COOK COUNTY JUVENILE FEMALE OFFENDER PROJECT
FEMALE YOUTH STRENGTHS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT *

OVERVIEW

NCCD has worked with several jurisdictions to design needs assessment tools for delinquency populations. These tools are designed to enable an agency to achieve several purposes:

- **CONSISTENCY:** They insure that certain types of problems are considered by all staff for all youth/families as part of the assessment process.

- **CONCISENESS:** They provide a quick "read" of a child/family's problems for the case manager, other staff/supervisors, and service providers from other agencies.

- **DRIVE THE CASE PLAN:** Since key areas are assessed, significant need areas should form the foundation for the case planning process. There should be a match between assessed needs and what's in the service plan. (NOTE: There may need to be a prioritization process and perhaps a conscious decision to not address some needs.)

- **PRIORITIZE WORKLOAD:** Total needs scores can serve as one basis for classification. For example, if those with the highest scores are considered to be more time consuming then they would probably carry a higher workload value. (NOTE: This practice tends to be more useful in field services than institutional services.)

- **MONITORING:** An initial needs assessment can be used as baseline information to measure progress over time. It can also serve as a foundation for assessing the effectiveness of the case plan. (NOTE: This use would require a reassessment process at set points in time to enable workers to compare where the youth/family are now as compared to where they were at either the initial or a previous assessment.)

- **MANAGEMENT INFORMATION:** Needs assessment data can be aggregated to assist an agency in its planning and evaluation. For example, if 45% of last year's females had major substance abuse problems and treatment slots existed for only 15% of this population, this information could be used to ascertain what new resources would be needed to address female needs.

The use of needs tools varies across jurisdictions and correlates to the specific goals and outcomes sought by key policy makers. The most common ways that needs tools are used are:

1.   Upon completion of the tool, workers are required to list the top three to five need areas. The worker's treatment plan must incorporate strategies to address these priority needs and identify desired outcomes for each of these need areas.

       To assess progress, workers are usually required to complete needs reassessments every three to six months. The results of the reassessment process are used to monitor progress, to revise the treatment plan, and make case closure decisions.

2.   Agencies adopt service standards for youth that correspond to their needs level. One example follows:

CONTACT STANDARDS - COMMUNITY-BASED			
Needs Level	Youth	Family	Productivity[1]
Low	One face-to-face with youth monthly	One face-to-face contact monthly	Once contact monthly
Moderate	One face-to-face with youth bi-weekly	One contact bi-weekly; in a month, at least one must be face-to-face	One contact bi-weekly
High	One face-to-face with youth weekly	One contact weekly; in a month, at least one must be face-to-face	One contact bi-weekly

Upon completion of the needs tool, the youth is classified as low, moderate, or high need. The need level guides the worker's supervision plan. Contacts are recorded in the case records so that supervisors can monitor for compliance with agency policies.

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[1]Includes School, Employment, or Training Program