

Attachment A: Guidelines for Juvenile Female Specific Programs Girls E.T.C.

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines represent a summary of the state of the research related to programming for juvenile female offenders. The information is intended to provide program specialists and planners with a current inventory of contemporary practice for this population as a means of developing the most appropriate treatment response for female juveniles in the justice system. The guidelines are based on national research and are not intended to represent a summary of standards or best practices based on case law. If a program implements the recommendations represented by these guidelines, it should be able to provide a more effective case management plan for female juvenile offenders.

Note, also, that these guidelines are a working document and will be revised to reflect changes and enhancements in the understanding of the female juvenile offender. A bibliography, from which these guidelines were developed, is attached.

I. Definition

Gender specific programming for young women has been defined as:

"Comprehensive programming which addresses and supports the psychological development process of female adolescents, while fostering connection within relationships in the context of a safe and nurturing environment." (Lindgren, 1996, as quoted in Minnesota, 1997, p. 1).

II. General Goals for Gender Specific Programs (Female and Male)¹

Many of the principles of sound program design apply to both male and female offender populations. A gender specific program should attempt to meet the following goals, as defined by the American Association of University Women in their report, *How Schools Shortchange Girls*. These goals should be applied in the context of the definition provided in Section I, above.

1. Acknowledge and affirm similarities and differences among and within groups of people.

¹American Association for University Women. (1992). *How schools shortchange girls*. AAUW: Baltimore, Maryland. Minnesota Department of Corrections. *Office of Planning for Female Offenders Request for Proposals*. (1997). MN DOC: Minneapolis, Minnesota.

2. Be inclusive, allow females and males to find and identify positively with the messages and expectations of society for themselves.
3. Be accurately designed around statistical data and developmental research that is verifiable and able to withstand critical analysis.
4. Be affirmative, acknowledge and value the worth of individuals, no matter what their backgrounds (or offense histories).
5. Be representative in staff and approach, balance multiple perspectives including those of race, gender, and ethnic background, and emphasize staff training at all levels.
6. Be integrated, weave together the experiences, needs, and interests of both males and females in ways that serve each most effectively and appropriately.

III. Specific Recommendations for Juvenile Female Specific Programs

In order to achieve these goals, consider the following recommendations when designing and/or altering juvenile justice and delinquency prevention treatment programs for young women.

A. Program Policies and Design

1. All program components must be designed in a manner which takes into consideration the social context in which young women grow and develop.

Staff need to be well read in issues of gender identity and female development. By doing so, staff will begin to be able to connect the messages young women receive from society, and the behavior these same young women display in their lives. This understanding then becomes a critical aspect of program design.

2. All program components must be designed in a manner which builds on and maximizes young women's existing strengths rather than focusing on their weaknesses.

When staff recognize the role social context plays in defining the behavior choices of young women, they can begin to understand the behavior displayed as being a form of survival through strength. All components need to be based on recognizing the underlying strengths being displayed by the young women and encouraging them to utilize these strengths rather than focusing on a behavior they exhibit.

3. Program design should intentionally build in opportunities for young women to actively participate in the development and the evaluation of the services they are receiving.

The female development literature is clear in its recommendation that young women must feel empowered about their role in treatment. An effort must be made to build in programs such as student councils and evaluative processes which include the voices of the young women in the program.

4. Create environments where young women can be afforded the safety and comfort of being only with other young women, whenever possible.

While there will always be some initial resistance on the part of the young women involved to being isolated with members of their own gender, this is a critical part of a gender specific program. It allows young women the time and environment to overcome their previous socialization that valued male relationships over female ones and to force them to learn to cooperate with and support one another.

5. Program design must reflect the relational nature of young women and allow for opportunities to develop and maintain these trusting relationships with staff. Program design must offer support, encouragement, and skill building in the context of these relationships.

Due to the relational nature of young women, effective treatment often happens in the context of their individual relationships with adult treatment staff. It is critical that time and formal mechanisms for the creation of these bonds be built into the program structure. For instance, individual young women may have certain aspects of their treatment programming built around ongoing communication with one particular staff member or primary counselor.

6. Program design must reflect the cultural diversity of the young women it serves, both in staff composition and in treatment components.

Gender experiences of young women will vary somewhat according to the cultural backgrounds. In order to foster role modeling, it is essential for staff to be representative of these same cultural background(s). Staff training and the design of treatment components must take into consideration the expectations, challenges, and strengths connected with the female experience in this same culture(s).

B. Treatment and Counseling Services

1. Treatment services should address issues related to gender development in young women and should do so in the context of the social environment in which young women grow and develop.

Treatment services and counseling groups should include topics which directly affect the quality of young women's lives. Groups related to body image, self esteem, issues of violence against women, self confidence, and life skills should be included, and each of these topics should be discussed in the context of the messages young women receive from society.

Traditional programming techniques such as anger management, mediation, etc. should be refined to ensure that these issues are addressed in a female context. For instance, when teaching anger management, it is critical for staff to understand the social culture which tells young women not to express their anger outwardly and punishes them when they do so.

2. Treatment services must address the issues of sexual abuse and the balance of power in relationships.

In light of the large number of young women referred to the juvenile justice system who have sexual abuse histories, treatment services and counseling groups should address this issue from a number of perspectives. Programs should offer specialized individual and group time for those young women who have experienced sexual abuse as well as group time for all young women focusing on healthy relationships, boundary issues, and how to manage power in relationships.

3. Treatment services should be designed to teach advocacy.

While improving the lives of individual young women is a noble goal of treatment, programming must also teach young women how to be advocates around the same issues they are overcoming. To accomplish this, there must be structured times during which young women are taught advocacy skills and then given the opportunity to practice these skills. Community service, restitution activities, and volunteerism can all be used to accomplish this goal.

4. Programming should intentionally build in the involvement of the individual family members of young women.

Young women do not grow and live in a vacuum. The role of their families must be a key aspect of programming. Families need to be involved in treatment throughout the programming

process. Building in structured family activities which allow for open communication is critical. An attempt should be made to support the mother-daughter relationship whenever possible.

5. Opportunities for spiritual and/or religious expression and growth should be an integral part of the treatment design.

Spiritual connection is a critical self esteem booster for young women. The program must build in elements of spirituality throughout the treatment process. Young women from religious backgrounds must be given outlets to participate in worship and religious discussion. Spirituality may also be expressed through time for reflection, relaxation, journalizing, gardening, etc.

C. Academic and Vocational Programming

1. Teaching staff must understand educational goals within the context of gender identity and female development.

There is a great deal of literature available on the educational process for young women and the need to confront gender bias in the educational system. Teaching staff must be aware of this literature and must develop strategies to create gender fair educational environments. This should include emphasizing the practical application of the material being taught, using hands-on techniques whenever possible, and allowing time for discussion and practice of new skills. An effort should be made to include women's history as a specific part of all subject matters.

2. Educational skill development should be a value of all program staff and should be reflected throughout the treatment programming.

The overall treatment program should be designed in such a way that the basic skills being taught have direct application in the classroom. For instance, if the young women are focusing on a specific math skill, there should be opportunities to practice that skill within the treatment environment. Women's history should play a role in the development of the overall treatment program. Young women should be exposed to the thoughts and ideas of famous women and be encouraged to use these women as role models.

D. Staff Training and Related Issues

1. Staff training must include issues of gender identity and female development.

In order to be fully effective, this training must not only include information on the female development process, but also include opportunities for staff to reflect upon and discuss with one another their own experiences around gender identity.

2. Programs should provide ongoing opportunities for staff reflection and discussion related to issues of gender identity and socialization.

While initial training is essential, staff will also need ongoing opportunities to discuss how their own socialization is affecting program implementation and staff relationships. Because staff are responsible for modeling positive gender relationships to the young women in the program, they must be involved in a constant process of evaluating their own gender role stereotypes and how they apply these to one another and to the young women they are serving.

3. Issues unique to male staff working with young women must be addressed.

There are specific challenges which come with serving as a male staff member in an all female environment. It will be essential for male staff to be given clear behavioral expectations and focused time in which to discuss their concerns.

E. Support Services

1. Food Services

In menu design and implementation, food service personnel should take into consideration the unique nutritional needs of young women.

Adolescent young women do not have the same nutritional needs as adolescent young men. Food service personnel should be well read on issues related to women's nutrition, particularly those which pertain to women of child bearing age. Food service and nutrition should connect to treatment services provided in other health related aspects of the program.

2. Health Services

- a) In design and implementation, health services should take into consideration female development and gender identity.

The literature on health issues for young women stresses the existence of a mind-body connection in young women. Nursing or other health-related staff must understand this connection and be able to account for it while providing services. For instance, health staff should be a part of the overall treatment team and should be in regular communication with treatment staff.

- b) Health services which include gynecological procedures should take into consideration the high rates of sexual abuse found in female juvenile justice and delinquency prevention treatment clients.

Estimates range from 70-90% of the young women referred to the juvenile justice system have been sexually abused. As a result, the standard procedures related to gynecological health may seem particularly invasive or frightening. Health and treatment staff need to find ways to address this issue, both in the regular treatment program as well as in the specific health care provided. Gynecological services should be provided by a female gynecologist if possible.

Young women should be encouraged to take an active role in defining and implementing their health treatments, including medications whenever possible. For instance, they should be able to select from various options when treating a health-related concern.

3. Mental Health Services

Mental health professionals working with this population should be well read in issues related to mental health programming and gender identity.

The literature is well versed on the negative relationship between mental health treatment and young women. Young women are often over medicated with psychotropic medications and/or assumed to have mental health conditions more often than their male counterparts. Mental health professionals working with these young women must understand this historical context as well as educate the young women on this matter.

Young women should be encouraged to take an active role in defining and implementing their mental health treatments, including medications whenever possible. They should be able to petition to remove themselves from psychotropic medications.

F. Aftercare and Follow-up Services

Aftercare services should take into consideration the role relationship plays in the lives of young women in both their design and implementation.

Due to the relational nature of young women, they often form intense relationships with their treatment providers. This is a necessary part of the treatment scenario. The implications of these relationships for aftercare or transitional services are critical. Transition or aftercare must be seen as a transfer of a relationship as well as a transfer of service. The aftercare worker should be involved early in the treatment process, not just at the time of transition. Young women should be given the opportunity to "try" whatever follow-up treatment is scheduled, while continuing in their current placement.

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