



Girls Justice Initiative

Progress Report Year Two

Period August 2003 - December 2004



United Way of the Bay Area

what matters.



City and County of San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department

WILLIAM P. SIFFERMANN
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER

The San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department is grateful for the opportunity to extend its partnership with the Girls Justice Initiative of the United Way of the Bay Area. A primary goal of our department is to enhance programs and services for young women in the juvenile justice system. The Girls Justice Initiative has provided key leadership in helping improve the quality and quantity of our gender-specific services.

On behalf of the department, we heartily endorse the specific recommendations outlined in this report to improve services to San Francisco girls. We look forward to working with the Girls Justice Initiative to implement these recommendations and other best practices designed to decrease the incarceration and recidivism of girls in the juvenile justice system.

I invite your continued support of the Girls Justice Initiative.

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United Way of the Bay Area is proud to have the Girls Justice Initiative as one of our signature community projects. In 2002, we identified the need for enhanced services for girls in the juvenile justice system; since then, the network of community-based organizations serving girls has undergone a transformation, with GJI acting as a primary agent of change. Through our collaborative partnership with these organizations, and with the City of San Francisco, we are achieving tremendous impact on so many young lives.

We enthusiastically support the recommendations presented in this report and hope to continue to play a guiding role in the improvement of San Francisco's juvenile justice system. By increasing the capacity of community based organizations - and strengthening their relationships with the Probation Department - we will continue to produce excellent results towards our goal of reducing the recidivism rate of girls. United Way strives to achieve our vision for the future, where the best practices of the Girls Justice Initiative are reproduced for youth across the Bay Area.

Eric McDonnell
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In loving memory of
Cheyenne Elaine Bell- Stamp

On May 18, 2005 our friend, mentor, and sister in the struggle Ms. Cheyenne Bell, completed one journey and now begins another. Ms. Bell was a pioneer, leader and vocal advocate for gender specific services for girls in the juvenile justice system. Her hard work has lead to many of the programs and services provided to girls in San Francisco today. Hundreds of girls have been helped due to her passion and commitment to a rehabilitative system. In her memory, the Girls Justice Initiative is proud to dedicate our work to this amazing woman, without whom many of us would not be here. Rest in peace Cheyenne and know that we will continue what you have started.

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Girls Ju

Executive Summary

What is the Girls Justice Initiative?

The Girls Justice Initiative (GJI) is a community project of United Way of the Bay Area, one of the largest private funders of health and human services in Northern California. Three years ago, United Way convened a group of youth-serving professionals to address an increase in the number of girls arrested and detained for criminal offenses in San Francisco. Subsequently, GJI was founded in July 2002 with the goal of reducing the recidivism rates of girls ages 12-18 in San Francisco's juvenile justice system. The Initiative was designed to collaboratively address this problem by providing girls with detention-based case management, creating a professional development program for probation officers and staff of community-based organizations (CBOs), and brokering partnerships between CBOs and probation officers.

Despite the overall drop in juvenile crime over the past decade, girls are the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population. The majority of these girls are African-American (64%), while 15% are Latina and 13% are Caucasian. 43% have been in the foster care system, and 30% are pregnant or parenting. The most alarming risk factor these girls share is the prevalence of abuse: a 1998 study from the National Council on Crime and Delinquency found that 92% of girls in California's juvenile justice system had been victims of one

or more forms of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse (Acoca, Dedel, 1998). However, one of the most defining characteristics of this population is its resiliency. Although they have endured poverty, racism, and abuse, many girls thrive when supported by gender- and culturally-appropriate services.

GJI has a formal memorandum of understanding with the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department and eleven CBOs that provide gender-appropriate services. GJI partners include: Center for Young Woman's Development (CYWD), Stand Against Global Exploitation (SAGE), Mission Neighborhood Centers, Inc. (MNC), YWCA Come Into the Sun Mentoring Program (CITS), Huckleberry Youth Programs, Community Assessment and Referral Center (CARC), Community Youth Center (CYC), Bayview Hunters Point Foundation (BHPF), Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center (BHNC), Girls After School Academy (GASA), and the SF Department of Public Health Special Programs for Youth (SPY).

Justice Initiative

Progress and Challenges

In the two years since the program launched, GJI has achieved significant measurable progress towards its goals. The CBOs that have participated in GJI's professional development program have responded positively to the curriculum; in addition, surveys indicate that their organizational practices have improved. Most notably, recidivism and arrests rates for girls have decreased by 25% since 2002. While there are multiple factors that have contributed to this decline, a study of the program suggests that the girls served by GJI have demonstrated marked changes in their behavior.

GJI was originally conceived as an intermediary that would facilitate collaborative case management, increase probation officers' referrals of girls to CBOs, expand data collection and analysis, and advocate for improved public policy. During year two, in response to the lack of resources in the community, GJI expanded to include direct services. While this has strengthened GJI's relationships with other service providers, and increased girls' access to quality services, it also reduces the amount of time available for other program functions, such as advocacy and improved data collection. GJI is in the process of evaluating whether providing direct services is an essential component to a model of juvenile justice reform.

While GJI has achieved notable success, the program still faces obstacles. The main challenge is the program's relationship with the probation department: despite GJI's efforts to collaborate with the department, there has been no increase in probation officers' utilization of community-based services. Some probation officers question GJI's role in the placement process for girls who need to be placed out of the home. In April 2005, the probation department received a critical Grand Jury report with recommendations for large-scale internal reform. The new Chief of Probation has made a public commitment to increasing the department's utilization of community-based services, and has specifically committed to helping to implement the recommendations in this report. GJI hopes that this new leadership will improve the program's collaboration with the probation department over the next year.

Summary of Recommendations

- **Implement a policy for collaboration among probation officers, public defenders, the court, and CBOs.**
- **Utilize data collected through GJI's risk and needs assessment more systematically.**
- **Clarify a focus or "niche" for GJI so that it avoids being spread too thin along lines of direct service, advocacy, professional development and brokering relationships**
- **Direct funding to the service areas where girls need it the most: health services, job training and development, therapy, housing, and educational support.**
- **Create a central referral location for girls who enter the juvenile justice system.**
- **Develop coordinated strategies to address policy issues related to female delinquency.**

Evaluation Methodology

This evaluation is the result of two years of research and investigation from an independent evaluator, Rebecca Aced-Molina of RAM Consulting. Its purpose is to facilitate GJI's program development, maintain accountability to funders and other stakeholders, and share outcomes with a larger audience. The evaluator employed the following methods to measure progress toward the desired outcomes of the Girls Justice Initiative.

Outcomes Related to CBOs Serving Girls

In order to assess whether CBOs exhibit skills and knowledge that enable them to better serve girls, the following data collection methods were utilized:

- 1) A pre- and post-test of participating CBOs measuring changes in organizational practices.
- 2) Evaluations of each GJI professional development training session.
- 3) A follow-up phone survey with participating organizational partners.

Outcomes Related to Girls' Lives

In order to assess whether clients exhibited steady improvements in their specific areas of risk and need, the following methods were utilized:

- 1) A comparison of "before and after" assessment scores of a sample of 10 girls who participated in the program for approximately 6 months.
- 2) A focus group with girls served by GJI.
- 3) A focus group with interns employed by GJI.

The total number of girls assessed through all data collection methods equals approximately 15% of the total population served

Outcomes Related to the System Serving Girls

In order to assess whether the system of care has improved, the following methods were utilized:

- 1) A focus group with Probation Officers.
- 2) A review of the GJI database and assessment forms.

Desired Outcomes, Progress and Findings

Outcomes Related to CBOs Serving Girls

Desired Outcome:

“CBO partners will exhibit skills and knowledge to better serve girls”.

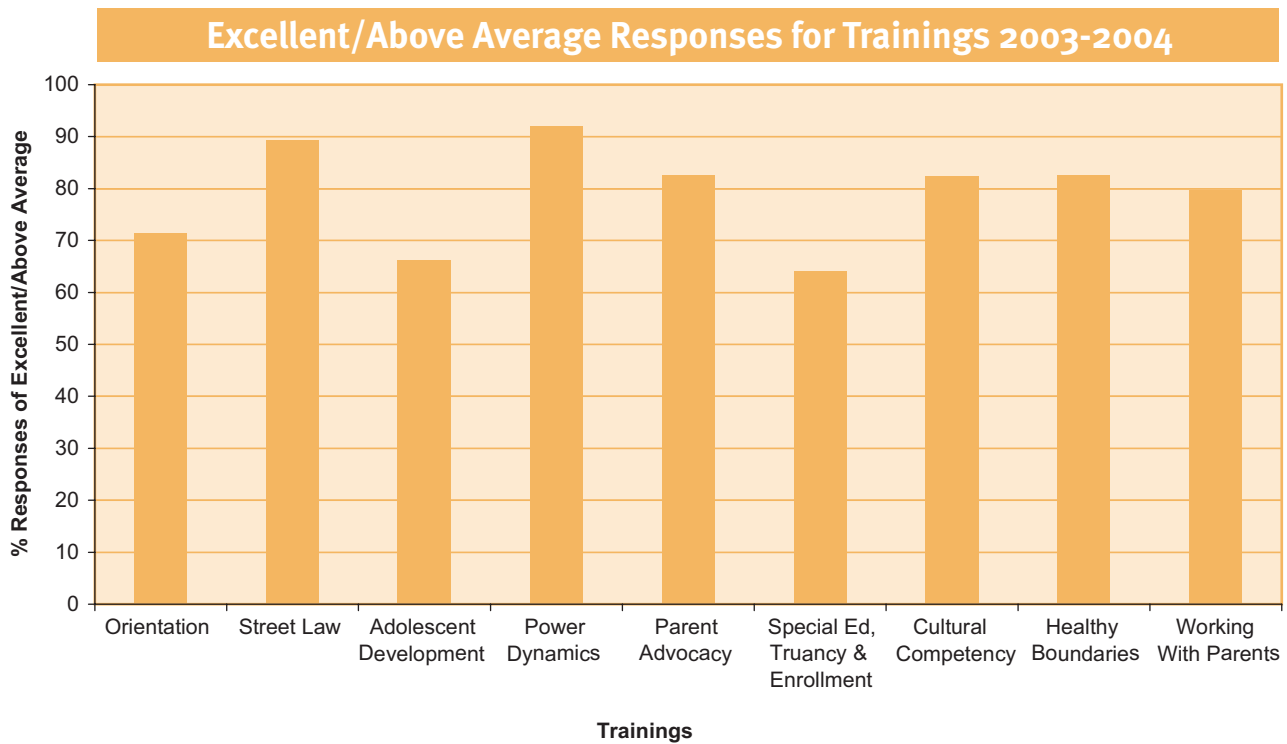
Progress:

CBOs overwhelmingly rated trainings as excellent or above average, and reported improvements in their approach to working with girls.



The Girls Justice Initiative conducts a comprehensive training program with the goal of improving the quality of services provided to girls. Nine trainings were offered to community-based organizations as well as Probation Department staff. Over the period between September 2003 and May 2004, the trainings averaged 30 participants; there was typically a waiting list for open spots. The total duplicated count of individuals served (some participants attended more than one training) was 270.

In six of nine training sessions (Working with Parents, Establishing Healthy Boundaries, Cultural Competence, Power Dynamics, Parent Advocacy, and Street Law), at least 80% of the participants rated their overall experience to be Excellent or Above Average. In the other three sessions (Youth Guidance Center, Adolescent Development, and Special Ed/Truancy/School Enrollment), over 60% of the participants rated their overall experience to be Excellent or Above Average.



Changes in Organizations' Behaviors

During the first year of GJI, evaluators administered a pre-test to organizations participating in trainings in order to rate how often staff behaved in accordance with GJI's standards of organizational competence. Based on research conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention on best practices for working with girls in the juvenile justice system, evaluators identified eight categories of behaviors to focus on: making referrals, tracking results, working with families, establishing healthy boundaries, building on girls' assets, building on staffs' assets, accountability, and use of professional therapy.



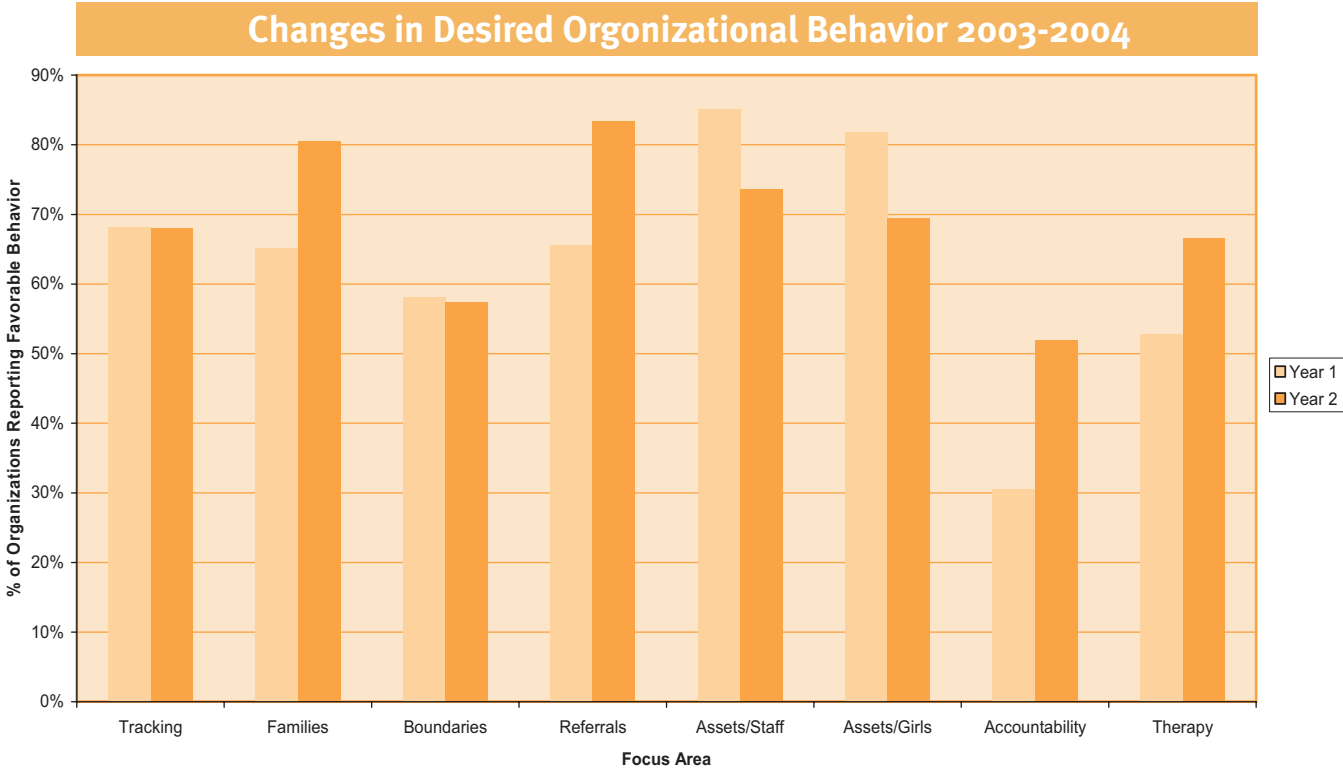
The chart below represents a sample of statements that participating organizations were asked to agree or disagree with. Favorable responses are those that relate to the desired outcomes of the Girls Justice Initiative. The chart data indicate the total percentage of responses that were favorable before and after GJI's second year; the column on the right illustrates the change.

GJI's goal for year two was to achieve at least a 5% increase in favorable responses. The increases of 15 to 20% indicate that in these categories, organizations have altered their behavior in ways consistent with GJI's expectations of competence.

Focus Area	Question Example	% Favorable Responses Year 1	% Favorable Responses Year 2	% Change
Families	8. <i>"Our organization has the capacity to work with both youth in the juvenile justice system and their families."</i>	65%	81%	+16%
Referrals	13. <i>"There are girls out there that our organization could help, but the juvenile justice system doesn't refer them to us."</i>	65%	83%	+18%
Therapy	23. <i>"I have at least one regular referral (organization) for girls on my case-load for professional therapy."</i>	53%	67%	+14%
Accountability	15. <i>"There is a positive working partnership between the juvenile justice system and CBOs in San Francisco."</i>	31%	52%	+21%

GJI's goal for year two was to achieve at least a 5% increase in favorable responses. The increases of 15 to 20% indicate that in these categories, organizations have altered their behavior in ways consistent with GJI's expectations of competence.

The graph below displays the percentages of favorable responses for all of the evaluation categories. In the areas of serving families, making referrals, meeting standards of accountability, and using therapy, organizations demonstrated a marked increase in favorable behavior. Organizations need more support in the areas of tracking results, establishing healthy boundaries, building on girls' assets, and building on staffs' assets.



Interviews with CBOs

Evaluators conducted phone interviews with GJI partners to investigate the collaborative relationship among different CBOs working to support girls involved with the juvenile justice system. Several themes emerged from these CBO interviews as essential rules for sustaining the collaboration:

- 1) work together on specific shared projects,
- 2) ensure that the collaborative work also supports the individual organizations' work, and
- 3) focus on the girls, not the politics

1) Work together on specific shared projects

The Girls Justice Initiative, during its second year, began to focus collaboratively on aftercare, support offered to girls after they have been released from the juvenile justice system. During shared case review meetings, CBO partners identified a common problem: many girls placed in group homes and other facilities outside of San Francisco began re-offending when they returned home. GJI realized that girls who have completed a placement need strong support systems to help them successfully transition into a positive life in San Francisco. In its response to the problem, the collaborative relied on the expertise and capacity of each of its members. One GJI partner, the Center for Young Women's Development, began to work with girls transitioning back from the California Youth Authority (the state detention center for youth). Another partner, YWCA, created "Come Into the Sun", a mentoring program that provides aftercare service to San Francisco girls who have recently been detained. This shared focus gave GJI's members an increased sense of participation in a collective effort, and strengthened their commitment to the collaborative.

"We are part of other collaboratives, mostly driven through funding. With GJI, it's more the need and the population that we serve. It just makes sense"
Organizational Partner

"We identified a need together – aftercare – and we came up with the solution together. It adds on to what we each were doing already before."
Organizational Partner

2) Ensure that the collaborative work also supports the individual organizations' work.

For many CBOs, “collaboration” has come to mean extra meetings and extra work with no perceived benefits to the individual organizations. Sometimes members even come to see a collaborative as a new organization that they have to work for pro-bono. GJI addresses this concern by brokering separate, organization-specific partnerships, outside of the official collaborative, to benefit individual organizations. One example is GJI’s partnership with Stand Against Global Exploitation (SAGE). SAGE has expertise, skills, and experience working with girls who have been victimized and exploited. GJI makes direct referrals to SAGE of girls in custody and SAGE does a victimization assessment with the clients. GJI and SAGE then collaborate on services to ensure that there is no duplication, and that girls receive the services they need. Both agencies are focused on the needs and strengths of the girls and share resources to help meet those needs.

“GJI is willing to work with different kinds of groups and broker partnerships between organizations.”

Organizational Partner

“It’s great to see the girls move into positions of leadership at [partner organization]. We would like to try that more too.”

Organizational Partner

“Both [GJI Directors] Gena and Julie have come to our organization to participate as speakers in the training and it worked out really well.”

Organizational Partner

3) Focus on the girls, not the politics.

Although it is easy to say, it is not always easy to practice. As GJI expands, the collaborative faces the on-going challenge of understanding each organization’s individual interests while concentrating on the shared goal: improving services for girls. Currently, collaborative members are confident that all partners are sufficiently focused on the clients and not their own organizational agenda. However, concerns about defining roles and avoiding duplication do exist.

“One challenge is duplication: when girls receive case management, how do we not duplicate efforts? They will get a case manager from our organization and one from GJI. We need to make sure to work this out.”

Organizational Partner

“Using the strengths and needs assessment is a good tool for figuring out which CBO is appropriate. I can comfortably step back and say, this girl doesn’t need our services.”

Organizational Partner

Findings



At its onset, GJI assumed that the reason girls were committing more crimes, or continuing to re-commit crimes, was a lack of coordination between community-based organizations and the Probation Department. However, during its first year of operation, GJI realized that the absence of coordination was not the only gap. Some of the most needed resources for girls – including health care, job training, therapy, housing, and educational support – are either non-existent or extremely limited. GJI found that these services not only need to be expanded, but also the quality of existing services needs to improve. Girls need increased access to programs that build on and maximize their strengths.

GJI was launched as an intermediary that would focus on training, referring, collecting and analyzing data, and making policy recommendations. In year two, in response to the lack of resources in the community, GJI began offering direct services to girls in detention. Programs that were in jeopardy of being de-funded by the Juvenile Probation Department were integrated into the GJI model. GJI now provides detention-based case management for 300 girls each year, a mentoring program for 35 girls, and individual and family therapy for girls in custody both at the juvenile hall and off site. GJI also employs ten girls transitioning out of the juvenile justice system as interns, providing them with the opportunity to develop job skills and start building a resume. All GJI programs strive to provide girls with a safe space to learn and grow, activities that build and increase competencies, healthy relationships with caring and appropriate adults, and a sense of empowerment that enables them to make positive changes in their lives.

Outcomes Related to Girls' Lives

Desired Outcome:

“75% of girls will have exhibited steady improvements in their specific areas of risk and need, and will meet their requirements for completion of probation.”

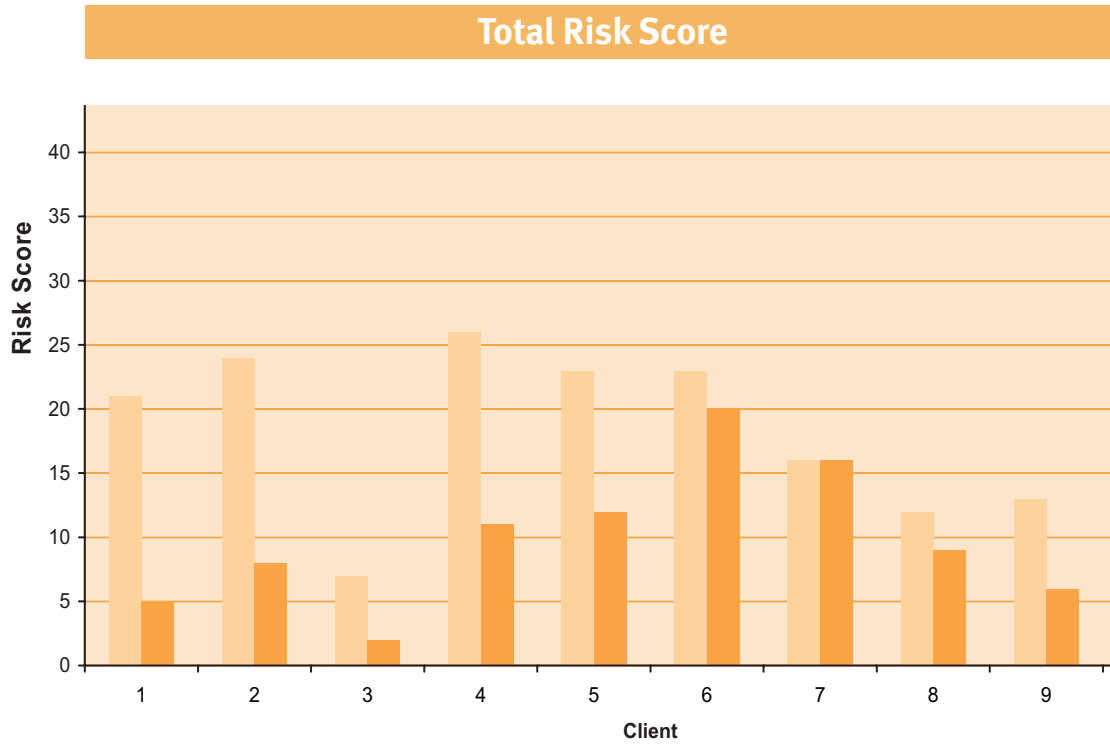
Progress:

Of a sample of girls that participated in GJI for approximately six months, 80% experienced a decrease in their risk score; 90% experienced a decrease or no change. This indicates that in a majority of cases the Girls Justice Initiative reduced girls' degree of risk for re-offending.



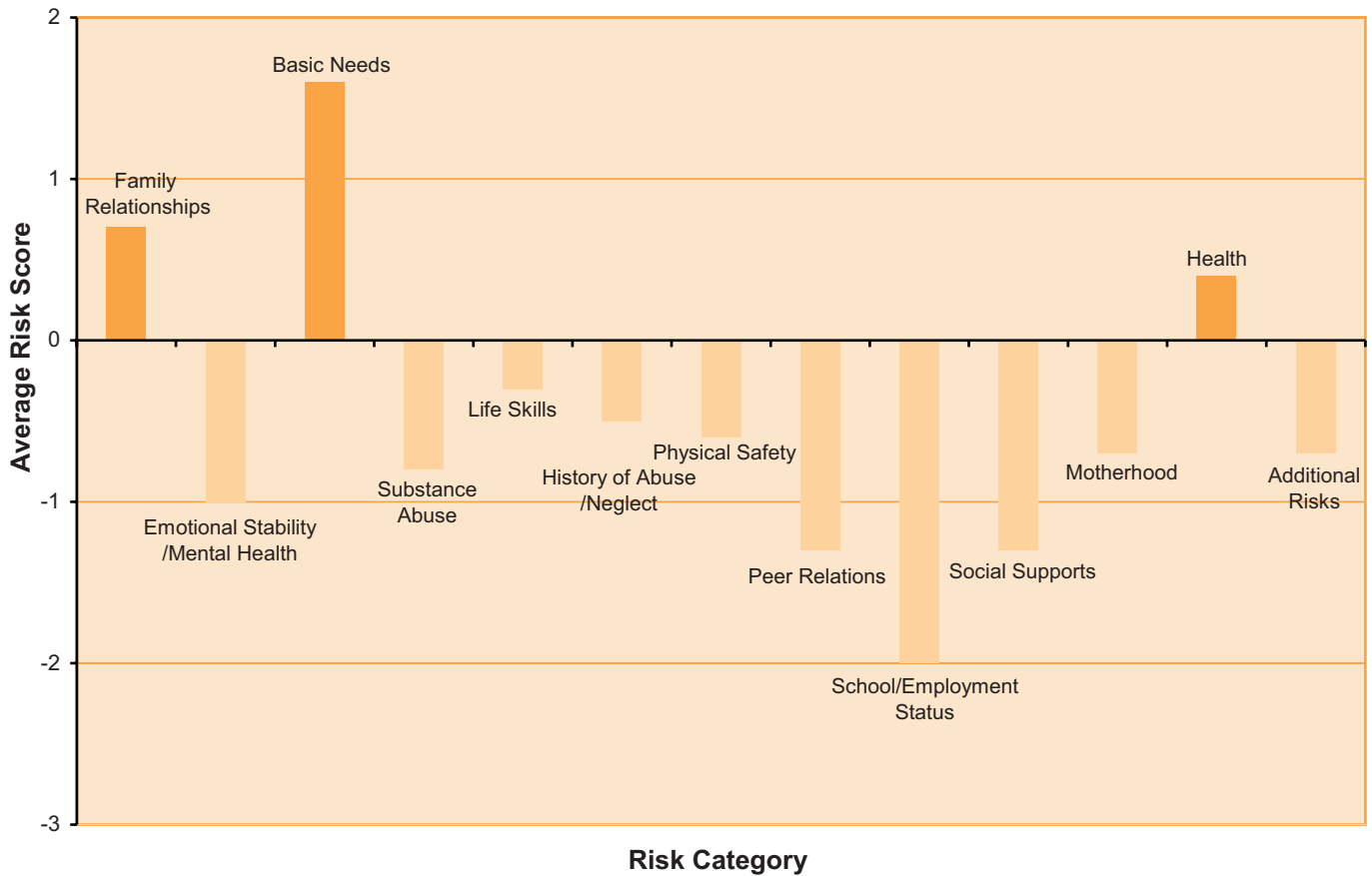
Upon entering Juvenile Hall, girls are assessed by a GJI case worker in 13 categories: family relationships, emotional stability/mental health, basic needs, substance abuse, life skills, history of abuse/neglect, physical safety, peer relationships, school/employment status, social supports, motherhood, health, and additional risks. These categories originate from a risk assessment tool endorsed by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention that was created for use in Cook County, Illinois. GJI adapted and expanded on the tool to create its own Risk, Strength and Need Assessment. During the assessment, a GJI case worker assigns the client a risk score for each category; these are tallied for a total risk score. The total risk score ranges from 0 (no risk at all) to 58 (the highest degree of risk).

Of a random sample of 10 girls, 8 girls experienced a decrease in their risk score over the period of June 2004 through December 2004. This decline indicates that these girls are making improvements in their lives and are at a lesser degree of risk for re-offending after six months. The data collection method of checking in with girls systemically after six months is a recent development; thus, the sample size is only 5% of the total population served. At the conclusion of year three, evaluators will assess the progress of 300 girls over a complete year of participation in GJI.



Girls' risk scores declined in some areas more than others. Peer Relationships, School/Employment Readiness, and Social Supports were categories in which the girls made the strongest improvements. On the other hand, Family Relationships, Basic Needs, and Health were three categories areas in which the average risk scores increased. These trends will be used to help determine GJI's organizational development; risk categories that fail to improve indicate areas in which girls need more access to quality services.

Average Risk Scores



Focus Group Outcomes

Evaluators spoke to focus groups of girls participating in Girls Justice Initiative programs. Their personal stories help illuminate why the risk scores are declining, particularly in the area of peer relationships, employment readiness, and personal growth.

Peer Relationships

The girls who participated in the focus group reported that they received essential peer support in a pregnant/parenting class offered through the Girls Justice Initiative. All the girls surveyed expressed their desire that the group meet more often.

“In this parenting class, we can really talk to each other”

GJI client’s quote

“This group is really cool. Sometimes you need to vent and you can’t do this with just anyone”

GJI client’s quote

Employment Readiness

Girls in the focus group feel that getting a job is an essential part of transitioning into a healthy lifestyle and staying out of the juvenile justice system. Many of the girls surveyed reported positive experiences with internship programs at GJI and the Center for Young Women’s Development.

“This program is really supportive! They make me want to be here and come and get real experience”

GJI client’s quote

Personal Growth

Girls also reported experiencing significant personal growth over the past year in areas such as academics, self-esteem, and hope.

“I used to be a bully – abusive. I am not like that no more; I finally started telling people the truth”

GJI client’s quote

“I still feel like I was doing something wrong, even though I know I was abused and I didn’t ask for it. I still have nightmares. It takes a long time to learn to love yourself – it’s hard!”

GJI client’s quote

“Everything has been going better – I got my GED!”

GJI client’s quote

“I am not cutting myself anymore, and I am in school. Being in school is stressful but I am doing it!”

GJI client’s quote

These quotes indicate that these girls have made conscious choices to improve themselves and are happy about the new directions their lives are taking.

Case Study

Kim was seventeen years old when she was arrested in San Francisco and brought to the Youth Guidance Center. She was the victim of a sexual assault, pregnant, and on the run from an abusive foster home. Soon after she came into custody, a GJI case manager met with her and assessed her situation. SAGE (Stand Against Global Exploitation) was immediately engaged to provide crisis counseling and further assess her victimization needs. A GJI case manager began looking for temporary housing for Kim, and worked with a probation officer to secure placement in a shelter. SPY (Special Programs for Youth) also met with Kim in custody to address her health and pregnancy needs. GJI, SAGE, and SPY collaborated to develop a coordinated aftercare plan for Kim when she was released a few weeks later. Her plan included placement in a group home for pregnant and parenting girls, school at Teenage Pregnant and Parenting Program (TAPP), case management and support group with SAGE, and individual therapy with Girls Justice Initiative. Once Kim stabilized with her case plan, she became involved with GJI's Pregnant and Parenting peer support group. Eventually, she was hired as an intern at the Center for Young Women's Development.

The coordination of services and programs that GJI and its partners were able to provide to Kim gave her the tools she needed to make positive changes in her life. Kim gave birth to a healthy child, left an abusive environment, and began a whole new life for herself. She is a strong, smart, and determined young person who just needed support to become the woman she was meant to be. More than 300 girls just like Kim come through the doors of Youth Guidance Center every year. With help from organizations and programs such as those described above, all of those girls can change their lives for the better – just like Kim.

Findings

Victimization on the rise:

Over the past five years, there has been a notable upward trend in the number of girls committing serious crimes. Rather than investigate the root causes of girls' delinquent behavior, the juvenile justice system has responded by giving girls harsher sentences. GJI, by expanding the assessment process, has discovered that many girls in the system have past experiences of victimization, exploitation, and violence. GJI believes that only by addressing these risk factors – with strengthened services and advocacy for girls – will the trend be reversed.

Absent Families:

The first-year evaluation of GJI revealed that San Francisco's courts and juvenile rehabilitation system lack mechanisms to involve a girl's family in a her rehabilitation plan. Girls identify with their families, their mothers in particular, and need this connection to feel a full sense of identity, regardless of the family's level of dysfunction. GJI has observed that families are often excluded from the decision making process regarding disposition and treatment planning; this contributes to low success rates for rehabilitation.

Achieving improvement in family relationships is difficult for two main reasons: 1) families are rarely included in the development of a plan with the probation department, and 2) families are overwhelmed not only with the youth involved in the system, but also with their other children, economic challenges, under-employment, substance abuse issues, incarceration and other factors. In the face of these challenges, GJI case workers do what they can to involve parents or guardians in their child's case plan development and implementation, and refer families to services in their communities when appropriate.

Housing:

The greatest basic need for most girls is housing. There are few options for girls between the ages of 17 and 24 who are on probation or parole. Housing is extremely costly in the Bay Area; individual housing is rarely an option for girls in the system. The Center for Young Women's Development assists girls with temporary and long term housing funding, but the demand is much greater than the resources. If girls cannot attain safe, affordable housing, they are at increased and continued risk of victimization, exploitation, and continued justice system involvement. More transitional housing is needed for girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

Health:

Health issues for girls continue to be a challenge. Girls who are in survival mode are consumed with getting their basic needs met (i.e. housing, employment, food, clothing). They tend to neglect their health needs, and participate in risky behavior. Unfortunately, valuable resources in the areas of prevention and intervention are shrinking rather than growing. Solutions, a GJI partner that provided health education and counseling to girls in detention, recently lost its financial support for those activities. Another partner, St. Elizabeth, closed its group home for pregnant girls this year due to lack of funding. It is imperative that girls have information, access, and support to improve their health outcomes.

Outcomes Related to the System

Desired Outcome:

“Improved assessment, tracking, referrals, system coordination, and accountability between probation and community-based organizations.”

Progress:

Probation Officers are increasingly aware of the Girls Justice Initiative and recognize GJI as a resource. Individual cases of collaboration between CBOs and Probation prove the potential for effective cooperation. However, there is still significant need for improvement. The primary point of contention regards out of home placements: Probation Officers feel that GJI should not be involved in the placement process whereas GJI case workers believe that it is their responsibility to advocate for appropriate placements and to seek placement alternatives.



Year One

During the program’s first year, probation officers had not heard of the Girls Justice Initiative and generally reported a lack of trust in community-based organizations. Probation Officers were skeptical of a new group urging greater use of community-based programs and feared that their own expertise would be devalued. This reluctance to work with new partners is symptomatic of the Juvenile Probation Department’s lack of a clear policy regarding partnership with community-based organizations.

CBOs reported that their linkages with probation were based on individual relationships with certain officers and that they did not have consistent experiences with the department as a whole.

Year Two

Second-year findings suggest significant improvements in probation officers' awareness of the program, attitude towards community-based organizations, and partnership with the Girls Justice Initiative. Probation officers participating in focus groups stated that they all knew about GJI, they valued the services GJI provided, and they would be interested in further clarifying the partnership between probation officers and GJI.

“The greatest thing [that GJI provides] is the support for the girls while they are locked up”

Probation Officer

“Girls that come to placement get followed more now. For a while that was problematic -- they [GJI] wanted me to write letters. Now they have a form letter that I sign and they do the leg work themselves – I am happy to help out in this way.”

Probation Officer

“I know they [GJI] work with the girls inside Juvenile Hall and try to link them up with programs afterwards. They have given me an assessment and are eager to have me use the assessment...I think it would be good to come to unit staff meetings.”

Probation Officer

However, probation officers also made statements that imply that more effective collaboration is needed. Probation Officers all expressed concern that Girls Justice Initiative case managers interfere with the placement process.

“Leave placement to placement! Help facilitate placement readiness, by all means.”

Probation Officer

Findings

Out of Home Placement:

According to a San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department report in December 2004, 194 youth were referred to out of home placement that year. The report does not break down statistics by gender, therefore accurate numbers of girls referred to out of home placement are not available. Since the female population at Juvenile Hall typically represents 25% of the total population, evaluators estimate that approximately 50 girls were sent to out of home placement in 2004. This includes group homes, treatment facilities, the Excelsior facility in Colorado, and the California Youth Authority.

During year one, GJI met with probation department leadership and received both a memorandum of understanding and a verbal agreement to implement GJI collaboratively. This included a mandate to work with probation officers in order to determine appropriate placements and alternatives. However, the department's leadership has changed over the past year and there is no formal policy that outlines procedures for probation officers and community-based organizations to work together. Without consistent leadership and/or a policy, the practice of collaboration depends solely on individual personalities and will not translate into long-term system change.

GJI makes placement recommendations to probation. Occasionally, GJI case workers disagree with the placement options utilized by probation officers. GJI typically discourages out of home placement for a variety of reasons: it does not include resources or services for the girl's family; it does not include transition plans for girls when they return to San Francisco; it is expensive, putting high demand on the city's resources; locations are typically far from the girls' homes and communities; girls typically run from these facilities and return home within a few weeks; and out of home placement increases the likelihood of girls being sent to California Youth Authority for multiple placement failures. GJI and probation officers agree that more alternatives to out of home placement need to be developed.

The Juvenile Probation Department needs to separate report statistics by gender so that case workers can identify trends. For example, with better data, it would be possible to investigate whether or not girls are disproportionately referred to out of home placement, or whether they have longer stays in detention. Because gender information is not documented, it is difficult to address the distinct issues and problems faced by girls in the juvenile justice system.

Lack of Coordinated Case Plan Development:

When GJI began developing gender-responsive case plans for girls in detention, case workers assumed that it would be reasonably easy to communicate and coordinate their recommendations with those of the probation officers, public defenders, and district attorneys. They soon learned that though disposition plans are crucial to identifying the appropriate services for rehabilitation, many probation officers were not interested in using community-based services for their clients. While GJI has had more success developing case plans with public defenders and private defense counsel, case workers still struggle in their attempts to collaborate effectively with probation officers.

The most successful collaborative case plans involved girls who were arrested for prostitution-related offenses. This was due to a pre-existing protocol that requires district attorneys and probation officers to receive service recommendations from the Girls Justice Initiative and SAGE before charging a young woman with a prostitution-related offense. The success of this protocol – and the positive feedback that GJI has received from district attorneys, probation officers, and public defenders regarding its execution – indicates that the best way to create coordinated case plans is to develop policies and procedures that require all juvenile justice entities to work together.

Recommendations

1) Implement a policy for collaboration among probation officers, public defenders, the court, and CBOs.

Year-two data indicate that the rate of improvement of the collaboration between the probation department and CBOs is very low. The positive collaborative efforts to date are generally the result of forward-thinking individuals from both parties who have enough insight to recognize the benefits of working together. The leadership of the probation department needs to implement policies outlining the roles of GJI, community based-organizations, and probation officers. This would improve the effectiveness of the initiative and improve individual outcomes for girls.

The biggest source of conflict between probation officers and community based services is the lack of confidence and trust in each others' roles in the lives of youth in the juvenile justice system. A strategy that could help build working relationships between these two entities would be to:

- a) Evaluate the effectiveness of community based programs working with offending youth, and
- b) Require probation officers to utilize community based services that have been effective in developing case plans.

Probation officers need concrete data in order to feel confident in the services that CBOs provide to youth on their caseload. Quality CBO programs need to receive funding, referrals, and partnership with probation officers in order to provide vital services to youth.

2) Utilize the data in the strengths and needs assessment more systematically.

The data collected during the intake and assessment process, while sometimes inconsistent and subjective, is nonetheless very rich and complex. This information is a valuable resource that can help case workers and probation officers understand the depth of girls' problems, and identify ways to support young women more effectively. In order to maximize the utility of the data, the strengths and needs assessments should be more directly connected to girls' referrals and the outcomes goals. By conducting follow-up assessments more regularly, and with a larger number of girls, more understanding about the utility of the programs will emerge and direct actions.

3) Clarify a focus or “niche” for GJI

During year one, GJI intended to serve primarily as a training and coordinating body that would track information and develop skills of other organizations to more effectively serve girls. By year two, GJI had expanded to fill gaps in services. While the direct services GJI provides are needed and effective, they create some ambiguities and inconsistencies in regards to GJI’s role in the juvenile justice system. For example, while probation officers resist partnering with GJI case managers on placement, the aftercare that GJI provides to girls transitioning back home after a placement fills a gap that no other entity currently provides.

In response to evaluation findings and ongoing programmatic learning, GJI advocates for a practice of using graduated sanctions when creating case plans for girls involved in the juvenile justice system. This means that POs must exhaust all means of local placement before utilizing costly and ineffective out of home placement. GJI can help develop a plan that provides needed services for the girl and her family in her own community. This is not only a more cost effective option; it also better addresses the strengths and needs of the individual girl.

4) Direct funding to the service areas where girls need it the most: health services, job training and development, therapy, housing, and educational support.

In our current state of difficult budget decisions, it is imperative to make choices based on concrete data. GJI’s experience demonstrates that in these areas in particular, there are not enough services available to girls in the juvenile justice system.

5) Create a central referral location for girls who enter the juvenile justice system.

Currently, juvenile probation officers decide whether to utilize community resources or simply require their clients to adhere to conditions of probation (e.g. curfew, truancy, drug testing). GJI’s detention-based assessments suggest that a large percentage of girls on probation have never been referred by their probation officer to services that could assist their rehabilitation. Because San Francisco has invested millions of dollars in services for youth, GJI recommends that JPD adopt policies to increase the number of referrals made to appropriate alternatives to detention. A central referral location in the Juvenile Probation Department would assist probation officers, public defenders, the juvenile court, girls and their families in locating these resources. Procedures should also be established to improve follow-up, quality control, and accountability when referrals are made to organizations funded to work with youth in the juvenile justice system.

6) Develop coordinated strategies to address policy issues related to female delinquency.

In pursuit of this goal, GJI is involved in several city-wide efforts to address issues such as overuse of confinement, disproportionate minority confinement, and lack of gender responsive alternatives for girls in the juvenile justice system. Both Julie Posadas Guzman and Gena Castro, GJI's directors, are on the steering committee of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Committee in San Francisco, a body tasked with the implementation of long term strategies to decrease the use of confinement and increase utilization of community alternatives for probation youth. GJI also participates in the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, a body that advises state and federal funding resources for juvenile justice in San Francisco. Julie Posadas Guzman is a member of the Mayor's Juvenile Justice Subcommittee of the Cluster Group on Children, Youth, Arts and Education, created to assess current services and procedures and make recommendations to improve those services and identify gaps. Finally, Gena Castro is a member of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency Woman and Prison Advisory Panel, whose purpose is to conduct research to inform public policy and promote activism focused on women and girls in the justice system.

In order to achieve meaningful results for girls in the juvenile justice system, it is necessary to pursue change in public policy. GJI strives to maintain a balance between providing direct services and working on long term, systemic change.

To Our Readers:

On behalf of the Girls Justice Initiative we would like to take this time to thank the many people that have supported our work over the last two and half years.

To the United Way of the Bay Area, thank you for your continued commitment, encouragement and support for GJI. We have been able to focus our efforts on direct services to girls because of the financial, technical and administrative support of the staff at UWBA. We greatly appreciate your assistance in launching and growing this program.

To our Community Partners, we have been honored and privileged to work with many dedicated, talented people committed to help youth change their lives. Your work has made the difference for hundreds of girls in San Francisco and on behalf of them we thank you for your work.

To our hard working and committed staff of the Girls Justice Initiative, thank you for all you do above and beyond the call of duty. Your passion for working with youth drives our work and assists us in the difficult time. We are grateful to work with a team of your caliber.

To the Juvenile Probation Department, thank you for your support of the work we are doing with the Girls Justice Initiative and commitment to continue our efforts to improve outcomes for girls in the juvenile justice system. We look forward to working with the new administration to support improvements and changes in the year to come.

And finally to the donors, volunteers, mentors and interns who have given of themselves to support the program and girls we serve, thank you for your generosity, time and compassion. Our programs could not be successful without your help.

With gratitude,

Gena Castro, Director Girls Justice Initiative

Julie Posadas Guzman, Director of Girls Services JPD