

**Iowa Girls Justice Initiative  
Meeting Summary  
June 3, 2016  
10:00am – 2:00 pm**



**Polk County River Place – Room 1A  
2309 Euclid Ave.  
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*  
Steve Crew, *Iowa Department of Education*  
LaTasha DeLoach, *Johnson County Social Services*  
Andrea Dickerson, *Youth and Shelter Services*  
Ruth Frush, *Juvenile Court Services*  
Evelyn Garrison, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*  
Nicole Hart, *Achieving Maximum Potential*  
Jeremy Kaiser, *Scott County Juvenile Detention*  
Nathan Kirstein, *Disability Rights Iowa*  
Julie Martin, *Juvenile Court Services*  
Steve Michael, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Div. of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*  
Lori Rinehart, *Juvenile Court Services*  
Monica Stone, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*  
Jennifer Tibbetts, *ITFYW Chair and Catherine McAuley Center*  
Patti Wachtendorf, *Iowa Women's Correctional Facility*  
Julie Walton, *Scott County Attorney's Office*

**Guests**

Paula Schaefer, *Safe Harbor Training Coordinator, MN Department of Health*

**Staff**

Gracie Brandsgard, *SPPG*  
Arlinda McKeen, *SPPG*  
Kathy Nesteby, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*

**Welcome and Overview of the Day**

The meeting began at 10:13 am. Arlinda McKeen introduced the working group's guest, Paula Schaefer, who will help the group have a serious discussion about their plan for girls in the juvenile justice system

while maintaining a focus on the deep end of the system. The summer months are going to go by quickly, and the group needs to start working on the final plan now.

Paula Schaefer thanked the working group for the invitation to join their June meeting. Schaefer was encouraged by the great work Iowa is doing already and informed the group that she uses Iowa as a model for systemic change when speaking to other jurisdictions. Schaefer spoke on her professional background in working with girls in the justice system with a trauma-informed care focus. Her other priorities include addressing the implicit gender and racial biases in the system and developing a cost-effective continuum of care.

### **Keep Shining a Light on Girls: A Call to Action**

Schaefer presented on some of the relevant work she has done related to this group's charge. Her mantra has been "you can't do everything, but you must do something." She stressed the importance of having "allies and angels" outside of the direct service work. Schaefer cited an in-state example of State Representative Marti Anderson, who is supportive of the work of the working group. In order to make real systemic change, Schaefer told the group that they must have support from outside allies, and it is important to develop those relationships and then keep those individuals engaged throughout the process.

*The system is cyclical.*

- When girls don't succeed in out of home placements, it is our fault, not theirs.
- Our system was never designed for girls in the first place, it was meant for serious adult male offenders. Hence, there is a punitive, rather than rehabilitative, nature of placements.

Schaefer gave an overview of some legislation Minnesota has passed, including parity statutes and a continuum of care law. Schaefer also passed around several reports for working group members to review during the presentation. Schaefer will make these available to working group members following the meeting as well.

*Determinants of Involvement with the Juvenile Justice System*

- Sexual abuse and trauma
  - This is one of the biggest determinants.
  - There is a greater need for victim-centered services.
  - The punitive nature of the system then re-traumatizes the victim.
- Safe housing
  - There was some discussion of how to fund these programs in Iowa.
    - The state is funding safe housing in Minnesota.
  - YSS just got two grants from VOCA to provide safe housing in Ames and Des Moines.
  - Other programs with safe housing initiatives are Breaking Traffic in Davenport and Dorothy's House in Des Moines.

- There is a significant national focus on this issue now, and our work should take advantage of the timing. Even if the final report does not include this as a recommendation, it can be mentioned in the gap analysis portion.
- Healthy Relationships
  - Many girls involved in the system do not know what a healthy relationship looks like.
  - Look at programs that are providing girls with real discussions on sexual health, and also include gender non-conforming and LGBT individuals.

Schaefer stressed that the Iowa plan must include data in order to appeal to elected officials. Data should cover the protective factors such as stable, affordable housing, child care accessibility, enrollment in school, and youth employment.

#### *Policy Recommendations*

- Implement screenings to identify history of trauma. This is the most important recommendation, in Schaefer's opinion.
- Use a computer screening specifically for detention centers. If we can accurately screen girls' health needs and then effectively address them, we can move 75-90% of the girls out the system.
- Construct a model based on Safe Harbor in Minnesota.

#### *Safe Harbor*

- Safe Harbor looks at the issue of sexually trafficked and exploited children as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice issue. This aligns well with the charge to the IGJI working group because many of the risk factors of being involved in the deep end of the system are the same risk factors for sex trafficking and exploitation.
- Under the Safe Harbor work, Minnesota passed a law that prohibited minors from being charged with prostitution. Instead they are labeled "victims" and receive access to services.
- Regional navigators are placed statewide and act as a point person for their area; they lead awareness campaigns and conduct trainings. They can also lead victims and families to local resources

#### *Cost-Benefit Analysis*

- Schaefer presented a Return on Investment (ROI) report to the working group. The report's findings showed that for every \$1 invested in early intervention against sex trafficking, \$34 was received in benefit.
- Schaefer suggested that the working group conduct its own ROI work and put together a report that included data and narrative portions as a persuasive way to make their case to policymakers and community leaders.
  - She stressed that the group must be able to articulate and find the cost savings of anything included in the plan.

- Quantify the cost of incarceration; what is the cost of deep-end girls continuing into the adult system?
- One of the biggest pieces of the plan needs to be data and data analysis. Develop a way to hold providers accountable and develop better performance measures.

#### *What Works for Girls?*

- Girls-only programming
- All-girl probation units
  - Programs to look at for models include Baltimore, Chicago, Florida, and Minnesota
  - Cedar Rapids is testing out the gender specific PO model in its adult system
- Skills for life; job readiness skills
- Keeping girls in the community
- Restorative justice has great positive impact.
  - Schaefer presented the report, “Corrections to Connections”.
  - Build the big programs around the Girls Court.
- Bring back the “Whispers and Screams” conference; provide opportunity to bring people together to mobilize on girls issues.
- Minnesota Student Survey is similar to the Iowa Youth Survey. In Iowa, fewer and fewer districts are using it, so it is becoming less meaningful as a statewide data source.
- It is important to disaggregate data by gender and by race. Iowa already does this with most of its data.

#### *Recidivism*

Discussion among working group members of the definition of recidivism and the effectiveness of it as a measure of girls’ success.

- Recidivism doesn’t mean anything because everyone has a different definition. It is very difficult to compare state-to-state data.
- It is just one piece of the outcome picture, and we should not hang our hat on it.
  - For example, consider if a girl commits a felony assault charge and then six months later commits shoplifting charge. Though that is not good, it is much better than committing another felony, and it is a lesser charge.
  - If she gets another charge but is still in school, a stable home environment, and has a stable job that is great. And we should not yank her out of that to put her back in the system. We should address the new charge, but we need to give her credit for the other things. *Focusing only on recidivism in this case could be detrimental to the girl.*

#### *Behavior*

- The behavior we see are trauma responses; they are coping behaviors.
- There are skills we can teach girls to help them self-regulate and be able to better manage the fallout from trauma. We can help them develop safety plans, self-care plans.

- Many women of color have a lost sense of identity and culture. We need to include the relearning of cultural differences in the self-care plan. Or we can use the self-care plan to help the individuals with re-centering.
- How can you use culture to be a part of healing?

#### *Hennepin County*

- Working on developing a community-based continuum of care.
- Implemented the trauma screening.
- Brought in the “Hold Your Horses” equine program, which was very successful but also very expensive upfront.
- Therapeutic yoga. Science is indisputable on the effectiveness of this.
  - Linn County Detention Center staff is being trained in this now as are several other detention centers around the state.
  - YSS also offers this program.

#### *Girls Day Academy*

- They create “life plans” rather than “treatment plans”. Wording is very important. The girl and the family takes the lead in developing the plans.
- Though you want to build a statewide model, may want to start in Des Moines. You have to start somewhere.
- A Girls Services Coordinator in the state government would be the main point person for the program, would ensure the plans go through, and would oversee the process.
- Specialized foster care
  - Families need to be hand selected, and then trained with continued support.
- Additional Training
  - Make sure therapists and other staff working with girls, especially those who have been formally trained in the medical fields, are also trained in girls, culture, trauma, and the intersection of those elements.
- Stabilization Unit
  - Located in a hospital setting, serving the very small number of girls who have serious mental illness and staffed by those who are specifically trained in female-responsive services.
  - Meant as a short term stay to stabilize. Not meant to be used for long-term treatment or care.

#### *Funding*

- DHS is the largest source of funds for services for girls. Consider the idea to ask that funding for juvenile justice be proportional to gender. So if girls make up 25% of the juvenile population, then 25% of the allocated funds should go towards female-responsive services
  - This would allow programs to stay open even if they only serve a small number of girls.

### *Level of Intervention*

The working group discussed the ideal level of intervention for various groups of girls involved in the juvenile justice system.

- We try to involve low-risk girls the least amount with a minimal amount of interventions.
  - Data shows that girls need more services and that the more intervention that is done, the higher chance for success.
    - The recidivism rates were lowest for low risk kids who we didn't serve. They were higher for people that we did interventions for. 60-66% of first-time offenders did not recidivate in the following three years following the first offense.
- The problem is the low-risk, high-needs people. Risk assessments drive resources, resources drive outcomes.
  - A risk assessment without protective factors does not help. Schaefer asked if Iowa's risk assessment, the IDA, is strength based?
    - The IDA used in Iowa is not strength based.
    - Cumulative protective factors lead to increased resiliency.

### *Seamlessness*

- What do we need to do to create more seamlessness between groups?
- Child welfare girls are no different than juvenile justice girls; it is biased on race, sexuality, geography, etc.
  - Politics plays a role in this, usually negatively.
- We've created these boxes. If we addressed the trauma and did it right, we would really only need to send five girls to intensive out-of-home placements. Girls should not be sent away.
- Put more money into community-based programs.

## **How the System and Services Should Respond to Deep End Girls – Discussion**

### *Continuum of Care Mandates*

- There is a continuum of care for homelessness services because it is mandated by HUD. HUD will only give funds to the state to give to local entities that only fund best practices and evidence-based practices.
  - What can we do within the system to put mandates in place to order a continuum of care for girls in the juvenile justice system?
  - If it was required to have certain services, how would those be determined? The economy of scale in more rural counties doesn't work.
- If there could be some way that to have basic federal guidelines that said gender needed to be evaluated when allocating funds, that would inform our work at the state and local levels.
- There is something in the federal law that says systems should address gender in the juvenile justice system. It is not a mandate, but it could be a starting point for us.

### *Recommendations*

- Residential program that is staffed appropriately, trauma-informed, and secure.
- The continuum of girls services that Schaefer presented could be the system for the girls, at any part of the system.
- Strengthen assessments to be more trauma-informed.
- Focus on community-based services and settings.
- Extend the jurisdiction beyond the age of 18.
  - If they are in a state training school, the Iowa Code allows them to stay beyond 18.

### *Deep End Focus*

- We are keeping the off-ramps off of the agenda in order to really focus on the deep-end girls.
- Two ways that girls get to the deep end:
  - You come in with a bang and either go to the state training school or you get waived to adult court. These girls pose a public safety issue.
  - Or the girls fail their way to the state training school.

### *Healthcare*

- We still lack a strong children's mental health system. Most of the girls in the deep end of the system have strong mental health needs.
  - Health insurance is a barrier, Medicaid isn't allowed if you're in a state institution. There are gaps in services and lack of access, with no continuity.
- Find a way to keep their Medicaid eligibility.

### *What is high risk, high need?*

- Girls whose needs have not been met by the system.
- Only 26% women in Mitchellville are there for a violent crime; the others are those who continue to fail within the system and have high needs, but continue to be low risk.
- The public safety issue girls are a small part of the population.
- At 16, if a child commits a serious crime, it is a direct file to adult court. They can be waived back to juvenile court, but they usually stay in the adult court because there is no available placement in juvenile court.
  - So what has to fill this void?
    - The idea of a continuum of care is a system change; we aren't filling the void, we are recreating the system.
  - What does our state need to do to make sure the needs of our girls are being met?
- The issue of girls comes up in juvenile justice, but nowhere else. This is being overseen by juvenile justice, but the silo effect will continue if we don't have a more holistic approach.
  - How do we build this up so that gender continues to be addressed even without juvenile justice and its funding? We need to institutionalize a mindset shift. Perhaps we include some statute reforms and changes as a way to change the system, such as our waiver statutes or jurisdiction statutes. What we recommend will need to be multi-faceted.

### *Secure Facility*

- There was discussion of the three levels of security: nonsecure, staff secure, and secure.
- Our lack of a secure facility is the reason girls in Iowa are being sent out of state or prematurely to adult court.
  - Judges don't feel like they have any other option, so we need to give those judges another option.
  - If we don't make an alternate recommendation, then we are giving a recommendation to send our kids off to adult court or out of state.
  - There are no options for girls in deep end. They are either sent out of state, sit in detention for longer, or get waived to adult court. They need another option.
- Our plan will include recommendations as a plural. We can serve the multiple sub-demographics of deep end girls.
  - We're talking about the highest risk girls, and that is different than the girls who haven't had their highest needs met. So we need to talk about if we have a facility, how community-based can we keep it?
- There are two separate issues at play here. The first is that our current system is not set up to adequately meet the needs of girls. Second, there is a gigantic gap in services in the state.
  - Boys have access to vocational trainings, boys get home visits at Eldora, and boys are rarely sent 5-6 hours from home.
- Any there any existing residential facilities in the state that could be expanded to take on the true public safety issue girls?
  - Don't build a brand new facility because it is very expensive and if you build it, people will find a way to fill it.
- Several options have been floated for a secure facility.
  - Build a special unit in Mitchellville .
  - Build a special unit onto a nonprofit like YSS.
  - Build another facility at Eldora.
  - Re-open the building in Toledo.
  - Build two secure facilities – one on the Eastern and one on the Western side of Iowa.
- People should be in the least-restrictive setting that their situation allows.
  - How do we set up a system that accommodates that?
  - How do you create that least-restrictive setting?
  - How do you create a secure setting that also uses the principle of least-restrictive setting?
- Change the language in the definition from “unsuccessful” girl (those who fail in multiple placements) to “chronic” girls. The continuum presented by Schaefer is a system for them. And maybe it could be a step down for the serious, violent offenders. The Girls Academy is a way to stop the feeder system.
- Change the terminology from “state training school” in order to better explain and advocate for the new system model for Iowa.



### *Girls Academy*

- Create a Girls Academy around existing single-gender residential placements around the state. It can serve both populations. When they have moments where they are having a hard time, where they are causing public safety issues, they can be placed in the group care setting with the idea that they absolutely would be coming back to the academy. They are not being kicked out, which gives them continuity and assurance that the providers are not giving up on them.
- We still need to focus on the high end girls. Maybe we have an additional secure facility for the 4-5 girls that are the high public safety risk. But they would still have access to the services at the Girls Academy.
  - Need to keep the secure facility as local as possible; maybe create three different secure facilities: one in Eastern Iowa, one in Polk County, and one in Western Iowa.
- These services are happening in pockets across the state, but they are not consistent, and they are not being evaluated intensively to see if they actually are female responsive.
  - A mandate should be a part of the recommendations.
- Who would be in charge of the Girls Academy? Is it the government, one nonprofit, or a collection of community partners?
  - We need to make sure that the philosophies for how they work with young women are the same. We need to decide what the philosophy and best practices are, and then make sure the organizations fit into that.
  - Perhaps that is one part of what the Girls Service Coordinator position would help with.

### *Plan*

- Schaefer asked what the group will want to say as a collective voice? She suggested including some value statements.

### **Closing Comments**

McKeen thanked Schaefer for traveling to Des Moines and sharing her advice and perspective. Schaefer thanked the working group again and commented that it was evident how much each of the group members cared about the girls in this state. The meeting adjourned at 2:00 pm.

**Next Iowa Girls Justice Initiative Working Group meeting is July 8, 2016, at River Place – Room 2, 2309 Euclid Avenue, Des Moines.**