

Hope is What We Do:
Girl-Centered Practice

DELORES BARR WEAVER ———
POLICY CENTER
————— SEE THE GIRL®

Agenda

Why Girls? A Look at the Research

Reflective Practice

What is Girl Centered?

Girl Centered Practice: Core Building Blocks

- Safety Matters
- Identity Matters
- Trauma Matters
- Relationships Matter
- Communication Matters
- Listening Matters

TRANSLATING THEORY TO PRACTICE: Model Programs & Curriculum

Certificate Training Opportunities

Resources

Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center

We engage communities, organizations and individuals through quality research, community organizing, advocacy, training and model programming to advance the rights of girls and young women, especially those in the justice system.

www.seethegirl.org

What We Do

- Research
- Advocacy
- Model Programming
- Training & Technical Assistance





See
the
Girl

What the Research Tells Us

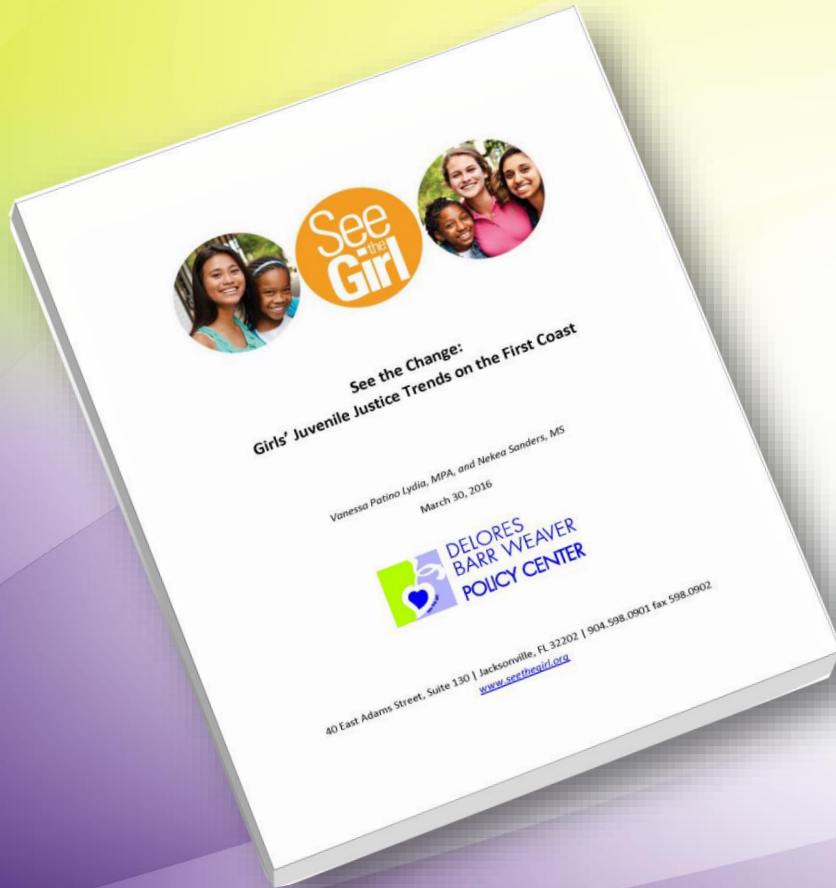
Why Girls?

- 1 in 5 girls/1 in 20 boys is a victim of child sexual abuse
- 63% of women who had suffered sexual abuse by a family member also reported a rape or attempted rape after the age of 14.
- Negative body image, low self concept, acute substance abuse aimed at self medicating to deal with trauma indicate need for a girl responsive approach

- <https://victimsofcrime.org/child-sexual-abuse-statistics/>

Her Story

What the Research Tells Us



What the Research Tells Us

- Nationally, girls represent about a third (1 out of 3) of juvenile referrals to the system (Sickmund, Sladky & Kang, 2017).
- Almost half of arrests resulted in petitions (48%), one quarter resulted in adjudications (24%), 15% were adjudicated to probation and 5% were adjudicated to lock-up (Sickmund et al., 2017).

What the Research Tells Us

- **Girls commit less serious offenses yet receive harsher sanctions**
(Sherman, 2013; Sherman & Balck 2015)
- **Behaviors are directly related to their lived experiences of trauma, exploitation, physical and sexual abuse, mental health, family conflict, academic failure and poverty** (Zahn et al., 2010).
- **Each system decision point (e.g., education, child protection, justice) presents an opportunity for girls to either be diverted to the services they need or get pulled into the system more deeply**
(Ravoira & Patino-Lydia, 2011).

What the Research Tells Us

- Girls of color continue to be overrepresented nationally at key decision points including arrest, detention, and commitment and tend to receive more severe judicial consequences than **White girls** (Chesney Lind, 1989; Zahn et al., 2010, Patino-Lydia & Gordon, 2020).
- Disparities exist for lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) youth who are only 7 to 9% of the general population, but represent almost 40% of girls in juvenile justice facilities (CAP et al., 2017).

Disparities, Gendered Response by Society & JJ System Towards Girls' Behaviors

- Lower risk of recidivism and lower public risk
- More likely to enter the system for more minor offenses
- Detained for longer periods of time
- Probation violations - return to detention or placement without committing a crime
- Charges inside the system (assault on LEO, acting out in detention or program)

(Datesman & Scarpitti, 1977; Goodkind et al., 2005; Sherman, 1999; Lederman, 2000; Acoca, 2000 ; Bloom, Covington, 2005; Patino-Lydia & Gordon, 2020)



Learning: Girls' Disconnection Through a Series of Complex Traumas





Through the Lens of a Girl

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Trauma
- Chaotic family life
- Multiple moves
- Grief and loss
- Academic failure
- Feelings of hopelessness



What We See

- Manipulative
- Anger
- Hostility
- Mistrust
- Disrespect for authority
- Withdrawn
- Runaway
- Aggressive
- Defensive



System Response

- Judge harshly
- Personalize
- Engage in power struggles
- Punish behavior
- Send away
- Suspend/Expel
- Isolation
- Restraint
- Control

Intergenerational Consequences of Girls' Incarceration

Problems follow girls into adulthood

- Poor physical, emotional & mental health
- Substance abuse
- Future arrests & incarceration
- High risk of domestic violence & violent relationships
- Dysfunctional parenting/losing custody of their children

Voices of Girls

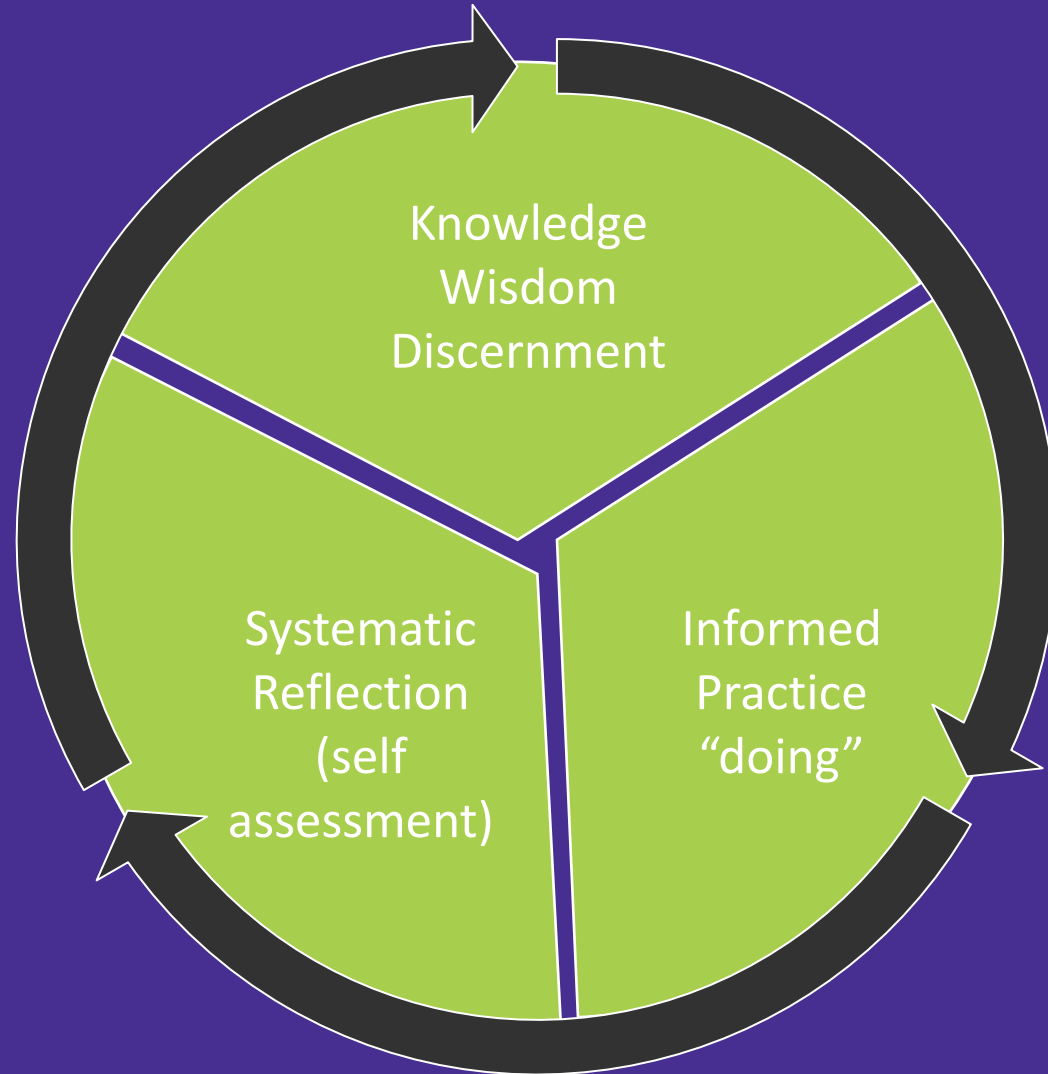




Reflective Practice (Donald Schon, 1983)

Reflective Practice refers to a discipline that seeks to bridge the gap between theory and action by encouraging active reflection on such questions as “What do we know? How does what we know inform what we do? How do the things we learn through our actions reshape what we know?” The process is cyclical and builds knowledge cumulatively when applied. Because “reflective practice” acknowledges that important lessons come from both thinking and doing, it can be a useful tool both for tempering professional hubris and challenging popular wisdom.

Reflective Practice Framework



- What do we know?
- What do we need to know?
- What do we do with what we know?

Reflective Practice

Building Knowledge (Facts)

- Informs and improves practice

Wisdom (Gain through experience)

- Creates stronger outcomes

Discernment

- Figuring out what to do
- What matters most

Reflective Practice

Links ACTION + THOUGHT + REFLECTION

Involves thinking about and critically analyzing one's actions with the goal of improving practice

YOU become an external observer

1. Identify assumptions and feelings underlying practice
2. Speculate about how these assumptions and feelings impact YOUR practice



Reframing

VII

IX

Reframing

VII ---VIII

IX

Setting the Stage for Reflection

Reflective Practice requires...

- **Knowledge of Practice** (without an understanding of rules, techniques that make up good practice, we repeat mistakes)
- **Awareness of professional and personal philosophy** (without awareness we can become preoccupied with technique)
- **Understanding of Incongruencies in Practice** (alignment of personal and professional values and actions)

PAUSE

Practice the PAUSE
Pause before judging
Pause before assuming
Pause before accusing
Pause whenever you're
About to react harshly,
And you'll avoid doing and
saying things you will later regret.

Lori Deschene



What is Girl-Centered?

Girl-Centered Practice[©]

Uses a strength-based approach that is grounded in 3 core principles:

1. **Girls as Experts**: Acknowledges each girl as an expert of her life and her relationships
2. **Mutuality**: Sit where a girl sits and seeing what she sees so we both learn and grow together.
3. **Lived Experiences**: Honor & value girl's lived experiences, knowledge, culture, ethnicity, and language.

Girl-Centered Practice[©]

Incorporates 6 key elements:

1. **Theory**: Ensures that programs are guided by gender relevant theories
2. **Connections**: Focuses on the importance of girls' connections (family, friends, schools, and others).
3. **Community**: Recognizes the dynamic community in which girls live, play, and learn.
4. **Intersectionality**: Focuses on the intersectionality of gender, gender identity, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, ability, education and socioeconomic status.
5. **Reflection**: Uses reflective practice and active listening without judging.
6. **Activism**: Promotes activism and informed advocacy



CORE BUILDING BLOCKS

Creating the culture and services to improve outcomes for girls, young women and youth who identify as female

Safety Matters

- Recall a time when you did not feel safe.

Questions:

- How did you feel physically?
Emotionally?
- How did you react to these feelings?
- What would have made you feel safe?



IS MY *happy* PLACE

ABC's of Creating Safety

- Authenticity
- Boundaries
- Consistency
- Structure



Stages of Healing

- Safety (Present Tense)
- Remembrance and Mourning (Past)
 - Give Voice to experience (context, facts, emotions, meaning – tell story and mourn the old self that trauma destroyed)
- Reconnection to Ordinary Life
 - Healing in the girls' context of relationships
 - Face task of creating new future
 - Now can develop a new self

Identity Matters

- Girls are more likely than boys to lose their self confidence as they enter adolescence.
- In early adolescence, girls may give up their personal sense of self in order to maintain a relationship.
- Girls can lose their voice and direction when seeking to fit in or to be accepted.

Identity Matters

- Compared to boys, 50% more likely to suffer from low self esteem (lack of belief in oneself) & poor sense of self efficacy.
- Report lower self esteem, loss of sense of purpose in life, less likely to say they like themselves or have a lot to be proud of.
- Concern for girls is degree to which they internalize perceived inadequacies and their consequential behaviors.

Dove Real Beauty Sketches



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=litXW91UauE>



Trauma Matters

Children and adolescents experience trauma under two different sets of circumstances.

- Acute Traumatic Events:
 - Experiencing a serious injury to yourself or witnessing a serious injury to or the death of someone else,
 - Facing imminent threats of serious injury or death to yourself or others, experiencing a violation of personal physical integrity.
- Chronic Traumatic Situations:
 - Exposure to trauma occurs repeatedly over long periods of time

From: National Child Traumatic Stress Network



Trauma Matters

- Trauma never goes away
- Trauma impact brain development
- It impacts ability to
 - Trust
 - Build autonomy
 - Take initiative
 - Self-care
 - Cognition
 - Develop our identity
 - Form stable relationships

Impact of Trauma

Trauma is linked to a host of negative outcomes:

- Mental health: PTSD, suicide, hopelessness, anxiety, fear, depression
- Behavioral: school problems, conduct issues, delinquency
- Health-related: high-risk behaviors, substance use, physical pain

Gender Differences

- Girls report higher rates of sexual abuse, sexual assault, physical punishment and psychological distress (Hennessey et al., 2004, Tolin & Foa, 2006)
- Boys are more likely to experience nonsexual assaults, accidents, serious illness or unspecified injury, and witnessing death or injury (Tolin & Foa, 2006)

Gender Differences con't

- Boys have a stronger response when they are the victim of trauma than when they witness traumatic events
- Girls have similar psychological responses to trauma whether they witness traumatic events or are themselves victimized
- The association between witnessing traumatic events and anxiety and depression is stronger for girls

Impact of shame and humiliation

- Women who are made to feel responsible for their victimization, may exhibit withdrawal behaviors due to impact of shame and humiliation
- Serve to “alienate and silence individuals”
- Responses to shame include:
 - Avoiding eye contact, hiding, withdrawing, avoidance behaviors (i.e. focusing on other’s problems)
 - Vulnerable to self-consciousness, blaming themselves, feel unlovable
- Men’s reaction to shame and humiliation is more likely to be with aggression and violence
- Women’s aggression is likely to be expressed indirectly through relational aggression (i.e. gossiping, isolating peers, etc.)

G I R L

Emotions Matter

- Trauma Drives Behavior
- Shift focus from controlling the behavior
- Behavior reflects the intensity of need
- Don't get caught up in **emotions & words**.
- Strong emotions mask pain, confusion, embarrassment, fear etc.
- Model and teach ways to express frustration, anger, embarrassment, fear
- Emotions coach: All emotions acceptable .
- Provide realistic feedback about emotional discomfort.

Evolution to Healing-Centered Approach

MM: What is wrong with you?

TIC: What happened to you?

HCA: What's right with you?

A photograph of three young girls lying on a colorful, patterned rug in a classroom. The girls are smiling and looking towards the camera. They are dressed in school uniforms, including blue shirts and khaki shorts. One girl is wearing a grey hoodie. The rug has large, colorful floral patterns in shades of pink, blue, green, and purple. A blue plastic chair is visible in the background. A purple banner with white text is overlaid at the bottom of the image.

Relationships Matter

Relationships Matter

Carol Gilligan *“In a Different Voice”*

- Important and fundamental
- Gives a sense of connection
- Give up self in order to be in a relationship
- Can lose their voices, inner strength, sense of who they are as an individual and what they want to be
- Social expectations crush spirits
- Dominated by peer pressure

Relationships Matter

Relationships are central in girls' lives.

Role models are needed to show girls what healthy relationships look like and who reflect them: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, upbringing, faith, etc.

Observe and seek to understand girls in the context of their relationships

Relational Cultural Theory

- Need for growth-fostering relationships is universal
- Growth fostering relationships are a central human necessity throughout our lives and chronic disconnections are the source of psychological problems and suffering
- People are motivated by a deep need for connections with other people
- This includes a desire to contribute to the well-being of other people
- Relationships are highly defined by the cultural context

Five Good Things

Jean Baker Miller, M.D.

Growth-fostering relationships empower all people in them. They are characterized by:

1. A sense of zest or well-being that comes from connecting with another person or other persons.
2. The ability and motivation to take action in the relationship as well as in other situations.
3. Increased knowledge of oneself and the other person(s).
4. An increased sense of worth,
5. A desire for more connections beyond the particular one.

Importance of Working within a Cultural Context

- All interactions occur within a cultural context, but often cultural factors are invisible or ignored
- Each person has multiple social identities
- Embracing diversity results in mutual empowerment and deepening of the relationship
- Because of pervasively negative attitudes in our culture toward differences, individuals within minority or marginalized groups are given little by the culture that supports their development of self-worth.
- Girls are too often discriminated against, shamed, or pushed to the margin



Strategies of disconnection may include:

1. Criticizing
2. Avoiding
3. Silence
4. Negative self-talk
5. Intellectualizing
6. Leaving
7. Blaming
8. Complaining
9. Threatening
10. Punishing
11. Numbing (addictive disorders)
12. Technology

Common outcomes of chronic disconnection for girls

- Inauthentic in relationships
- A lack of investment in work/school
- Relational and physical aggression
- Stay in/return to abusive relationships
- Depression
- Eating disorders
- Substance abuse
- Anxiety
- Self-silencing
- Shame
- Self injury

My Role Model

Relationships are central in girls' lives.

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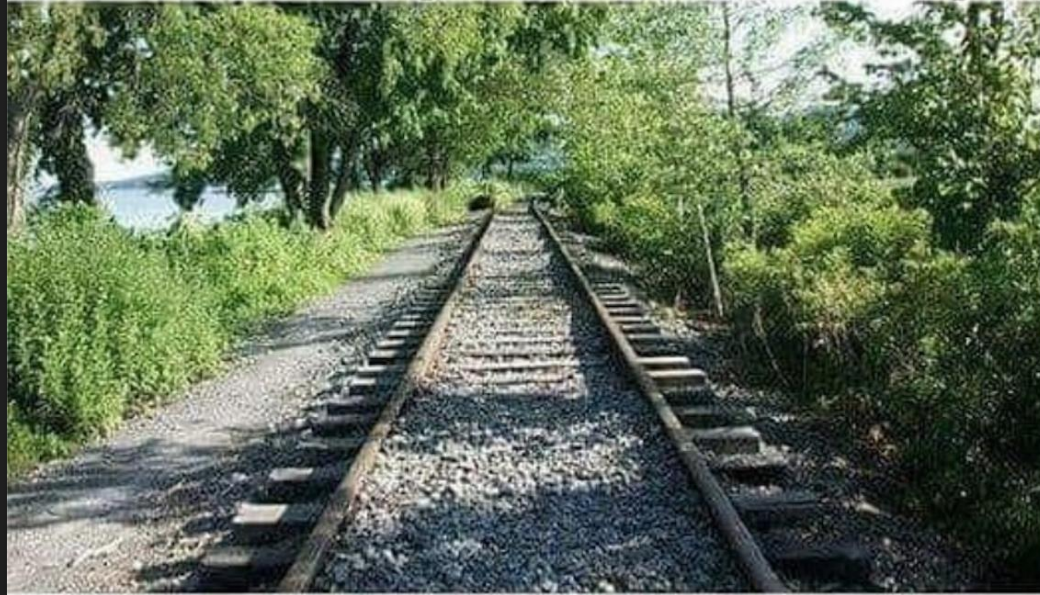
“Which is more important,” asked Big Panda, “the journey or the destination?”

“The company.” said Tiny Dragon.

Communication Matters

- Girls need time to talk
- Communication is not just to share information
- How she forms relationships

How boys tell a story



How girls tell a story



Communication Matters

- Girls want to be heard and affirmed
- You don't have to "fix" everything – to "rescue"
- Someone needs to have listened to her story
- Allow time for girls to share their stories in the context of her life as she sees it
- Integrate time to process thoughts, feelings, emotions
- Safe space for her "aha" moments

Communication Matters

- Become an expert listener.
- Be aware of the “silent” ways you may silence others.
- How are you silenced?

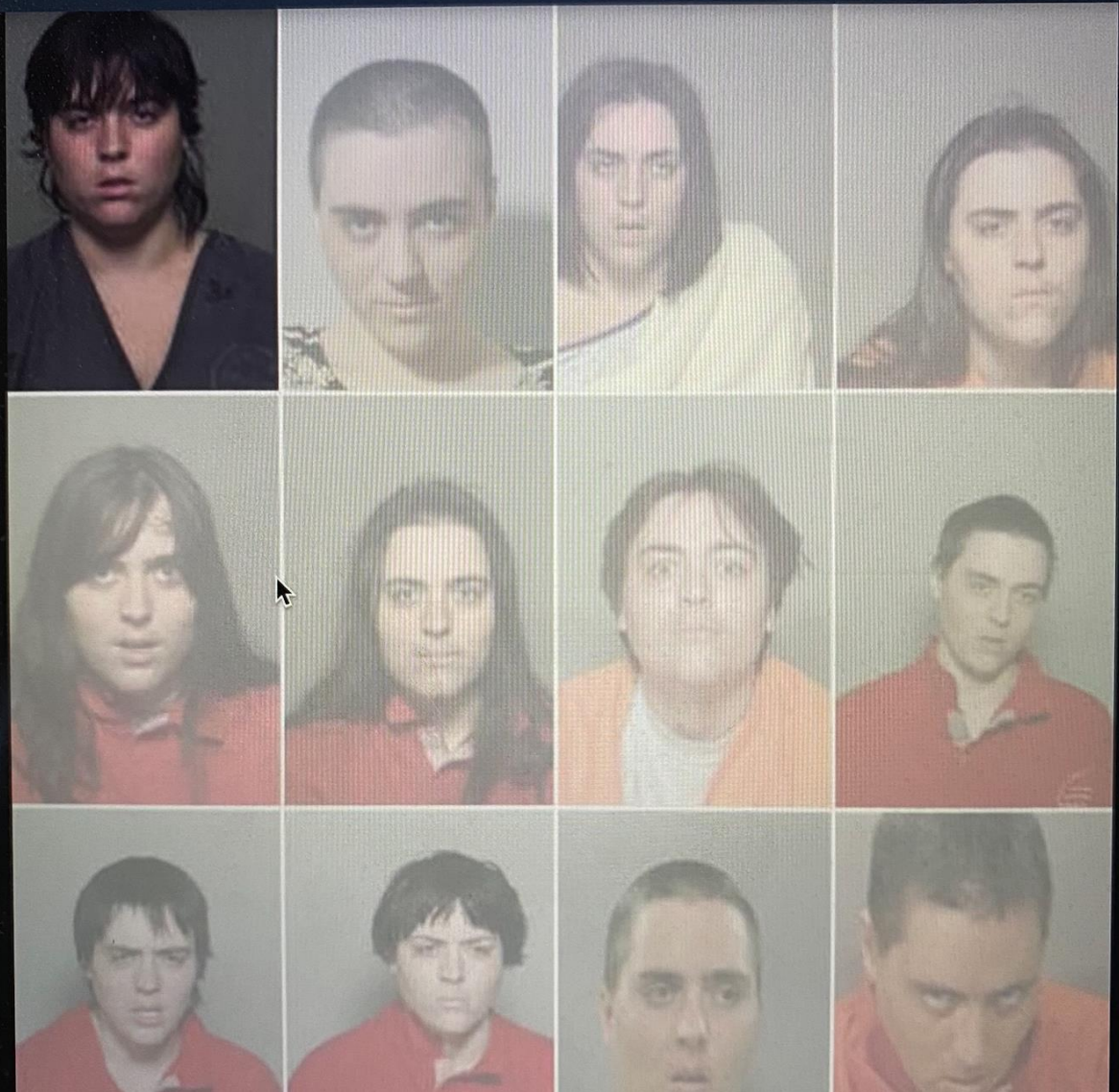
Listening Matters

“Without a listener, the healing process is aborted. Human beings, like plants that bend toward the sunlight, bend toward others in an innate healing tropism. There are times when being truly listened to is more critical than being fed. Listening well to another’s pain is a primary form of nurturance, capable of healing even the most devastating of human afflictions, including the wounds and scars of violence, even the horrors of war and large-scale social trauma. Children speak their pain automatically when there is a listener, but learn to hide it when there is no ear to hear.”

(Greenspan, 2004, p. 14)

Did anyone *see the girl*?

Melissa Ann Jernigan has been arrested many times for offenses arising from her chronic mental illness. She aged out of the foster-care system at age 18, and her available adult criminal record began at 21, when she was arrested for possession of cocaine. Since then, she has been arrested about 20 times, mostly for relatively minor crimes like battery, possession of drug paraphernalia, trespassing, criminal mischief, disorderly conduct and parole violations. Her offenses escalating, when she was charged with aggravated battery after she repeatedly kicked a state hospital guard who then suffered a heart attack and died.



Justice System as a Mental Health Provider

- **70 % of the 2 million children/adolescents arrested each year in the United States have a mental health disorder.**
- **1 in 4 suffers from a mental illness so severe it impairs her/his ability to function and grow into a responsible adult.**

Call to Action

- Integration of mental health, juvenile justice, child welfare and education systems
- Care management & treatment plans tailored to address the specific needs of each child and family.

(<https://www.ncsl.org/documents/cj/jjguidebook-mental.pdf>)

Fundamental Rights

- Have a system advocate
- Fair and equitable treatment
- Freedom from violence and exploitation
- Be valued and respected by those who interact with them
- Be able to trust the system



Girl-Centered Practice[©]

Programs & Services

Theory to Practice: Girl Matters: Continuity of Care Model Programs

- Girl Matters: It's Elementary
- Girl Matters: In the Middle
- Girl Matters: In the Community
- Open Doors Outreach Network





Girl Matters[®]: It's
Elementary



Policy Center Video: Kayla's Story

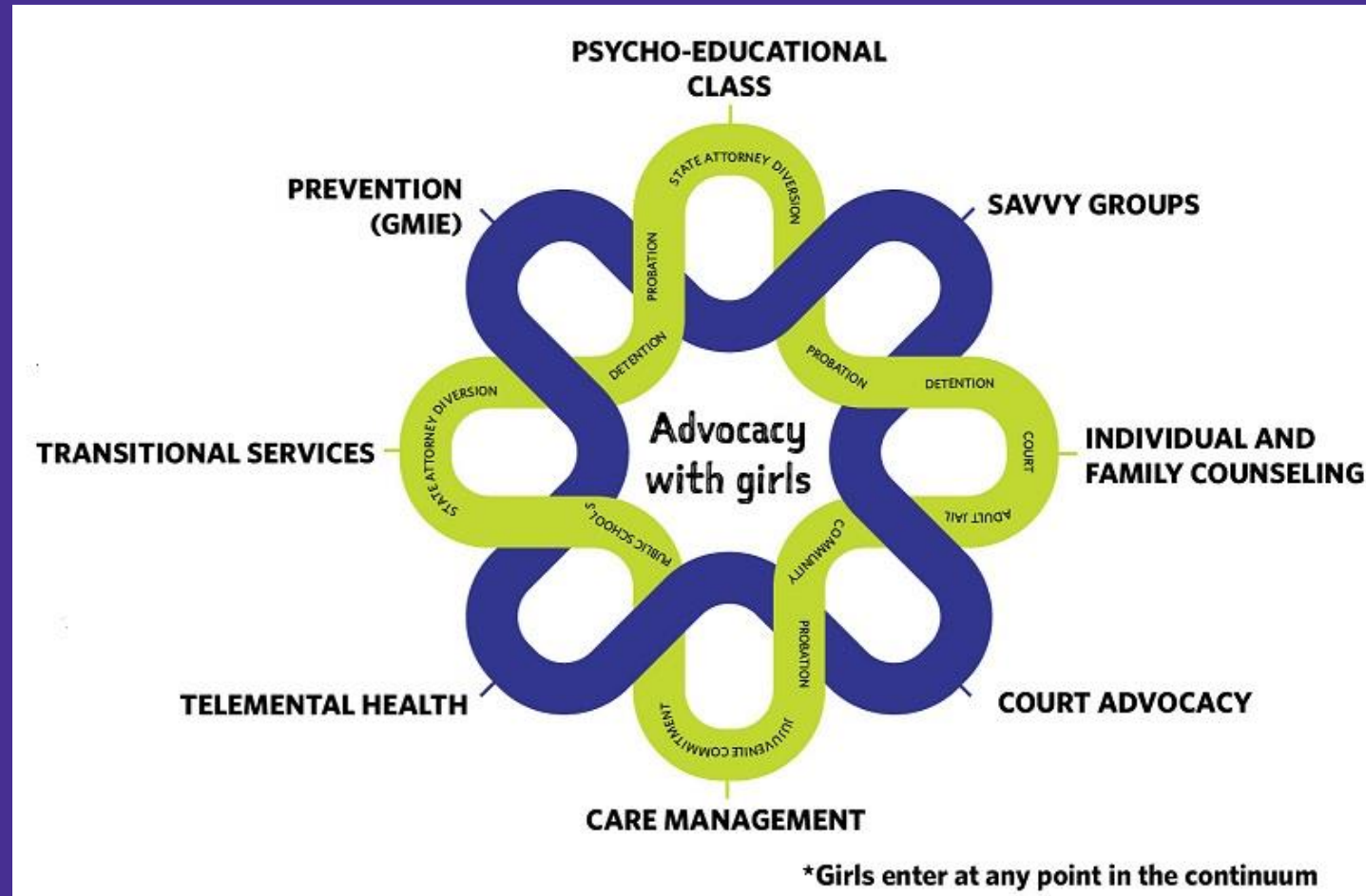




Girl Matters[®]: In the Community

- School
- Home/Foster Care/Shelters
- Diversion
- Court
- Detention
- Probation
- Commitment
- Re-entry
- Pre-trial Detention

Girl Matters: In the Community Services



Policy Center video: PBS News Hour



SAVVY[®] Sister

Safety, Action, Values, Victory, Yes I Can!



SAVVY[©] Lessons

- S**afety Explores & defines safety
- A**ction Assist girls with setting goals and developing an action plan to build skills
- V**alues Encourage girls to explore personal and societal values
- V**ictory Demonstrate progress/success in mastery of new skills
- Y**es I Can! Savvy Plan to transfer knowledge to practice



SAVVY Topics

- Being a Girl Matters
- Safety Matters
- Identity Matters
- Self Esteem Matters
- Language Matters
- Communication Matters & Listening Matters
- Relationships Matter
- Emotions Matter
- Body Matters
- Sex Matters
- Power and Choice Matters
- Spirit
- Feminist Movement Matters
- Activism Matters
- Social Supports Matter
- Career Matters

The Lesson Plans

- Flexible based on girls/agency needs
- Can be used
 - in a series of counseling sessions
 - group topics
 - self directed study



Open Doors Outreach Network

Sex Trafficking Survivor Network

The Open Doors Outreach Network improves care and coordination for child and adult victims of commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking up to the age of 24.

The Policy Center defines sex trafficking as rape, sexual exploitation, and abuse. The Open Doors Network Team consists of a Survivor Mentor, Regional Navigator, Clinicians,

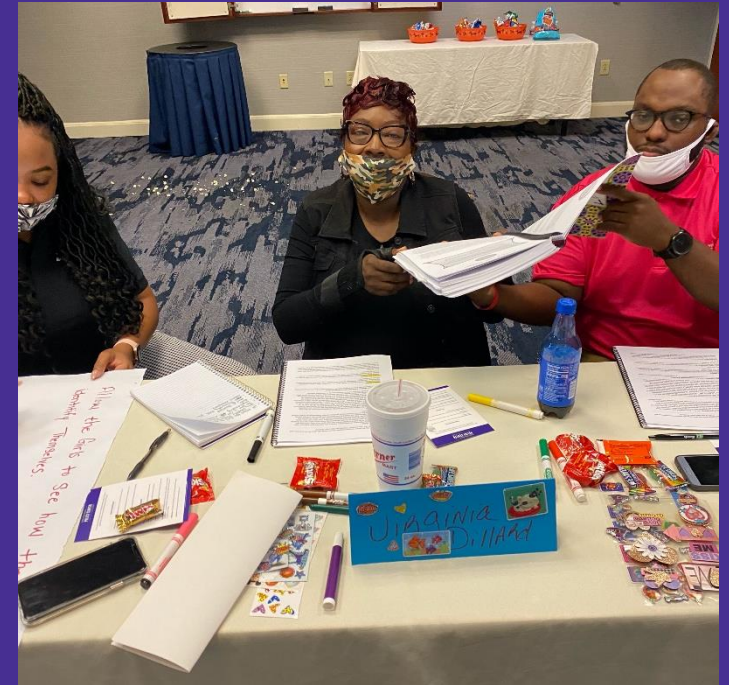


CERTIFICATE TRAINING OPPORTUNITY

August 9-13, 2021

- Girl Centered Practice Certificate
3 Days
- SAVVY Sister Curriculum
2 Days

Register online @ www.seethegirl.org



Resources

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