

**Iowa Girls Justice Initiative  
Meeting Summary  
July 8, 2016  
10:00am – 2:00 pm**



**Polk County River Place – Room 3A  
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*  
Latasha DeLoach, *Johnson County Social Services*  
Ruth Frush, *Juvenile Court Services*  
Evelyn Garrison, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*  
Stephanie Hernandez, *Family Resources, Inc.*  
Steve Michael, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*  
Kristie Oliver, *The Coalition for Children and Family Services*  
Tom Southard, *Juvenile Court Services*  
Jennifer Tibbets, *ITFYW Chair and Catherine McAuley Center*  
Patti Wachtendorf, *Iowa Correctional Institution for Women*  
Julie Walton, *Scott County Attorney's Office*

**Staff**

Gracie Brandsgard, *SPPG*  
Arlinda McKeen, *SPPG*  
Kathy Nesteby, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*

**Welcome and Overview of the Day**

The meeting began at 10:14 am. Arlinda McKeen presented the group with the working group's original timeline for the rest of the year. With the addition of the national experts at the last two meetings, the timeline has been shortened for the writing of the plan. The original goal was to have the plan drafted by the end of September and then allow the last few meetings to have discussions of plan implementation. McKeen explained that the overall timeline will be pushed back about a month, but the group is still relatively on track with the original plan.

McKeen presented a PowerPoint slide on the definition of consensus. Today, the group will begin talking about consensus decision making. Everything the working group will be doing going forward really revolves around consensus. Consensus doesn't mean total agreement by everyone on everything. It expects give and take and asks "Can you live with this?" Consensus is important because everyone has a

specific expertise and in order to ensure an effective, holistic plan we have to have consensus from each of those expertise areas. In order to maximize the remaining working group meetings and ensure that the group continues to move forward in its work, McKeen noted that once consensus has been reached on an item, the group will not revisit that same item at a later meeting. Because of this, McKeen added that attendance and participation are critical of all working group members.

The rest of the day will focus on shaping the structure of the plan: determining the targeted audience, level of detail, and content. The group will use the strategies discussed at the first meeting and have been built upon since then.

### **The Plan for Deep End Girls: High Level Policy Decision Makers**

McKeen provided additional background information to the working group as they discussed the targeted audience for the plan. The original intent of the grant was that the intended audience would be high level policy makers. The goal of the plan is put in place systemic changes for deep end girls; the recommendation will be implemented in a variety of settings across the state, but they need to start with policy makers to implement the recommendations at a higher level.

McKeen reminded the group that the original proposal indicated that the final plan would ultimately be used by high level policy decision makers. McKeen then presented a PowerPoint slide with a proposed list of audience members; the list included:

- State legislators
- Governor
- Court Administrators
- Chief Juvenile Court Officers

*Who should be the targeted audience for the plan?*

- I don't think you're going to be able to move forward with the plan without the support of DHS. Legislators won't push anything DHS doesn't want.
- To me, DHS would count as a high level decision maker and thus would fit in that category. Any state agency leads would go in there.
- The Department of Education should be included as well, some of the consensus points are education related, which would necessitate their involvement.
- Members agreed there is a need to clarify specifically the state agencies' involvements in the plan.

Working group members agreed to the PowerPoint slide of listed targeted audience members, with the explicit addition of state agencies.

McKeen noted that it is important all working group members be able to see themselves in the plan, and to see how you fit individually. There is a place for everyone in this room.

## Plan Document: Level of Detail

Arlinda McKeen presented the group with three different examples of levels of detail in a plan: a traditional model that is more academic, provides greater detail, citations and resources; a set of high level recommendations focused on the deep end that includes less detail with greater room for policy maker interpretation; and a roadmap style that includes recommendations that reflect best practices and includes infographics.

*What do you think would be the most effective? What is necessary to be effective?*

- We need to do a good job of educating. It's cost effective to treat girls the way we need to. It may seem expensive, but it pays off in the long run. We need to do a good job on the education piece to show decision makers the cost-benefit.
  - A lot of people are not knowledgeable on topics related to girls and trauma-informed care. We will also want to include basic definitions before diving into the plan. To make sure everyone's on the same page. For example, we would need to define girl's court for people who don't know what it is.
  - That alone puts us in the roadmap style. High level recommendations leave room for lawmakers to interpret and if they aren't educated in trauma-informed, gender-specific, and culturally-responsive practices then we can't leave it up to them to interpret our recommendations. We need to be specific because if we're not then we're not going to get what we want.
  - We can do an education piece on how many girls we have in the deep end of the system.
- *Can we do both?* We could develop a one pager with high level recommendations that are more specific and then we can also provide a document that gives more data and drills down a little more into the issues.
  - CJPJ does that; whenever they publish a report they typically include an executive summary or a one page overview.
  - If you look at a list of the targeted audiences, legislators are listed and they typically want one pagers. We're going to have to figure out how to get their attention.
  - Legislators might want a one pager, but state agencies want more detailed reports when it comes to implementation. The Governor's staff will also want more detail.
  - You'll have to hit them right up front with the one pager to give them the information in case they don't want to read more.
- I keep thinking of Fran Sherman's report, she's utilized those different techniques to get those different audiences at different levels; that's what I'm envisioning for our report.
  - I liked that executive summary, I thought it captured everything well.
- The visual from the continuum is really compelling and it shows that the recommendations should be individualized to the girl.
- In addition to the graphic, we would need to go more in-depth. Perhaps we could make executive summaries of each service, like a rainbow binder to maximize the user-friendliness.

- Links are good for that too. We can include additional links in the report for those looking for more details. If we made it electronic, those links could be directly embedded in the report.
- You decide what you want and what you need and then you decide what you need to sell it. What do we really want and how are we going to do it? We need to decide the content first, then design the plan.
  - That approach worries me, being so specific. If we have so many specific recommendations, they'll say no. We need to make the case of how it integrates into the existing system.
- We need to be more concrete. What is it that we need and what do we need to get there?
- Shouldn't we start with the recommendations that were given when Toledo closed? When we're selling this, we should add onto something that was already done. Then we're not starting from scratch. And then we can show how we're building onto those existing recommendations with more education, more holistic looks, etc.
- It's important that however this plan looks like, we're getting buy-in to have the youth understand the process. If we're providing all this information to adults, we should also provide something to the youth.
  - If you can get kids' buy-in, the legislators are more likely to buy in to it.
- Let's look at the recommendations for the mental health system. Another working group looked at the system as a whole, and they framed it as you have to look at, and address, the crisis first before you can turn your attention to prevention strategies.
  - The goal is to figure out what to do with the deep end girls. If we build a whole system that's going to kill this.
  - Fire chart metaphor – if we have a fire blazing, we need to buy a fire truck first. Then we can start to think about fire prevention education, smoke detectors, etc. But need to set priorities.
- Even if all of our off ramps are successful, we'll still have girls at the deep end – and what do we do with them?
  - Recommendations for off ramps already exist, but there isn't anything for the deep end. We're going where no one has gone before. We can mention off ramps in our report, but the focus needs to be on deep end.
  - If we design the deep end well enough, we could be the state that other girls come to.
  - We can talk about improving all the steps that get to the deep end, but we need to be specific about the last resort placement and work backwards from there. We can improve off ramps to lower the number of girls that get there, but what is there? We have to have the "here", and that's something we haven't been able to get yet.
- None of the off ramps have been looked at through a gender lens. The state doesn't see gender as something by which one can assess quality.
  - There are off ramps that are gender specific, but on the whole the state is not taking the initiative to make sure programs are gender specific.
- Rural is an issue, it's hard to get gender specific programs there.

- It's not that they don't want to have gender specific programs, but they don't have the resources.
- There's a difference between providing services for girls and having female-responsive services.
- The plan needs to clearly spell out what we're talking about and define all the right things. We have to do basic education within the report because it will explain the problem and the need.
- It would be good for the group to think about the next steps as a group, after this project ends.

#### *Definition of "Deep End"*

- There was discussion by the group on the term "prior, unsuccessful placements". Members suggested, among others, to use "multiple prior placements" "prior out-of-home placements" instead.
- A lot of kids in the deep end can do great in their previous placements. Being unsuccessful is not a prerequisite for deep end.
- Take out "unsuccessful" from the definition of deep end.
- Add "least restrictive" – is there value in listing "prior, less-restrictive placements"?
- Add "due to a combination of" factors, or "who are a combination of high risk, high need".

Members agreed to an updated definition of deep-end drafted by Kathy Nesteby and moved to the next topic of discussion. The agreed upon definition is:

*Young women under juvenile court jurisdiction who have a combination of high risk, high need, aggressive behavior, prior placement(s), and risk to public safety due to their serious, violent, and/or chronic offenses and social histories.*

#### **Consensus Strategies from Previous Discussions**

McKeen presented a list of potential consensus items for the group's review. These items were compiled from the notes and ongoing work from the previous meetings and includes items that were suggested in multiple meetings and seemed to have a majority of support behind them.

The initial consensus list presented to the working group for discussion and changes:

1. *Smaller, specialized foster homes.*
2. *Funding to placements to ensure stability, training, and ratio of staff to girls.*
3. *Strengthen assessments to be more trauma-informed.*
4. *Single gender environments for services and placements as a best practice.*
5. *Training on female-responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate practices should be developed and provided to anyone providing impact services to girls in the juvenile justice system.*
6. *Continue one family, one judge.*
7. *Make basic education requirements and credits universal and easily transferable from one school district to the next.*
8. *The highest level of care should have a no reject, no eject policy.*

9. *Extend jurisdiction beyond the age of 18.*
10. *Develop a statewide mental health system for girls that includes services for high need deep end girls.*
11. *Create a continuum of care of services for girls that includes services for high need deep end girls.*

- Change “smaller, specialized foster homes” to “specialized foster homes”.
- Add “culturally-responsive” to consensus item #5.
- Add “equitable resources” to consensus item #2, or “**sufficient** funding”, or “sufficient reimbursement”.
  - It’s important to put equitable. You can see through the data that we give the world to the boys and give whatever’s left to the girls; it’s a national trend. So it’s important to point to that equitable piece.
  - And opponents will often use the smaller number of girls as a justification for inequitable funds.
- Add a statement that when implementing these recommendations or strategies, the money that is saved in the long run should be reinvested back into girls in the juvenile justice system.
- Some of the consensus items are specific to the high risk, high need girls and others address all of the girls in the juvenile justice system. Is that a problem?
  - We need to create a list that uses consistent language that focuses on deep end girls. What if we ended every bullet point with “for high risk, high need, deep end girls”. And then we can have a more general list of recommendations that focuses on all girls in the juvenile justice system.
- By keeping “specialized foster homes” on the consensus list, are we saying that that is a placement that should be made available to current deep end girls?
  - Everyone’s going to need a placement anywhere in the system. For instance, if we had a Girls Academy, they’re going to need a place to step down.
- For #3, what assessments are we talking about?
  - We need to strengthen the whole assessment process for girls. That may overlap to all girls, but it would directly affect deep end girls the most.
  - Are we talking about strengthening assessments that assess whether or not girls are state training school eligible, or the assessments that are being used prior to deep end placement?
  - We should also look at assessing what level of care a girl needs. When you’re getting the deep end label, what assessment is giving you that label and is it using those four criteria (developmentally appropriate, trauma informed, female responsive, and culturally responsive).
- In the adult world, there is an extra piece to the universal assessment that gets added for females.
- When we talk about strengthening the assessment process, IDA has a trauma informed piece, and it’s been validated for being female responsive too. We’re working on a statewide matrix

that points out specific services and programming for the range of risk and need. We do the assessments, we go by the Code, and that's what trumps everything.

- There's a discrepancy between boys and girls. A working group member provided examples of two murder cases, one boy and one girl, where JCS was trying to determine the charge level with minimal information about the individual. The boy was able to be sent to a state training school, was given a lengthy assessment and was observed for a period of time to better determine his level of risk whereas with the girl, they were not able to send her to a placement for assessment and observation. The working group member felt as though they were better able to make a decision with the boy than the girl because of the lack of a placement of last resort for deep end girls.
- #4, that program and service should be in single gender environments, should be mandated, it should not just be a suggestion. Other states have implemented the mandate.
  - I want to be careful of the oomph, with no funding.
  - That's an artificial environment, while the treatment is more effective with single gender, it doesn't prepare them for going back into their home.
    - That's true, but this is a time when they're in crisis.
  - You can't mandate services. It's too hard to put a mandate like that on all service. You might be able to mandate those that just serve deep end girls.
- #5, change the focus away from training specifically to a new focus on designing an environment for deep end girls that fits all four criteria. And then training comes as a part of it. Or is that a separate bullet point?
- It would be hard to require the training. I think it's definitely necessary for people working with girls and it should be required for service providers, but you can't require it for everyone involved in the system.
  - Any training that's offered to a broad spectrum of people is going to be low impact because it has to touch every area; it's hard to get specific, you can't go past the lowest common denominator. To me, it's more important that lawyers know their way around a courtroom and know the rule book; that's what the girls need.
- There is work going on now to keep kids engaged with their home school district while they're in placement.
  - There are a lot of groups working on it right now.
  - It's about the transferability and the quality of education they receive in placement. Change to "they have access to quality education while they're in placement commensurate with where they're at."
  - Having an advocate who can help navigate those different credits and advocate to the schools for the child.
  - Integration and collaboration of treatment and education while they're in a program.
- There's a Child Health and Well Being work group that's working on developing a children's mental health system.
  - We would want to offer ideas of the services that deep end girls specifically need in a mental health system, like access to a psychiatrist, 30 day evaluation, etc.

- Placements are not a life sentence. And the girls are missing the reentry piece without a state training school for girls. It's a huge gap between boys and girls.
- Add "reentry services are added for deep end girls".

After the discussion and feedback from the working group, the consensus list was revised to include:

1. *Specialized foster homes with foster parents trained in working with high risk high need girls and a capacity for a level of security as needed.*
2. *Sufficient funding to placements for facility and staff to ensure equitable services and programming and sustainability for girls that includes stability, training, and appropriate ratio of staff to girls.*
3. *Strengthen Improve assessment process to be more to include and to indicate specific needs for services that are female responsive, culturally responsive, trauma informed, and developmentally appropriate.*
4. *Single gender environments for services and placements as a best practice.*
5. *Training on female-responsive, trauma-informed, culturally responsive, and developmentally appropriate practices shall be developed and provided at the appropriate level to those involved with girls in the juvenile justice system.*
6. *One Continue one family, one judge for deep end girls.*
7. *Provide Girls Court for girls with delinquency charges.*
8. *Make basic education requirements and credits universal and easily transferable from one school district to the next.*
9. *Develop and implement uniform education requirements.*
10. *Integration of treatment and education to ensure girls have access to education while in treatment commensurate with their non-placement education...*
11. *The highest level of care should have a no reject, no eject policy.*
12. *Extend jurisdiction beyond the age of 18.to age 24.*
13. *Ensure the statewide children's mental health system includes services provides timely, consistent, and ongoing access to psychiatric and/or psychological services for high need, deep end girls.*
14. *Strengthen the continuum of care of services for girls that includes services, such as individually tailored re-entry service, for high need deep end girls.*

*Are we changing the Code that defines state training school eligible or are we following the Code?*

- This definition of "deep end" that we discussed previously is not meant to replace the Code.
- The judge is going to follow the Code, that's what they're going to do.
- We need to distinguish if what we recommend at the last resort placement is going to be a state training school that follows Iowa Codes or if it's going to be a residential facility that can provide deep end services.
- But if we don't have a state training school then people will always be looking for a state training school. If it's not a state training school it won't have a "no reject, no eject" rule.
- I'm opposed to idea of a state training school because legislators won't do it. We need to think differently to what's already been done.



- We may not need a state training school brick and mortar, but we do need a state training school level of care. A state training school has “no reject, no eject” and can extend jurisdiction beyond 18, and the state has taken an interest in the facility. They will provide state psychiatrists on campus, which doesn’t happen everywhere. Because it’s a state facility staff can unionize, which decreases turnover, etc.
  - In a year all group care facilities will have a “no reject, no eject” policy.
  - With enough funding and staffing and the right reimbursement rate, a lot of providers would be able to provide “no reject, no eject”.
- With any last resort placement, you run into mixing of high risk CINA cases with serious, delinquent high risk cases together again. Especially by adding in social histories piece into the definition of deep end. Is it opening up a can of worms?
  - The first line of the definition reads, “under juvenile court jurisdiction” so that automatically means it can only be delinquent cases.
- Codes for boys and girls eligibility should be compatible with each other.
- The initial task force recommended changing the Iowa Code in order to implement a new service. So I’ve always assumed we’d have to change the Code.
- Our recommendations have to include the Code change.
- Is that beyond the scope of our work?
- It would be helpful if we could get some data that had accurate numbers of state training school eligible girls in Iowa. It would help to know if we’re talking about a small group of girls who are eligible or if that’s a greater number, and if it’s a larger number then why is that? And does that show a problem with the Code?
  - It’s hard to get an accurate picture because the eligibility requirements are not static, it’s subjective in a lot of ways.

The group agreed to revisit this topic at a later meeting once additional progress had been made on the content of the recommendations.

### **Closing Comments**

McKeen thanked the working group members for their thoughtful discussion and feedback. The group was able to reach consensus on a working definition of “deep end girls” and the targeted audience of the final plan, and make progress on deciding the structure, level of detail, and recommendations of the plan. Next month’s meeting will move the group further towards determining the structure of the final plan as well as the content of the plan. The meeting adjourned at 2:14pm.

**Next Iowa Girls Justice Initiative Working Group meeting is August 5, 2016, at River Place, 2309 Euclid Avenue, Des Moines.**