for Girls Movement and transitioned from the National Center for Girls and Young Women. The mission of the Policy Center is to engage communities, organizations, and individuals through quality research, community organizing, advocacy, training, and model programming to advance the rights of girls and young women, especially those in the justice system. The Policy Center provides the resources to laser focus on local communities so that Florida can better respond to girls. Since its beginning, the Policy Center has monitored and analyzed the data to inform stakeholders on the status of girls and the areas that warrant attention and urgent action.

POLICY CENTER PUBLICATIONS

- ▶ ***Wake Up Call: Trends in Girls' Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System (2013)*** highlighted the number of girls involved along the juvenile justice continuum in Florida (arrest, diversion, detention, probation, commitment, and transfer to the adult system). It called attention to the disparities for girls, which include the arrest and incarceration of girls for non-felonies at higher rates than boys, incarceration into residential commitment programs for violations of probation, and the needs of girls that require a different approach.
- ▶ ***Breaking New Ground on the First Coast: Examining Girls' Pathways into the Juvenile Justice System (2015)*** studied girls locked up from the First Coast community and included narratives about what girls were facing, what protective factors buffered their own life traumas, and what they need to heal. Critical issues and questions were raised for policymakers, service providers, citizens, and funders to transform the response to girls in the community.
- ▶ ***See the Change: Girls' Juvenile Justice Trends on the First Coast (2016)*** revealed a significant reduction in the number of girls incarcerated on the First Coast and highlighted continued disparities for girls, particularly those committed for non-law violations of probation and those with significant mental health needs.
- ▶ ***Status of Girls Series (2019–2021)*** commissioned by the Florida Women's Funding Alliance. This three-part publication analyzed county level data for girls' educational attainment, emotional and mental health well-being and issued a call to action for funders. Data was used from multiple sources including; Florida Department of Education, Florida Department of Health, Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey, and Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. These reports explore the differences in how groups of girls are experiencing their schools, homes, and community.
 - ***Status of Girls in Florida Educational Attainment and Disparities by County (2019)***, examines a baseline of the status of girls in school across multiple issues including graduation, dropping out, and school experience. Major findings brought light to the disparities faced by girls who live in rural communities, girls of color, and the invisible population of youth in Florida who were not in school or in the workforce.
 - ***Status of Girls' Well-Being (2019)***, investigates the well-being of girls on a county level. It explores the victimization and experiences of girls across several systems by race, ethnicity, sexual orientation (where possible), grade level, and county. Findings from this report reveal how girls are doing on emotional health indicators, their experiences of disconnect, and the existing lack of safety.
 - ***Research to Action: Make Girls a Priority in Florida (2021)***, provides policy and practice recommendations for stakeholders, decisionmakers, and funders based on the two status of girls reports above.

- ***Sounding the Alarm: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Florida (2021)***, examined how Black girls were faring across the state, by county. This research found that Black girls were overrepresented at every point in the juvenile justice system and were also being pulled into the system at school. This report also highlights the adultification of Black girls, and revealed data that showed that the youngest girls age 6-9 who were arrested and charged with felonies were all Black.

LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY SUCCESSES

► **The Policy Center, in partnership with the American Children’s Campaign and Voices for Florida, has garnered incredible results in Florida and has received national recognition for those results. Together, we did the following successfully:**

- Advocated for and passed anti-shackling legislation for pregnant girls during labor. (2012)
- Passed the Safe Harbor Law (2012) and protected the intent of the law to recognize trafficked children as victims and not criminals. (2014)
- Amended Florida’s Safe Harbor laws to ensure CSEC victims were not detained in secure confinement. (2015)
- Wrote and secured passage of Expunction of Juvenile Records Law that clears arrest charges and convictions at age 21 to promote access to education and job opportunities. (2016)
- Wrote and secured passage of Confidentiality of Juvenile Records Law, which closes the loopholes and keeps records from being publicly available. (2016)
- Developed the program design and secured \$3.2 million in state appropriations to launch the statewide Open Doors Outreach Network of first responders for victims (predominantly ages 10–24) of sexual exploitation and trafficking in five Florida districts. Today, Open Doors is in 32 counties and has served over 1,000 survivors of sex trafficking statewide. (2017)

PROGRAMMING SUCCESSES

▶ **Piloted and expanded Girl Matters®: It's Elementary, a program designed to interrupt suspension and prevent the spiraling effect of girls entering the juvenile justice system (2010). The program still operates and has served 1,300 girls. While they are in the program, success rates of girls who do not receive a suspension continue to improve, with 89% in 2018 to 93% in 2019. These data points were not available in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. None of the girls have been arrested.**

- Published Girl-Centered Practice Training Institute© curriculum and provided training to key stakeholders, including the Department of Juvenile Justice. (2012)
- Launched Girl Matters®: Continuity of Care to cut incarceration rates by providing continuous therapeutic services for girls impacted by the justice system. (2013)
- Open Doors pilot, a first responder statewide advocacy network that provides services and supports to survivors of sex trafficking. (2017)
- Girl-Centered Practice Training Institute© became a certificate program through Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform (CJJR). (2021)

Appendix B. Media Headlines

► **The headlines below are samples specific to abuse and violence towards girls in juvenile placements in Florida. This does not include abuse occurring in schools, foster homes, afterschool programs, or other programs that are supposed to be safe places for children.**

- Entangled in the shadows: girls in the juvenile justice system, Judge Cindy Lederman, 11th Judicial Circuit, Miami-Dade, FL, Buffalo Law Review, October 1, 2000
- Sex allegations at girls' prison prompt inquiry, South Florida Sun-Sentinel, June 16, 2003
- Sex allegations at girls' prison prompt inquiry, Sun Sentinel (FIG), July 17, 2003
- Florida Institute for Girls, sexual abuse of inmates, Psych Watch, 2003
- 661 Kids abused in juvenile centers, Sun Sentinel, April 12, 2004
- Florida shuts down prison for teen girls, By Shana Gruskin and South Florida Sun-Sentinel, Orlando Sentinel, August 28, 2005
- What's the matter with Florida?, Salon.com, July 20, 2006
- Florida closes scandal ridden girls facility, takes over control of another juvenile facility, Prison Legal News, March 15, 2006
- Florida justice system harsher to underage girls, study finds, Courant, July 18, 2006
- State to shut troubled girls' facility (Umatilla), Orlando Sun Sentinel, August 17, 2006
- Guard, suspended in teen's death in custody, was fired from last job, Palm Beach Post, July 27, 2011
- Video shows girl, 15, battered in state juvenile prison, St. Augustine Record, December 13, 2012
- Shocking video shows girl, 15, battered in Florida juvenile jail (Milton Girls Juvenile Residential Facility), Daily Mail News, December 13, 2012
- Abuse of girls at Milton Detention Facility exposes flaws in Florida's Juvenile Justice, Flagler Live, December 18, 2012
- Are abused and traumatized girls disproportionately pushed into the justice system? A startling new study says: Yes, Witness LA, September 30, 2015
- Prisoners of profit, Florida's lax oversight enables systematic abuse at private youth prisons, Huffington Post, October 23, 2013

APPENDIX B

- States grapple with girls in the juvenile justice system, by Teresa Wiltz, Pew Trusts, November 25, 2015
- Florida juvenile justice staffers engaged in stalking, sex abuse, Miami Herald, October 13, 2017
- Youth still dying in Florida Juvenile Detention Center from abuse, neglect, Prison Legal News, March 9, 2017
- They were stalkers, sexters and rapists—and worked safeguarding Florida delinquents, by Carol Marbin Miller, USC Center for Health Journalism, October 10, 2017
- Editorial: The horror inside Florida’s juvenile detention centers, Tampa Bay News, October 13, 2017
- Investigation shows widespread abuse in Florida juvenile justice system, PBS News Hour, November 4, 2017
- Pasco youth worker charged with sexual battery, ABC Action News, September 6, 2018
- The institutionalized abuse of incarcerated girls, Kennedy School Review, August 13, 2018
- Teen accuses Pasco Juvenile Detention Supervisor of rape, by D’Ann Lawrence White, Patch.com, September 7, 2018
- Lehigh teen raped by guard in juvenile center (Pasco Girls Academy), Fox 4 News, September 7, 2018
- Investigation: Inmate violence at state-run Martin Girls Academy has local staff, taxpayers paying costs, by Melissa E. Holsman, TCPalm, March 8, 2015
- Martin Girls Academy loses county lease, will move to Miami, TCPalm, Feb. 15, 2019
- Florida deputy charged with child abuse after slamming teen girl to the ground by her throat, NBC News, November 5, 2019
- Sexual abuse fears at Florida detention centers, Orlando Sun Sentinel, July 13, 2020
- Sexual abuse persists in juvenile facilities despite years of reform, by Jana Allen, Layne Dowdall, Haillie Parker, and Chloe Johnson, News 21, August 21, 2020
- Manatee juvenile detention center sergeant charged with child abuse after surveillance video shows response to girl’s death in detention, Bradenton Herald, August 10, 2021
- New FL study finds Black girls receive unfair punishment, First Coast News, March 12, 2021

Appendix C. Data Tables

TABLE 1: DISPARITIES OF BLACK GIRLS ARRESTED AND INCARCERATED BY COUNTY, FY 2019-2020

		ARRESTED		INCARCERATED	
County	% of Black girls in General Population	# of Girls arrested	% Black of girls arrested	# of Girls incarcerated	% Black of girls incarcerated
Alachua	34%	88	82%	7	100%
Brevard	15%	273	36%	5	20%
Broward	39%	371	57%	8	87%
Duval	43%	201	67%	11	64%
Escambia	35%	328	72%	19	63%
Highlands	17%	50	44%	6	33%
Lee	14%	191	29%	10	20%
Manatee	14%	177	34%	7	71%
Marion	20%	183	40%	7	71%
Orange	25%	536	56%	9	67%
Palm Beach	28%	330	55%	8	50%
Pinellas	19%	287	55%	7	86%
Polk	20%	394	46%	16	38%
St. Lucie	31%	148	59%	7	43%
Volusia	16%	252	42%	12	50%

Reprinted from: *Sounding the Alarm: Criminalization of Black girls in Florida*, 2021, pg. 9

TABLE 2: THE EMOTIONAL HEALTH INDICATORS OF GIRLS IN FLORIDA BY RACE AND ETHNICITY—2018

	Native American/ American Indian	Asian	African American	Hispanic / Latina	Multiracial	Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	White	Statewide
Sadness	57%	49%	57%	54%	59%	54%	49%	53%
Hopelessness	38%	38%	35%	36%	41%	35%	36%	37%
Experience of depression	43%	31%	36%	38%	NA	49%	40%	38%
Sexual violence	17%	3%	8%	9%	NA	20%	9%	9%
Suicide ideation	26%	12%	16%	19%	NA	30%	19%	18%
Feel unsafe in school	28%	25%	36%	29%	34%	43%	26%	29%

Source: Patino Lydia, V. & Gordon, V analyses of Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey (FYSAS), 2018.

Appendix D. Statutes

BLUEPRINT STRATEGY 1

► Kaia Rolle Act

Under Section 8. Section 985.031, Florida Statutes, the Kaia Rolle Act created the first age limitation in Florida in 2020–2021 to read:

(1) This section may be cited as the “Kaia Rolle Act.”

(2) A child younger than 7 years of age may not be arrested, charged, or adjudicated delinquent for a delinquent act or violation of law based on an act occurring before he or she reaches 7 years of age, unless the violation of law is a forcible felony as defined in s. 776.08.

► Definitions Related to Domestic Violence

Under Florida law, Domestic Violence Battery is defined as any actual and intentional touching or striking of another person without consent, or the intentional causing of bodily harm to another person, when the person struck is a “family or household member.”

Under Section 741.28, Florida Statutes, the term “family or household member” can include the following:

- Wives and husbands;
- Ex-wives and ex-husbands;
- Individuals related by blood or marriage;
- Individuals living together as a family;
- Individuals who have resided together as if a family in the past; and
- Persons who have a child in common (regardless of prior marriage).

The statute specifically requires that the family or household members must be currently residing or have in the past resided together in the same single dwelling unit. The only exception is for persons who have a child in common.

BLUEPRINT STRATEGY 2

► **Florida Statute 984.02 Legislative intent for the juvenile system:**

Florida Legislature intends that detention care, in addition to providing secure and safe custody, will promote the health and well-being of the children committed thereto and provide an environment that fosters their social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development.

BLUEPRINT STRATEGY 4

► **Florida Statute 985.66 Juvenile justice training; staff development and training; Juvenile Justice Training Trust Fund.**

(1) **LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE** — In order to enable the state to provide a systematic approach to staff development and training for judges, state attorneys, public defenders, law enforcement officers, school district personnel, and juvenile justice program staff that will meet the needs of such persons in their discharge of duties while at the same time meeting the requirements for the American Correction Association accreditation by the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections, it is the purpose of the Legislature to require the department to establish, maintain, and oversee the operation of juvenile justice training, programs, and courses in the state. The purpose of the Legislature in establishing staff development and training programs is to provide employees of the department, any private or public entity, or contract providers who provide services or care for children under the responsibility of the department with the knowledge and skills needed to appropriately interact with children and provide such care and services; to positively impact the recidivism of children in the juvenile justice system; and to afford greater protection of the public through an improved level of services delivered by a professionally trained juvenile justice staff to children who are alleged to be or who have been found to be delinquent.

(3) **JUVENILE JUSTICE TRAINING PROGRAM** — The department shall establish a certifiable program for juvenile justice training pursuant to this section, and all department program staff and providers who deliver direct care services pursuant to contract with the department shall be required to participate in and successfully complete the department-approved program of training pertinent to their areas of responsibility. Judges, state attorneys, and public defenders, law enforcement officers, school district personnel, and employees of contract providers who provide services or care for children under the responsibility of the department may participate in such training program. For the juvenile justice program staff, the department shall, based on a job-task analysis:

(a) Design, implement, maintain, evaluate, and revise a basic training program, including a competency-based examination, for the purpose of providing minimum employment training qualifications for all juvenile justice personnel.

(b) Design, implement, maintain, evaluate, and revise an advanced training program, including a competency-based examination for each training course, which is intended to enhance knowledge, skills, and abilities related to job performance.

(d) The department is encouraged to design, implement, maintain, evaluate, and revise juvenile justice training courses, or to enter into contracts for such training courses, that are intended to provide for the safety and well-being of both citizens and juvenile offenders.

BLUEPRINT STRATEGY 5

► 985.02 Legislative intent for the juvenile justice system

(1) GENERAL PROTECTIONS FOR CHILDREN — It is a purpose of the Legislature that the children of this state be provided with the following protections:

(a) Protection from abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

(b) A permanent and stable home.

(c) A safe and nurturing environment which will preserve a sense of personal dignity and integrity.

(d) Adequate nutrition, shelter, and clothing.

(e) Effective treatment to address physical, social, and emotional needs, regardless of geographical location.

(f) Equal opportunity and access to quality and effective education, which will meet the individual needs of each child, and to recreation and other community resources to develop individual abilities.

(g) Access to prevention programs and services.

(h) Gender-specific programming and gender-specific program models and services that comprehensively address the needs of a targeted gender group.

(2) SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES — The Legislature finds that children in the care of the state's delinquency system need appropriate health care services, that the impact of substance abuse on health indicates the need for health care services to include substance abuse services where appropriate, and that it is in the state's best interest that such children be provided the services they need to enable them to become and remain independent of state care. In order to provide these services, the state's delinquency system must have the ability to identify and provide appropriate

intervention and treatment for children with personal or family-related substance abuse problems. It is therefore the purpose of the Legislature to provide authority for the state to contract with community substance abuse treatment providers for the development and operation of specialized support and overlay services for the delinquency system, which will be fully implemented and utilized as resources permit.

(3) JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION — It is the policy of the state with respect to juvenile justice and delinquency prevention to first protect the public from acts of delinquency. In addition, it is the policy of the state to:

(a) Develop and implement effective methods of preventing and reducing acts of delinquency, with a focus on maintaining and strengthening the family as a whole so that children may remain in their homes or communities.

(b) Develop and implement effective programs to prevent delinquency, to divert children from the traditional juvenile justice system, to intervene at an early stage of delinquency, and to provide critically needed alternatives to institutionalization and deep-end commitment.

(c) Provide well-trained personnel, high-quality services, and cost-effective programs within the juvenile justice system.

(d) Increase the capacity of local governments and public and private agencies to conduct rehabilitative treatment programs and to provide research, evaluation, and training services in the field of juvenile delinquency prevention.

(7) GENDER-SPECIFIC PROGRAMMING —

(a) The Legislature finds that the needs of children served by the juvenile justice system are gender-specific. A gender-specific approach is one in which programs, services, and treatments comprehensively address the unique developmental needs of a targeted gender group under the care of the department. Young women and men have different pathways to delinquency, display different patterns of offending, and respond differently to interventions, treatment, and services.

(b) Gender-specific interventions focus on the differences between young females' and young males' social roles and responsibilities, access to and use of resources, history of trauma, and reasons for interaction with the juvenile justice system. Gender-specific programs increase the effectiveness of programs by making interventions more appropriate to the specific needs of young women and men and ensuring that these programs do not unknowingly create, maintain, or reinforce gender roles or relations that may be damaging.

(8) TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE — The Legislature finds that the department should use trauma-informed care as an approach to treating children with histories of trauma. Trauma-informed care assists service providers in recognizing the symptoms of trauma and acknowledges the role trauma has played in the child's life. Services for children should be based on an understanding of the vulnerabilities and triggers of trauma survivors that traditional service delivery approaches may exacerbate, so that these services and programs can be more supportive and avoid re-traumatization. The department should use trauma-specific interventions that are designed to address the consequences of trauma in the child and to facilitate healing.

Appendix E. Additional Resources

SETTING AGE LIMITS

- **National Juvenile Justice Network (NJJN) National Report (by state):** The NJJN calls for all states to set the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 14. The report also contains a toolkit for raising the age. Raising the Minimum Age for Prosecuting Children (njjn.org)
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN).** Although there is no specified minimum age of criminal responsibility under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the UN's Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty recommends that all UN member states set a minimum age of criminal responsibility no lower than age 14.
- **Sample Jurisdictions:**
 - District of Columbia: General Order Metropolitan Police OPS 305 01
 - No handcuffing policy under age 12.
 - Officers cannot handcuff juveniles age 12 and under unless the juvenile presents a danger to themselves or others.
 - When handcuffing juveniles aged 13–17, officers must consider the severity and circumstances of the offense.
 - https://go.mpdconline.com/GO/GO_305_01.pdf
 - California Senate Bill No. 439, Chapter 1006
 - Amended the law so that youth under 12 years old cannot be adjudicated in juvenile court, except in cases of murder or rape.
 - https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180SB439

PHASING OUT USE OF DETENTION/VALID COURT ORDER

- **Washington State Senate Bill 5290** eliminated the use of the valid court order exception to place youth in detention for noncriminal behavior, including truancy.
 - Senate Bill 5290
 - Senate Bill Report 5290
- **Nevada Chapter 62C.020 Procedure before adjudication**
 - This policy results in a 50% reduction in the use of secure detention for girls in Washoe County.
- **Ombudsperson Roles and Responsibilities**
 - National Conference of State Legislatures. Provides state-specific information regarding ombudsman programs related to children's services. See Virginia's Juvenile Justice Ombudsman Program operated under the Office of Inspector General.
 - Children's Ombudsman Offices | Office of the Child Advocate ([ncsl.org](https://nysl.org/))

JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM RESOURCES

- **Opportunity Based Probation (OBP)** centers on the brain development of youth and recognizes that a punitive probation is not an effective tool to reduce youth recidivism. The OBP model integrates new practices within the phases of probation and includes family engagement, structured goal setting, rewards, and positive youth development. Goals are developed with the youth and are aimed at addressing the root causes of entry into the justice system.
 - OBP — CoLab for Community and Behavioral Health Policy (uwcolab.org)
 - <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5935ee955893fc011586f1304/t/5de8007ec172cb20cebf2aab/1575485567786/OBP+report+10.9.2019.pdf>
- **Detention Reform — Annie E. Casey Foundation: *Making Detention Reform for Girls Work***
 - Sherman, Mendel, and Irvine developed this guide to improve detention for girls. This guide was created around the JDAI core strategies through a gender lens
 - [Making Detention Reform for Girls Work \(aecf.org\)](https://www.aecf.org/making-detention-reform-for-girls-work)
 - [Detention Reform and Girls: Challenges and Solutions \(aecf.org\)](https://www.aecf.org/detention-reform-and-girls-challenges-and-solutions)

- **Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform: Girl-Centered Practice Training Institute® (GCPI)**
 - The GCPI trains professionals to better support and work with system-involved girls. It teaches effective research and evidence-based practices for addressing the needs of girls. The five-day training includes elevating the girl’s experience and expertise, building connections, giving context to behavior, activism as a healing tool, and core building blocks for girl-centered programming and interventions. The training also provides practical interventions and frameworks.
 - <https://www.seethegirl.org/what-we-do/training/>
 - <https://cjjr.georgetown.edu/certificate-programs/>
- **Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality: Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity**
 - The Initiative on Gender Justice and Opportunity addresses inequities at the crossroads of gender, race, and economics. Focus is on the school-to-prison and abuse-to-prison pipelines, sexual abuse/violence, trauma unique to girls, barriers to healthcare, restorative justice, and the adultification of Black girls. Reports from this initiative elevates the voices and lived experiences of communities of color.
 - [Reports—The Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality](#)
 - [Other Resources—The Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality](#)
- **Coalition of Juvenile Justice**
 - The Coalition of Juvenile Justice (CJJ) is a national agency of state advisory groups (SAGs), organizations, and individuals, including youth working to prevent children’s entry to the juvenile justice system. This work is made possible through evidence-based policies and practices, recommendations to policymakers, and assisting states to meet the requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. CJJ offers resources and toolkits to further accomplish this work.
 - [Resources | CJJ \(juvjustice.org\)](#)
 - [Our Work | CJJ \(juvjustice.org\)](#)
- **National Black Women’s Justice Institute**
 - The National Black Women’s Justice Institute (NBWJI) conducts research to address the criminalization of Black women and girls in all aspects of their life including school, survivors of CSEC, and in the justice system, working so that systems can be places of healing. Through its work, NBWJI elevates the voices of Black women and educates the public. Resources raise awareness and provide policy recommendations to address these issues.
 - [Resources | NBWJI](#)
- **Full Frames Initiative**
 - Works to dismantle inequities with a focus on access to well-being. Through collaborative efforts, the Full Frame Initiative works with governments, communities, and nonprofits to create systemic change.
 - www.fullframeinitiative.org
 - [RESOURCES—Full Frame Initiative](#)

Appendix F. Glossary

▶ **Arrest/Referral/Intake**

Once a youth is arrested, they can either be formally charged or diverted. If a formal charge is issued, then youth undergo a detention hearing. Pending the outcome of the detention hearing, youth will either be released into a guardian's custody or placed in detention until the adjudicatory hearing. At that hearing, youth are either found not to have committed the offense and are released, or they are determined to have committed the offense and face a dispositional hearing. The dispositional hearing can have two primary outcomes: probation/supervision or residential commitment.

▶ **Adultification**

The perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like than white girls of the same age, which effectively reduces or removes the consideration of childhood as a mediating factor in Black youths' behavior, as well as its possible causal connection with negative outcomes across a diverse range of public systems, including education, juvenile justice, and child welfare.

▶ **Baker Act**

The Baker Act is an involuntary 72-hour hold of an individual in an institution for evaluation. It can be initiated by judges, law enforcement, physicians, or mental health professionals. There must be evidence the person has a mental illness or is at risk of harm to themselves or others.

▶ **Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)**

Federal and state law defines CSE to be any commercial sex act induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act is a minor. CSE includes exchanging any sex act for anything of value and includes prostitution, stripping, and pornography.

▶ **Civil Citation**

If a youth commits a misdemeanor offense, they are eligible to receive a civil citation. This prevents the youth from having an arrest record. Civil citation is given at the discretion of the law enforcement officer, and rather than making an official arrest, civil citation is issued. It allows youth to receive a comprehensive assessment and then have alternative (non-judicial) interventions to address the problem. Civil citation is effective because it prevents youth from having an arrest record, specific pathways into the system can be addressed, service referrals can be provided, and case management can more effectively occur.

▶ **Commitment**

Commitment is the most severe disposition for juveniles, often referred to as residential lock-up. According to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, there are three levels of commitment in the state, and facilities vary by restrictiveness. Eight facilities are designated for girls; six are non-secure, and two are high and maximum-risk. Thirty-four facilities are designated for boys; twenty-two are non-secure, seven are high-risk, four are high and maximum-risk, and one is maximum-risk.

Cross-over Involvement

Youth who come into contact with the Department of Juvenile Justice while in a Department of Children and Families out of home placement.

Detention (Secure)

Youth can be placed in detention prior to an adjudication hearing when less restrictive placements are not appropriate—youth pose a risk to public safety, their attendance in court cannot be guaranteed, or as the result of state mandates. A detention facility is where youth wait for their adjudication hearing (court date) or for residential commitment placement if there are no beds available. This is the juvenile version of adult jail. The decision to place youth in detention includes current offenses, prior history, legal status, and any aggravating or mitigating factors. Detention services include secure detention, home detention, and electronic monitoring with secure detention being the most frequently used option.

Direct File

When the State Attorney decides to waive a youth out of the juvenile justice and into the adult system for their court hearing and penalties.

Disposition

Decision made by the judge which includes the sanctions, conditions, and services imposed on a youth by the court.

Diversion

A program designed to keep a youth out of the juvenile justice system. The State Attorney's office has discretion to send the youth to non-judicial diversion. When youth are diverted, they have requirements to go to meetings, including a diversion class. If they complete all of their requirements (sanctions), the case is closed.

Foster Care

According to the Department of Children and Families, foster care is the placement of a child who has been removed from their home and needs to be under state supervision. This child could live with a relative, non-relative, or with individuals or families who have requested to be able to take dependent children into their home. Foster homes are licensed and inspected regularly.

Incarceration

Incarceration is the most severe sanction imposed on a youth by the court. Youth who are incarcerated have been determined by the court that they committed the act with which they are charged. Girls from the First Coast are incarcerated across the state of Florida in residential programs based on risk level. Girls spend an average of six to nine months in lock-up.

Intake

The screening and assessment process when a youth is arrested or taken into custody for an alleged offense. At intake, a youth receives a PACT assessment.

► **Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO)**

The JPO is an employee of the Department of Juvenile Justice and is responsible for intake of youth and monitoring their community supervision (probation). Youth on probation are assigned to a JPO, who monitors the youth and their sanctions. If a youth violates their sanctions, then the JPO can file paperwork to show the youth is in violation of their probation.

► **New Law Violation of Probation**

New law violations occur when a youth commits a new delinquent act while on probation.

► **Non-law Violation of Probation**

Non-law violations, also known as technical violations, occur when a youth is noncompliant with the technical conditions of their probation (e.g., running away from home, not going to school, violating curfew), but has not committed a new violation of law/criminal offense.

► **Placement**

Placement can include secure confinement in a residential program, residential treatment facilities, shelter care, a safe house, or out-of home placement.

► **Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)**

A risk and needs assessment tool administered by the FL DJJ used to determine a youth's needs, strengths, and risk of re-offending.

► **Probation**

Probation is the Florida DJJ's primary form of community supervision. At the time of disposition, youth on probation are ordered by a judge to perform specific sanctions, which can include community service work, a curfew, school attendance, and victim restitution. A court-appointed Probation Officer monitors and supervises the youth on probation and determines when the sanctions are complete and the youth can be released from supervision.

► **Recidivism**

Recidivism occurs when the court finds that the youth committed a new violation of law within 12 months of completing a program.

► **Revoking Probation**

Once a violation of probation occurs, the Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO) files an affidavit for violation of probation (VOP) for the delinquency act or any technical violations. The state attorney office (SAO) files a petition for delinquency with the court for youth who have committed a delinquent act.

Upon the formal filing of a violation, if the courts find that a violation (technical or new-law) occurred, the youth's probation may be modified and continued or revoked and the child committed to DJJ.

► **Sanction**

Court-ordered requirements. Being out of compliance with sanctions results in violation of probation.

APPENDIX F

► **Status Offense**

An action that is not illegal for an adult, but is illegal for juveniles such as running away, underage drinking, or truancy.

► **Violation of Probation**

There are several ways a youth can violate probation including committing a new offense or not abiding by court-ordered sanctions (technical VOP or non-law VOP). See definitions above for new-law violation of probation and non-law violation of probation.

Endnotes

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ENDNOTES

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**We envision communities where
ALL girls have alternatives to lock
up, a community where ALL girls
are safe, valued, and celebrated.**

