

# Juvenile Female Offenders: A Plan for Cook County

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, OCTOBER 1996

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) awarded a one-year planning grant to the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center to develop gender specific programming for young women in Cook County's juvenile justice system. Working collaboratively through a Steering Committee, the grant officially began on November 1, 1995. Unofficially, it began two years before when members of the Steering Committee, although not officially named as such, jointly developed the proposal in response to a Request For Proposals from OJJDP.

Recognizing the strength of partnerships at the community and state levels, the Steering Committee elected to create a Task Force with which to collaborate. The Task Force is composed of government and community based organizations working to promote gender equity and fairness. Task Force members have been a critical resource, providing feedback on current services and identifying new ideas and perspectives on how girls might best be served. These two groups combined their energies and commitment to girls with an eye to developing a comprehensive strategy to promote systemic change and gender specific programs from prevention through aftercare.

The mission statement sets forth the charge for the Steering Committee and Task Force:

- Increase the visibility of girls in the Cook County juvenile and criminal justice system.
- Effect change in the way the system treats girls by encouraging a shift in attitudes.
- Articulate the specific needs of girls.
- Design and implement policies and programming developed specifically to meet their needs.

The Steering Committee knew that, to succeed, we must build on existing organizational strength rather than duplicate what already exists. To achieve this goal, many individuals and organizations contributed hundreds of hours of their time as we undertook the following tasks:

1. Develop gender specific risk and needs assessments with the assistance of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency. These assessments are built on data from girls in the Cook County juvenile justice system. The needs assessment was designed by individuals representing 13 public and private agencies. The risk assessment used data from girls involved in court proceedings.



2. Create the first Resource Directory for girls in Cook County which includes programs on addictions counseling, girls in gangs, victims of abuse, mentoring, teen parenting, group counseling (education and support groups), residential/independent living and teen mom residential placement.
3. Present training on how to implement gender specific programming. In three training sessions, Linda Albrecht trained more than 300 staff from over 100 public and private organizations. Sistas, a rites of passage program operated by probation officers from Washington, DC, also trained 150 staff.
4. Assess the strengths, modes of interaction and areas for improvement among the five custodial agencies -- Chicago Police Department, Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and Juvenile Probation Department, and the Illinois Departments of Corrections and Children and Family Services. The result has been a commitment to share information more effectively and continue to devise productive opportunities for improving programs and services for young women. This work was completed by the Custodial Subcommittee and included focus groups with custodial agency front line staff.
5. Design a community-based case management system. Girls enter the juvenile justice system from multiple points; each girl's case manager will stay with her as long as she remains in the juvenile justice system. The Case Management Subcommittee reviewed numerous case management models, and held focus groups with girls in detention, on parole, or on probation. Organizational perspectives blended and developed into a full continuum of care, one that considers the girl, her personal problems, problems with the justice system and the goal: positive outcomes.

The grant formally concludes on October 31. The Steering Committee will continue its work as it:

- Seeks funding to establish a private, not-for-profit organization to provide case managers to interested agencies. Other functions identified as important components of case management are ongoing case reviews; central intake; technical assistance in designing gender specific programs; standards and protocols; advocacy; policy development; monitoring and training in the use of the risk and needs assessments; and developing a quality assurance system.
- Establishes a Girls Network to continue the dialogue about at-risk girls in Cook County, share information and resources, and work together to empower girls to achieve their greatest hopes and dreams.

Contact us until October 31 at 312-433-7974 and speak to Suzanne Kraus. After that, call a member of the Steering Committee.