



**HOW TO  
IMPLEMENT  
OREGON'S  
GUIDELINES  
FOR  
EFFECTIVE  
GENDER-  
RESPONSIVE  
PROGRAMMING  
FOR  
GIRLS**

*Written by Pam Patton and Marcia Morgan  
for the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission  
Juvenile Crime Prevention Program and the  
Oregon Commission on Children and Families  
July 2002*

**For more information:**

*Pam Patton  
Gender-Specific Services Consultant  
830 NE Holladay, Suite 125  
Portland, OR 97232  
Phone (503) 233-4356 ex. 203  
Fax (503) 630-5883  
rspatton@ix.netcom.com*

*Marcia Morgan  
Gender-Specific Services Consultant  
P.O. Box 5217  
Portland, OR 97208  
Phone (503) 244-0044  
Fax (503) 244-0600  
marcia@migima.com*

This document was prepared under grants awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, to the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission (No. 2001-JE-FX-2041 and No. 1999-JF-FX-0041) and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (No. 1998-JF-FX-0041). Development of the guidelines for gender-specific services for girls was encouraged by the state agencies as part of a comprehensive investment strategy for Oregon's youth and families.

The opinions, findings and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission, the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, or the Department of Justice.

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Guidelines at a Glance</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Part I: Why Gender-Specific Services are Important for Girls</b>	<b>9</b>
A. Defining Gender-Specific Services for Girls	
B. A Profile of Girls Today: Girls Face Different Challenges than Boys	
C. Influence of Media	
D. Girls' Adolescent Development	
<b>Part II: The Administration and Management of Gender-Specific Programs</b>	<b>13</b>
A. Program Policies	
(1) Program Policies	
(2) Collecting Data on Girls	
(3) Program Design	
(4) Aftercare/Follow-Up	
(5) Assessment Tools, Screening Instruments and Intake Practices	
(6) Outcome Measurements	
(7) Quality Assurance and a Continuous Feedback Loop	
B. Staff Qualifications Regarding Female Gender Issues	
(1) Hiring	
(2) Staff Diversity	
(3) Training	
<b>Part III: Program Content</b>	<b>31</b>
A. Environment	
(1) Physical Safety	
(2) Emotional Safety	
(3) Surroundings That Value Females	
B. Holistic Programming	
(1) Addressing the Whole Girl with a Holistic Approach	
C. Relationship-Based Programming for Girls	
(1) Understanding Girls Need Relationships	
(2) Taking Time for Relationships	
(3) Single-Gender Programming: Developing Relationships of Trust and Interdependence with Other Females	
(4) Significant Relationships with Caring Adults	
D. Strength-Based Programming for Girls	
(1) Teaching New Skills Built on Existing Strengths	
(2) Teaching Personal Respect	
(3) Giving Girls Control	
(4) Victimization and Trauma	
E. Health-Based Programming	
(1) Physical Health and Sexual Health	
(2) Emotional and Mental Health	
(3) Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Free Health	
(4) Spiritual Health and Rites of Passage	
<b>Part IV: Gender-Specific Services Assessment Form</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Part V: Resources</b>	



# Introduction

How to Implement Oregon's Guidelines for Effective Gender-Responsive Programming for Girls is designed to provide information and suggestions to assist organizations that work with girls ages 10-19 in the construction of program design, practices, and evaluation. This guidebook is not intended to be all-inclusive, but rather, serves as a catalyst encouraging professionals to look critically at how services are provided to girls. The guidelines for effective gender-responsive programming for girls are based on promising models and current research and literature in the field on gender-specific services. All the guidelines are interconnected and build on each other to create an environment that can enhance and maximizes program effectiveness for girls and young women.

The guidelines are applicable to a wide variety of services from community-based prevention programs for at-risk girls to intensive residential programs, detention, and state institutions for girls and young women. Whether it is small or large, any program can meet the guidelines outlined in this guidebook at some level, creating an effective continuum of care for girls. In the process, by utilizing these guidelines, Oregon's programs for girls will reinforce one another through clear and consistent gender-responsive programming for girls and young women.

We recognize that implementing these guidelines is a process that will occur over time. Therefore, allow flexibility in the development and implementation process as you work towards fully integrating guidelines into the culture of your organization, policies, programming, and outcome evaluations.

In this document, you will find each guideline listed in a shaded box, followed by a description of the guideline, and real-life examples from existing programs. These examples are not intended to be inclusive, but are listed for illustrative purposes. Some of the examples are from institution-based programs and others are from community-based programs. Some examples are applicable to either setting.

Discussion questions for each guideline were developed for training purposes as well as to help program and agency staff evaluate their own programs for gender-responsiveness.



# Guidelines at a Glance

## The Administration and Management of Gender-Specific Programs

**Guideline: Policies.** Develop gender-specific policies for programs serving girls. This ensures that administration and staff are informed and follow a similar set of work practices, understand the philosophy and commitment to girls' gender-specific services, and create a culture where gender issues are integrated into the organizational structure. Policies need to be in writing and should include guiding principles and program values. It is important that gender-specific policies and practices are integrated into all parts of the program continuum from intake to follow-up/aftercare.

**Guideline: Collecting Data on Girls.** Document demographic profile information relevant to the population being served. For comparison, collect parallel information on girls of similar age in the general community. Possessing data on risk and protective factors, or strengths/assets and needs of both populations is also important. This ensures policies and services are targeted and based on data-driven information. If serving both females and males, ensure data can be separated by gender.

**Guideline: Program Design.** Include girls in the design or redesign of programs and services. If appropriate, programs need to review best practices or promising gender-specific programs, and incorporate effective program components. The design should include an understanding of a girl's development including risk/protective factors, resiliency, strengths/assets, independence, self-esteem, life skills, and how girls are socialized within the context of their society and culture.

**Guideline: Aftercare/Follow-Up.** Ensure that girls get aftercare/follow-up services, and that these services are relationship-based. Girls need stability and relationships in all transitions. Integrate these needs into aftercare/follow-up plans from the moment a girl enters the program, and continue these services until the girl successfully completes her transition into the community.

**Guideline: Assessment Tools, Screening Instruments, and Intake Practices.** Develop instruments and practices that are responsive to the needs of females and are designed to eliminate barriers, cultural bias, and gender bias. Formal and informal decision points throughout the system (places where decisions are made by staff and other professionals that impact the girl) should also be examined for gender-bias practices.

**Guideline: Outcome Measurements.** Develop outcome measurements and evaluation methodologies that are gender appropriate. Identify goals or outcomes that are meaningful for the girl. The measurement tool you use should be free from bias and accommodate differences in communication, interpretation, and subject sensitivities. Data collection and interpretation should be appropriate for females and include qualitative as well as quantitative methods. It should also incorporate the current research on girls noting a research sample's breadth in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

**Guideline: Quality Assurance and Continuous Feedback Loop.** Include girls in evaluating service delivery, program content, and program effectiveness through feedback and suggestions. Programs need to support formal and informal feedback processes with staff and clients on a regular basis. The issues and concerns identified should be reviewed and incorporated into program changes and redesigned where appropriate. A program's effectiveness and relevance to girls and their diverse life experiences needs to be continually evaluated.

**Guideline: Hiring.** Interview applicants with questions that focus on gender issues. When interviewing potential staff for girls' programs, include questions on the applicant's interest in working with girls, their experiences with gender-specific service delivery, and their knowledge of female development.

**Guideline: Staff Diversity.** Maintain staffing that reflects the race and ethnic backgrounds of the girls being served to ensure that multiple perspectives are included and integrated into a program's services. Programs should be inclusive, welcoming, and culturally appropriate for all staff members and girls.

**Guideline: Training.** Provide new employees with a program orientation and follow-up training opportunities for all staff, supervisors, and managers on gender-specific issues. This may include, but is not limited to, current research on girls and young women, books on adolescent female development, female issues and needs, unique issues for girls of color, communication, staff boundary issues, sexuality, and gender identity.

## Program Content

**Guideline: Environment, Physical Safety.** Create an environment for girls that is physically safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be safe from violence, physical and sexual abuse, verbal harassment, bullying, teasing, and stalking. Management and staff need to create a safe environment where boundary issues are clear, acting out behavior is consistently addressed, and physical safety is taken seriously.

**Guideline: Environment, Emotional Safety.** Create an environment for girls that is emotionally safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be nurturing and safe. This environment should encourage girls to express themselves and share feelings and allow time to develop trust, all within the context of building ongoing relationships. Girls need time to talk and to process. They need to feel emotionally safe and free from negative or coercive behaviors, bias, racism, and sexism. When possible, their spaces should be free from the demands for attention produced by adolescent males.

**Guideline: Environment, Surroundings That Value Females.** Create an environment that values females. Facilities, classrooms, and other program settings should have books, magazines, posters, videos, wall decorations, and other items that celebrate females' current and historical achievements and contributions to the world. The surroundings should enhance a girl's understanding of female development, honor and respect the female perspective, respond to girls' diverse heritages and life experiences, and empower young women to reach their full potential.



**Guideline: Holistic Programming, Addressing the Whole Girl with a Holistic Approach.**

A holistic approach to the individual girl addresses the whole girl within the social context of her life, her relationships, the systems she encounters, and the society in which she lives. A holistic approach to programming integrates the contributions each staff member makes in creating a gender-responsive environment and fostering positive identity development for the girls in the program.

**Guideline: Understanding Girls Need Relationships.** Develop programs that embody an understanding of the significance of relationships and connections in the lives of young women. Healthy relationships and positive connections should be at the core of a program.

**Guideline: Taking Time for Relationships.** Create opportunities for staff and girls to talk and process their feelings and issues. Formal mechanisms need to be built into a program to enhance relationships and trust through one-on-one interactions.

**Guideline: Single-Gender Programming.** Create opportunities for girls-only programming. While there is often resistance on the part of girls to be isolated from boys or participate in programs with solely members of their own sex, girls-only programming is an important part of a gender-specific approach. It gives young women the time, environment, and permission to work on overcoming a value system that commonly prioritizes male relationships over female relationships.

**Guideline: Significant Relationships with Caring Adults.** Help girls establish significant relationships with caring adults through mentor programs. Matching a girl with a mentor who has a similar ethnic heritage, culture, and background is encouraged. Mentors can play a significant role in a girl's success, especially with continual, reliable contact that avoids competition with a girl's mother/family. Girls also need adult females who can model and support survival and growth along with resistance and change. Staff members as well as adult mentors can play this role in a girl's life.

**Guideline: Teaching New Skills Built on Existing Strengths.** Create opportunities for girls to learn new skills. Also, teach skills that build on a girl's existing strengths. Gaining competence in new areas can build self-esteem, control, and positive social behaviors. When girls master new skills that are healthy and productive, they expand their opportunities and become less dependent on old, non-productive, and/or harmful ways of behaving.

**Guideline: Teaching Personal Respect.** Develop self-esteem enhancement programs that teach girls to appreciate and respect themselves rather than relying on others for validation. Self-monitoring skills can be incorporated into girls' programming.

**Guideline: Giving Girls Control.** Develop programs that support and encourage girls to have hope, realistic expectations for the future, and the skills needed to reach their goals. Girls need help in developing a plan for the future, and an opportunity to practice the skills that will help them realize their goals. Girls need to be shown that they can affect how things happen in a way that is empowering. Programs need to help girls find their voices and to be expressive and powerful in positive and productive ways. All of these efforts provide girls with a sense of control in their lives.

**Guideline: Victimization and Trauma.** Develop programs that address the sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional/verbal abuse, trauma, domestic violence, and loss that many girls have faced. These issues deeply affect many parts of a girl's life and how she views herself as a female.

**Guideline: Physical Health and Sexual Health.** Develop programs that address physical health as well as sexual health. (We should care about the whole girl, not just about whether a girl is or is going to get pregnant.) Information needs to be shared with girls about female development, personal care, exercising, physical health, as well as menstruation, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and sexuality.

**Guideline: Emotional and Mental Health.** Develop programs that address emotional and mental health. Girls need good and accurate information about emotional and mental health, eating disorders, body image, addiction, depression, and self-care. Girls should be assessed for emotional and mental health needs and referred to counseling or therapy with a professional who has experience working with female adolescents.

**Guideline: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Free Health.** Develop programs that address the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The connection between drug use and self-medication by girls to deal with abuse and depression issues is best addressed in single-sex treatment programming. Prevention and intervention programs need to understand female adolescent development and incorporate programming that is specifically responsive to females.

**Guideline: Spiritual Health and Rites of Passage.** Develop programs that allow time for girls to address their spiritual health. Information needs to be shared and time set aside for girls to explore their spirituality and inner strength; to develop hope; and to become strong, centered, and at peace. This might include time for personal reflection; cultural traditions; and discussions about life, meaning, guidance, values, morals, and ethics. Develop rites of passage celebrations for significant events, or milestones found in a girl's daily routine.

# I. Why Gender-Specific Services are Important for Girls

## A. Defining Gender-Specific Services for Girls

To talk about why services should be gender specific for girls, it must first be acknowledged that girls and boys are socialized differently. Many things influence the definition of what it means to be male (masculine) and what it means to be female (feminine) in the United States. Culture, the media, and the family all play significant roles in girls' and boys' socialization and perceptions of self. As girls and boys mature, they experience things differently, chart different pathways to problem behaviors, and face different issues and challenges. Therefore, the models for responding to girls' and boys' needs must be different in order to be effective and gender-specific.

Gender-specific services comprehensively address the needs of a gender group (female or male), fostering positive gender identity development. Gender-responsive programming for girls intentionally allows gender to affect and guide services, creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of girls' lives, and is responsive to the issues and needs of the girls and young women being served.

Programs often state that they are “gender neutral.” However, on closer examination, many times these programs' approaches are based on a male model. That is, they respond more to the traditional needs of males. If we examine why many programs serving youth are based on a male model, we find that education, juvenile justice, and social services have historically served more boys because of their aggressive acting-out behaviors, while giving less attention to girls' self-destructive, internal behaviors. Therefore, boys were the population primarily reflected in the studies and research that drove program design. Current publications on boys tend to focus on changing male stereotypes and boys' roles in society rather than changing male-modeled programming. As you review these guidelines, consider how your program is designed, whether it meets the needs of girls in a female gender-specific approach or is more traditional in its approach. When gender-responsive programming concepts are understood and used with girls in a holistic manner, individual programs can begin the fundamental change of how the general service system responds to the needs of girls. And evaluations show that the integration of gender-specific approaches with girls also broaden our approaches with boys to better meet their needs, especially those boys who don't respond to the male model.

One of the reasons that gender-specific services for girls is such an important focus in our state is that in 1993 an organization called the Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls helped pass a bill that resulted in Oregon becoming the only state in the nation with a law (ORS 417.270) that requires state agencies serving children under 18 to ensure that girls and boys have equal access to appropriate services, treatment, and facilities. State agencies are also required to implement plans to ensure girls are receiving equity in access to social, juvenile justice, and community services statewide; that barriers to these services are removed; and that the services provided are gender-specific. Ensuring that services are gender-specific is also a requirement of Oregon counties' Juvenile Crime Prevention Plans.

## **B. A Profile of Girls Today: Girls Face Different Challenges than Boys.**

### **Eating Disorders**

One in every 12 females who took the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey in Oregon reported taking diet pills or laxatives, or vomiting in order to lose weight. Sixty percent of girls who participated in the survey reported trying to lose weight versus 24% of male survey participants.<sup>1</sup> Self-confidence declines with age for girls, but not as much for boys.<sup>2</sup>

### **Depression**

Nationally, girls are 50% more likely to suffer from depression than boys.<sup>3</sup> Nearly one in four girls<sup>4</sup> in Oregon state they frequently feel sad and depressed. Twenty-one percent of girls in middle school reported seriously considering suicide in the past year. Seventy-six percent of the suicide attempts by 13 to 18-year-olds in Oregon were females.<sup>5</sup>

### **Using and Abusing Alcohol, Drugs, and Tobacco**

Twenty-six percent of eighth graders and 42% of eleventh graders in Oregon report having used alcohol during the past month. Girls start smoking at a greater rate than boys and are more influenced by peers to use controlled substances than boys.

### **Violence and Abuse**

A 1998 self-study in Portland, Oregon found that one in three female high school students are or have been in an abusive relationship. A Harvard School of Public Health's analysis of the 1997 and 1999 national Youth Risk Behavior Survey conducted in Massachusetts states that one in five girls 14 to 18 years of age report they have been abused by a dating partner. This abuse is linked to teen pregnancy, suicide attempts and other health risks. One out of three girls will experience sexual or physical abuse in their childhood, almost three times more often than boys.<sup>6</sup> Sixty-two percent of teen mothers report a history of being abused.<sup>7</sup> Seventy-three percent of girls in the juvenile justice system have been abused.<sup>8</sup>

### **Homelessness, Runaways, and Prostitution**

In Oregon, 64% of runaways and 40% of homeless youth are girls. Nationally, 70% of girls on the street run away to flee violence in their homes.<sup>9</sup> Many of these girls are at risk of entering prostitution. The majority of prostitutes are influenced by their early experiences of sexual abuse.<sup>10</sup> The average age for entry into prostitution is thirteen.<sup>11</sup>

This risk data shows that the pressure girls experience to conform, and the pathways to crime and other self-destructive behaviors are often very different for girls than they are for boys.

1. Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995  
2. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995  
3. Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, 1995  
4. 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Study  
5. Oregon Health Division, 1999  
6. National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1997

7. Boyer, Debra, University of Washington, 1992  
8. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1995  
9. Chesney-Lind and Sheldon, 1998  
10. Seng, M.J., "Child Sexual Abuse and Adolescent Prostitution," 1989  
11. Klain, Eva J., "Prostitution of Children and Child-Sex Tourism," 1999.

## C. Influence of Media

Girls identities and senses of self are shaped by the various contexts in which they live. Cultural theorists argue that the constant flood of images on TV, magazines, video games, and in movies, as well as what is heard on the radio, influences the way we think of and act regarding gender roles. Media images have a profound impact on young women's and young men's conception of self and their tastes, attitudes, behaviors, and choices.

Television and the media are socializing America's children and youth. The average child in the U.S. watches 1,500 hours of TV a year, more hours than they spend in school. What they see on MTV, for instance, are females or parts of the female anatomy that are there with no purpose other than to be sexual and/or serve as an adornment. The media's sexualization and objectification of females not only affects how girls perceive themselves, but how males perceive females. The media sends mixed messages to girls, espousing female empowerment while exhibiting stereotypical expectations of female beauty, body shape, sexuality, and perfection. Recent findings conclude that the acceptance of media images about the importance of physical appearance (ultra-thinness being the hallmark of beauty) is negatively related to general feelings about the self. Society tells girls that their identity is not based on who they are, but on their physical appearance, their popularity with peers, and their sexuality.

## D. Girls' Adolescent Development

In her book, *In a Different Voice* (1982), Carol Gilligan states that:

- ◆ Relationships are important and fundamental to girls' lives. Relationships give girls a sense of connection.
- ◆ Girls relate and work one-on-one.
- ◆ Females tend to internalize failure (assume it is their fault) and externalize success (have difficulty taking credit for success).
- ◆ Females look to external sources in building their own self-esteem

Gilligan also found that a fundamental shift in self-perception takes place when girls reach adolescence, (*Meeting at the Crossroads*, 1992). Around age 13, girls "hit the wall," Gilligan argues. At this stage, girls give up self in order to be in a relationship. Their self-esteem diminishes, and they lose their voices, inner-strength, a sense of who they are as an individual, and what they want to be. For many girls, social expectations crush their spirit. Their focus becomes dominated by peer pressure, trying to be attractive to boys, and becoming competitive with other girls for the attention of boys.

Important differences appear among girls when data is analyzed by race. Race and gender are separate issues, yet fundamentally intertwined in a girl's life. A girl's loss of voice can manifest itself differently based on a girl's racial and ethnic culture. For instance, an African American adolescent girl's voice may in fact become louder (a response to race, class, and gender oppression), but

internally she may be struggling with a loss of inner strength and her sense of self. Or, an African American girl may become quiet in school in response to negative feedback for having certain opinions or attitudes. In the process, she loses her voice because she views success in an academic setting as dependent on her invisibility and silence. Girls live in complex and dynamic social contexts and receive contradictory mixed messages that can vary across race, class, culture and sexuality as well as gender.

As girls develop they form their identity primarily in relation to other people. In general, they are interested in what a relationship means and how it works. They define themselves through their relationships and by how well they get along with others. A model that works best for most girls would have a structure where they can build relationships, have time to process and talk about issues, have one-on-one opportunities, and feel connected to people.

As boys develop they form their identity primarily in relation to the greater world. In general, they are interested in the rules of that world, their place in the structure of that world, and ways to advance or gain power within that structure. A model that works best for most boys has compartmentalized hierarchical structures with clear rules that allow them to conduct direct problem solving and participate in group activities.

Mary Pipher's national best-seller Reviving Ophelia (1994) brought information to the general public about the issues girls face as they travel through adolescence. Dr. Pipher says that "girls today live in a more dangerous, overly-sexualized and media-saturated culture... and as a society we protect our girls less in how we socialize them and at the same time we put much more pressure on them to conform to the female role prescriptions."

1998 Search Institute research shows that girls, compared to boys, are 50% more likely to suffer from low-self esteem (lack of belief in ones self) and a poor sense of self-efficacy (self-perceptions of effectiveness). According to their data, girls have more developmental assets related to caring about and helping others. However, girls report lower self-esteem, loss of a sense of purpose in life, and are significantly less likely than boys to say they like themselves or have a lot to be proud of. The concern for girls is the degree to which they internalize their perceived inadequacies and their consequential behaviors.

A recent National Institute of Mental Health (NIH Publication No. 01-4929) study revealed – for the first time – that patterns of brain development extend into the adolescent years and don't stop at the early years. "The ongoing brain plasticity gives the teenage brain amazing power to grow and heal through the power of hope, commitment and intimate relationships" (David W. Willis, M.D., NW Early Childhood Institute, Portland, OR).

When research is presented in this guidebook, it is referring to girls and boys as a whole social group. It is not intended to label or stereotype individuals, females, or males. It is intended, however, to inform the reader of the perspectives that research presents about sex (biological differences) and gender (socially ascribed differences). Some developmental researchers believe that gender specific behavior is an intricate mix of both biology and environment – a myriad of social learning and biological factors interacting together. Others suggest that behavioral differences between females and males are determined not by biological factors, but by social and environmental factors. Researchers do concur that there are more differences within the genders than there are between them.

# II: The Administration and Management of Gender-Specific Programs

## A. Program Structure

### (1) Program Policies

#### **Guideline: Program Policies**

Develop gender-specific policies for programs serving girls. This ensures that administration and staff are informed and follow a similar set of work practices, understand the philosophy and commitment to girls' gender-specific services, and create a culture where gender issues are integrated into the organizational structure. Policies need to be in writing and should include guiding principles and program values. It is important that gender-specific policies and practices are integrated into all parts of the program continuum from intake to follow-up/aftercare.

#### **Description**

Gender-specific program policies should be consistent with the agency's/organization's policies and with the county and state's. Mission statements, contract language, and grant or contract proposals are other areas where gender-specific language can be incorporated.

Policies are values put into words to guide services and peoples' actions. Historically, girls' treatment programs or juvenile justice programs were designed to return girls to a morally acceptable path defined by society's general values and expectations of women. Often these programs dealt with a symptom rather than a cause, missing the holistic picture of a young woman within her social context. Examine the values driving your policies (e.g., to guide, understand, empower, rehabilitate, confine, punish, sanction, or cure). Programs need to be clear about the values and attitudes that affect policies. When possible, programs should involve girls in the development of policies.

Program policies also need to include information on staff boundary issues. They should define appropriate emotional, physical, and sexual boundaries between staff and program participants. Program policies should also include training for staff around these issues, addressing clear, appropriate, and gender-specific methods of response.

## **Examples**

### **A. Policy Statement**

“It is the policy of this county to assure a system of care that is vigilant and responsive to gender differences, acknowledges and incorporates gender-specific programming at all levels of the system, expands knowledge, and then adapts services to meet gender-unique needs.”

“It is the policy of the Commission on Children, Families and Community to assure a gender-fair system of care that acknowledges and incorporates at all levels the importance of gender, the assessment of gender-specific difference, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from gender differences, the expansion of gender-specific knowledge and the adaptation of services to meet gender-unique needs.”

(Sample taken from Clackamas County Commission on Children, Families and Community.)

### **B. Mission Statement**

“To provide females, in a safe and secure setting, with the skills to resist negative influences and opportunities to create a healthy future.”

(Sample adapted from Corvallis House, Oregon Youth Authority.)

“GIRLS LINK, together with decision-makers, service providers, and the community will develop a systemic culture that recognizes the importance of increasing resources designed to meet the special needs of girls who are involved in or are at risk of becoming involved in the Cook County juvenile justice system.

(Sample from Cook County, Illinois, GIRLS LINK program.)

“To help all girls to be strong, smart, and bold.”

(Sample from GIRLS, INC.)

### **C. Contract Statement**

“All contractors must provide gender-specific services based on best practices in the field. Gender-specific services use programming that comprehensively addresses the needs of a targeted gender group and includes the fostering of positive gender identity development.”

(Sample adapted from the Oregon Youth Authority.)



## For Discussion

1. Does your agency or organization have gender-specific policies? Does your specific program? If yes, do your program policies on gender-specific programming match your overall agency or organization's policies on providing effective services? Are they consistent?
2. Do informal practices match with formal policies? For instance, most schools have policies on sexual harassment, yet is the organization's environment supportive of the policy? There may be very few cases being reported, yet many girls state they have been harassed. Why does this gap exist? How is your organization's sexual harassment policy being implemented and enforced?
3. What is the process to change a policy in your agency or program? How do girls get involved in that change?
4. How do you know if your program's policies on daily activities are gender-specific?

Example 1. Some treatment programs have a no make-up rule for girls. What is the value associated with such a rule? Do the girls need instruction on how to apply make-up? How does this impact a girl's self-esteem?

Example 2. A detention program may have clothing policies/rules that state if boys wear jumpsuits, girls should wear jumpsuits too. Yet a jumpsuit requires girls to completely disrobe to use the bathroom. How does this policy violate a girl's privacy?

Example 3. Some residential or institutional program policies/rules ban chemically-based hair products for girls. Yet water-based products do not work on the hair or skin of some ethnic groups. For example, hair relaxant for African American girls is not solely a beauty issue; it can be a health issue because without these products, some girls cannot easily clean their hair.

5. There may be policies/rules about no talking during certain times, but is there time set aside for girls to verbally process issues that arise?

## (2) Collecting Data on Girls

### **Guideline: Collecting Data on Girls**

Document demographic profile information relevant to the population being served. For comparison, collect parallel information on girls of similar age in the general community. Possessing data on risk and protective factors, or strengths/assets and needs of both populations is also important. This ensures policies and services are targeted and based on data-driven information. If serving both females and males, ensure data can be separated by gender.

### **Description**

Good data is the empirical foundation for effective programs. Profile data about girls is important because it is an objective source of information and it can be reliably measured over and over again to monitor progress. Without it, only anecdotal evidence leading to decisions based on hunch rather than fact can be made. Model programs target girl's key issues. It is difficult to target the critical issues if you do not have the data to identify them.

### **Examples**

Data can be collected on many things. Here are some examples of risk factors and needs for females that may be important to examine in your program.

#### **Individual/Family**

- Physical, emotional, and sexual abuse
- Parental neglect
- Alcohol, tobacco and, other drug abuse
- Sexually activity and/or early pregnancy
- A learning disability
- Runaway/homelessness
- Prostitution
- Criminal activity
- Negative peer relationships/isolation
- Gang involvement
- Sex-offenses
- Peer engagement in antisocial behavior
- Low self-esteem
- Depression/suicidal tendencies
- Family violence
- Parental substance abuse
- Foster care placement
- Family criminal activity
- School dropout/truancy/suspension

#### **School/Community**

- Economic depression
- Urban underclass
- Classism
- Racism
- Lack of adequate housing/homelessness
- School drop-out
- Lack of school to work/college preparation
- Limited in/alternative school resources
- Academic failure
- Lack of social activities
- Lack of health care

Here are some examples of protective/resiliency and strength/assets factors for females:

### **Individual/Family**

Positive self-concept  
Positive gender identification  
Good social skills  
Competence/sense of purpose  
Spirituality  
Positive ethnic identity formation  
Connections to family  
Nurturing family/effective communication  
Positive relationships with peers  
Healthy/thriving  
Bonding to school

### **School/Community**

Extracurricular/community activities  
Social supports  
Caring school climate  
Values youth  
Safe places to grow  
Mentoring/caring adults  
Physical/Mental Health care access  
Drug/alcohol education/treatment  
Vocational/ non-traditional job training  
College/higher education supports  
Low crime rate

## **For Discussion**

1. What sort of data currently exists for your program?
2. Do you use qualitative as well as quantitative data to track your program's progress?
3. What are you trying to answer or address? What do you want to know?
4. Is the data just aggregated (totals/tallies) or is it correlated to other things?
5. Is the data from self-reports, or is it grounded in secondary data sources?
6. What data exists about issues that are specific to girls?
7. What do the girls say they need or want from the program?
8. Are you tracking risk/need factors as well as protective, resilient, strength, and/or asset factors?
9. What are the demographics of the girls in your program? In the community? How do they differ?
10. What do you know about race and gender in this population?

### (3) Program Design

**Guideline: Program Design.**

Include girls in the design or redesign of programs and services. If appropriate, programs need to review best practices or promising gender-specific programs, and incorporate effective program components. The design should include an understanding of a girl's development including risk/protective factors, resiliency, strengths/assets, independence, self-esteem, life skills, and how girls are socialized within the context of their society and culture.

#### Description

Even if a program is designed solely for girls, it does not necessarily mean that it is gender-specific. Traditional programming is frequently based on a male model that is responding more to male needs rather than female needs. To determine if a program is gender-specific for girls in its context, content, and approach, the program should be assessed to see if the design is incorporating skills and methods that work well for the needs of girls. As mentioned previously in the adolescent development section, most boys work best (i.e., their general needs are met) in structures that are hierarchical and linear in perspective, while most girls work best (i.e., their general needs are met) through a relational view of the hierarchical structure, and a circular perspective. Boys like the rules of a program to be clear and compartmentalized. Girls need program rules to be consistent for reasons of safety and stability. Boys like to work in groups/teams and are naturally competitive. Girls need one-on-one time, as well as group activities, and work best when offered both. Girls do compete, but frequently this competition is over boys or for attention, rather than for personal power. Girls often use communication to build relationships and trust. When girls problem-solve, they need time to process. Boys often use communication for problem solving and information gathering, preferring to solve problems independently with little process time.

Program design should be based on an understanding that girls' identities and sense of self are complex, fluid and shaped by the many contexts in which they live, intersecting race, social class, and sexual identity to name a few. Programs can make a difference in promoting girls' positive self-images, identity development, and senses of possibilities by focusing on a girl's strengths and assets. Designs based on a strength-based culture, with a common language and complementary approaches along the continuum encourage girls to express their opinions, explore new realms, and pursue their interests.

## Examples

- ◆ Anger management groups often focus on a girl's management and control of her anger independent of other individuals or factors involved in the conflict. This design may work for most boys, but for multiple reasons it does not work for most girls. One reason is that we know that girls are relational, so the other individuals involved in a girl's conflict are directly involved in a girl's anger management process. Also, we know that many females internalize failure. Therefore, focusing on a girl controlling her anger places the blame on the individual girl, emphasizing her lack of control and enhances the feeling of failure. A better name for an anger management group for girls may be "Finding Your Voice." This title is more gender responsive and presents the program as skill-development utilizing relationship connections. Both groups have the same goal, but tailor their approach based on specific gender needs.
- ◆ Behavior management approaches that utilize isolation or alienation as a punishment are rarely effective with girls.
- ◆ Alcohol and drug treatment programs often use the Twelve Step model, which emphasizes an individual's powerlessness in the face of his or her addiction. Since victimization, trauma, and feeling powerless can be an issue for many young women, using a gender-specific version of the Twelve Steps program that is designed for females is much more effective than the traditional model. (Please refer to the examples on page 55 of this guidebook in section E (3), "Health-Based Programming: Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug-Free Health.")

## For Discussion

1. Do you involve girls in the design of your program?
2. Do you look at a girl holistically, incorporating into the design of your program an understanding of all the relational, systemic, and societal factors in her life?
3. How has allowing girls time to talk, process, and build relationships been incorporated into your program's design?
4. How do you celebrate, support, or reward girls in your program?
5. How are life skills and competency building activities incorporated into your program's design?
6. How are girl's physical and emotional development issues incorporated into your program's design (e.g., physical exercise, hygiene, menstruation, depression, etc.)?

## (4) Aftercare/Follow-Up

### **Guideline: Aftercare/Follow-Up**

Ensure that girls get aftercare/follow-up services, and that these services are relationship-based. Girls need stability and relationships in all transitions. Integrate these needs into aftercare/follow-up plans from the moment a girl enters the program, and continue these services until the girl successfully completes her transition into the community.

### **Description**

Girls need relationships and stability as they make transitions. Relationship-based programming does not mean dependency. Rather, relationship-based programming is about the nourishment of healthy relationships in many aspects of a girl's life. Staff members' relationships with a girl are based on care, respect, and trust. From the first day a girl enters a program, the girl and each staff member she interacts with need to understand that their relationship is based upon the girl's process of transition out of the program to home, the community, or another program. In working towards that goal, staff will need to actively assure a girl that she will not lose the stability of relationships built within the context of the program. When a girl is ready to leave the program/group, the staff will have already conducted the groundwork needed in assisting her to establish stable relationships in her new or returning setting. These relationships will also be based on care, respect, and trust. If programs do not plan transitions early, girls sabotage or resist the transition plan in an attempt to hang on to the relationships they have built within the program structure.

### **Example**

The PACE Center for Girls, Inc., in Florida, an education-based day program for girls, is nationally recognized for using gender-specific best practices for girls. PACE credits much of its success on a comprehensive, three-year, follow-up service. The follow-up is for all girls attending the program for more than 30 days.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What type of follow-up/aftercare processes do you have in your program? How are relationships integrated into girls' aftercare/follow-up?
2. How is a girl's reliance on relationships integrated into aftercare/follow-up services? Is it included early in a girl's program experience?

## (5) Assessment Tools, Screening Instruments and Intake Practices

### **Guideline: Assessment Tools, Screening Instruments and Intake Practices**

Develop instruments and practices that are responsive to the needs of females and are designed to eliminate barriers, cultural bias, and gender bias. Formal and informal decision points throughout the system (places where decisions are made by staff and other professionals that impact the girl) should also be examined for gender-bias practices.

### **Description**

A system's established screening policies and practices can create gender-based barriers blocking a girl's access to needed services, and may inherently involve gender-based bias. For example, in the child welfare system it is often assumed younger children need protection more than older youth; in the juvenile justice system access to services are based upon a youth's risk factors to re-offend; or in mental health a child or youth's treatment is based on having a DSM IV diagnosis.

It often takes longer to complete intake assessment with girls than boys because girls have a greater need to talk, process, connect, feel safe, and build trust. Assessment instruments need to be validated, normed and timed for females. Classification instruments should include items that fit the female population. For instance, there should be a distinction between an assault charge based on safety reasons and a disciplinary infraction.

### **Examples**

- ◆ In Illinois's Cook County Juvenile Department, a gender-specific risk assessment and strength/needs assessment instrument for girls has been developed that looks at family relationships, mental health, basic needs, substance abuse, life skills, history of abuse and neglect, physical safety, peer relationships, school status, social supports, motherhood, and health.
- ◆ A comprehensive assessment and interview protocol for young women in the juvenile justice system was developed by Leslie Acoca of the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (1995).
- ◆ San Diego's County Department of Probation developed a Risk and Resiliency Check-up (1998) for youth, which they are making gender-specific.
- ◆ In Oregon, the Northwest Professional Consortium, Inc., has developed a strength/needs assessment tool for both female and male juveniles. The organization has also developed a Juvenile Crime Prevention Risk Screen and Assessment Instrument.

- ◆ Many agencies develop what is referred to as a Decision Point Map. This “map” helps programs look at how where, and by whom decisions are made regarding girls in a system. It helps programs examine both formal and informal decision points. Formal decision points may include decisions regarding expulsion, arrest, legal sanctions, discipline and access to services based on laws and written policies. Informal decision points may be based on bias, stereotyping, emotions, and personal values. Informal decision points are less structured, but still have a significant impact on a girl’s life. Assessing both types of decision points can help determine gender responsiveness throughout the system.

## For Discussion

1. Have you looked at the design of your screening or intake instruments and practices to determine if they may contain gender barriers or gender biases?
2. When is profile information gathered on a girl? How accurate is the self-reported information if it is gathered at the beginning of a program when trust has not yet been established?
3. Do you allow for any extended time for intakes, screenings, or assessments of females?

## (6) Outcome Measurements

### Guideline: Outcome Measurements

Develop outcome measurements and evaluation methodologies that are gender appropriate. Identify goals or outcomes that are meaningful for the girl. The measurement tool you use should be free from bias and accommodate differences in communication, interpretation, and subject sensitivities. Data collection and interpretation should be appropriate for females and include qualitative as well as quantitative methods. It should also incorporate the current research on girls noting a research sample’s breadth in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

### Description

Success is not just the absence of negatives. Because many girls’ issues and problems are hidden and internalized, a girl’s visible expressions of success do not necessarily mean she is healthy on the inside. Both quantitative and qualitative data should be used to identify multiple indicators of success in a girl’s life.

Quantitative data that evaluates re-arrest rates, dropout rates, or lengths of time with clean urinalysis checks, is a more traditional approach to measuring outcomes. Often success is measured by recidivism rates, yet that may not be the best measure and certainly should not be the sole measure of success for girls.



Success for girls must include the presence of “internalized positives.” That is, competencies/skills a girl has developed and internalized, such as her ability to maintain healthy relationships and make healthy lifestyle choices, need to be evaluated. Success factors may be observable as well as non-observable.

Programs need to consider goals and outcomes that are meaningful to the girl. This includes an understanding of culturally-based behaviors as well as the culture to which a girl identifies.

## **Examples**

- ◆ Following the completion of a skill building/competency group, program staff have the girls fill out a self-assessment form on how well they felt they did, what skills they learned, and how they might use these skills in their lives.
- ◆ Staff track a girl’s interactions with peers (female and male) daily or weekly to document and then reinforce positive interactions, healthy decisions, and positive self-messages.
- ◆ Programs that use level systems should not tie program expectations to competition or points. Level systems should be based on: the treatment plan; what a girl’s behaviors are; steps in skill development; natural consequences for accepting or not accepting responsibility of behaviors; and the privileges that go with the levels. The levels need to be tied to a girl’s development of skills; skills that a girl can identify and internalize, and that staff can recognize externally as the girl’s strengths. Complimentary to the Level System a program can develop a token economy where girls can earn points and then choose a privilege (an item or an activity) that she has determined in advance as meaningful to her. Each girl starts with a minimum percentage of points (rather than zero points), and when she goes above that percentage she earns extra privileges. Using such a method allows the conversation between staff and girls to be based on positives, focusing on points earned rather than points lost. Girls have the opportunity to authentically internalize their successes, while staff can recognize a girl’s progress externally.
- ◆ Positive quantifiable behaviors displayed in a program should be tracked and documented and translated for a young woman in a way that she can recognize and internalize her successes as her own. In the process, allowing her to acknowledge the control she has over her own behavior and progress.

## **For Discussion**

1. How does your program define success? Does your program ask girls to define success for themselves? Are girls involved in forming outcome measurements? Are the goals and outcomes meaningful to the girl within her world and culture?
2. What are the values driving your outcome measurements? Are the outcomes being used because they are more easily measured, or are they required by a contract held by the program? Are they based on what is best for the girl?

## (7) Quality Assurance and a Continuous Feedback Loop

### **Guideline: Quality Assurance and Continuous Feedback Loop**

Include girls in evaluating service delivery, program content, and program effectiveness through feedback and suggestions. Programs need to support formal and informal feedback processes with staff and clients on a regular basis. The issues and concerns identified should be reviewed and incorporated into program changes and redesigned where appropriate. A program's effectiveness and relevance to girls and their diverse life experiences needs to be continually evaluated.

### **Description**

Quality assurance is not a luxury item, but should be integrated into the routine of doing good business. It is hard to imagine a person investing money in the stock market and never getting a statement, or having access to information on how his or her stocks are doing. Continuous quality assurance gives a program feedback to assess, readjust, improve, and become more effective.

Set up a system so girls can provide feedback and know that their suggestions have been heard, and if appropriate, implemented. A girls' program committee led by girls can be an empowering mechanism in a program. It allows girls to recognize that they have control and input regarding the direction of their lives, and that their opinion is valued. Such processes also develop trust between girls and staff.

### **Examples**

Set up a system for collecting feedback from girls and staff:

- ◆ Establish focus groups.
- ◆ At the end of treatment groups, ask for feedback.
- ◆ Supply suggestion boxes with forms asking participants to articulate problems or concerns they may have with the program, and solutions or suggestions for eliminating problems. Publish these forms in the native languages appropriate to the population(s) served.
- ◆ Allow girls to create proposals for improvement. Let them present their proposal(s) to staff. Then work with the girls to assess the proposal and produce a final version.
- ◆ Provide an e-mail address for participants to use to give comments or suggestions.
- ◆ Use exit interviews with girls and staff to collect feedback on the program.
- ◆ Establish a program committee with girls, that concentrates on quality assurance.
- ◆ Discuss quality assurance in the orientation with the girls, creating a culture of openness for improvement.
- ◆ Discuss quality assurance in the orientation with staff, creating a culture of openness for improvement.

## For Discussion

1. How are you currently collecting feedback from girls? From staff? From parents? From other related parties/stakeholders?
2. Who will be reviewing the feedback information? Do you have more than one staff member reviewing the feedback? (More creative solutions will come from multiple perspectives.)
3. How is feedback incorporated into the program to make changes and improve the quality of programming?
4. How do staff members provide feedback to girls? Is the feedback constructive and strength-based?

## B. Staff Qualifications Regarding Female Gender Issues

### (1) Hiring

#### **Guideline: Hiring**

Interview applicants with questions that focus on gender issues. When interviewing potential staff for girls' programs, include questions on the applicant's interest in working with girls, their experiences with gender-specific service delivery, and their knowledge of female development.

### Description

It is important to find staff who not only have a genuine interest in working with girls, but are also effective in such work. Existing research shows that youth workers “commonly lament that girls are more difficult to work with” than boys, (Belknap, et. al., 1997; Baines & Alder, 1996; Kersten, 1990). Meda Chesney-Lind states that more recent studies have found that “most participants did not regard girls as more difficult. In general, practitioners recognized that girls were indeed different to work with in comparison to their male counterparts... But many found it was easier to work with girls... girls are more open minded, able to sit and listen and hear what you're proposing to them, less accusational to staff,” (*Women, Girls & Criminal Justice*, August/September 2001).

It takes an understanding of female and adolescent development to feel confident in work with girls because relationships play such significant roles for them. Staff cannot escape dealing directly with young women. Therefore, it is also important that as soon as possible after hiring, staff receive training on understanding and becoming aware of their own gender and cultural biases. Some female staff may have confronted the same challenges in their lives that the girls they are working with are facing. And it

is possible that these staff members continue to struggle with the residual effects of those life challenges. They may find it difficult to constantly relive their experiences or be directly confronted by young women who can be adept at publicly exposing weaknesses in others, including adults. Some male staff may view the behavior of young women as sexual or manipulative if they do not understand their own male socialization about females, or that for many young women their history of abuse and trauma is linked to current behaviors. Young women need to be supported by both female and male staff members who can model appropriate female and male roles, behaviors, and interactions. It is critical that girls, many of whom were abused or exposed to violence by males, interact with male staff members who are caring, trustworthy, and nurturing.

It is important to remember the crucial role staff members can play in a girl's healthy progress and personal growth.

## **Examples**

Questions to consider during the hiring process:

- ◆ Does his or her past experience and training exhibit equally effective and healthy interactions with females and males?
- ◆ Is the individual willing to form healthy relationships with girls who are considered difficult?
- ◆ Is the applicant willing to serve as a role model, exhibiting the gender-sensitive behaviors advocated by the program?
- ◆ Are they willing to model how a person can grow and change?
- ◆ Is the applicant aware of their own gender issues and the values they bring to the program?
- ◆ Is the applicant able to serve as an advocate for girls and girls' issues?
- ◆ Is the applicant non-judgmental when dealing with the families of girls? Is the applicant a good listener?

## **For Discussion**

1. Have you developed a list of standard, gender-related questions for new hires who will be working with girls?
2. Are your hiring practices consistent with your program's gender-specific policies?
3. Do you involve girls in the staff hiring process through the contributions of questions, welcome procedures, or tours of the facility?

## (2) Staff Diversity

### **Guideline: Staff Diversity.**

Maintain staffing that reflects the race and ethnic backgrounds of the girls being served to ensure that multiple perspectives are included and integrated into a program's services. Programs should be inclusive, welcoming, and culturally appropriate for all staff members.

### **Description**

Hiring practices and continual training on socio-cultural issues can have a powerful impact on the quality of a program. The staffing of a program should reflect the demographics of the population(s) being served. This reduces barriers and opens doors to understanding and trust, allowing staff and the program to authentically honor the diverse cultures represented in the group. A diverse staff can help a program understand and integrate multiple cultural perspectives and information into daily programming, as well as increase the opportunity of connecting young women of a similar culture. Building a diverse staff reflective of the populations served may be challenging for programs serving a small number of girls from a specific ethnic group. However, recognizing this difficulty does not change the importance of establishing a culturally diverse staff. A diverse staff also can be important for the girls for a variety of reasons. Girls of color may want or need to be in a program, but do not feel welcomed or comfortable because a program has no staff of color. Additionally, some girls in a program may not have experience interacting with African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, or members of another represented ethnic group. It is important to have qualified staff that supports and encourages this cross-cultural dialogue. The sexual orientation of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender girls, no matter what race or ethnicity, also needs to be recognized as a diversity issue to ensure programs are inclusive, welcoming, and culturally appropriate.

### **Examples**

- ◆ A program establishes an advisory team made up of Native American, African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Caucasian representatives who serve as advisers on program outreach and hiring. This advisory board also helps conduct training on cultural competency and reviews a program's contracting practices.
- ◆ Gender-responsive programming recognizes that staff diversity creates another opportunity for individual staff members in an organization to actively practice the values found in their cultural competency policy by not only developing the capacity, skills, and knowledge to respond to the unique needs of different cultural populations, but to understand and respond to the specific needs of females of differing cultural backgrounds.

- ◆ If a program is unable to match the diversity of staff with the populations of girls being served, a program can bring in volunteers, speakers, and mentors who can help meet this need until appropriate staff can be hired.

## **For Discussion**

1. How does your program conduct outreach to racial and ethnically diverse people for purposes of staff hiring?
2. Do you have racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse staff members, effectively reflecting the racial, ethnic, and cultural demographics of the population being served?
3. Do you have multilingual staff appropriate to the linguistic population(s) of girls being served?
4. How do you evaluate the cultural competency of staff members?
5. Do staff members understand the gender-specific issues for females of differing cultural backgrounds?
6. How does the program address the needs of sexual minority youth?
7. How do you respond to the notion that because all the girls served by a program are Caucasian, a diverse staff and/or attention to diversity issues is just not needed?

## **(3) Training**

### **Guideline: Training**

Provide new employees with a program orientation and follow-up training opportunities for all staff, supervisors, and managers on gender-specific issues. This may include, but is not limited to, current research on girls and young women, books on adolescent female development, female issues and needs, unique issues for girls of color, communication, staff boundary issues, sexuality, and gender identity.

## **Description**

Staff members need to be well versed on female development, as well as gender issues as they relate to alcohol and drug use/abuse, domestic violence, trauma, and loss. There also needs to be ongoing training and supervisory support on culturally specific services, with a particular focus on the gender-specific needs and issues within the cultures of the females being served.

Training should also be evaluated for relevance, impact on staff behavior, and retention of knowledge. Additionally, staff members need to be informed about gender-specific policies and guidelines regarding program philosophy and program content. This can be done, for example, through orientation videos and manuals, training, e-mails, and postings.

It is important for programs to recognize the importance of staff boundary issues and to provide ongoing training and support for staff in this area beyond a written policy. This may include the acquisition of healthy and consistent language for dealing with boundary issues, as well as supervised practices in this area.

### **Examples/Resources**

Training and technical assistance is available in Oregon and nationally. Contact Pam Patton or Marcia Morgan for resources.

### **For Discussion**

1. Is training given to all staff members who work with girls on gender specific services, female adolescent development, and staff boundaries, etc.?
2. How often is training on boundary issues provided? During orientation? Annually? Is there follow-up? Is the information on boundary issues consistent for all staff? Is it updated regularly?
3. Do you provide cultural competency training for staff? Does it include understanding female gender within the context of culture and race?
4. Is the effectiveness of your training evaluated in terms of staff retention?
5. How do you manage the issue of hugging or touch between staff and girls with the understanding that relationships are extremely important in a girl's life experience and growth?





# III. Program Content

## A. Environment

### (1) Physical Safety

**Guideline: Physical Safety**

Create an environment for girls that is physically safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be safe from violence, physical and sexual abuse, verbal harassment, bullying, teasing, and stalking. Management and staff need to create a safe environment where boundary issues are clear, acting out behavior is consistently addressed, and physical safety is taken seriously.

**Description**

Since many girls have been victimized, experienced a trauma or loss, or feel powerless, programs need to establish an environment where girls feel safe. Girls not only need to be safe, but need to feel safe in their physical surroundings. This effort goes beyond the physical design of the building. If the basic need of both being safe and feeling safe is not addressed, the effectiveness of programming for girls is seriously impeded.

**Examples**

- ◆ Physical safety needs to be considered in the facility design and in the selection of community meeting locations. A program's facility needs to protect girls' privacy for hygiene activities and the physical checks associated with intake. Meeting locations need to be protected from populations that may threaten a girl's progress (e.g., male peers, girls outside the group, and other outsiders that may endanger a girl's physical privacy and space).
- ◆ Many girls feel physically unsafe on school grounds or walking to and from school when they encounter males making sexual comments to them.
- ◆ Physical comfort should also be considered within a program's meeting space(s). Use of beanbag chairs or pillows in a circle formation creates a comfortable setting. Limit the size of groups so that issues of physical safety can be easily managed. Wall colors and wall art can influence the feel of a room (e.g., stark white is not very soothing).

## For Discussion

1. Have you asked girls in your program how safe they *feel*? At what point did you ask them? On the first day? After one week? How may this have affected what you learned?
2. What do girls request to feel safe?
3. Are there changes that could be made in your program's physical structure that would enhance safety and the feeling of safety?

## (2) Emotional Safety

### **Guideline: Emotional Safety**

Create an environment for girls that is emotionally safe. The location where girls meet or reside should be nurturing and safe. This environment should encourage girls to express themselves and share feelings and allow time to develop trust, all within the context of building on-going relationships. Girls need time to talk and to process. They need to feel emotionally safe and free from negative or coercive behaviors, bias, racism, and sexism. When possible, their spaces should be free from the demands for attention produced by adolescent males.

## Description

A setting that is emotionally safe for girls may be more difficult to recognize than an environment that is physically safe. Yet, it is just as important.

Programs need to ensure girls are emotionally safe from themselves. A program's environment must protect girls from self-destructive behaviors such as mutilation, suicide attempts, eating disorders, or drug and alcohol abuse. Programs need to ensure girls are emotionally safe from other girls. Programs need a low staff-to-participant ratio due to the significance of relationships in a girl's life, and their role in a girl's ability to establish trust and successfully move through the program. The staff/program must develop a structure where it is not only unacceptable for girls to physically hurt each other, but to emotionally hurt each other through "relational aggression" (i.e., rolling eyes; verbal put downs; gossip; manipulating relationships by threatening to damage a girl's relationships by spreading rumors; purposely ignoring someone when angry; or telling others not to associate with a certain person as a means of retaliation). It is important to remember programs must establish a safe environment for lesbian and bisexual young women.

Girls must feel safe in their interactions with a program's staff. In return, staff must be aware of their own biases and boundaries.

## Examples

- ◆ Girls should have their own space, free from the demands for attention from adolescent males. This is especially important if the program is co-ed. Many girls are taught to accommodate and please males, putting their own needs aside. Consequently, girls need time by themselves to be themselves and focus on their own issues and growth. This space should reflect females' experiences and interests.
- ◆ Girls also need one-on-one time with staff. Group dynamics change when a program is co-ed. In co-ed situations, girls typically are heard less, receive less time with staff, and ultimately receive less support. Girls should have equal access to the services and activities they need. And it is important to recognize that equal service does not mean the same service. Rather, it means equity in receiving appropriate holistic, gender-specific services.
- ◆ Staff members need to be sensitive to the times when a girl is within visual or hearing range of boys or others outside the group, and the impact these situations may have on a girl's general sense of safety. It is important staff arrange activities so that the interference in a girl's progress brought about by the proximity of people is avoided.
- ◆ In one program, a male staff member walked into a girl's room to check on her. The male staff member was not aware that this girl had been sexually abused many times by her uncle. She was startled by the male staff member and had a post-traumatic stress reaction. Emotional boundaries can be violated sometimes without staff being aware of the triggers. Finding out about a girl's history can help prevent these kinds of negative experiences from occurring. It is important to remember that not all abuse experienced by girls is perpetrated by males. Some girls have been abused by their mothers or other females.
- ◆ Girls need allies to feel emotionally safe. Staff and peers should be encouraged to view one another as allies, not necessarily friends, but as individuals accountable to one another.
- ◆ Staff members should assess their body language when interacting with a girl, and consider how their own preoccupations, irritations, frustrations, or urgency impact a girl's sense of emotional safety.

## For Discussion

1. How does your program create an environment in which girls feel emotionally safe in their interactions with peers and staff? How can you tell if a program is an emotionally safe place for a girl?
2. What things do you (or staff) do every day to ensure girls in your program feel emotionally safe? How do you manage girls' emotional/relational aggression?

3. How does having an emotionally safe environment correspond with your program policies?
4. What are some of the issues that arise for male staff in creating an emotionally safe setting for girls?

### (3) Surroundings That Value Females

#### **Guideline: Surroundings That Value Females**

Create an environment that values females. Facilities, classrooms, and other program settings should have books, magazines, posters, videos, wall decorations, and other items that celebrate females' current and historical achievements and contributions to the world. The surroundings should enhance a girl's understanding of female development, honor and respect the female perspective, respond to girls' diverse heritages and life experiences, and empower young women to reach their full potential.

#### **Description**

What girls see in their environment affects their attitude towards themselves, the program, and the world. Creating an environment that supports females can open up a girl's world to many options.

#### **Examples**

- ◆ **Books.** Have books about strong females readily available for use by girls. Be sure they are gender, age, culture, and language appropriate books. (A brief bibliography is provided in the appendix of this guidebook.)
- ◆ **Books on tape.** Have books on tape about strong females readily available for use by girls. This is an especially important medium if girls cannot read or are delayed in their reading abilities.
- ◆ **Posters.** Display inspirational posters that are gender-specific.
- ◆ **Pictures of strong females.** Display pictures of outstanding and inspiring women and girls. The National Women's History Project is a good resource for such materials ([www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org)).
- ◆ **Magazines.** Have age and message appropriate magazines readily available for girls. Include magazines written and produced by young women (e.g., *New Moon*). Cut out ads with girls, and then discuss them to help girls be aware/conscious of unhealthy images and messages they find in magazines. Or, discuss the inappropriate and/or stereotypical female images found in some magazines.

- ◆ **Videos.** Maintain a video library of programs with positive female role models.
- ◆ **Cultural materials.** Have materials or events that celebrate females of different cultures (e.g., special activities for Women’s History Month, Black History Month, and Cinco de Mayo.) Incorporate these events or materials into your program’s regular activities.
- ◆ **Activities.** Support activities that focus on positive female development and womanhood. Some examples include: the cowgirl cards and game; a quilting project that incorporates meaningful items contributed by the girls and sewn into the quilt; the construction of a doll representing the girl followed by discussion on the ways the doll is used to represent positive aspects of a girl’s character; the construction of a mask representing a part of her she wants to shed, revealing her true self. Have each girl discuss who the mask represents, then have her discard the mask in a freeing ritual.
- ◆ **Inspirational messages.** Maintain a chalk/white board which features daily inspirational messages made by a well-known, positive female role models.
- ◆ **Guest speakers.** Invite strong, inspirational women with diverse cultural backgrounds to meet with girls (e.g., female celebrities, sports figures, and everyday citizens doing good things in your community).

## For Discussion

The following activity helps to assess the degree to which your program environment values females. (Note: the activity is for staff and administrators.)

Get out a piece of paper and draw a line down the middle. Close your eyes and visualize your girls’ program. Open the door to the place where the program is located. On the left side of the piece of paper write down as fast as you can as much as you can remember about what is in that room from ceiling to floor. (Allow three minutes.) When complete, write on the right hand column how the items listed make you feel. How does the physical space make you feel? What are your emotions when you walk in the room and when you walk out of the room? (Allow five minutes.) Conduct this exercise with staff and discuss your answers as a group.

## B. Holistic Programming

### (1) Addressing the Whole Girl with a Holistic Approach

#### **Guideline: Addressing the Whole Girl with a Holistic Approach**

A holistic approach to the individual girl addresses the whole girl within the social context of her life, her relationships, the systems she encounters, and the society in which she lives.

A holistic approach to programming integrates the contributions each staff member makes in creating a gender-responsive environment and fostering positive identity development for the girls in the program.

#### **Description**

One of the ways to describe the whole girl within her social context is to picture the individual girl in the center of concentric circles. These circles represent relationships, systems, and society. A holistic approach to a girl's life experiences takes into account each context or circle in which a girl lives, and provides her with messages that contribute to how she defines who she is as an individual and a female.

#### **Social Context: The Circle of Relationships.**

**Family.** Include the family, as defined by the individual girl, in programming when possible. Many family structures of program participants are chaotic and fragmented due to intergenerational cycles of poverty, early pregnancy, abuse/violence, and incarceration. Involving the family allows a girl to connect with family members in a safe structure where she can work on issues and develop skills. This will help her understand the family dynamic and how she wants to interact with family members in her life.

**Friends.** Address issues involving a girl's friends. Friends, as defined by the girl, play a significant role in her life and the decisions she makes. Friends may include boyfriends, girlfriends, neighbors, teachers, church members, and in some cases, gangs. Recognizing the importance of these people in a girl's life, and concurrently building her competence in making good decisions about healthy relationships, allows a girl to choose friends who will help her be the woman she wants to be.

#### **Social Context: The Circle of Systems.**

**Education.** Address issues regarding a girl's school situation including the environment, curriculum, and a girl's relationships with school personnel and fellow students. Examine issues that could be barriers to education for a girl (e.g., the labeling of girls; limited educational options including higher education or vocational opportunities). Educational curricula may need to be reshaped to reflect and value the contributions of an individual girl's life experience.

**The juvenile justice system and the social service system.** Address issues that involve the juvenile justice system (e.g., juvenile departments, parole/probation, law enforcement, the courts), and the social service system (e.g., mental health, health, substance abuse, child welfare, public welfare, community programs). At-risk girls are likely to encounter at least one or more of the services found in these systems. The manner in which girls are dealt with and labeled, and the overall services and care they do or do not receive, can have a powerful impact on their lives. It also affects how they see themselves as females.

### **Social Context: The Circle of Society.**

**Media.** Address how the media influences girls' lives. Discussing the impact of music, videos, movies, television, advertising, magazines, and gender messages transmitted via the media is critical in a girl's program. Girls need to be given tangible ways to recognize the impact these messages have on their lives. In the process, they can become critical consumers, capable of speaking out against such negative gender messages (e.g., writing letters to the editor and/or policymakers, displaying bumper stickers, or spending money on things they support).

**Culture.** Address the cultural issues in a girl's life. Services for a girl need to be presented within the context of her culture. Girls view the world through the lens of their gender, race, and ethnicity. All play a significant role in everything they do. Race, gender, and class influence the formation of self-esteem, self-competency, and perceptions of the physical, sexual, and social self, and therefore must be integrated into overarching program activities and education issues.

Programming that addresses the whole girl responds to the girl within all of her social contexts and does not limit programming to a specific problem or programmatic approach (e.g., an alcohol and drug program that only deals with addiction.)

**A holistic approach to programming** integrates all parts at all levels based on an understanding of the integral relationship and the importance of the role that all staff play. Staff, whether they deal with behavior (practice), focus on affect (feelings/treatment), or both, create the context of a gender-responsive environment that offers an opportunity for a girl to succeed. Just as we cannot separate a girl into only one context or problem, we cannot separate staff members' roles into isolated approaches. Staff must work together as a team, recognizing the importance of each person's role in supporting a girl's growth. This helps integrate all levels of programming and staffing to serve girls' needs. Each of the individuals involved in a girl's life (including parents) need to ask themselves what their commitment is to supporting a girl reach her goals.

## Examples

The definition for the three levels of a holistic approach:

- ◆ A holistic *system* is where gender-specific services are offered throughout the whole continuum of services in the system and are complementary and consistent in their philosophy and approach.
- ◆ A holistic *program* is where the gender-specific program content guidelines are fully incorporated (relationship-based, strength-based, and health-based programming). A holistic program also supports staff working together as a team, understanding their integrated roles and creating opportunities for success in a girl's life.
- ◆ A holistic *individual* approach is where programming includes all aspects of a girl's life, and incorporates these aspects across program activities. A girl's issues/problems can not be addressed in isolation from the whole.

One way to address issues in a girl's world is to help her connect with her community. Girls need to be given skills and opportunities to connect with the community. This could include volunteering at an abuse hotline or a domestic violence shelter, registering to vote, becoming involved politically in a community issue, making social change, developing a sense of power through social responsibility and justice, and understanding the importance of civic and community connection and pride.

One way to holistically address programming is to approach girls' services with a strength-based, individual plan. Holistic programming starts at where the girl is in her life and proceeds in a manner that is sensitive to the pace and direction of the girl's choosing. This plan involves all staff members, clearly defining their individual roles in supporting the young woman's progress towards her goals. Regular team meetings need to occur to discuss and integrate staff members' perspectives on a girl's plan and develop a comprehensive picture of the girl's progress within the program. A holistic approach to gender-responsive programming advocates that one cannot separate a girl's behavior and emotions and must be considered together within the context of a her life.

## For Discussion

1. How can you ensure your program is using a consistent, holistic gender-specific approach?
2. How does your program staff incorporate all aspects of a girl's social contexts in their work?
3. How does your program and system contribute either positively or negatively to a girl's view of herself?
4. Do staff members work together to shape programming to meet the needs of the girls in your program? Why or why not?



## C. Relationship-Based Programming for Girls

### (1) Understanding Girls Need Relationships

**Guideline: Understanding Girls Need Relationships**

Develop programs that embody an understanding of the significance of relationships and connections in the lives of young women. Healthy relationships and positive connections should be at the core of a program.

#### Description

It is important to incorporate the importance of girl's relationships into every part of the program, from intake to follow-up. Carol Gilligan states, "attachment, interdependence, and connectedness to a relationship are critical issues that form the foundation of female identity." For programs, this means that a girl's relationship with staff, and a staff's relationship with a girl, are fundamental to a program's effectiveness. Therefore, how staff manages and expresses relationships is significant, and warrants ongoing training and support.

Programs need to teach skills and present options to girls on how to replace harmful relationships with positive ones, and address negative behaviors in relationships. Community programs can provide opportunities for girls to reflect upon the role of relationships in their individual lives through all-girl groups, workshops, challenge activities, coordinated service activities, and outdoor expeditions that focus on relationships. These opportunities can expose girls to different environments, helping them build confidence in themselves and one another.

The quality of staff-to-client relationships is critical to a girl's success in any program. If a girl does not connect with staff, she may feel alienated and jeopardize her success by acting out or running away. Distrust is common among girls who have been emotionally and physically hurt by adults so developing healthy connections can be challenging. When possible, match girls with counselors or case managers who can effectively respond to her needs and personality. Develop a process for resolving conflict and bad feelings between girls and staff. Give girls the opportunity to visit your program so they may begin developing relationships with staff and peers. Conduct a similar process when a girl exits your program, allowing her to make new relationships in the environment she is about to enter. Taking the time to help girls build and maintain relationships assists in program success and the transition process.

## Examples

- ◆ Anger management groups often focus on a girl managing and controlling her anger, independent of the other person involved. If we know that girls are relational, the individuals involved in the conflict play a direct role in her acquiring skills to effectively manage her anger. Therefore, “Finding Your Voice” may be a better name for a gender-responsive group for girls on controlling anger and managing conflicts. Presenting the activity as a skill-development group based on relationship connections may be more productive for female populations. (Also cited as an example on page 19, section A(3) Program Design.)
- ◆ Traditional, male-oriented approaches to serving youth can involve punitive power structures that further damage the already fragile self-esteem of some girls. A gender-specific program model for girls can be non-punitive (i.e., strength-based) and non-hierarchical (i.e., relationship based) and still be accountable. It is often assumed in the juvenile justice system, that to manage youth, a program must control them in a strict power structure, or they will act out, undercutting the program’s effectiveness and authority. Girls can be completely accountable to the program, the public, and particularly to themselves when services are not this way and are more gender-specific. Most importantly, when a young woman returns to her community, the gender-responsive programming she has received is much more likely to have resonated and provided her with meaningful skills.
- ◆ Programs should be aware that establishing goals leading to a girl’s independence might be viewed by her as undesirable when it appears to her that it will result in breaking off relationships and connections to others.
- ◆ The voices of girls are often ignored if they are expressed with emotion. This is due in part to gender stereotypes about females being “overly emotional.” Encourage staff to openly discuss how gender stereotypes impact their perceptions of girls’ behaviors and their responsiveness in those situations.
- ◆ As professionals, we recognize that an abusive boyfriend, a prostituting girl friend, or a drug-abusing mother do not produce healthy relationships for girls. We also know that girls need relationships. Until we offer a girl the opportunity to build and internalize self-confidence and skills necessary in making healthy decisions, we risk losing the trusting relationship she has with us if our first response is expecting her to cut off past relationships. We should not condone or minimize a girl’s relationships, but we can help her see what she wants and needs in a relationship, and whether her current relationships fulfill those needs.

Some girls have used social relationships as a vehicle to harm other girls. Girls need to learn how to have healthy relationships with other girls. “Relational aggression” towards other girls includes behaviors that discount others or minimize their importance, such as: rolling eyes; verbal put downs; manipulative behavior with peers; threats to damage relationships by spreading rumors; gossip; purposely ignoring someone when angry; or telling others not to associate with a certain person as a means of retaliation.

Touching between staff and girls is a boundary issue, which can pose significant issues for at-risk girls because of their personal histories of abuse. Appropriate touching needs to be addressed pro-actively through training, policy and practice. This includes male and female staff-girl interactions. Touch can be misinterpreted, especially with male staff members' interactions with girls. Male staff need to be aware that girls may not know how to interact in healthy ways with members of the opposite sex.

## **For Discussion**

1. How do you ensure girls have healthy relationships?
2. How do you ensure girls build healthy relationships during times of transition? At what point in the program is this done? Are relationships a significant part of the new program/setting to which she is transitioning ?
3. How do you evaluate your group's activities and programs to determine if they are based on a male or a female model?
4. How does your staff handle or manage relational aggression?
5. How do you manage relationships with girls using appropriate staff boundaries? Do staff-to-staff interactions in your program model positive and appropriate relationship behaviors?

## **(2) Taking Time for Relationships**

### **Guideline: Taking Time for Relationships**

Create opportunities for staff and girls to talk and process their feelings and issues. Formal mechanisms need to be built into a program to enhance relationships and trust through one-on-one interactions.

## **Description**

Young women need to verbally communicate with one another as well as with adults (including staff). Programmatically, this does not mean staff members need to listen to young women at every moment they feel the need to talk. The key is to have space in the programming schedule that allows for this type of interaction. If staff members are respectful and committed to following-up with program participants, girls will use the appropriate time to talk and process.

When working with young women, it is important to understand and respect their communication style and to know that part of their purpose in communicating is to build trust and relationships. It is also important to understand female communication styles in order to effectively listen to and hear young women. Communication literature such as Deborah Tannen's You Just Don't Understand states that men and women often use language for different purposes, sometimes leading to miscommunication. For example, men often use communication to get information to solve problems. Women often use communication to build relationships and to work on problem-solving more collaboratively. Men may get frustrated in conversations with women when they cannot see the problem to be solved, and thus do not understand the point of the discussion. Women may get frustrated with men who do not listen or connect emotionally with them, but instead offer solutions when they are not solicited.

## Examples

- ◆ One juvenile justice residential program found that girls were disruptive at dinner on Monday nights. Staff assessed the situation and observed that girls returned from court on Mondays around 4:45 p.m. and met for dinner at five o'clock. There was no time for the girls to verbally process and debrief their court appearances. By simply moving dinner to 5:30 p.m. and making staff aware that girls needed to talk before dinner led to a reduction in disruptive behavior during dinner.
- ◆ One-on-one time in programs is often conducted with a therapist/counselor, or when a young woman is in trouble, which she may instigate in order to get one-on-one time. Group activities are important, but if one-on-one time is only designed around problems, then girls will invent their own methods for getting that time. In the process, girls may be denied the opportunity to develop trusting relationships with staff or with other girls.

## For Discussion

1. How does your program build in regular opportunities for girls to receive one-on-one time?
2. Do you or your staff members feel like the girls in your program talk too much?
3. How do you manage adequate time for girls to talk, process, and build relationships?

### **(3) Single-Gender Programming: Developing Relationships of Trust and Interdependence with Other Females**

#### **Guideline: Single-Gender Programming**

Create opportunities for girls-only programming. While there is often resistance on the part of girls to be isolated from boys or participate in programs with solely members of their own sex, girls-only programming is an important part of a gender-specific approach. It gives young women the time, environment, and permission to work on overcoming a value system that commonly prioritizes male relationships over female relationships.

#### **Description**

Many girls are taught to accommodate and please males, putting their own needs aside. Consequently, girls need to have time by themselves, to be themselves, and focus on their own issues and growth. This means that they need to be taught that relationships with self and others are just as important as being with boys, and that it is okay for them to make self-care a priority.

Girls-only programs or groups teach girls to cooperate with and support one another. Unless girls learn healthy ways to interact, many will use the unhealthy ways they know, which includes being competitive, holding grudges, being cruel to each other, gossiping, and/or passive aggressive and emotionally hurtful behavior.

#### **Examples**

- ◆ Co-ed programs should create girl-only space (a location decorated by girls, honored by the whole group as the girls' space and a safe place to meet). If the female population is too small for single-gender groups, girls should be given one-on-one time or special small group time with a female counselor, mentor, or staff person. These opportunities will help girls establish the skills and experience necessary to develop healthy, cooperative relationships with females, as well as males, relatives, friends, neighbors, social group members, employers, and co-workers.
- ◆ Girls' leadership and empowerment groups (e.g., Girl's Circle, Young Women's Lives) are examples of programs that build self-esteem through competencies. These groups teach girls how to build healthy relationships through the establishment of trust in their own selves. (Please refer to the resource section in this guidebook.)

## For Discussion

1. From your perspective what are the advantages/disadvantages of girls-only programs?
2. If you don't or can't offer girls-only programming, what are some of the barriers that stop you from doing so? How have others overcome these barriers?
3. Why do you think girls are resistant to girls-only programs versus co-ed programs?
4. What issues need to be addressed with the girls and with staff because of this attitude?

## (4) Significant Relationships with Caring Adults

### **Guideline: Significant Relationships with Caring Adults**

Help girls establish significant relationships with caring adults through mentor programs. Matching a girl with a mentor who has a similar ethnic heritage, culture, and background is encouraged. Mentors can play a significant role in a girl's success, especially with continual, reliable contact that avoids competition with a girl's mother/family. Girls also need adult females who can model and support survival and growth along with resistance and change. Staff members as well as adult mentors can play this role in a girl's life.

## Description

Mentorship should be a component of all programs, connecting mentors/volunteers with girls during, and certainly before they transition out of the program. It is critical that girls have adult women in their lives who can serve as examples of internal strength and ability. Adult women can exemplify survival and growth as well as resistance and change. Program mentors, teachers, and female staff can certainly play that role as well as women already in the lives of girls.

Most young women have someone in their lives who can serve as an ongoing, positive model of womanhood and function as a mentor. For some young women, the most effective mentorship relationship is one in which the mentor works with both the girl and her mother. There is a particularly important place in this role modeling process for mothers. We know a lot of young women in programs do not have mothers they can rely upon for support. However, we need to utilize the relationship when possible. Unfortunately, many young women first acquire negative, female-to-female competition through their relationships with mothers. To counteract this behavior, girls and their mothers need to recognize the common issues and struggles they both face as females, and how they may join together to fight adversity.

When possible, we need to empower girls and their mothers by helping them build healthy relationships instead of protecting the girl from her mother. For example, we could teach a girl about her own personal strength as a female through the identification of her own mother's personal strengths. If possible, include mothers in this process.

Female staff members can also serve as role models to girls regarding how to be a female, develop healthy female-to-male and female-to-female relationships, and treat people in positions of power (management) and in positions of less power (staff). Staff can also play an important role as a significant adult in a girl's life.

## **Examples**

In an essay printed in *Beyond Appearance, A New Look At Adolescent Girls* (1999) Harvard researcher Elizabeth Debold assessed mentoring practices and identified a mentoring model of community "hardiness zones" as a promising model. Best practices research on mentoring recommends one consistent, caring adult serving as a mentor in a girl's life for a period of at least three years. Most mentoring programs do not follow this three-year recommendation. When a mentoring relationship does not work for a girl, Debold argues, the system all too frequently considers it a failure of the girl's making. We must be careful that the mentoring model does not set a girl up to choose between a positive role model (the mentor) and a designated negative role model (her mother), especially when we know that girls are relational and their bond with their mother is strong, no matter how negative an influence she may seem to others.

When we put girls in the position of choosing one lifestyle over the other, many times a girl will choose the relationship with her mother. When this happens the system or program often determines that the girl has failed to take advantage of the programming provided to her, rather than considering how a program model has failed the girl. Debold suggests a mentoring community that includes a girl's mother and establishes a "hardiness zone" for the girl to succeed rather than forcing the girl to rely upon one mentor that is unconnected to her community and mother.

A female staff member can play an important role in modeling strengths for a girl. A structured setting like a program can create an opportunity for a girl to experience a positive, supportive adult relationship that can open her up to other healthy adult relationships.

## **For Discussion**

1. How does your program recruit good mentors for girls? When do you have them meet the girl they will mentor?
2. How does your program train and maintain good mentors? How does your program teach mentors about gender-specific services?

3. How does your program train and support mentors to help the girl not feel like she has to choose between her mother and the mentor? Do you involve mothers as part of your mentoring program?
4. How are girls matched with mentors in your program? Do you take into account issues of race, ethnicity, and background?
5. What type of monitoring, reporting, or check-and-balance system do you have for your mentoring program?

## **D. Strength-Based Programming for Girls**

### **(1) Teaching New Skills Built on Existing Strengths**

#### **Guideline: Teaching New Skills Built on Existing Strength**

Create opportunities for girls to learn new skills. Also, teach skills that build on a girl's existing strengths. Gaining competence in new areas can build self-esteem, control, and positive social behaviors. When girls master new skills that are healthy and productive, they expand their opportunities and become less dependent on old, non-productive, and/or harmful ways of behaving.

#### **Description**

Teaching girls new skills based on their personal and cultural strengths is important. Tapping into a girl's socio-cultural roots, her life story, memories, and ancestors can provide a girl with opportunities to increase her sense of value and competency. Utilizing these authentic elements in a girl's life can be important because many adolescent girls have low self-esteem and feelings of powerlessness.

Skill building based on a girl's strengths crosses over all parts/levels of programming. The more girls have a sense of control/competence in multiple areas, the stronger their self-esteem will be.

Goals girls set for themselves can be limited by their world experience. They may want to be like their mom or like the celebrities they view in the media. Sometimes neither option is a good one, or very realistic. Girls need support expanding their worldview and life's possibilities. They need to be taught new educational, job, and social skills to help them succeed in the world and reach their full potential. Additionally, girls need to have the opportunity to practice these life skills in a safe environment.



## Examples

- ◆ **Reframe survival skills.** Strength-based approaches, rather than deficit/problem-based models, focus on the skills girls have cultivated to survive. Strength-based services redirect girls' behavior and ultimately increases self-esteem, confidence, and capacity to handle diverse situations.
- ◆ **Foster resiliency.** Strength-based approaches help girls by emphasizing positive language over negative language (e.g., at-promise rather than at-risk youth); providing caring and supportive relationships with adults; emphasizing high expectations bolstered by hope (e.g., expect a lot from a girl and you will get it); and offering meaningful participation in the community.
- ◆ **Provide a safe environment for practicing skills.** When girls have an opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions in a safe environment, it strengthens their confidence and encourages them to express themselves more fully. By examining cultural expectations in a safe and supportive setting, girls gain greater awareness of their options and strengthen their ability to make choices that are consistent with their values, interests, and talents.
- ◆ **Teach social skills.** Some programs teach girls positive social skills. This includes how to advocate for themselves and discuss issues that are important to them; how to interact with people on a day-to-day basis; how to negotiate diverse social settings and recognize accepted social etiquette practices; how to manage situations in socially acceptable and effective ways; and how to take healthy risks and grow.
- ◆ **Teach Educational skills.** Examples of teaching educational skills include homework clubs and the use of tutors/mentors.
- ◆ **Teach job and school skills.** For example, girls are given the opportunity to explore subjects typically associated with male culture such as forestry, mechanics, entrepreneurial endeavors, web page design, and technology. Girls acquire age-appropriate skills, such as budgeting and personal finance, as well as more traditional job and school-related skills. Programs might include job interview training, guidance on how to dress for a job, preparation for job expectations, and time management skills.

Entrepreneurial endeavors may be explored. For example, one girls' group set up a coffee cart at an alternative high school where the girls acquired diverse job skills including making change, customer service, marketing, self-discipline, and a "work ethic."

Read stories from newspapers about successful women and teach a skill related to how she accomplished what she did. Invite the featured woman to come speak at your program.

- ◆ **Re-evaluate the Level System.** (As introduced on page 23, section A (6) Outcome Measurements.) Programs that use level systems should not tie program expectations to competition or points. Level systems should be based on: the treatment plan; what a girl's behaviors are; steps in skill development; natural consequences for accepting or not accepting responsibility of behaviors; and the privileges that go with the levels. The levels need to be tied to a girl's development of skills; skills that a girl can identify and internalize, and that staff can recognize externally as the girl's strengths. Complimentary to the Level System a program can develop a token economy where girls can earn points and then choose a privilege (an item or an activity) that she has determined in advance as meaningful to her. Each girl starts with a minimum percentage of points (rather than zero points), and when she goes above that percentage she earns extra privileges. In such a system, the conversation between staff and girls is based on positives rather than negatives.

## For Discussion

1. What are some skill-building programs you use or know of in your area?
2. How can you incorporate skill building into all aspects of your program or interactions with girls?
3. What are the names of your programs for girls? Do they use strength-based words?
4. Most programs are targeted at alleviating a problem behavior(s), with funding based on the reduction of that problem behavior. How do you reframe your approach from problem-driven to a strength-based model?

## (2) Teaching Personal Respect

### **Guideline: Teaching Personal Respect**

Develop self-esteem enhancement programs that teach girls to appreciate and respect themselves rather than relying on others for validation. Self-monitoring skills can be incorporated into girls' programming.

## Description

We need to give girls the language and the skills to develop personal respect. Personal respect assists girls in respecting others. Staff members' modeling of personal respect for themselves and others is also a teaching tool. Since females in general externalize success (i.e., have difficulty taking credit for success), and look to external sources to define self-esteem, it is imperative that programs do not reinforce such patterns. Instead, programs must integrate programming approaches that teach young women how to value

their perspective, celebrate and honor the female experience, and respect themselves for the unique individuals they are and who they are becoming.

Self-monitoring skills, such as positive self-talk, journal writing, and the recognition of triggers help girls learn personal respect.

## **Examples**

- ◆ Have girls develop “geneograms” that allow girls to get a sense of their roots/genealogy, and how their life fits in with their family. For example, ask girls to explore the question: Who are my foremothers?
- ◆ Have girls write thank you notes to people who have done something special to support them, such as a guest speaker or a teacher. Have them practice letter-composing skills (business and personal).
- ◆ Discuss issues of etiquette with girls, for example, when to give up seats on the bus to elderly or disabled individuals, or when to share with others.
- ◆ Discuss appropriate voice volumes with girls for various public spaces, and the respect needed for others in such situations.
- ◆ Help girls identify words or phrases that can be both hurtful and disrespectful, or positive and encouraging.
- ◆ Conduct a group exercise where each young woman gets an opportunity to identify, celebrate, or experience unique and special qualities she possesses.

## **For Discussion**

1. How does your staff teach respect by example?
2. In what ways do you already incorporate self-respect building methods into your programming?
3. Since we know that many girls internalize failure and externalize success, how do you turn that dynamic around for girls in your programming?

### (3) Giving Girls Control

#### **Guideline: Giving Girls Control**

Develop programs that support and encourage girls to have hope, realistic expectations for the future, and the skills needed to reach their goals. Girls need help in developing a plan for the future, and an opportunity to practice the skills that will help them realize their goals. Girls need to be shown that they can affect how things happen in a way that is empowering. Programs need to help girls find their voices and to be expressive and powerful in positive and productive ways. All of these efforts provide girls with a sense of control in their lives.

#### **Description**

Learning how to make good decisions, practicing making decisions in a safe environment, and learning from the consequences or outcomes of personal decisions in a supportive environment assists girls in understanding that they can impact their own lives in healthy ways.

#### **Examples**

- ◆ Identify places where girls can have a role in decision-making in your program, and include them in the process.
- ◆ Have girls write a letter or email to the editor of a publication of their choice on an issue of importance to them.
- ◆ Take girls to the legislature, or meet with an elected official regarding a particular issue.
- ◆ Have girls practice consumer choice, choosing not to buy products that belittle or disrespect women. Establish ways they can educate their peers to be critical consumers.
- ◆ Encourage girls' participation in school, clubs, neighborhoods, or community activities where they have an opportunity to take charge (e.g., such as leading a group, organizing an event).
- ◆ Give girls space and safe opportunities to practice their skills (e.g., community service).

## For Discussion

1. What are some ways you give girls control in your program?
2. How can you encourage staff to take the time to teach girls new skills (especially when it would be faster/easier for staff to do it themselves)?

## (4) Victimization and Trauma

### **Guideline: Victimization and Trauma**

Develop programs that address the sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional/verbal abuse, trauma, domestic violence, and loss that many girls have faced. These issues deeply affect many parts of a girl's life and how she views herself as a female.

### **Description**

Many girls have been victims of crimes of abuse, and they need help in learning not to view themselves as victims, but instead, as survivors and thrivers. Program staff need to support girls in understanding the connection between their anger and acting out or acting in (i.e., self-destructive) behaviors, their reluctance to trust others, and their victimization. As mentioned previously, girls need to learn how to develop and maintain healthy boundaries and how to develop healthy relationships (i.e., non-sexual, mutual, and empathetic).

Females' pathways to crime, violence, substance abuse, exploitation, prostitution, pornography and other problems often stem from an experience of abuse or trauma. For programs to build on a girl's strengths, they must first understand and address issues of victimization to get at the root of a girl's attitudes and behaviors. Victimization issues should be discussed one-on-one or in single-gender groups.

### **Examples**

- ◆ Paul Kivel's Young Women's Lives: Building Self-Awareness to Life, multi-session curriculum for violence prevention and empowering young women (Hazeldon Education Publishers, 1998).
- ◆ Discuss the terms "victim," "survivor," and "thriver," and what they mean to the girls in your program.

## For Discussion

1. How are girls given safe opportunities to talk about their abuse and trauma experiences?
2. Does your program integrate an understanding of the impact of abuse, trauma, and victimization on a girl's life into every part of your programming or is it dealt with only in an abuse or victims' group?

## E. Health-Based Programming

### (1) Physical Health and Sexual Health

#### **Guideline: Physical Health and Sexual Health**

Develop programs that address physical health as well as sexual health. (We should care about the whole girl, not just about whether a girl is or is going to get pregnant.) Information needs to be shared with girls about female development, personal care, exercising, physical health, as well as menstruation, pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, and sexuality.

### Description

Girls have four times as many health issues as boys. Girls need real knowledge about their bodies in order to take ownership over their physical being. Because body image is important to young women, it is essential to consider the process of physical development in young women. As girls' bodies develop, they change outwardly as well as inwardly. The result is that young women not only have to deal with their own feelings about these changes, but have to respond to everyone else's comments and opinions. For example, as many young women develop breasts they are plagued by comments from peers, especially boys. All around her she sees images of women who are sexualized. These confusing images can pressure her into unhealthy and risky situations.

Programs need to be aware of the connection between physical and emotional health as it relates to somatic issues for young women. It is important that a medical opinion is acquired before staff members assume a girl's physical issues are all in her head. (Please refer to page 53 of this guidebook in section E (2) Health-Based Programming: Emotional Health description.)

## Example

Eighty percent of girls in high school are concerned about their body image. Girls need to be able to love themselves no matter their size, shape or looks. They need to feel comfortable with their bodies and their physical development. Consequently, many programs for girls offer classes or groups on body image. These sessions examine female images displayed in the media and balance these visions with reality. They discuss the “beauty myth,” the concept of beauty found within, rather than just focusing on exterior physical features. Girls have an opportunity to share their thoughts, concerns, and fears of not being accepted, popular, or dateable. This openness, coupled with other self-esteem building exercises, perspective, and humor, helps girls attain a more balanced picture of what it means to be female.

## For Discussion

1. What type of information on physical and sexual health do you offer to girls in your program?
2. What type of materials do you have on hand at your program site for girls so they may learn more about physical and sexual health?

## (2) Emotional and Mental Health

### **Guideline: Emotional and Mental Health**

Develop programs that address emotional and mental health. Girls need good and accurate information about emotional and mental health, eating disorders, body image, addiction, depression, and self-care. Girls should be assessed for emotional and mental health needs and referred to counseling or therapy with a professional who has experience working with female adolescents.

## Description

Emotional health is an important part of holistic health. Girls’ emotional health is at risk with society’s expectations for females to follow a masquerade of conformity by being beautiful, thin, sexually appealing, perfect, and smart-but-not-too-smart. Many physical and mental health issues stem from the emotional pressure put on young women from society, systems, and relationships.

Girls should be given psychological assessments and evaluations that look at the whole girl, taking into account her social contexts in order to obtain an accurate diagnosis. Counseling services should be conducted with a professional who has knowledge of and experience working with adolescent females. Too often the

failure of mental health treatment is blamed on the young woman without a clear assessment of the system's role in treatment outcomes. For example, is the girl receiving an adequate number of counseling sessions based upon her needs? Does her counselor have the appropriate training to work with her?

Also, because service systems are still placing youth in programs that are problem-based, girls with a dual diagnosis (e.g., mental health and chemical dependency) find themselves working with staff members who have only been trained in one discipline (e.g., chemical dependency treatment). Programs need to identify this gap in programming and develop a plan to also address all of a girl's mental health needs.

## **Examples**

- ◆ Have self-help books (or tapes) available for girls to read that include success stories of recovery.
- ◆ Make counseling available to girls on an as-needed basis with mental health professionals who have experience with adolescent females.
- ◆ Be open and accessible through words and actions. Try to de-mystify and de-stigmatize mental health issues, and support seeking help for problems.
- ◆ Sometimes mental health professionals can pathologize a girl's identity-crisis or lesbian behaviors in a closed/secure program, missing the fact that the oppressed environment of a secure setting could be the impetus for the behavior.
- ◆ Establish and nurture committed and meaningful relationships with the girls in your program.
- ◆ Train staff on recognizing signs of mental health problems in program participants. This includes information on post-traumatic stress disorder, since many girls have been traumatized.

## **For Discussion**

1. Does your policy and staff training address girl's mental health issues?
2. How do you assess emotional issues or determine that there should be a mental health assessment completed on a girl in your program?
3. Is the availability of mental health professionals with experience working with female adolescents an issue for your program? Where do you refer girls for mental health services? Are these services readily available?
4. Is there trained, knowledgeable, and non-judgemental counseling staff available for lesbian, transexual, and transgender populations?



### (3) Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Free Health

#### **Guideline: Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug-Free Health**

Develop programs that address the use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. The connection between drug use and self-medication by girls to deal with abuse and depression issues is best addressed in single-sex treatment programming. Prevention and intervention programs need to understand female adolescent development and incorporate programming that is specifically responsive to females.

#### **Description**

Alcohol, drug, and tobacco treatment programs need to be delivered in a context that is compatible with females' experiences. This type of programming must address safety issues, relationships, and empowerment. Staff members need to reduce barriers to recovery from drug/alcohol dependence that are more likely to occur for females. Programming should also take into account females' roles, socialization, and status. It should empower not dis-empower girls. Single-sex groups help girls feel safe, especially in the early stages of recovery when girls are trying to be heard, building trusting relationships, or dealing with issues of abuse and trauma. Research has shown that while men do better in co-ed alcohol and drug groups, females do worse. Therefore, when providing or referring young women to alcohol or other drug treatment it is best to place them where they can receive single-gender programming. Equal treatment services for females and males means providing opportunities that are customized to work best for each gender.

#### **Examples**

- ◆ Stephanie Covington has written a curriculum for programs treating females struggling with addiction entitled, *A Woman's Journal: Helping Women Recover* (Jossey-Bass Books, 1999). This curriculum is designed for adult females, but many of the concepts are transferable to young women. It "addresses issues that many women struggle with, especially if they are addicted to alcohol or other drugs. Each woman's path of healing is unique, but most of us find that it involves discovering our true selves, connecting in healthy relationships with others, understanding sexuality, and gaining some spiritual connection. Recovery is like a spiral upward, away from a life that revolves around the objects of addiction (alcohol or other drugs, food, sex, etc.), and outward into ever-widening circles of freedom, self-knowledge, and connection with others."
- ◆ In 1991, Charlotte Kasl wrote "The Sixteen Steps for Discovery and Empowerment" as an alternative to the Twelve Steps program. Kasl believes the Twelve Steps program is not helpful for women because many women drink or use drugs as a way of dealing with a lack of power in their lives. In response to Charlotte Kasl, David Berenson proposed "A New Version of the Twelve Steps," which retains the

essential philosophy of the Twelve Steps program while expressing the steps in language that may be more valid for females and males living in today's world.

## **For Discussion**

1. How do you assess your girls' alcohol and drug programs, or the alcohol and drug programs to which you refer girls? Do you consider whether the approach/model of these programs is designed to meet the specific needs of females?
2. How do you address abuse and trauma in your programming and their relationship to the abuse of alcohol or drugs?

## **(4) Spiritual Health and Rites of Passage**

### **Guideline: Spiritual Health and Rites of Passage**

Develop programs that allow time for girls to address their spiritual health. Information needs to be shared and time set aside for girls to explore their spirituality and inner strength; to develop hope; and to become strong, centered, and at peace. This might include time for personal reflection; cultural traditions; and discussions about life, meaning, guidance, values, morals, and ethics. Develop rites of passage celebrations for significant events, or milestones found in a girl's daily routine.

## **Description**

Spiritual health is not the same as religion. This is an important distinction due to the fact governmental programs need to respect the basic separation between church and state. Some people practice spirituality through religion, but that is their personal choice. Spirituality may take many forms. Many girls are drawn to ritual and spiritual activities that bring a richer meaning to their lives. These activities are often connected to culture and have a spiritual nature.

Research suggests that spiritual connectedness is one factor that enables a young woman to maintain self-esteem and a sense of self during difficult developmental periods. Many girls do not take quiet time to come face-to-face with difficult issues or with their personal strengths. In addition, spiritual health is one factor to combat running and hiding through drugs and alcohol.

## Examples

- ◆ Quiet time, meditation, centering activities, music, singing, bedtime stories, field trips in the woods, and keeping journals are all examples of ways to help girls nourish their spiritual health.
- ◆ Personal alters in a residential setting can be made out of things that are meaningful to the girl such as a sea shell from a memorable walk on the beach, a collar from a beloved pet, a photo of a significant person, a pine cone from a hike, a family photo, or a prize from a fair. Publicly displaying what is meaningful and special to a girl can help her feel connected and give her a place to pause and reflect.
- ◆ Holding a quiet, safe, respectful time where girls can share their hopes, dreams, and things that are meaningful to them, is empowering. This is a time girls can learn from one another. For example, one program watched *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, about inspirational stories of people who have overcome adversity, and then used the program segment as an opportunity for discussion and writing in their journals about what the stories meant to them.
- ◆ Integrate celebration, ritual, and traditions into the daily routine of your program. Teach girls to celebrate themselves, even when they are alone. One example is instituting a rite of passage or milestone celebration. Many cultures celebrate significant life milestones. It gives structure and meaning to important times in one's life. Examples include ceremonies for a girl's first menstrual period, graduation to the next level in school, receiving a high school diploma or GED, staying clean and sober, or birthdays. Recognizing significant physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual milestones for girls is important. These rites of passage can provide girls with stability, connection to her roots, and direction. Rites of passage celebrations are also a way to reinforce positive conceptions of womanhood.

Dr. Michael Leed's work found that rites of passage provided organized opportunities for:

1. Relating and connecting (i.e., creating relationships, honest, straightforward relationships with family, community, and peers)
2. Believing (i.e., articulating belief systems or values)
3. Healing
4. Protecting (i.e., protection from the community, friends, family, and others)
5. Supporting (i.e., adults committed to supporting a girl and helping her reach her goals)
6. Celebrating (i.e., sharing what it means to be a woman)

Helping a girl find and keep her spirit, discover meaning in life, understand how she fits into the world, embrace the shared experiences of womanhood, gain confidence, and celebrate opportunities that lay ahead, sets a foundation of hope for the future.

## **For Discussion**

1. If spiritual health is incorporated into your program, what concerns have you encountered? From administration? From girls? From parents? From staff?
2. What rites of passage celebrations could you hold in your program?

# IV. Gender-Specific Services Assessment Form

**Date:**

**Name of organization/agency:**

**Name of program:**

**Person(s) who completed form:**

**Title:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Fax:**

**Email:**

Scoring Scale
1=Non-existent or missing.
2=Exists but needs significant improvement or is in the process of being developed or incorporated.
3=Average. Exists but may need some improvement.
4=Exists or functions reasonably well.
5=Excellent. In place and working well.

## A. Administration and Management of Gender-Specific Programs

Policy	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Do you have a gender-specific program policy in place?		
2. Does the policy include guiding principles and program values that respect the female experience and female needs, and promotes healthy connections to others?		
3. Is the policy integrated into all parts of the program?		

Collecting Data on Girls	Comments	Score 1-5
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you have documented demographic/profile information on the females being served?</li> <li>2. Do you have data on risk/needs and protective factors/strength/assets?</li> <li>3. Do you collect both qualitative and quantitative data on girls?</li> <li>4. If serving both females and males, is data separated by gender?</li> </ol>		

Program Design	Comments	Score 1-5
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is your program based on best practices or promising approaches?</li> <li>2. Does your program design include an understanding of girl's development?</li> <li>3. Were girls included in the design/re-design of your program?</li> </ol>		

Aftercare/Follow-Up	Comments	Score 1-5
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does your program offer aftercare and follow-up services for girls?</li> <li>2. If so, what is the length of time these services are offered for girls?</li> <li>3. How are relationships integrated into girls' follow-up and aftercare?</li> </ol>		

<b>Assessment Tools, Screening Instruments, and Intake Practices</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Have you reviewed your instruments and practices for gender bias, cultural bias, and other gender-related barriers (accommodating differences in communication, interpretation, and subject sensitivity)?</li> <li>2. Have you evaluated your formal and informal decision points for gender bias, cultural bias, and other gender-related barriers?</li> </ol>		

<b>Outcome Measurements</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are your program outcomes meaningful to the girl?</li> <li>2. Are your program outcomes relevant to the program goals?</li> <li>3. Are your program outcomes free from gender and cultural bias?</li> <li>4. Is qualitative and quantitative data used in determining a girl's outcomes?</li> </ol>		

<b>Quality Assurance and a Continuous Feedback Loop</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is formal and informal feedback regularly gathered from staff?</li> <li>2. Is formal and informal feedback regularly gathered from girls?</li> <li>3. How is that information used for improving or redesigning your program?</li> </ol>		

Hiring	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Do applicants' interview questions focus on gender issues such as determining their interest in working with girls, experience in gender-specific service delivery, and training regarding female development?		

Staff Diversity	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does your staff reflect the population of girls being served (race, ethnicity)?  2. Is staff evaluated for cultural competency?		

Training	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Is regular, on-going, gender-specific training given to all of your staff and management?  2. Is the training mandatory?  3. How are staff boundary issues dealt with?  4. Is training offered on staff boundary issues?		

**Scoring:** Now, go back and review your comments and scores for all of the questions. Note each guideline has multiple questions in it, so it is important to look at individual questions as well as patterns that may emerge with the guidelines themselves. Reviewing your scores will give you an idea of what administrative guidelines need attention and how to go about developing an action plan to make your program more gender-specific.



## B. Program Content

Environment: Physical Safety	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Is the place where girls meet or reside safe from violence, physical and sexual abuse, harassment, bullying, teasing and stalking?  2. Is acting out behavior consistently addressed?  3. Is physical safety taken seriously by management, staff, and girls?		

Environment: Emotional Safety	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Is the place where girls meet or reside safe and nurturing, allowing them to share feelings, express themselves, and develop trust?  2. Is the program environment free from negative or coercive behaviors, and bias (such as racism sexism, or relational aggression)?		

Surroundings That Value Females	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does the program environment value females and honor female achievements through books, magazines, posters, wall decorations, etc.?		

Holistic Programming	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does the program address the whole girl within her social context?  2. Does the program begin to work with a girl from the point where she is in her life?  3. Does the program integrate the diverse talents of staff members and the contributions each staff member makes in creating a gender-responsive environment?		

<b>Girls Need Relationships</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
1. Does the program embody an understanding of the significance of relationships and connections in girls' lives?  2. Are healthy relationships and positive connections at the core of your program?		

<b>Making Time for Relationships</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
1. Is there time set aside for girls to talk and process their feelings and issues with staff and others?  2. Are there formal mechanisms to make that happen?		

<b>Single-Gender Programming</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
1. If your program is co-ed, is there time set aside for girls only programming?  2. If your program is girls only, does your program use a gender-specific approach?		

<b>Significant Relationships with Caring Adults</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
1. Are there opportunities in your program for girls to establish significant relationships with caring adults?  2. Are there adult females who can model what it means to be a healthy, strong woman?		

<b>Teaching New Skills Built on Existing Strengths</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are girls given the opportunity to learn new skills to gain competence in new areas?</li> <li>2. Do the skill-building activities featured in your program build upon a girl's strengths?</li> </ol>		

<b>Teaching Personal Respect</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are girls taught to appreciate and respect themselves rather than relying on others for validation?</li> <li>2. Do you include self-monitoring skills?</li> </ol>		

<b>Giving Girls Control</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are girls supported and encouraged to hope, dream, and to have realistic expectations?</li> <li>2. Are girls supported in developing skills to reach those goals?</li> <li>3. Are girls given opportunities to express their opinions and power in a variety of healthy, constructive ways?</li> </ol>		

<b>Victimization and Trauma</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does your program address sexual abuse, physical abuse, neglect, emotional/verbal abuse, trauma, domestic violence, loss, and grief?</li> <li>2. Does your program integrate an understanding of the affect of abuse on a girl's life and how she views herself?</li> </ol>		

Physical and Sexual Health	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does your program address girls' physical health and sexual health including but not limited to female development, personal care/hygiene, exercise, physical strength, menstruation, pregnancy, STDs, AIDs, contraception, sexuality, self care)?		

Emotional and Mental Health	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does your program address emotional and mental health issues for girls such as depression, suicide, eating disorders, body image, and self care?  2. Does your program provide counseling from a mental health professional with experience with adolescent females?		

Alcohol, Tobacco & Drug-Free Health	Comments	Score 1-5
1. Does your program address girls' use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and related health issues?  2. Does your program offer single gender alcohol and drug treatment?		

<b>Spiritual Health and Rites of Passage</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Score 1-5</b>
<p>1. Does your program address a girl's spiritual health and allow her time for personal reflection, cultural traditions, and discussions about life, meaning, and values?</p> <p>2. Does your program celebrate a girl's rites of passage/milestones?</p>		

**Scoring.** Now, go back and review your comments and scores for all of the questions. Note each guideline has multiple questions in it, so it is important to look at individual questions as well as patterns that may emerge with the guidelines themselves. Reviewing your scores will give you an idea of what program content guidelines need attention and how to go about developing an action plan to make your program more gender-specific.