

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.