



A CAMPAIGN OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE & DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COALITION

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FACT SHEET: GIRLS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

“I didn’t like how you had to put your hands behind your back, and how they’d restrain you. I was four months pregnant, and this [staff member] slammed me up against the wall. I could’ve miscarried! He knew I was pregnant because I had purple laces. I was in mudroom standing with my hands in a diamond.” – Dana G., 16, held in a unit at Tyron Girls Center in Johnstown, NY¹

What are the current JJDPA provisions related to gender?

To access formula funds under the JJDPA, each state must submit a three-year plan to the Department of Justice, including a plan for providing needed gender-specific services. States must also assure equitable treatment according to gender.

In addition, programs for girls and prenatal care for pregnant juveniles are listed as allowable expenditures under the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Block Grant, but this program has never been funded.

How should these provisions be strengthened?

- Add an accountability mechanism for the existing state plan requirement, which is often ignored.
- Require at least one member of the State Advisory Group (SAG) to have expertise in gender-specific services.
- Direct funding to gender-specific prevention and treatment programs under Title V Delinquency Prevention grants.
- Eliminate the Valid Court Order exception for Status Offenders.
- Increase research and information dissemination on effective practices.

Why are these changes needed?

Between 1991 and 2003 girls' detention rates rose by 98%; boys' detention rates rose 29%². **The juvenile justice system remains under-equipped to handle the increased presence of girls.** Because boys have dominated and still dominate the juvenile justice system, juvenile facilities, staffing, policies, and programs have been slow to respond to the girl population.

Research points to **significant differences** in the male and female population that call for a gender-specific approach:

- In 2010, boys' arrest rates were down by 26.5% but girls' arrest rates were down by only 15.5%.³
- Girls comprised less than 10% of all arrests for violent offenses.⁴
- Girls receive inappropriately harsh treatment for status offenses, for which they are routinely detained.⁵
- As a group, girls in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately "high-need" and "low-risk" which means that they have critical needs for services but do not, generally, pose a serious threat to the public.⁶
- Sex-trafficking disproportionately affects girls. Those victims are more often treated as offenders rather than victims.⁷

Case Studies:

In 2002, an investigation by the Assistant Attorney General of Mississippi reported on girls being placed naked in a windowless, dark isolation cell, with only a drain in the floor, for as long as three days to a week at a time. The facility had no separate logbook to record the use of this isolation cell.⁸

In 2002, a 12 year-old runaway from New York was taken into custody after she was found on the streets of Washington, D.C. Having no available alternative placement, the girl was sent to the city's juvenile facility. She was placed in a cell with two other girls, who sexually assaulted her.⁹

Prepared by Girls, Inc. www.girlsinc.org

¹ Lewis, Mie (2006). *Custody and Control: Conditions of Confinement in New York's Juvenile Prisons for Girls*, New York, NY: American Civil Liberties Union and Human Rights Watch.

² Meda Chesney-Lind et al., *Girls' Troubles, Girls' Delinquency, and Gender Responsive Programming: A Review*, 41 *Austl. & N.Z. J. Criminology*, 162, 163 (2008).

³ FBI, Uniform Crime Report, *Crime in the United States*, 2010 Tbl. 33 (2011).

⁴ Charles Puzzanchera, *Juvenile Arrests 2008*, *Juvenile Justice Bulletin* (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Washington D.C.), at 3.

⁵ Watson, Liz & Edelman, Peter, *Improving the Juvenile Justice System for Girls*, Georgetown Center on Poverty, Inequality, and Public Policy, at 2 (2012).

⁶ *Id.*, at 1.

⁷ Kristin Finklea, *Juvenile Victims of Domestic Sex Trafficking: Juvenile Justice Issues*, Congressional Research Service(CRS) Report, at 4, August 5, 2014.

⁸ Boyd, Ralph F., Jr., Assistant Attorney General (June 19, 2003). Letter to The Honorable Ronnie Musgrove, Governor of Mississippi, Re: CRIPA Investigation of Oakley and Columbia Training Schools in Raymond and Columbia, Mississippi.

⁹ "In the City's Hands." *The Washington Post*. Dec. 11, 2002: A32.