

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

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Introduction

Young women and girls in the juvenile justice system present unique challenges and risks that are frequently not present in young men and boys. The County of San Diego's policy is to provide this population with supportive services through a collaborative approach that emphasizes a strength-based, positive development model that promotes the long-term interests of all youth in the juvenile justice system while maintaining community safety.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to clarify, facilitate, and enhance the County of San Diego's commitment to preventing female juvenile delinquency and promoting positive development of at-risk girls and young women. Also, to improve the ability of the juvenile justice system and related County services to identify and address the specific and unique needs of this population.

Definition of Gender-Responsive Services for Girls

Gender-responsive services for this population are those services whose content, delivery, and cultural competencies addresses the unique needs and characteristics of young women and girls. The goal of these services is to prevent or reduce female juvenile delinquency and promote positive development of at-risk young women and girls. Services will encourage healthy relationships, behaviors, and lifestyles, as well as promote responsible decision making and self-reliance.

Background

For young women and girls, the path to adulthood often features very different developmental experiences, challenges, and problems than those faced by young men and boys. Addressing and preventing female juvenile delinquency requires gender-responsive solutions.

In general, this population has a high incidence of physical, sexual, and emotional victimization, depression, and low self-esteem that are directly linked to at-risk behaviors. In addition, the adultification of young girls of color can lead to negative consequences and perceptions of culpability. In San Diego County, female juveniles on probation are more likely than males to suffer from chronic substance abuse, suffer from anxiety and depression, have limited parental/guardian involvement in their lives

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(e.g., parental involvement with the child welfare system of care), suffer from biases around adultification which may contribute to poor school attendance and performance. Additionally, some juvenile justice-involved females who may be pregnant at the time of their detention become mothers at an early age.

This population with juvenile justice system involvement are more at-risk of being victimized through the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) while also breaking the law. Being both victims and engaging in delinquent behaviors presents unique challenges to the rehabilitative process. The Board of Supervisors is committed to supporting programs and services that helps young women and girls, who are at risk of CSEC involvement, become successful in the community.

Guiding Principles:

The psychosocial perspective and developmental needs of this population are very different from those of young men and boys. Effective programming for this population involved in or at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system must address their unique characteristics and needs.

Effective service delivery for this population requires providers with a comprehensive understanding of their psychosocial perspective and developmental needs. Programming and training must be gender responsive and reflect knowledge of their diverse backgrounds and needs.

Programming adapted to this population's developmental needs is more likely to result in positive outcomes, including healthy relationships, behaviors and lifestyles, as well as responsible decision making and self-reliance.

Involvement with at least one significant positive adult, a positive peer group, core social institutions, and the community is critical in providing effective and lasting outcomes for this population.

Wherever appropriate, families should continue to play the primary role in the development of young women and girls. Programs at all levels should provide services that include the family in addressing the factors that lead to delinquency and system involvement.

Young women and girls who commit violent and serious offenses that present public safety risks should receive an appropriate length-of-stay commitment that addresses criminogenic behaviors and maintains community safety. While in custody, young women

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and girls should receive case management services that include treatment providers, families, and positive role models in the rehabilitative process.

Program and Policy Priorities

1. Diversion programs are the foundation for addressing early identification of at-risk and delinquent behaviors. These programs work with youth and families to connect community to services that promotes long-term success. The County focuses on early prevention, diversion and intervention services that serve as a foundation for addressing the early identification of at-risk and delinquent behaviors to connect youth and families to community services that promote long-term success.
2. Aggressive and sustained efforts to seek state, federal, and private foundation funding sources to augment County commitments are integral to the development and implementation of these services.
3. For this population, County contracted programs and services address family dynamics, and experiences of physical, emotional, and sexual victimization. These factors may contribute significantly to at-risk and delinquent behavior.
4. Physical and mental health assessment, intervention, and treatment are essential components of County contracted programs and services.
5. School challenges and perceived negative attitudes toward school, as evidenced by limited engagement, failing grades, poor school attendance reflect and contribute to at-risk behavior. Services for this population that support academic performance and remove barriers to success in school are essential components of gender-responsive programming.
6. Services for this population must include development of educational and career-oriented skills promoting the capacity to sustain independence and self-reliance. Services will include academic assistance, professional behavior, and planning for the future.
7. An essential component of gender-responsive service delivery is ensuring that at-risk young women and girls and their families know what programs are available and how to utilize neighborhood and core social institutions for future problem solving. Gender-responsive programs must be part of an integrated and accessible service delivery network.

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8. Programming must help at-risk young women and girls in and at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system, to develop and strengthen personal support networks, including positive peer group and mentors, in order to foster positive behaviors and effective decision-making skills.

9. The ultimate goal of gender-responsive diversion programs must provide a holistic approach that is trauma informed and culturally responsive in order to empower self-reliance. Services for this population must include information and counseling on basic life skills, such as personal finances, education, career goals and parenting, in order to assist their development into responsible, successful, and self-sufficient adults.

Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-32.

CAO REFERENCE

1. Probation Department

Board Action

11-16-99 (1)
09-27-05 (1)
12-09-08 (33)
11-08-11 (2)
12-11-18 (6)