

**Girls in the Juvenile Justice System:  
Causes, Consequences and  
Strategies to Reduce  
Delinquency**

Tuesday, March 21, 2006  
2:00 – 3:00pm Eastern

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**Moderator:**

**Lisa King**

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**Patterns, Causes and  
Correlates of Girls' Delinquency**

Margaret A. Zahn, PI  
Girls Study Group

OJJDP Funded

 *turning knowledge into practice*

Crime, Violence, and Justice Center  
RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NORTH CAROLINA

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## Girls Study Group

- ❑ Multi-disciplinary group of researchers and practitioners
- ❑ Convened to:
  - Study patterns, causes, and consequences of female delinquency
  - Develop a theory of female delinquency
  - Identify effective strategies to prevent and reduce female involvement in delinquency
- ❑ Funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)

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## Mission of the Girls Study Group

- ❑ Understand girls' patterns of delinquency, their pathways to and desistance from delinquency
- ❑ Identify relevant risk and protective factors
- ❑ Identify gaps in research as it relates to girls and delinquency
- ❑ Effectively communicate findings both to the research community and to those who have the responsibility to intervene in the lives of girls at risk for or currently involved in delinquent behavior
- ❑ Identify and promote effective programs and policies

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## Girls Study Group Members

- ❑ Dr. Robert Agnew, Professor, Department of Sociology, Emory University
- ❑ Anne Marie Ambrose, Esq., Director, Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services, Pennsylvania Office of Children, Youth and Families
- ❑ Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology and Social Behavior, University of California, Irvine
- ❑ Dr. Meda Chesney-Lind, Professor, Women's Studies Program, University of Hawaii at Manoa
- ❑ Dr. Gayle Dakof, Associate Research Professor, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, University of Miami
- ❑ Dr. Delbert Elliott, Professor of Sociology, Director, Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, University of Colorado
- ❑ Dr. Barry Feld, Professor, School of Law, University of Minnesota
- ❑ Dr. Diana Fishbein, Director, Transdisciplinary Behavioral Science Program, RTI International

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## Girls Study Group Members, cont.

- ❑ Dr. Peggy Giordano, Professor of Sociology, Center for Family and Demographic Research, Bowling Green State University
- ❑ Dr. Candace Kruttschnitt, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Minnesota
- ❑ Dr. Jody Miller, Associate Professor, Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of Missouri—St. Louis
- ❑ Dr. Merry Morash, Professor, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University
- ❑ Dr. Darrell Steffensmeier, Professor, Department of Sociology, The Pennsylvania State
- ❑ Ms. Giovanna Taormina, Executive Director, Girls Circle Association
- ❑ Dr. Donna-Marie Winn, Senior Research Scientist, Center for Child and Family Policy, Duke University

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## Research Activities

- ❑ Review of the literature
- ❑ Secondary analysis of relevant datasets
- ❑ Review of programs targeting female delinquency
- ❑ Review of screening and assessment tools
- ❑ Development of model programs

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## Literature Review

- ❑ 1600 pieces of literature were reviewed
- ❑ 13 chapter drafts have been done
- ❑ 10 have been finalized

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## Literature Review Topics

- ❑ Robert Agnew, "The Contributions of Mainstream Theories to the Explanation of Female Delinquency"
- ❑ Jody Miller and Christopher Mullins, "Feminist Theories of Girls' Delinquency"
- ❑ Darrell Steffensmeier, "Trends in Girls' Delinquency and the Gender Gap"
- ❑ Barry Feld, "Girls in the Juvenile Justice System"
- ❑ Meda Chesney-Lind, "An Overview of Key Themes in Female Delinquency"
- ❑ Candace Kruttschnitt and Peggy Giordano, "Family Influences on Girls' Delinquency"
- ❑ Peggy Giordano, "Peer Influences on Girls' Delinquency"

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## Review Topics, cont.

- ❑ Allison Payne, Denise Gottfredson and Candace Kruttschnitt, "Girls, Schooling and Delinquency"
- ❑ Margaret A. Zahn, "Communities and Girls' Delinquency"
- ❑ Robert Agnew, "Religion, Gender and Delinquency"
- ❑ Diana Fishbein, Shari Miller-Johnson, Donna-Marie Winn and Gayle Dakof, "Individual Risk Factors in Girls' Delinquency"
- ❑ Jody Miller, "Young Women and Street Gangs"
- ❑ Merry Morash and Meda Chesney-Lind, "Girls Violence in Context"
- ❑ Elizabeth Cauffman, Lisa Broidy and Alex Piquero, "Pathways to Girls Offending"
- ❑ RTI Staff, "Resilience and Girls' Delinquency"

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## Trends in Girls' Violence

- ❑ Official data sources show an increase in female arrests for aggravated and simple assaults
- ❑ Data source: Uniform Crime Reports
- ❑ Time frame: 1980-2003

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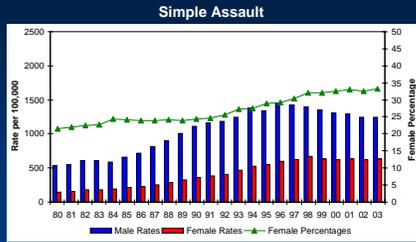
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Trends in Juvenile Female and Male Arrest Rates<sup>a</sup> (per 100,000) and Female Percentage of Arrests<sup>b</sup> for Violent Offending: *Uniform Crime Reports, 1980–2003*



<sup>a</sup>Rates are adjusted for the sex composition of the population and for changes in UCR coverage over time. The population base includes ages 12-17.  
<sup>b</sup>Female Percentage = Female Rate / (Female Rate + Male Rate)\*100%

From Steffensmeier, 2005

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Trends in Girls' Violence

- In contrast to official arrest statistics, self-report data from *Monitoring the Future* show:
  - Levels of assault for juvenile females and males have been fairly constant over the past two decades
  - Female involvement in violence has not increased relative to male violence

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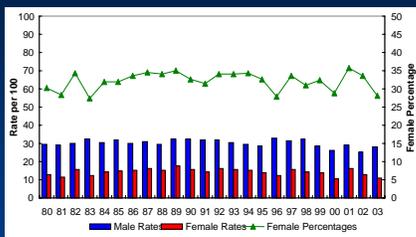
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Trends in Female and Male Self-Reported Assault<sup>a</sup> and Female Percentage of Violent Offending: *Monitoring the Future, 1980-2003 (17-18-year olds)*



<sup>a</sup>Items in the assault index include (1) hit instructor/supervisor, (2) fight at school/work, and (3) hurt someone badly in a fight

From Steffensmeier, 2005

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## Trends in Girls' Violence

- Victimization data from the *National Crime Victimization Survey* also show little change
- Thus, there has been more change in girls' arrests than in underlying violent behavior of girls

From Steffensmeier, 2005

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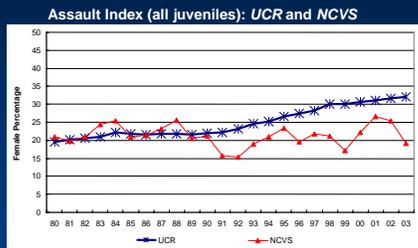
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Summary of Trends in Juvenile Gender Gap for Assault in Arrest Data Compared with Victimization and Self-Report Sources: *Uniform Crime Reports* and the *National Crime Victimization Survey*, 1980-2003



From Steffensmeier, 2005

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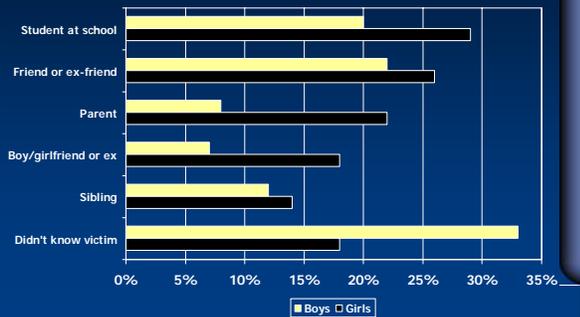
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Among youth with current person offenses, 82% of girls knew their victims compared to 66% of boys




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## Gender Differences in Causes and Correlates of Girls' Delinquency

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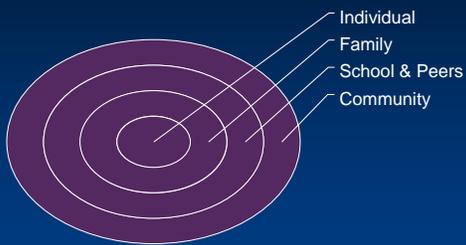
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## The Ecological Model



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## Gender Differences

- ❑ Girls and boys experience many of the same risk factors, but they differ in sensitivity to and rate of exposure to these factors

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Gender Differences in Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Delinquency

- The following risk and protective factors are associated with delinquency in both girls and boys:
  - Family dynamics
    - Structure and stability
    - Supervision and control
    - Family criminality
    - Maltreatment
  - School involvement
  - Availability of community-based alternatives to detention

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Gender Differences in Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Delinquency

- The following risk and protective factors are especially gender-sensitive:
  - Early puberty
  - Witnessing family violence
  - Cross-gender peer influence
  - Responsivity to religion
  - Attachment and bonding to school
  - Neighborhood disadvantage

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Gender Differences in Risk and Protective Factors Associated with Delinquency

- There are differential rates of exposure, by gender, to:
  - Supervision and control
  - Sexual assault
  - Community violence

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## Peer Dynamics\*

- ❑ Girls have fewer delinquent peer associations
- ❑ Both boys and girls are influenced by romantic partners when serious delinquency is an issue
- ❑ However, girls may be more influenced by the delinquency of romantic partners, especially for committing minor delinquent acts

\*From Giordano, 2005

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## Neighborhood Effects\*

- ❑ Question: Do disadvantaged neighborhoods create equally crime-producing results for boys and girls?
- ❑ Answer: Yes and no

\*From Zahn, 2005

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## Neighborhood Effects\*

- ❑ There are many studies on neighborhoods, but few on gender related effects
- ❑ Structural disadvantage affects crime rates of both girls and boys
- ❑ Girls are less exposed to community violence
- ❑ Relocation to more affluent neighborhoods lowered girls' delinquency more than boys' delinquency (see MTO study, Kling et al. 2005)

\*From Zahn, 2005

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## Neighborhood Effects\*

- ❑ Disadvantaged neighborhoods may have less crime-producing effects for girls than boys because:
  - Girls stay at home more
  - Girls are supervised more closely by parents
  - Girls cope more with environmental pressures by avoidance and by internalizing rather than externalizing

\*From Zahn, 2005

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## Schools\*

- ❑ School success has a slightly stronger protective effect for boys, though it depends on the type of delinquency
- ❑ Students' perception of the fairness and clarity of the rules and enforcement has a protective effect on both genders, but more so for boys than girls
- ❑ Bonding to school is a stronger protective factor for girls
- ❑ School leaving may impact delinquency-but the reasons for leaving are more important. Leaving because of pregnancy is no related to delinquency outcomes

\*From Payne, Gottfredson and Kruttschnitt, 2005

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## Pathways to Delinquency

- ❑ The literature suggests multiple pathways to delinquency, but research is scarce:
  - Early puberty + structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods → association with older boys (if delinquent) → delinquency of girls
  - Sexual abuse or maltreatment at home → running away → law-violating behavior
  - Neglect at home + structurally disadvantaged neighborhoods → gang membership → delinquent activity

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## A Theory of Delinquency

- Research suggests that a theory to explain girls' delinquency would involve:
  - Sexual abuse or maltreatment history
  - Relationship with a delinquent romantic partner
  - Disparity between biological and social maturity—maturity gap within specific contexts
  - Mother-daughter conflict
  - Low bonding to conventional institutions—school, church, etc.

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## Girls in Custody

- Not all girls who commit delinquent acts are in custody
- Characteristics of those in custody were assessed through the Survey of Youth in Residential Placement (SYRP), Andrea J. Sedlack—Westat, OJJDP sponsored
  - Nationally representative sample of facilities
  - 7073 youth interviewed; 1695 of the interviewees were girls

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## Girls in Custody

- According to SYRP:
  - Prior sexual abuse was experienced by
    - 8% of boys
    - 35% of girls
  - Prior physical abuse was experienced by
    - 22% of boys
    - 42% of girls

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## Girls in Custody

- Those who abuse: Sexual abuse
  - Father or stepfather
  - Other adult in home
  - Mother's boyfriend
- Those who abuse: Physical abuse
  - Father or stepfather
  - Mother or stepmother
  - Brother or sister
  - Mother's boyfriend

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## Girls in Custody

□ Those who physically abuse:

	Overall	Boys	Girls	Sex difference
Father or stepfather	57%	58%	50%	**
Mother or stepmother	35%	32%	45%	***
Brother or sister	20%	18%	24%	*
Mother's boyfriend	17%	17%	17%	ns
Other adult in home	16%	15%	17%	ns
Other	16%	15%	22%	***
Foster parent	5%	5%	7%	ns
Father's girlfriend	3%	3%	2%	ns

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\*p<.001

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## Girls in Custody

- Compared to boys in the system, girls in the system are more likely to be victims of
  - Sexual abuse
  - Physical abuse
- They are also more likely to suffer from mental health disorders, especially
  - PTSD
  - Depression
  - Anxiety

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## Girls in Custody

- Compared to boys in the system, girls are more likely to suffer from substance use disorders
  
- Compared to girls in the general population, girls in the system are more likely to
  - Have dropped out of high school, or
  - Have repeated a grade at least once
  - Be performing below their grade level

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## Next Steps: This Year

- Integrate findings from literature review into the work of Year 2
- Conduct additional analyses to fill research gaps with existing data sources
- Assemble list of prevention and intervention programs and evidence of effectiveness
- Identify programs for promotion and replication
- Review risk and assessment tools for their utility in accurately assessing girls' risks and needs
- Conduct focus groups with girls and practitioners

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For more information, visit:  
<http://girlsstudygroup.rti.org/>



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Girls Circle Association



**Promoting Resiliency in Adolescent Girls**

Giovanna Taormina, Executive Director and Co-Founder

*The shortest distance between isolation and belonging is a circle...make one.*

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National Consultants to the OJJDP  
Serving All Areas of Juvenile Justice

- ◆ Probation
- ◆ Detention
- ◆ Residential Treatment
- ◆ Group Homes
- ◆ Drug Courts
- ◆ Diversion Programs
- ◆ Secure Facilities



Rated a "Promising Approach" by the OJJDP

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**Girls Circle Programming Additionally Effective in Many Prevention Settings**

- ◆ Schools
- ◆ Health Education
- ◆ Economic Literacy
- ◆ Substance Abuse Prevention
- ◆ Gang Prevention
- ◆ Pregnancy Prevention
- ◆ Boys & Girls Clubs
- ◆ Outdoor Adventure Groups




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## What is a Girls Circle?

The Girls Circle is a model of structured support groups for girls from 9-18 years.

#1 Priority: To promote SAFETY and RESPECT for all girls.

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## Girls Circle Theoretical Framework

### Relational Theory

- ❖ A girl's connection with others is a central organizing feature in her psychological make-up.
- ❖ The quality of these connections determines her overall psychological health.

### Employs Resiliency Practices

- ❖ Caring and support from at least one adult
- ❖ High expectations from adults
- ❖ Offers meaningful participation
- ❖ Promotes positive cultural identity



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## Girls Circle Format

1. **Opening Ritual**
2. **Theme Introduction**
3. **Check-in** (One at a time)
4. **Activity** (Verbal & Creative)
5. **Sharing of Activity**
6. **Closing Ritual**

Groups usually meet weekly with 6-10 girls per Circle  
Facilitators may use Girls Circle Facilitator Activity Guides

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Girls Circle utilizes a strengths based approach



- Girls voice ideas and opinions in a safe environment
- Follows gender relevant Girls Circle curricula to **build skills** and promote critical thinking
- Helps girls maintain authentic, respectful connection with peers and adults
- Blends left brain (*verbal discussion*) and right brain (*creative*) activities
- Builds on individual and collective strengths
- Counters trends toward self-doubt – decreases sense of isolation

*Strengthens girls' abilities to make healthy choices*

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**The majority of girls who come into the juvenile justice system are victims of crime themselves ...**

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*The Girls Circle Association recognizes trauma as a pathway to delinquency*



- Girls may become delinquent if their bond to family and society is weak or broken
- Searching for safe relationships in which to connect emotionally
- Peer groups are their primary means to validate personal and social growth
- Girls' conformity is held in place by social connectedness



Facilitators employ #1 strategy in working with girls: LISTENING

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## What Girls Say About Girls Circle




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From Imprisoned Girls at the Calif. Youth Authority – Ventura, CA

- "I noticed that I can work on myself and get positive comments."
- "How to speak up in groups and trust your neighbor."*
- "That I could talk to someone about my problems."*
- "Allowing myself to feel."*
- "I count down to the day we have group it really helps me relax. Make groups longer."*
- "That I'm not alone on how I feel."*
- "How the girls began to become a cohesive group."*
- "It was good. Nobody put nobody down."*
- "I am willing to open up here and learn some new things and how to avoid bad associates and what to do to change it."*
- "I am coming out of my shell."*

"Girls Circle puts a smile on my face and helps me to keep it there. I really want to continue to be in the future Girls Circles."




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## Strategies Vital to Girls' Development

- ◆ Listen to girls and all troubled youth carefully
- ◆ Create safe spaces – emotionally, physically and culturally
- ◆ Provide girls with authentic, supportive relationships with adults
- ◆ See girls as capable – recognize their potential
- ◆ Build on individual and collective strengths
- ◆ Share resistance strategies and challenge social practices and cultural ideologies that impede girls' growth
- ◆ Address hurtful words and actions
- ◆ Offer simple rituals and experiences that honor and celebrate young womanhood
- ◆ Include girls in decisions and policy making




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## Girls Circle Research 2004-2005

### 2 Studies in 2004 and 2005 in Prevention Settings

- 112 girls in 16 groups across U.S.
- Girls from 10-18 years in age
- Urban, Suburban, Rural Settings
- Variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds
- Met once a week for 10 weeks



### 2005 Study on Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

- 42 girls in 5 states – 12-18 yrs in age
- In Residential, Detention, and Probation
- Met once a week for 10 weeks

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## Outcomes

Shown significant increases in:

- ◆ **Self-Efficacy**
- ◆ **Body Image**
- ◆ **Social Connection**



Girls in Court System had even greater gains in Social Connection

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Receiving OJJDP Technical Assistance for Girls Circle Training



Ordering Girls Circle Curricula:  
[www.girlscircle.com](http://www.girlscircle.com)

Contact:  
**Development Services Group**  
Joe Fedeli (301) 951-3324



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**Thank you**

Girls Circle Association  
707-794-9477



[www.girlscircle.com](http://www.girlscircle.com)

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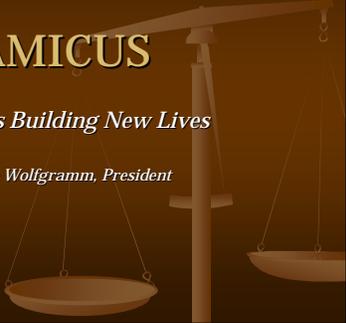
From Corrections to Connections Girls Restorative Program



**AMICUS**

*Partners Building New Lives*

*Louise Wolfgramm, President*




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From Corrections to Connections Girls Restorative Program



**Core Values**

- *Caring*
- *Respect*
- *Responsibility*
- *Community*
- *Transformation*




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## Mission

*AMICUS partners with  
inmates  
ex-offenders  
juvenile offenders  
and  
communities  
to build successful lives and  
stronger communities*



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## AMICUS

- *Brings offenders into positive human connection so that they may experience a sense of belonging.*
- *Educates and encourages communities to be welcoming and supportive.*



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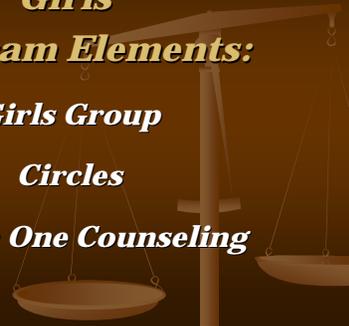


## *Girls' Program Elements:*

*Girls Group*

*Circles*

*One on One Counseling*



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## Stakeholders

- **The girls**
- **Their families**
- **Their communities (including their victims)**
- **Professionals involved**




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## Who are the girls?

- **Serious and chronic offenders & at-risk on probation**
- **Victims of physical, emotional, sexual abuse**
- **Substance abusers**
- **Mental health issues and medications**
- **School difficulties**
- **Long-term involvement in corrections and/or social services**
- **Many out-of-home placements**




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## Who are the families?

- **Single/absent parents**
- **Substance abuse**
- **Domestic violence and sexual abuse**
- **Poverty**
- **Poor communication**
- **Desperate for something different**
- **Outstanding grandmas**




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## Who are the communities?

- **Special professionals**
- **Victims**
- **Former connections**
- **Peers**
- **Mentors**




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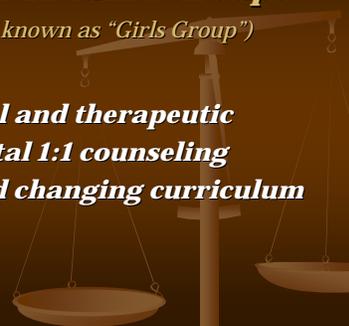
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## Grief and Trauma Groups

*(otherwise known as "Girls Group")*

- **Weekly**
- **Educational and therapeutic**
- **Supplemental 1:1 counseling**
- **Flexible and changing curriculum**




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## Group Topics include:

- **Grief and Trauma**
- **Abuse**
- **Abandonment and neglect**
- **Self-injurious behavior**
- **Running away**
- **PTSD (volcano theory)**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Victim empathy**
- **Teenage motherhood**
- **Conflict resolution**




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## Circle Types

### 1. Circles of Support:

- Establishing circle
- Family Circle
- Transition Circle
- Emergency circle
- Celebration Circle

### 2. Victim-Offender Circles

- Girl as offender
- Girl as victim




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## Circles of Support:

- Provide a safe place to discuss emotional and practical issues
- Support the girl in her transitions
- Participants chosen by the girl
- Agreements/commitments
- Takes place in home community




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**What happens when you roll up your sleeves and work this way with girls?**




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*Every person has a story.*



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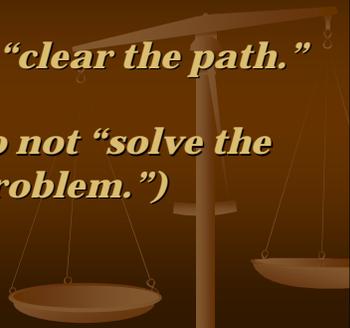
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*You help "clear the path."  
(You do not "solve the  
problem.")*



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*It is messy.*



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From Corrections to Connections Girls Restorative Program



***You provide hope***

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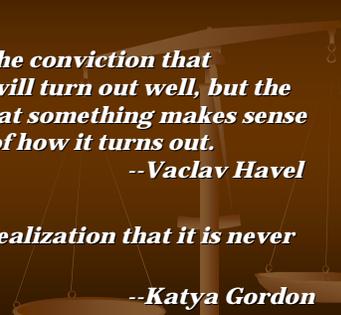
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From Corrections to Connections Girls Restorative Program



***“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense regardless of how it turns out.”***  
--Vaclav Havel

***“Hope is the realization that it is never over.”***  
--Katya Gordon

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**Circle Transform the Juvenile Justice System for Girls**

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**Paula Schaefer**  
**“Transforming Services, Transforming Lives”**  
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Paula Schaefer & Associates, Inc.  
Paula@PSchaefer.com

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**Talking Circles  
Help Transform Juvenile Justice  
Services for Girls:  
  
Community & Residential  
Based Services**

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**Talking Circles**

- Administrative Teams
- Staff Team
- Girls
- Staff & Girls
- Conflict Resolution
- Managing Change

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***“Everything we do in  
juvenile justice must be  
value driven.”***

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**Gordon Bazemore**

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Our values about the girls we work with determine the care & treatment they receive from us

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Can we see girls as:

- Capable & Competent
- Possessing wisdom
- Leaders
- Incredibly resilient
- Their own best experts

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Our Challenge As Adults Is To **Listen to Girls** Without:

- Judging
- Assigning motivation
- Questioning authenticity
- Determining credibility
- Feeling the need to defend ourselves
- Thinking we have to agree or disagree

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## What Circles Can Do:

- Build Skills & Focus on Strengths
- Create Community through Relationships
- Create & Maintain A Safe Environment
- Create clearer & more accurate "picture"
- More creative & effective problem solving
- Collaboration girls, families & staff
- Empowers girls & adults

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## How to Sustain Restorative Treatment Communities

- All members of the community have a voice, feel valued & a sense of belonging
- Shared values & goals
- Healthy conflict resolution for the purpose of Community Wellness
- Circle process & other restorative measures are integrated
- Bring the community in & let girls "out into the community"

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Thank you!

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