



Gender Responsiveness Workgroup 2024 Report

GOAL AND MISSION:

Connecticut is committed to ensuring that gender-responsive solutions, policies and practices are implemented sustainably throughout all systems of care for youth with legal system involvement.

<p>WORKGROUP:</p> <p>GENDER RESPONSIVENESS WORKGROUP</p>	<p>RECOMMENDATION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Public Act 14-217 Sec. 79 – insert (k): no later than January 1, 2024 there shall be the creation of a Gender Responsiveness Workgroup created in partnership with Trafficking in Persons Council (TIPC), responsible for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Creating a landscape analysis and conducting a gap assessment of gender responsive work in the state; no later than January 1, 2025<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Define what is meant by gender responsive and what makes a practice gender responsive1. Hear from youth, families, and communities directly impacted2. Review national best practices – approaches, service types, and system considerations3. Review past work and legislation on gender responsiveness4. Identify gaps resulting from system/program changes.5. Review existing work and practices on gender responsiveness among agencies and community providers6. Review data, broken down by race and ethnicity, gender, age, location, and level of system involvement (type of offense/ judicial handling).ii. Collaboratively develop a framework for reporting, collecting, and distributing police data on human trafficking.<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. TYJI collaborate with TIPC and generate regular analysis and reports for data collected, received, and reported to TIPC or through JJPOC Gender Responsiveness Workgroup regarding human trafficking.iii. Compile a set of legislative and or policy recommendations for JJPOC and TIPC to consider.<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. Recommendations for improvements to the continuum of care that include trauma informed and culturally informed approaches, services, treatment, and permanency models for girls and include:
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Continuity of clinical support across a continuum of placement/treatment settings. b. Specialized treatment foster care for girls who have experienced sexual abuse and/or domestic minor sex trafficking, including children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. c. Specialized training for direct care providers and treatment providers. d. Consistent and constant source of support (e.g., peer mentor, therapist) for the young person. e. Programs and practices that are developed with the input of sexual abuse and trafficking survivors. f. Service and treatment setting options that specifically address the needs of children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. g. Examination of successful treatment/support models from other jurisdictions to inform service enhancement in CT. h. Supports for youth who identify as trans or gender non-conforming i. Diversion options through JORB or other diversion models j. Quality assurance framework/monitoring framework <p>iii. The Gender Responsiveness Workgroup and Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Committee will share information on gender responsive practices and policies for youth with child welfare involvement.</p>
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BACKGROUND:

For over two decades, the US federal government has recognized that there is a need to respond to girls’ unique delinquency-related needs. Gender bias was prohibited by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, and the Act required states applying for federal grants to provide evidence of gender-specific services for girls, and gender-specific service plan for prevention and treatment of

delinquency. ¹Gender-responsive approaches to address girls' specific needs have since become widely accepted as best practice.² Nine years ago, Connecticut was championed as a national leader in implementing robust gender responsive programming. Past initiatives include legislation directing multiple state agencies to create a prevention plan for a continuum of community-based services designed for delinquent girls.¹ Additional gender specific system investments were made in the Families With Service Needs (FWSN) initiative and a 2006 Connecticut Judicial Branch, Court Support Services Division (CSSD), Gender Responsive Probation Model (GRPM) in 2006. The core objectives of the GRPM initiative aimed not only to improve the quality of supervision services for at-risk and delinquent girls, but also strengthen the unique protective factors for females, lower individual risks and reduce further involvement in the system.

However, according to data from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Program Guide, only 13 existing programs nationally— approximately six percent of total programs in CT— are specifically designed for girls.³ Present approaches in Connecticut have followed similar trends and have focused less attention on the engendered differences in girls' pathways into delinquency, their offense patterns, behaviors and needs. Primary programmatic emphasis has been focused on boys, who are overrepresented in almost all areas of the youth justice system, and subsequently applied to young girls without adequate consideration of girl's distinct needs. Even evidence-based program models predominantly rely on data outcomes from a male dominated population. Consequently, existing practices have left girls in the youth justice system an underserved and understudied minority. A problematic paradox, considering young girls represent about 30% of the juvenile justice population in Connecticut.⁴

It is important to distinguish between sexual orientation and gender conformity. The numbers may be even higher considering consensual understanding of gender and the significance of intersecting identities has evolved to include lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning (LGBTQ+), and or non-conforming identities. According to a 2014, OJJDP literature review, youth who identify as LGBTQ are twice as likely as their heterosexual peers to be arrested and detained for status and other nonviolent offenses.⁵ Likewise, an analysis of the National Survey of Youth in Custody by the Bureau of Justice Statistics found that approximately 12% of youth in out-of-home placement identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or other sexual orientations and gender identity.⁶ Given the increasing number of both gender-nonconforming young women who identify as LGBTQ+ and or other identities, it is critical that gender responsive case planning, safety assessment, and dispositional provisions recognize the pathways and experiences of LGBQ/GNCT youth. Research has found LGBTQ+ and gender non-conforming girls have distinctive needs and pathways into the juvenile justice system; and are a higher risk than peers for a host of negative outcomes as a result of prejudice and discrimination against LGBTQ+.⁷ It is not unusual for LGBTQ youth to experience rejection

¹ Greene, Peters and Associates. (1998). *Guiding principles for promising female programming: An inventory of best practices*. US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

² Morash, M., & Hoskins, K. M. (2022). Effective Community Interventions for Justice-Involved Girls and Women in the United States. *The Wiley handbook on what works with girls and women in conflict with the law: A critical review of theory, practice, and policy*, 256-266. Doi: 10.1002/9781119874898.ch18

³Javdani, S., & Allen, N. E. (2016). An ecological model for intervention for juvenile justice- involved girls: Development and preliminary prospective evaluation. *Feminist Criminology*, 11(2), 135-162;

⁴ <https://data.ct.gov/stories/s/Juvenile-Justice-Policy-and-Oversight-Committee-JJ/efuz-5jhe/>

⁵ [LGBTQ Youths in the Juvenile Justice System Literature Review \(ojp.gov\)](https://www.ojjdp.org/literature-review/literature-review-2014)

⁶ [Sexual orientation and gender identity in BJS data collections | Bureau of Justice Statistics \(ojp.gov\)](https://www.bjs.ojp.gov/publications/special-reports/sexual-orientation-and-gender-identity-in-bjs-data-collections)

⁷ <https://impactjustice.org/gender-responsive-programming-brief/>;

from their families, subsequently leading to them being kicked out of their homes; and or bullied and harassed at school, two examples of why youth tend to run away or become truant from school.⁸

BEST PRACTICES

Gender responsiveness refers to a comprehensive systems response that emphasizes the importance of girls' experiences and pathways into behaviors identified as delinquent and which addresses girls' unique developmental, social, and psychological needs. What makes gender-specific programs different from gender-nonspecific programs is the concentration on some of the differences between girls and boys and the provision of services that address the distinct needs of girls in the justice system. Gender-nonspecific programs are not necessarily gender neutral, as some have been primarily designed and developed to respond to boys' delinquency. Although the term—gender specific can be interpreted to be relevant for both boys and girls, and though the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act defines gender-specific services as “services designed to address needs unique to the gender of the individual to whom such services are provided,” they often are used as a reference solely to reflect programming for girls.⁹

While gender-neutral approaches—if evidence-based—can be effective in reducing recidivism for both young boys and girls, research has shown that gender-responsive approaches result in far better outcomes. Even though adolescent boys and girls often experience similar risk factors, research suggests that boys and girls have uniquely different proclivities in sensitivity and rates of exposure to risk. For example, studies have shown boys are generally exposed to higher rates of gun and community violence victimization when compared to girls¹⁰; whereas sexual assault and dating violence is a risk factor for both boys and girls, the rate of exposure is greater for girls¹¹. Research has also concluded girls in the juvenile justice system have higher psychological and mental health needs than boys.¹² Experts contend this is largely due to gender related coping styles. Females respond differently to stress and often internalize stress which may lead to a

⁸ <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/newsletter/ojjdp-news-glance-septemberoctober-2023/pride-justice-resource-center-provides-training-resources-ensure-equity-justice-involved-lgbtq2s>

⁹ Development Services Group, Inc. August 2023. “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System.” Literature review. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/girls-juvenile-justice-system>.

¹⁰Bottiani, J.H., Camacho, D.A., Lindstrom Johnson, S., and Bradshaw, C.P. 2021. Annual research review: Youth firearm violence disparities in the United States and implications for prevention. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 62(5):563–579; Estrada, S., Gee, D.G., Bozic, I., Cinguina, M., Joormann, J., and Baskin–Sommers, A. 2021. Individual and environmental correlates of childhood maltreatment and exposure to community violence: Utilizing a latent profile and a multilevel meta-analytic approach. *Psychological Medicine* 1–17.

¹¹Basile, K.C., Clayton, H.B., DeGue, S., Gilford, J.W., Vagi, K J., Suarez, N.A., Zwald, M.L., and Lowry, R. 2020. Interpersonal violence victimization among high school students—Youth Risk Behavior Survey, United States, 2019. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report Supplements* 69(1):28–37; Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Ormrod, R., Hamby, S.L., and Kracke, K. 2009. National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence—OJJDP’s Juvenile Justice Bulletin. Washington, DC: DOJ, OJP, OJJDP; Finkelhor, D., Turner, H.A., Shattuck, A., and Hamby, S.L. 2015. Prevalence of childhood exposure to violence, crime, and abuse: Results from the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence. *Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics* 169(8):746–754; Tharp, A.T., McNaughton Reyes, H.L., Foshee, V., Swahn, M.H., Hall, J.E., and Logan, J. 2017. Examining the prevalence and predictors of injury from adolescent dating violence. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 26(5):445–461

¹² Borschmann, R., Janca, E., Carter, A., Willoughby, M., Hughes, N., Snow, K., Stockings, E., Hill, N.T.M., Hocking, J., Love, A., Patton, G.C., Sawyer, S.M., Fazel, S., Puljević, C., Robinson, J., and Kinner, S.A. 2020. The health of adolescents in detention: A global scoping review. *The Lancet Public Health* 5(2):e114–e126.

diagnosis of anxiety, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder, and or emotion dysregulation¹³, whereas young boys are more likely to externalize stress in the form acting out in anger or with aggression.

Gender specific interventions, treatments, program services and reentry plans are critical before, during, and after court involvement. A 2019 evaluation was conducted of the Gender-Responsive Intervention for Female Juvenile Offenders Program. This program was offered to adjudicated girls in the juvenile justice system with identified high risk and needs, and provided them with personalized safety, empowerment, and family and relationship support—all in the context of community-based services. A twenty-four-month follow-up showed program participants were significantly less likely to have a new offense petitioned to court compared with girls who did not receive gender responsive services.¹⁴ Similarly, an evaluation of Roses, a community-based, trauma-informed, gender-responsive advocacy intervention for girls 11 to 17 years old who are at risk for or already involved in the juvenile justice system, showed significant statistical differences for girls who participated in their program compared to the control group. The study showed a positive reduction of risk factors for the intervention group of young girls; for example, girls were less likely to engage in physical fights and minor status offending behavior (i.e., missing fewer days of school).¹⁵

DATA

Nationwide, girls involved in the juvenile justice system have long histories of chronic inter-generational adversity, violence and are multisystem involved. Research data has consistently pointed to a strong link between victimization, trauma, and girls' delinquency. Adolescent girls in the juvenile justice system, are also more likely to have history of human trafficking.¹⁶ Studies on child sexual abuse histories of both youth and adults with justice system involvement, suggest pointedly higher instance of sexual abuse for girls than for boys. A Bureau of Justice Statistics report on the characteristics of suspected human trafficking incidents, estimated nearly 94 percent of sex trafficked victims were female, and more than half were age 17 or younger.¹⁷ Additionally, a recent U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Child Maltreatment 2020 report showed 88.6 percent of the 877 reported victims of sex trafficking were female.¹⁸

¹³ Beaudry, G., Yu, R., Långström, N., and Fazel, S. 2021. An updated systematic review and meta-regression analysis: Mental disorders among adolescents in juvenile detention and correctional facilities. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry* 60(1):46–60.

¹⁴ Anderson, V.R., Walerych, B.M., Campbell, N.A., Barnes, A.R., Davidson, W.S., Campbell, C.A., Onifade, E., and Petersen, J.L. 2019. Gender-responsive intervention for female juvenile offenders: A quasi-experimental outcome evaluation. *Feminist Criminology* 14(1):24–44.

¹⁵ Javdani, Shabnam, and Nancy S. Daneau. 2020. "Reducing Crime for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System Through Researcher–Practitioner Partnerships.": Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice.

¹⁶ Reid, J.A., Baglivio, M.T., Piquero, A.R., Greenwald, M.A., and Epps, N. 2017. Human trafficking of minors and childhood adversity in Florida. *American Journal of Public Health* 107(2):306–311; Development Services Group, Inc. 2014. "Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children/Sex Trafficking." Literature review. Washington, D.C.: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/CSECSexTrafficking.pdf>

¹⁷ Banks, D., and Kyckelhahn, T. 2011. Characteristics of Suspected Human Trafficking Incidents, 2008–2010. Washington, DC: US Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Statistics.

¹⁸ U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. 2022. Washington, DC: HHS. Child Maltreatment 2020. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/data-research/child-maltreatment>.

IMPACT

Gender responsiveness is a paradigm for addressing girls' unique needs in the youth justice system; a preventative, intervention and response to female delinquency that underscores the importance of girls' unique experiences; and psychological, developmental, and social needs; and pathways into delinquency. Consequently gender-specific interventions are needed to successfully support justice-involved girls. Further support is needed to improve policies and practices that promote the safe, inclusive treatment of youth who identify as trans and gender-nonconforming. Manageable opportunities exist. Our state is fortunate to have a group of individuals in leadership positions and committed providers who have proven to be capable of achieving statewide system change.