

**Iowa Girls Justice Initiative
Meeting Summary
February 5, 2016
10:00am – 2:00 pm**



**Jessie Parker Building
Grant Conference Room
Des Moines, IA**

Working Group Members

Ashley Artzer, *Juvenile Court Services*
Terri Bailey, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*
Jim Chesnik, *Iowa Department of Human Services, Division of Adult, Children, & Family Services*
Kristin Corey, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*
Steve Crew, *Iowa Department of Education*
LaTasha DeLoach, *Johnson County Social Services*
Andrea Dickerson, *Youth & Shelter Services, Inc.*
Ruth Frush, *Juvenile Court Services*
Evelyn Garrison, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*
Nicole Hart, *Achieving Maximum Potential member*
Stephanie Hernandez, *Family Resources, Inc.*
Jeremy Kaiser, *Scott County Juvenile Detention*
Steve Michael, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Div. of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*
Lori Rinehart, *Polk County Juvenile Court*
Pat Rogness, *CFI (substitute for Kristie Oliver)*
Beth Rydberg, *DRI (substitute for Nathan Kirstein)*
Tom Southard, *Juvenile Court Services*
Monica Stone, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*
Jennifer Tibbetts, *ITFYW Chair and Catherine McAuley Center*
Patti Wachtendorf, *Iowa Correctional Institutional for Women*

Guests

Jeff Regula, *CJJP*
Emily Morgan
Kurby Velez
Kelly Loorey

Staff

Gracie Brandsgard, *SPPG*
Indira Karic, *SPPG*
Arlinda McKeen, *SPPG*

Welcome and Overview of the Day

The meeting began at 10:10 a.m. Self-introductions were made, with several individuals substituting for regular members. McKeen reviewed the charge to the group and the guiding principles meant to help guide the work of the working group. McKeen stressed the importance of the variety of perspectives and expertise areas from the group.

Data Presentation

Nesteby presented data on girls in the juvenile justice system as prepared by CJJP. Nesteby provided some background on the data report, which was first compiled in 2007 for a summit on girls in the juvenile justice system. The data specifically looks at differences between girls and boys in the system. The data report presented today was an update to the original 2007 report and will show trends over the last five years.

Table 1: Juvenile Charges by Charge Class, Sex and Calendar Year

Key takeaways:

- Girls proportionately commit fewer felonies than boys.
- The only charge to increase for females was serious misdemeanors.
- Charges for boys are declining more quickly than girls.

A member asked if there were any theories to explain why the charges on males are decreasing at a faster rate than girls. Nesteby responded that specialized programming can be offered to pockets of males, but typically those same programs are not offered to females because they lack the numbers to justify the use of resources. Another member added that juvenile courts have partnered with schools to hold kids accountable in school rather than charging them for actions occurring during school time. Most of the kids in the program are males so the success of this program is also contributing to the difference in declining rates between males and females.

Nesteby clarified that the numbers presented in the data represent one charge, not one person. So if someone is charged three different times, that person would show up three times to represent each charge.

A member asked how repeat offenders might affect the bigger picture shown by the data and asked if there was a way for the data to show the demographics of the repeat offenders.

Nestebly responded that there are chronic repeat offenders across the board in every demographic, and one group is not disproportionately affected.

Table 2: Female Juvenile Charges by Charge Class, Race and Calendar Year

A member asked if Africans are considered as African American in the data. Yes, it is a broad racial category, and where an individual is counted depends on how the JCOs input their information and how the individual would identify themselves among the current racial category options. Those who identify as multiracial are sorted back into single race categories proportionately. Another member added that the court system only allows single race categories to be used so both boys and girls must choose one racial category to identify with.

There was discussion on how we can evaluate the success of existing programs and services when the numbers show increasing trends, something that would suggest existing programs are not effective. Nestebly noted that the data cannot provide us with the “why”, and that will be something the working group will need to discuss.

Table 3: Comparison of Top 5 Juvenile Charges by Sex from Calendar Year

Key takeaways:

- Theft 5th degree is the top charge for both genders, but is a high proportion for girls.
- Top charges for both genders are all misdemeanors.

Discussion included noting that disorderly conduct and assault charges are usually a result of fighting in schools. There has been a push by juvenile courts for schools to deal with fighting incidents within the school rather than formally charging them as a way to disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. It was asked whether there are staff at these schools who have been trained in how to deal with these conflicts and what the standard protocols are. Another member added that there has been an effort to teach mediation skills to school liaisons.

Table 4: Comparison of Top 5 Female Juvenile Charges by Race from Calendar Year

Key takeaways:

- Theft is at the top of the list for all races.

A member asked if the table shows the disproportionality of race within the system. It does not because it compares charges within each race category rather than a specific gender as a whole.

A member asked if there is data that compares when school resource officers were implemented and rates of disorderly conduct charges. Another member answered that there are national data comparisons, but no data that is Iowa-specific.

The group was reminded to keep in mind that the age at which someone is formally charged, regardless of the charge, impacts the likelihood of that person reaching the deep end of the system. Staying aware of the data on these lesser charges is important in preventing girls from getting to the deep end. Nesteby added that 60% of those who receive their first charge will not receive another charge, so we must also balance the two and not overwhelm first-time offenders because that might blow things out of proportion.

Figure 1 - Percent Change in Juvenile Charge Type by Sex

Nesteby clarified that the “Other” category includes alcohol possession and violation of city ordinances (e.g. curfew).

Figure 2: Female Juvenile Detention Holds by Race

Nesteby reminded the group that these numbers are holds, not individuals. For example, if a girl is held twice in one year, she would show up twice in the count.

Nesteby added that there is a lot of data on detention centers because in the CJP’s original data collection in 2007, the data showed a lot of disproportionality in how girls and boys were treated in terms of detention centers (girls often held more often, longer, for lesser charges, etc.). As a result, more research has been done on detention centers to fully analyze the disproportionalities.

Figure 3: Average Length of Stay in Detention

It was noted that the increase in length of stay in detention centers coincides with the closing of the Iowa Juvenile Home. It was also pointed out that the Hispanic line varies significantly from year to year and does not follow the trend lines. Members offered theories as to why this may be the case.

Figure 5: Juvenile Detention Holds by Sex and Offense Severity in 2010

Key Takeaways:

- Females are more often being held for misdemeanors than felonies as compared to boys.

A group member clarified that this graph only shows the charge that put them in the detention center and does not show past charges. This means that someone could have a misdemeanor

that put them in the detention center because it followed a string of misdemeanors or a previous felony. Sometimes kids are placed in detention centers because there are no other placement options and all other options were full. The working group discussed the fairness of these specific situations and whether or not it was something the group wanted to address in their plan. Another member added that there are oversight committees for detention centers to protect children from these human rights violations. Detention centers are not allowed to take in those who have status offenses (e.g. runaways).

Another working group member added that Iowa has a good history of complying with human rights standards. Everyone in the juvenile court system receives a daily data report on numbers from detention centers, all entries into detention center are accounted for, and go to all of the family attorneys, judges, and others so that if there are children who are in there without charges, someone will catch it.

Table 7: Juvenile Detention Holds by Reason for Hold, Sex and Calendar Year

Nestey clarified that a technical violation would include a violation of ankle monitoring, going out when you're on house arrest, school attendance, etc.

Small Group

Working group members worked in small groups to develop a list of strategies for creating a female-responsive juvenile justice system.

Closing Comments

McKeen thanked the working group for their thoughtful discussion and thanked the guests for attending. The meeting ended at 2:00 pm. The next meeting will focus on small group work and planning specific activities for the plan.

Next Iowa Girls Justice Initiative Working Group meeting is March 4, 2016, at a location to be determined.