

## *Appropriate Programming for Female Offenders*

When creating or evaluating juvenile justice programs designed for young women, it is critical that one begin with an understanding of female development and of the specific issues which young women bring into the treatment setting. It is not enough for practitioners to strive to provide similar services as are provided to young men. Further, it is often not enough for services to simply focus on traditional techniques for meeting the needs of young offenders. Young women present unique treatment issues which stem from their own processes of growing up and developing, and programs and services must reflect an understanding of these issues in order to be effective. A discussion of the development needs of young women and how these needs are reflected in programming, must take into consideration the following four basic assumptions (Maniglia, 1994).

### ■ Good Gender Specific Services Begin with Good Services

In order for a program to effectively serve the needs of young women, it must first have as its base, solid programming techniques. Poor programming will never become good gender specific programming simply by adding specific components designed to serve the unique needs of young women. Effective programs share many basics in common no matter who their clientele. For instance, it is essential to have a well trained and competent staff which is involved with and knowledgeable about the youth in the program. Programs should have effective and ongoing evaluation mechanisms and focus on well thought out treatment approaches that have some basis in current adolescent development theory. Further, they must use sensitive assessment techniques which take into consideration not only offense history, but issues of gender development and must present the youth involved with an atmosphere of highly structured activities with specific treatment goals. If these basics are in place, then a program can begin to address specific treatment components which may be effected by the gender of the clientele.

### ■ Young Women are Different than Young Men So Their Services Must be Also

Psychological research continues to confirm that while there are similarities between the genders, there are also issues unique to the process of development in young women. Further, juvenile justice research reflects young women's patterns of offending which are often different in scope and motivation than those of their male counterparts. Therefore, service providers must take these differences into account when designing specific components for treatment programs. The result of such consideration is sometimes substantially new and different approaches to traditional treatment modalities and sometimes only slight adaptations in content or approach.

### ■ Equality Does Not Equal Sameness

In juvenile justice programming, equality of service delivery is not simply about allowing young women access to services traditionally reserved for young men. In fact this falls far short of what is necessary. Young men and women must have sameness only in terms of the most basic requirements. For instance equality might be reflected as sameness in the quality of line and administrative staff, in financial support of programming, and in the quality of physical structures. In the particulars of treatment, however, equality must be redefined to mean providing opportunities which mean the same to each gender. In this way, treatment services, while equal in quality, may appear very different depending on to whom the service is being delivered. When equality is redefined in this manner, it not only allows for the understanding of developmental differences, but also legitimizes them as valuable indicators of the type of programming necessary.

### ■ Services for Young Women Cannot Be Viewed in Isolation From Society

It has been said that "girls need to see their lives as a metaphor for the roles and experiences of women in the culture" (Pipher, 1996). In other words, the specific needs presented by young women in juvenile justice treatment are very often issues which have their basis in society's expectations of both girls and women. Therefore, part of effective juvenile justice treatment programming for young women is to recognize the connection between women's role in society and societal barriers to women's growth and development and the specific issues which need to be addressed in the treatment environment. However, recognition is not enough.



Staff must learn to make young women aware of this connection also so that they recognize their own treatment issues as being related to larger societal issues. When this is done effectively, it results in juvenile justice treatment which operates on three levels: a level of individual change for the young woman in the program; a level of relational change between that young woman and those key individuals in her life; and a level of community change in which the young woman learns how to become an advocate for other young women with similar problems or needs (Maniglia and Albrecht, 1995).

In order, therefore, to develop programming which is gender-specific--that is which takes into consideration the unique development needs of young women--service providers must be aware of these development issues and understand their specific implications for service delivery. In general terms, when developing a program for young women, the essential components include the following. Gender-specific programming must:

- Meet the unique needs of females.
- Value the female perspective.
- Honor the female experience.
- Celebrate the contributions of girls and women.
- Respect female development.
- Empower girls and young women to reach their full human potential.
- Work to change established attitudes that prevent or discourage girls and young women from recognizing their potential. (Cheltenham, 1994, p. 11).

Further, gender-specific programming must provide services designed to intervene comprehensively in a young woman's life. In their report *How Schools Shortchange Girls*, the American Association of University Women and the National Education Association provide criteria for gender fair curriculum. These same standards can easily be applied to gender specific programs and service delivery systems. In order to be appropriate for young women, these services should:

- Acknowledge and affirm similarities and differences among and within groups of people.
- Be inclusive, allowing females and males to find and identify positively with the messages and expectations themselves.
- Be accurately designed around statistical data and developmental research that is verifiable and able to withstand critical analysis.
- Be affirmative, acknowledging and valuing the worth of individuals, no matter what their backgrounds or offense histories.
- Be representative in staff and approach, balancing multiple perspectives including those of race, gender, and ethnic background, and emphasizing staff training at all levels.
- Be integrated, weaving together the experiences, needs, and interests of both males and females in ways that serve each most effectively and appropriately. (AAUW, p. 64).

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# Resource Organizations

**American Association of University Women**  
P.O. Box 251, Annapolis Junction, MD, 20701, 800/225-9998

**American Correctional Association**  
4380 Forbes Avenue, Lanham, MD, 20706, 301/918-1800

**Center for Educational Equity**  
American Institutes for Research, P.O. Box 1113, Palo Alto, CA, 94302, 415/493-3550

**Center for Sex Equity in School**  
University of Michigan School of Education, Ann Arbor, MI, 48109-1259, 313/763-9910

**Consortium for Educational Equity**  
Rutgers University, 4090 Livingstone Campus, New Brunswick, NJ, 08903, 908/932-2071

**Educational Equity Concepts, Inc.**  
114 East 32nd Street, New York, NY, 10016, 212/725-1803

**The Equity Institute**  
P.O. Box 30245, Bethesda, MD, 20824, 301/654-2904

**Girls Count**  
225 East 16th Avenue, Suite 475, Denver, CO, 80203, 303/832-6600

**Girls Incorporated National Resource Center**  
441 West Michigan Street, Indianapolis, IN, 46202-3233, 317/634-7546

**Girl Scouts of the USA**  
420 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY, 10018-2702, 212/852-5726

**Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse**  
P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD, 20849-6000, 800/638-8736

**Many Roads, One Journey**  
P.O. Box 1302, Lolo, MT, 59847

**Maryland Female Population Task Force**  
Department of Juvenile Services, 2323 Eastern Blvd., Baltimore, MD, 21220, 410/780-7836, ext. 306

**Ms. Foundation for Women**  
120 Wall St., 33rd Floor, New York, NY, 10005, 212/742-2300

**National Black Child Development Institute**  
1023 15th Street, NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC, 20005, 202/387-1281

**National Coalition Against Domestic Violence**  
P.O. Box 18749, Denver, CO, 80218-0749, 303/839-1852

**National Coalition for Sex Equality in Education**  
1 Redwood Drive, Clifton, NJ, 08809, 908/735-5045

**National Girls Caucus**  
2771-25 Monument Road, #212, Jacksonville, FL, 32225, 904/358-0555

**National Institute of Corrections**  
1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A, Longmont, CO, 80501, 800/995-6429

**National Women's History Project**  
7738 Bell Road, Windsor, CA, 95492-8518, 707/838-6000

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention**  
633 Indiana Avenue, NW, Washington, DC, 20534

**Oregon Commission on Children and Families**  
800 Northeast Oregon Street, Suite 550-M13, Portland, OR, 97232, 503/731-3361

**Organization for Equal Education of the Sexes**  
P.O. Box 438, Blue Hill, ME, 04614, 207/374-2489

**P.A.C.E. Center for Girls**  
2771-25 Monument Road, #212, Jacksonville, FL, 32225, 904/358-0555

**Project on Equal Education Rights**  
NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 1413 K Street, NW, 9th Floor, Washington, DC, 20005, 202/332-7337

**The Stone Center**  
Wellesley College, Wellesley, MA, 02181-8268

**Valentine Foundation**  
900 Old Gulph Road, Bryn Mawr, PA, 19010

**Women's Educational Equity Act Publishing Center**  
55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA, 02160, 800/225-3088



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