



# Girl Connection

For those who serve adolescent females

August 2007

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Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force

## Girls' Summit October 12th, 2007

The Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force will host a Girls' Summit October 12<sup>th</sup> in Urbandale, IA.

Key decision makers from around the state will be invited to participate in a day of learning and exploring the issues of young women in the juvenile justice system in Iowa. These participants will examine the circumstances surrounding and contributing to young women's system involvement as well as how this can lead those girls to the adult corrections system. Participants will look at state-wide and institutional data as well as hear from a national expert and young women in the juvenile justice and adult correctional systems themselves via results from investigative interviews now taking place.

In addition to examining the above information, the group will use their varied expertise to make recommendations for improved responses to these young women once they are involved in the system as well as earlier interventions that may prevent this involvement. Recommendations will also include areas for further study.

It is our hope that the Girls' Summit will focus attention on these young women and how to best meet their needs. Young women in the juvenile justice system are frequently involved in the human service system and/or end up in adult corrections. They make up a smaller portion of the juvenile justice population than boys though and are not generally perceived as much of a threat to the community when compared to their male counterparts. As a result, they can be inadvertently overlooked.

A preliminary exploration of data has revealed several areas for further examination at the Summit.

1. Young women are held in detention for misdemeanor offenses at a higher rate than boys:

Girls Detention Holds 2006	20.6% felonies	76.4% misdemeanors
Boys Detention Holds 2006	34.5% felonies	65.5% misdemeanors

(Source: Iowa Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning)

2. Girls of color experience disproportionate contact with the system (particularly African American and Native American girls). For example, juvenile detention holds for girls by race yields the following data:

	State Fiscal Year 2006	
Caucasian	707	64.9%
African American	274	25.2%
Hispanic	60	5.5%
Native American	42	3.9%
Asian	6	0.6%
Total	1089	100.0%

(Source: Iowa Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning)

Note: Caucasian girls are 88% of the juvenile female population, while African American girls are 4%; Hispanic girls 6%; Native American girls .4% and Asian girls 1.7% (Source: National Criminal Justice Reference Service)

3. Young women show a significant statistical increase in violent offenses when they recidivate compared to their male counterparts. Iowa Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning analyzed initial and subsequent offenses among a population of juvenile offenders and found a 1.7% increase among violent offenses by males and a 7.7% increase among violent offenses by females.

Statistics also show differences in the type of abuse reported as experienced by girls and a significant difference in the type and severity of offenses they commit compared to boys. However, it would be premature to draw conclusions from the findings at this time. Rather, the Girls' Summit will provide a venue for further study of these and other trends and their implications.

Ultimately, the Summit will result in a report detailing the status of young women in the juvenile justice system in Iowa from a broad range of sources and will include recommendations from participants. The Summit and resulting report will serve as a tool for anyone working on behalf of young women.

The Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force intends to make this, the inaugural Girls' Summit, an annual event where the issues of young women involved in the juvenile justice system can be spotlighted with the intention of improving the circumstances and futures of these young women.

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