

**Iowa Girls Justice Initiative
Meeting Summary
May 6, 2016
10:00am – 3:00 pm**



**Polk County River Place – Room 2
2309 Euclid Ave.
Des Moines, IA**

Working Group Members

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*
Andrea Dickerson, *Youth and Shelter Services*
Nicole Hart, *Achieving Maximum Potential Member*
Stephanie Hernandez, *Family Resources, Inc.*
Nathan Kirstein, *Disability Rights Iowa*
Julie Martin, *Juvenile Court Services*
Steve Michael, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Div. of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*
Kristie Oliver, *The Coalition*
Lori Rinehart, *Polk County Juvenile Court*
Monica Stone, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*
Patti Wachtendorf, *Iowa Correctional Institution for Women*

Guests

Karen B. Francis, PhD - *Co- Director National Girls Initiative; Principal Researcher, American Institutes for Research*
Jeannette Pai-Espinosa - *Co-Director, OJJDP National Girls Initiative; President, The National Crittenton Foundation*
Francine Sherman - *Clinical Professor; Director, Juvenile Rights Advocacy Program, Boston College Law School*

Staff

Gracie Brandsgard, *SPPG*
Arlinda McKeen, *SPPG*
Kathy Nesteby, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Div. of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*
IGJI Planning Group
May 6, 2016

Welcome and Overview of the Day

The meeting began at 10:05 am. McKeen thanked the planning group members and guests for being at the meeting. McKeen recognized that for this meeting, IGJI has invited three national experts on issues related to girls justice and they are here to provide additional guidance and feedback for the work of the planning group. She also outlined the agenda for the day: the morning would include an introduction of planning group members and guests, a debrief of the group's trip to Iowa Correctional Institution for Women, and a DHS update. The discussions in the afternoon would include a presentation by national expert, Francine Sherman.

Introductions of Planning Group Members and Guests

Planning group members introduced themselves to the guests. McKeen noted to the guests that there were a lot of different types of experiences among the diverse planning group members, and that it was very intentional to have the voices of key constituencies involved so that the final plan is inclusive and holistic.

Reminder of Charge and Guiding Principles

McKeen reviewed the charge of the group and guiding principles to give the national expert guests additional insights on how the group has worked thus far and the foundation of the plan.

Kathy Nesteby provided an overview of the goals and objectives from the original grant proposal. These included looking at data, both quantitative and qualitative, to put together an accurate picture of the experiences of girls in the deep end of the Iowa juvenile system. The second goal focused on putting a structure in place to analyze the effectiveness of existing services and system qualities, and then identifying strategies to increase its effectiveness. There is an emphasis on integrating the IGJI plan into the larger system as well as complementing other plans and initiatives that exist. The planning group has remained cognizant of those as they move forward with their work.

Take-Aways

Discussions with Women at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women

McKeen provided a brief explanation of the planning group's meeting last month for the benefit of guests and planning group members who were unable to attend. For its April 1 meeting the group was hosted at the Iowa Correctional Institution for Women and were able to meet with several women at the facility in a small group discussion format. The planning group participated in a large group discussion at the end of their visit to the facility and those take-aways are available in last month's minutes.

Members of the planning group offered comments and further discussion of their perspectives from the Mitchellville visit.

- Women had too much freedom at the facility. Did not expect them to have access to television or the ability to walk the grounds freely.
- They are human, and we should treat them as such. Also most of them are getting out at some point so they need to be prepared for that.
- The facility built and supported a positive environment for the women there. The women we spoke to were excited about the classes they were taking. They are just now learning things they should have learned when they were younger.
- Family circumstances played a large role in the women getting to the facility; there was a lack of support. Shared commonality of family dysfunction.
- Not a lot of community supports and services, both for the individual and for the family. And if there were services, it was really disjointed and not on a continuum.
- A lot of this happened when girls were very young – some of it has been blacked out due to the trauma, women may not remember a lot from their childhood as a way to cope with the trauma.
- Engaging the families, and engaging them earlier with an emphasis on prevention.
 - Since each family and girl is different, the ideal set-up would be to hear what the girl and her family need, and then design services around them rather than pushing services onto them.
- How do you connect them to someone who will be there long after the services?
- “Hurt people hurt”
 - How do you create a system that recognizes and addresses the trauma **early**? Often there is deep, multigenerational trauma that needs to be addressed.
 - They don’t have models of healthy, safe relationships.
- Storybook project allows women to record their reading of a story to a child or grandchild, with the book and recording sent to the child as a way of continuing bonds.

April 18 Minnesota Girls to Women Conference

Planning group members Kathy Nesteby, Lori Rinehart, Ashley Artzer, Jennifer Tibbetts, and two other juvenile court staff involved in the Girls Court attended the conference in St. Paul. Data presented at the conference showed that crime has not gone up, and girls are not worse by historic trends, but the system is charging girls more often and for smaller crimes.

In October, the Crittenton Foundation is hosting a roundtable on girls courts and will invite Iowa to participate.

IGJI planning group members were able to speak with several panelists and speakers at the conference to gain feedback on the work the planning group is doing now. Their advice to the IGJI planning process was to use multiple measures of success in addition to recidivism and to complete a cost-benefit analysis as the persuasive component for implementation. Nesteby also asked one of the national experts what their ideal plan for deep-end girls would be if money was not an object. Expert said they would like to see a Day Academy in the community that is set up similar to a college campus with services and classes in one place. Kids would attend during the day, like a regular school day, but still be able to stay with their families. To make that feasible in Iowa, one could build a Day Academy in Des Moines and recruit foster families for girls to live with during the week, and then could go back to their families on the weekends.

There was a discussion by the planning group over the definition of “serious, chronic, violent” and the number of “serious, chronic, violent” girls in the state. After disagreement on a specific number, a planning group member noted that the specific number is irrelevant to our work and the main takeaway should be that these girls exist in Iowa and are in desperate need of services. Another member agreed and added that the group should make sure that the plan we put together includes a way to collect data on deep-end girls.

Pai-Espinosa added that the number of “serious, chronic, violent” girls will be higher if the continuum of services is small. Sherman advised the group to consider the context in which these girls are operating and the social issues they are dealing with, from substance abuse, family dysfunction, and trauma. There has traditionally been an emphasis on the formal process, leading to the overutilization of detention centers, and there seems to be an opportunity to build up the off ramps.

Updates on Group Care Procurement Changes from Iowa Department of Human Services

Jim Chesnik provided the group with an update on changes in the procurement of group care contracts through the Iowa Department of Human Services. Every six years, DHS re-procures contracts for foster and group care services, child welfare emergency services, and supervised independent living facilities. These three service categories used to have separate contracts, but now DHS will combine all three into one contract and will be called crisis intervention, stabilization, and reunification.

The new contracts begin July 1, 2017, DHS is drawing up the RFPs now and those will be published this fall. DHS is going through a process of gathering input from providers and families on the new procurements. They have held several meetings with providers to develop a set of guiding principles together for the new procurements. Chesnik shared the list with the

planning group. The guiding principles emphasize keeping children with their families, keeping families and communities safe, and using out-of-home placements as minimally as possible. Chesnik added that the goal of these cooperative meetings was to have providers take ownership of the process rather than just buy-in. Planning group members that are interested in learning more can visit the DHS website.

Sherman informed the group that there is a federal law that supports a continuation of DHS services, specifically foster care payments, beyond the age of 18 if the state passes a law that allows that. As an example, Massachusetts and California have both passed laws to allow services to age 21. Planning group members added that currently in Iowa there are special circumstances that allow for service payment continuation through the age of 19.

Sherman suggested looking at the federal law as a potential recommendation to include in the final IGJI plan. Increasing the age cutoff would help women transition into independent living instead of cutting off payments all at once. Women would have the option to opt out and back in so they can try to live on their own with the option of opting back in if they want that additional support. A planning group member added that state legislators have bought into this idea already, but since the current system for payments is underfunded, increasing the age to 21 would not get support now because of the funding issue. Sherman agreed and pointed to the importance of conducting a cost-benefit analysis to show how policies such as this would decrease costs in the long term.

Chesnik continued with additional details of the new procurement process. These include a focus on facilities that use a “no reject, no eject” policy and implementing proper assessment of the child to ensure each child is placed in the right type of placement.

Sherman added to Chesnik’s comments on proper assessment and informed the planning group of a domestic battery typology testing tool available on the Models for Change website. This tool categorizes domestic battery charges and gives a more accurate description of the risk level of that child. Additionally, it is trauma informed and female responsive.

One Girl, Many Systems – Francine Sherman

Sherman began her presentation with an overview of the role of the grantor on this project. It is always challenging to come in to a state and try to understand the context. She stressed that it is not their role to tell each state how to structure their plan or what to include in it, because they cannot see the juvenile system from the inside like many of the planning group members do on a daily basis. Instead, they are here to provide the group with resources, best practices and examples from other states, and technical assistance.

Sherman presented a series of recorded interviews she conducted with women who had been involved in the juvenile justice system. She played the recordings for the planning group and then asked group members what stood out to them from what they heard in the interviews.

- “Don’t have sex.”
- “Don’t rush, be patient.”
- “Cry more.” Expressing emotions allows you to deal with trauma and conflict, rather than bottling it up and expressing it later through angry outbursts
- There’s a universality of the conversation topics. Everyone has challenges, but having those support systems and caring relationships allows you to deal with challenges and conflicts. That’s the difference between us and the girls in the juvenile justice system.
- We are criminalizing natural, adaptive responses to trauma. Girls have particular sensitivity with relationship stress. We should move away from a punitive process.

Additional take-aways from Sherman’s presentation include:

- The complete Gender Injustice report is available on Crittenton website, and is meant to be a user-friendly resource with links to data and studies.
 - From looking at Iowa-specific data, Sherman concluded that family chaos and domestic battery are large drivers for girls in the juvenile justice system
 - The planning group should look at the bullets of the executive summary of the Gender Injustice report and determine which of those recommendations would have the largest impact in the state, as a starting point for the group developing its own recommendations
- “Failing up”
 - The US criminalizes these coping mechanism behaviors into the juvenile justice system, then place them in more and more restrictive settings.
 - Sherman shared a visual demonstrating the “failing up.”
- Discussion of crossover cases and the ease of using crossover practices.
 - Sometimes JCS and DHS offer the same service in Iowa, so it’s hard for JCS to not get involved if they feel like they can get the services started sooner.
 - However the performance measures, or accountability tools are different between DHS and JCS and that’s important to keep in mind.
- Probation response grids
- Will the recommendations in the plan be statewide? Yes, they will because each juvenile court region is doing something different, there is not a lot of standardization. That will be a challenge to presenting a list of standard recommendations for the state.

- Justice by geography – if you commit the same crime in two cities, you should be treated the same, receive the same punishment, etc.
- Can say we would like to see some version of this continuum in every jurisdiction? For example, the plan could list a recommendation and then present “levels” or suggestions of how a region might implement this specific recommendation.
- Suggestion of including case studies of girls in Iowa into the plan.
- The best way to address intersectionality disparities (race, gender, etc.) is at the most local level.
- Conduct assessment early on. Currently, we define a case by the charge when we really want to be able to define a case by the needs of the girls. But you can’t do that without an accurate, timely assessment.
 - Assessments used by DHS are varied based on the individual and the case. There is no uniform assessment tool, and no one uses a true trauma tool.
 - Goal would be to find a tool that can be used across systems, DHS and JCS, and that can be carried with the child wherever they go.
 - Can a requirement of universal assessment open the door to more involvement with the system?
- Attorney training component
- Detention is a status, not a place. Some states have placed detained kids in foster homes or other type of out of home placement with success.
 - It is a funding issue with providing services because Medicaid stops when a kid goes to detention.
- Iowa is very high in terms of uses of detention centers; technical violations and status offenses make up 45% of detention placements nationally. Iowa is a lot higher at 65%.
- The chronic offenders (though nonviolent) end up in the secure settings, and that’s a failure of the system. Sherman made the argument in the Gender Injustice report that there is no evidence in favor of doing that. The success is in the community-based services.
- “Safely Home” report by YAP (youth advocacy programs)
- If we choose a community-based route, how do we get the community prepared to provide those services?
 - Need for therapeutic foster homes
 - Girls act inward, so providers need a lot of training in order to make those services for girls successful
- “We’re trying to do a system we haven’t set up yet.” We need better foster parent training, instead of setting them up to fail.

- We're improving existing resources and shuffling around where people go, rather than creating new resources.
- Training doesn't create a philosophical shift, and that's what we need.
- FOCUS foster homes, in Polk County
 - Social worker was on call 24/7 for foster parents.
 - Had a group of 12 foster families that had mandatory support groups, provided respite for each other, and got to know the families and other kids very well.
 - Foster parents were required to complete 24 hours of training every year.
 - Social workers were very involved in the families.
 - Program was shut down due to lack of funding.
- You have a lot more services in place than you realize, it just needs to be trained up and realigned. This is your time to reset your services.

Closing Comments

McKeen thanked the working group for their thoughtful discussion and thanked the guests for attending and for their input. The meeting ended at 3:03 pm. The next meeting will focus on designing the structure of the final plan, and host national expert, Paula Schaefer, Safe Harbor Training Coordinator at the Minnesota Department of Health.

Next Iowa Girls Justice Initiative Working Group meeting is June 3, 2016, at River Place – Room 1A, 2309 Euclid Avenue, Des Moines.