

JUSTICE-INVOLVED GIRLS

Compiled by Lily Gleicher, Ph.D.

Research indicates that, overall, justice-involved girls **experience** consistently **higher levels of violence and traumatic events** compared to non-justice-involved girls and boys.¹

HISTORY OF JUSTICE-INVOLVED GIRLS ²

- Proportion of female youth arrests increased between 1996 (23%) and 2009 (29%).
- There was an increase in girls arrested in the late 2000s, but this same increase does not appear for boys.
- 2006 to 2015, juvenile delinquency decreased for both boys and girls.
- 2015: Girls accounted for less than one-third of youth arrests, but a larger proportion of larceny-theft (39%), simple assault (36%), disorderly conduct (37%), prostitution-related offenses (76%), and a higher percentage of status offenses.
 - 54% of all female delinquency cases involved Black or Latinx youth.
- Research indicates girls are more likely to be held in residential placement for technical violations than boys.
- Trauma exposure is associated with other negative psychological and health outcomes for girls--self-harm, risky sexual behaviors, substance use, internalizing behaviors (i.e. anxiety, depression).
- Females are twice as likely to report prior physical abuse, particularly by a sibling or mother.

DEFINITIONS



Gender-responsive:³ Creating programs and practices that are grounded in girls' perceptions of their environments and how the justice system can respond to female-specific concerns (e.g., promoting positive, healthy relationships, empowerment, etc.).

Gender-specificity:⁴ Issues that may contribute to girls' risk for delinquency that look different from their male counterparts. (e.g., differing limitations related to girls academic achievement, high-conflict families, health issues, their environments, etc.).

**These terms also apply for male populations and LGBTQI populations regarding reponsivity and specificity.*

GENDER-SPECIFIC RISK & PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR GIRLS DELINQUENCY & JUSTICE-INVOLVEMENT ⁵

RISK

- Family conflict, family-based violence, harsh punishment
- Chaotic home environment
- Parental neglect, maltreatment
- Physical, emotional, &/or sexual victimization; prior victimization experiences
- Co-occurring mental health & substance misuse/disorder needs
- Early pubertal maturation

PROTECTIVE

- Support from caring adult
- Academic success/achievements, connectedness
- Healthy relationship formation during mid-adolescence
- Caregiver warmth through middle childhood
- Effective parental/caregiver monitoring
- Prosocial peer relationships

**Not an exhaustive list of factors*

BEST PRACTICES ⁶

- Services that are gender-responsive & may target gender-specific issues include those that:
 - Use relationship-based approach/relational
 - Empower girls through resource attainment
 - Use a trauma-informed approach
 - Are contextually and culturally competent
 - Use community-based systems and strengths-based programs
 - Are restorative in nature, navigating system with attention to trauma & victimization
 - Individualize services to meet various needs of girls
 - Engage a multi-systems approach
- Train all juvenile and criminal justice practitioners & professionals about female pathways to delinquency, gender-responsivity, and gender-specificity. Including attorneys, judges, probation/parole professionals, providers, and others.
- Disengage from mandatory or pro-arrest policies, as they disproportionately impact girls.

Gender-responsive programs and practices are scarce. Information on efficacy of gender-responsive programs that do exist is limited due to lack of evaluation(s). ⁷

Gender-responsive risk/needs assessments include both gender-neutral & gender-specific risk & protective factors for identifying potential risk for recidivism. This creates a more holistic case plan that is individualized to the additional needs of girls.

Create supportive political and ecological climate within the organization and among stakeholders--shared mission and goals.

Gender non-specific programs like Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MDFT) are effective for both genders--the basis of good gender-responsive programming starts with good general programming..



Information compiled by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority.

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RESOURCES

Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development at the University of Colorado-Boulder, Institute of Behavioral Science. <https://www.blueprintsprograms.org/>

CrimeSolutions.gov. National of Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. <https://www.crimesolutions.gov/>

Center for Gender and Justice. <https://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org/>

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