



Kitsap Girls Court Program Blueprint for Implementation



Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

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The publication was prepared by WSCCR Researcher Arina Gertseva, Ph.D. and Claire Mocha, Research Analyst with the Washington State Department of Health. Direction was provided by Carl McCurley, Ph.D., Manager of the Washington State Center for Court Research.

Washington State Center for Court Research

Dr. Arina Gertseva, Senior Research Associate

Dr. Carl McCurley, Manager

External contributors:

Claire Mocha, Contractor, Washington State Department of Health

Melissa A. Hemstreet, Judge for the Kitsap County Superior Court

Shannon Porter, Court Services Officer, Kitsap County Juvenile and Family Court Services

Cami Lewis, Chief Deputy Prosecutor, Kitsap County Prosecutor's Office

Todd Dowell, Senior Deputy Prosecutor, Kitsap County Prosecutor's Office

Angela Youtsey, LICSW, MSW, West Sound Program Director

Sarah Dubitzky (Friedman), MSW, LSWAIC, ILS Programs Manager, Olive Crest

Jennifer Stearns, ILS Case Manager, Olive Crest

For questions related to this report, please contact:

WSCCR, Administrative Office of the Courts

Post Office Box 41170

Olympia, WA 98504-1170

Phone: (360) 753-3365

Fax: (360) 956-5700

[**wscrr@courts.wa.gov**](mailto:wscrr@courts.wa.gov)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the Girls Court Program Blueprint for Implementation.

This toolkit describes the girls' court model and outlines recommendations and strategies for communities interested in having their own girls' court program. The Kitsap County, Washington, Girls Court¹ pilot program is used as an example of girls' court implementation. This toolkit is designed for judicial leaders, administrators, probation counselors/officers,² frontline staff, and community partners who want to align juvenile justice practices with a gender-responsive approach to meet the needs of justice-involved girls more effectively. We also hope this blueprint will assist leaders outside the court systems in bringing community stakeholders to the table and engaging with them about whether, and how, this program can help to address the developmental and social needs of girls and young women in their local communities.

This toolkit is not intended to be comprehensive but rather serves as an illustration of how gender-responsive court-based programming was implemented in a small, semi-urban county in Washington State. It is important to note that not all girls' courts need to be identical; what works for one community may not work for another. However, principles and core elements of this model can be applied across communities while enabling the courts to adapt the model in response to local needs.

The Girls Court pilot in Kitsap County³ was initiated in response to a growing concern among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers regarding the ability of a traditionally male-oriented justice system to address gender-specific needs of girls⁴ in a developmentally appropriate manner. The 1992 reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) mandated states to provide gender-responsive services.⁵ Kitsap County became the first jurisdiction in Washington State (and one of the first in the country⁶) to implement a court-based program to address the limitations of the “one-size-fits-all” approach of the juvenile justice system.

The Kitsap County Girls Court pilot was initially funded for three years. It began in June of 2019 and continued through May 31, 2022.⁷ During this time, 27 girls participated in the program⁸. When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated. Participation is

¹ Throughout the document, “girls' court” refers to the general model, and “Girls Court” refers to the pilot program in Kitsap County.

² Courts use “probation counselor” and “probation officer” terms interchangeably. [RCW 13.04.035](#) uses “probation counselor” language, while [RCW 13.04.050](#) has some references to “probation officer.” Yet, some courts are using “court services officer” terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, special supervision, dependency, assessments and evaluations (i.e., Okanogan, Kitsap).

³ See [Kitsap County Profile](#), Washington State Employment Security Department.

⁴ “Girls” and “female” refer to cisgender and transgender girls as well as gender-expansive youth (non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any female-identified youth).

⁵ Chesney-Lind, M., & Irwin, K. (2008). *Beyond bad girls: Gender, violence and hype*. New York, NY: Routledge.

⁶ Girls court models have been implemented in several states, including Hawaii, California (Orange County), Michigan (Genesee County), and Florida.

⁷ At the time of writing this toolkit (Summer 2022) Kitsap County continues to operate the program.

⁸ The program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but COVID-19 has had a profound impact on program enrollment.

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entirely voluntary. Unlike the traditional court, the Kitsap County Girls Court seeks to resolve the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system, rather than merely holding the youth accountable.

The program has enacted many gender-responsive best practices, along with several innovative local solutions, by leveraging existing community resources. As a result, all participants have access to trauma-informed, gender-responsive services and non-court interventions based on individualized case management plans. These interventions promote positive behavioral change in a non-traditional (particularly, a non-adversarial) manner. Upon successful program completion, all charges are dismissed.

A program evaluation began shortly after the launch of the program and has since indicated improvements in three major categories: 1) organizational practices; 2) staff competencies; and 3) youth outcomes.

According to interviews with key stakeholders, the pilot resulted in several important changes to organizational practice. For example, the program staff invested heavily in external relationship-building, significantly expanding the network of formal and informal community partners and gaining the support of local school leaders. As a result of these partnerships, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication and action that did not exist before, which led to improvements in coordination with, and referrals to, community-based resources.

All program staff—supervisors, managers, service providers, and support staff—underwent multiple phases of training on various topics related to trauma, nutrition, equity, serving LGBTQ+ youth, and gender-responsive approaches.⁹ Program staff note that these trainings increased their understanding of gender-responsive programming and their role in improving the system's responses to girls and young women.

Through interviews, program staff noted multiple ways the program benefited participants, including problem recognition, trauma relief, improved self-awareness, skills building, and symptom reduction. Youth outcome data have shown that the program increased participant social skills and improved attitudes and behaviors relating to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning. There was some evidence of improvements in school performance, and modest improvements in behavioral health.

The pilot also faced some challenges, including logistical challenges (such as delays in contract finalization with service providers), and programming challenges (such as engaging families and youth). By far the biggest challenge, however, was the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the ability to recruit new girls to the program and to maintain the continuity of activities. In response to COVID-19, both court professionals and youth-serving providers transitioned to virtual programming, including case management, court hearings, program activities, and service provision.

Despite these challenges, program staff and their community partners are determined to continue the program. The Kitsap team has already begun to think about how to expand program options and create opportunities for serving all youth in the juvenile justice system, including girls,¹⁰ boys,

⁹ A list and short description of trainings can be found in Table 3 of the Appendix.

¹⁰ The pilot was intended to be open to all female-identifying youth (e.g., cisgender and transgender girls as well as gender-expansive youth such as non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, and gender queer youth). Although the program

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LGBTQ+ youth, and youth from traditionally underserved communities (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)). By creating and sustaining inclusive practices, the program staff is hoping to promote equity by supporting all youth entering the juvenile justice system.

The development of this toolkit has allowed the Kitsap team to reflect on lessons they learned from this pilot, and they are excited to share their experiences with other communities.

The toolkit is divided into five sections, each addressing a specific topic. Users can apply the toolkit in its entirety, or they may find certain portions of it particularly relevant to their needs.

- Section 1 discusses the rationale for a girls' court, gives a short description of the Kitsap County Girls Court program and how it is different from a traditional court, and lists some benefits of the girls' court model.
- Section 2 describes specifics of the Kitsap County Girls Court program structure, including operations, activities, and key operational program staff.
- Section 3 gives a brief overview of the program evaluation planning and findings.
- Section 4 gives a checklist and important steps for other jurisdictions or court systems interested in implementing a girls' court program of their own to assess readiness and begin implementation.
- Section 5 gives specific recommendations and lessons learned from key operational program staff including the judge, court services officer¹¹, prosecutor, and service providers.

The toolkit also includes an Appendix that provides additional resources (e.g., referral forms, a case management template created by the Kitsap team, and more). Terminology used in this report is explained below.

TERMINOLOGY

The binary terms “boy/girl” and “male/female”, used in this report to summarize past and current research, refer to sex assigned at birth, not gender identity. Most data and research in the juvenile justice system does not capture or acknowledge gender identity, much less gender expansiveness.

Gender is a social construct composed of norms, behaviors, relationships, and roles. Gender may be categorized as non-binary, as well as man or woman, boy or girl, or many other identities. For many individuals, gender identity is experienced (and gender is expressed) in expansive ways, outside of the girl/woman versus man/boy binary.

Almost all data is about sex assigned at birth and not gender identity. Sex assigned at birth is based on physical characteristics; gender identity is an internal sense of self. We can't know someone's gender identity unless we ask.

participants in this pilot were mostly cis white girls, program staff were trained and prepared to provide supportive environment for gender-expansive youth.

¹¹ Kitsap Superior Court is using “court services officer” terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, dependency, assessments and evaluations instead of “probation counselor” and “probation officer” terms.

SECTION 1: WHY GIRLS' COURT?

Why are girls' court programs needed?

While males account for the majority of youth in the juvenile justice system, the proportion of females has been steadily growing over the past several years.¹² For example, the female share of juvenile arrests nationwide increased from 18% in 1980 to 31% in 2019.¹³ For non-violent drug and property offenses in 2019, the female share was even higher, as with liquor law violations (42%), larceny-theft (40%), simple assault (38%), and disorderly conduct (37%). For adjudicated girls, the likelihood of being placed on formal probation slightly increased from 62% in 2005 to 68% in 2019.¹⁴ Research suggests that LGBTQ+ identified girls¹⁵ and girls of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.¹⁶

Despite the growing number of girls in the juvenile justice system, policy measures, practices, and programs within that system have historically been designed for boys and applied to girls without consideration of their distinct realities and life experiences.¹⁷ Boys and girls entering the juvenile justice system share many of the same challenges; however, some issues are much more commonly disclosed by girls. For example, girls under probation supervision in Washington State¹⁸ are more likely to have been exposed to violence at home and to have been victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and child neglect, when compared to their male counterparts and girls in the general youth population (Table 1).¹⁹

Exposure to violence and victimization affects girls' mental health, substance use, involvement with violent partners, re-victimization, and subsequent offending behavior.²⁰ Although victimization is found among justice-involved boys, feminist criminologists have identified victimization as a particularly salient risk factor for female offending, with violent victimization often considered to be the first step in girls' pathways to crime.²¹

¹² All reported data trends reflect the data collected prior to COVID-19.

¹³ Juvenile arrests, 2019, Office of Justice Programs, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/juvenile-arrests-2019.pdf>

¹⁴ National Center for Juvenile Justice (2019). Juvenile court statistics: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/pdf/jcs2019.pdf>

¹⁵ Irvine, A., & Canfield, A. (2016). [The Overrepresentation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, Gender Nonconforming and Transgender Youth within the Child Welfare to Juvenile Justice Crossover Population](#). *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 24(2):249. See also Hunt, Jerome, & Moodie-Mills. (2012). *The Unfair Criminalization of Gay and Transgender Youth: An Overview of the Experiences of LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. http://www.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2012/06/pdf/juvenile_justice.pdf.

¹⁶ OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Case processing characteristics of delinquency offenses by gender and race, 2019. https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/special_topics/qa11604.asp?qaDate=2019 Released on February 24, 2022.

¹⁷ Chesney-Lind, M., & Pasco, L. (2004). *The female offender: girls, women and crime*. Sage Publications.

¹⁸ Gertseva, A. (2017). *Girls on Probation: Challenges and Outcomes*. Washington State Center for Court Research.

¹⁹ Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Shattuck, A., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2015). *Children's Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: An Update*. Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/248547.pdf>

²⁰ Chesney-Lind, M., & Shelden, R. G. (2004). *Girls, delinquency, and juvenile justice* (3rd Ed.). Thompson Wadsworth; Jasinski, J. L., Williams, L. M., & Siegel, J. (2000). Childhood physical and sexual abuse as risk factors for heavy drinking among African American women: A prospective study. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(8), 1061-1071; Widom, C. S., Marmorstein, N. R., & White, H. R. (2006). Childhood victimization and illicit drug use in middle adulthood. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 20(4), 394-403; Casey, E. A., & Nurius, P. S. (2005). Trauma exposure and sexual re-victimization risk: Comparisons across single, multiple incident, and multiple perpetrator victimizations. *Violence against Women*, 11(4), 505-530; Makarios, M. D. (2007). Race, abuse, and female criminal violence. *Feminist Criminology*, 2(2), 100-116.

²¹ Belknap, J., & Holsinger, K. (2006). The gendered nature of risk factors for delinquency. *Feminist Criminology*. 1(1):48-71; Gavazzi, S., Yarcheck, C., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2006). Global risk indicators and the role of gender in a juvenile detention sample. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 33(5), 597-612.

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Table 1: Exposure to Violence, Youth on Probation vs. Youth in the Population

	<i>Youth on probation</i>		<i>Youth in the population</i>	
	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
Witnessed violence at home	56%	42%	21%	21%
Witnessed violence in the community	52%	48%	25%	30%
Experienced sexual abuse	34%	8%	11%	8%
Experienced physical abuse	44%	31%	8%	11%
Experienced child neglect	33%	21%	14%	15%

Justice-involved girls are also particularly affected by family-related challenges such as interpersonal problems, parental alcohol and drug abuse, and family conflict.²² These adversities, although experienced by youth of any gender, may be particularly stressful for girls because many girls have been socialized from a young age to value interpersonal relations and emotional exchanges.²³ When faced with relational and other adversities, girls are more likely than boys to generate strong self-directed emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety, shame, and guilt) that can lead to a variety of self-destructive behaviors (e.g., running away from home, self-harm, suicide, and substance use). In contrast, boys, in response to stress, are more likely to generate outward-directed emotions (e.g., anger and hostility) that lead to behavioral outbursts directed toward others.²⁴

These gendered coping strategies are more likely to cause severe health-related effects in girls than in boys. For example, girls are more likely than boys to suffer from mental health disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress syndrome, psychotic disorders, borderline personality disorders, and eating disorders) and substance use disorders.²⁵ Gender-responsive researchers argue that girls should be taught positive ways to cope with the aftermath of their victimization, otherwise they may continue to deal with the emotional and physical pains of victimization through risky behaviors and substance use.

With these differences in mind, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have raised concerns regarding the ability of a traditionally male-oriented justice system to address the gender-specific needs of girls in a developmentally appropriate manner.

In response to these concerns, in 2015, the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released *Girls and the Juvenile Justice System Policy Guidance*. This guidance explicitly stated that girls in the juvenile system differ from boys in terms of their offenses, background characteristics, and needs; specifically, girls commit less serious crimes and for different reasons (e.g., running away from abusive homes, economic marginalization), and are more likely to experience victimization, substance abuse, and mental health issues. This guidance called for a national commitment to increase “gender and culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate approaches” when working with girls in the juvenile justice system.

²² American Bar Association & National Bar Association. (2001). *Justice by gender: The lack of appropriate prevention, diversion and treatment alternatives for girls in the justice system*. Washington, DC: American Bar Association. <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol9/iss1/5/>

²³ Loeber, R., & Hay, D. (1997). Key issues in the development of aggression and violence from childhood to early adulthood. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48: 371-393.

²⁴ Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. (1995). Sex Differences in Distress: Real or Artifact? *American Sociological Review*. 60: 449-468.

²⁵ Timmons-Mitchell, J., Brown, C., Schulz, S. C., Webster, S. E., Underwood, L. A., & Semple, W. E. (1997). Comparing the mental health needs of female and male incarcerated juvenile delinquents. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 15, 195-202.

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While numerous task forces and committees were developed across the country to implement gender-responsive services,²⁶ nationally, only a few programs have been created specifically for girls. A 2009 analysis of a database of juvenile justice program evaluations revealed that only 4% of the programs in the country exclusively served girls, while 87% served only or mostly boys.²⁷ This is particularly problematic given that girls comprise about 28% of the juvenile court population in Washington State.²⁸

Girls' court programs provide an example of how court systems in our state can address girls' unique needs by "creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of girl's lives and addresses the issues of the participants."²⁹

What is a girls' court program and how is it different?

A girls' court program is an alternative to the traditional court model that is specifically designed for female-identifying youth. This is a specialized form of therapeutic court that provides trauma-informed, gender-responsive services and non-court interventions to promote behavior change in a non-traditional, non-adversarial manner. Unlike traditional courts, a girls' court seeks to resolve the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system, rather than merely holding the youth accountable. This type of court focuses on providing treatment and support to the participants instead of sanctioning youth for their behaviors.

The girls' court model incorporates gender-responsive elements from feminist pathways theory (e.g., addressing trauma, victimization, abuse, and neglect)³⁰ and relational/cultural theory that emphasize relationships as building blocks for youths' wellness (e.g., centrality of relationships, inclusion of girls' voices, and sense of connection to others).³¹

According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington, a gender-responsive court seeks to create an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that girls bring to the justice system; it adjusts strategies and practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions.³² This involves understanding the unique history of each girl. These histories may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, victimization, eating disorders, homelessness, running away, exploitation, neglect, using and abusing alcohol/drugs, and

"A gender-responsive court seeks to create an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that girls bring to the justice system and appropriately responds to those conditions."

-Bloom et al., 2005

²⁶ Walker, S. C., Muno, A., & Sullivan-Colglazier, C. (2015). Principles in practice: A multistate study of gender-responsive reforms in the juvenile justice system. *Crime & Delinquency*, 61, 742-766.

²⁷ Lipsey, M. W. (2009). The primary factors that characterize effective interventions with juvenile offenders: A meta-analytic overview. *Victims & Offenders*, 4, 124-147.

²⁸ See: [2020 WA-PCJJ Governor's Report](#), p.63.

²⁹ Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2005). *Gender-responsive strategies for women offenders: A summary of research, practice, and guiding principles for women offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/020418.pdf>

³⁰ Wattanaporn, K.A., & Holtfreter, K. (2014). The Impact of Feminist Pathways Research on Gender-Responsive Policy and Practice. *Feminist Criminology*. 9(3), 191-207.

³¹ Cannon, K., Hammer, T., Reicherzer, S., & Gilliam, B. (2012). Relational-Cultural Theory: A Framework for Relational Competencies and Movement in Group Work with Female Adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 7(1), 2-16.

³² Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2005). *Gender-responsive strategies for women offenders: A summary of research, practice, and guiding principles for women offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

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involvement in the child welfare system. A key difference between the traditional court and the girls' court model is that the latter takes a holistic approach to working with girls by building strong, authentic relationships that honor every girl's background. By shifting from asking, "what is wrong with you?" to asking, "what happened to you?" a girls' court recognizes and responds to girls' experiences by creating a safe, therapeutic, and engaging environment.

This change in focus and operation requires strong, committed leadership. A key role in girls' court is the visible judicial leader who demonstrates a commitment to establishing and carrying out the program and who leads a diverse group of stakeholders. This group includes both internal court system stakeholders (e.g., court administration, defense attorneys, prosecutors, clerks, and other court staff) and external stakeholders (e.g., service providers, volunteers, and non-profit organizations). The judge in the girls' court takes a more hands-on approach, beyond evidence and legal process, by closely monitoring the progress of each girl and having more frequent contact and communication with program participants. The judge participates not only in court hearings but also in shared activities outside the courtroom. This differs from a traditional court in which the judge serves as an impersonal, objective, and remote decision maker.

Another key characteristic of a girls' court program is collaboration with community partners. A girls' court relies heavily on community resources by linking the girls to local service providers, including behavioral health providers, counselors, and mentors. The extensive community outreach component of the program enables girls to be served in their local communities instead of relying on services available within the juvenile justice system. Finally, unlike the traditional court, the goal of the girls' court program is to ensure that girls have options to remain connected to services even after completing the program.

What are the potential benefits of girls' courts?

There is a body of research supporting the theoretical framework of a girls' court program and its benefits not only to the program participants,³³ but also to the court system, the families, and the wider community.

Benefits to participants

Accumulated anecdotal reports and preliminary evaluations from the Kitsap County pilot and other U.S. girls' court programs suggest a wide array of benefits to participants. For example, there is some evidence that gender-specific programs have positive outcomes in the areas of education, employment, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and social development.³⁴ The literature provides evidence that young women receiving trauma-informed services have shown improvements in trauma-related symptomatology, reductions in PTSD, and positive substance use outcomes.³⁵

³³ Due to practically non-existent research on how girls' court framework impacts gender-diverse youth (transgender girls/women, transgender boys/men, as well as youth who are gender fluid, genderqueer, non-binary, agender, etc.), we can only hypothesize that program's services can positively impact these youths.

³⁴ Zahn, M., Day, J., Mihalic, S., & Tichavsky, L. (2009). Determining What Works for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. *Crime & Delinquency*. 55(2), 266–293.

³⁵ Morrissey, J.P., Ellis, A.R., & Gatz, M. (2005). Outcomes for women with co-occurring disorders and trauma: Program and person-level effects. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*. 28(2), 121–133.

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Zahn et al. (2009)³⁶ examined nine gender-responsive programs and found a general pattern of improvement in school performance and interpersonal relationships. Research also shows that expanding girls' social support networks through creating relationships with supportive, non-parental adults has a positive impact on a youth's overall mental health³⁷ and is the most common protective factor in helping young people be resilient in difficult life circumstances.³⁸

Evaluation of Honolulu's Girls' Court³⁹ found that the core gender-responsive elements of intensive case management that focused on building healthy relationships and individualized therapy to address trauma significantly decreased girls' law violations. The most recent evaluation of the gender-responsive program, *Girls...Moving On (GMO)* demonstrated significant reductions in risk scores and increases in strength scores as well as improvements in self-efficacy.⁴⁰

The Kitsap County Girls Court evaluation⁴¹ showed a range of benefits to participants, including increased problem solving (e.g., consequential thinking, goal setting, skills for dealing with difficult situations, skills for controlling impulsive behaviors, and aggression), improved emotional stability (e.g., ability to regulate impulsivity, having empathy for victims, respecting others' property, respecting authority, and accepting responsibility for behavior), and academic improvement (i.e., school enrollment status, attitudes toward education, school attendance, academic performance, and school conduct).

"Many participants have told me while leaving the program that they would not be in a position they are right now if they were not participating in the program. That tells me that we are making a difference."

-Kitsap court professional

Benefits to court systems

At a time when courts are under increasing pressure to be more responsive and accessible, investing in gender-responsive programming can have a transformative effect on the entire juvenile justice system. When court staff are educated about what it means to be a trauma-responsive organization, why it's important, and how every person in the organization plays a role in creating a safe and trusting environment, this can benefit not only girls in the program but also youth whom court professionals encounter in the mainstream juvenile justice system. By learning more about the origins and manifestations of trauma, justice professionals can incorporate trauma-responsive practices into all court hearings and other court activities and interactions. This shift

"Our goal is to make probation therapeutic. If we are successful with [the] Girls Court Program, we can use the same model for all youth on probation."

-Kitsap court professional

³⁶ Zahn, M. A., Day, J. C., Mihalic, S. F., & Tichavsky, L. (2009). Determining what works for girls in the juvenile justice system: A summary of evaluation evidence. *Crime & Delinquency*, 55(2), 266-293.

³⁷ Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., & Mannes, M. (2006). The contribution to adolescent well-being made by nonfamily adults: An examination of developmental assets as contexts and processes. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(4), 401-413.

³⁸ Rutter, M. (1987). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(3), 316-331.

³⁹ Davidson, J. T., Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2011). "She's way too good to lose": An evaluation of Honolulu's Girls Court. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 21, 308-32.

⁴⁰ Belisle, L.A., Salisbury, E.J., Keen, J. (2022). Did They Move on? An Outcome Evaluation of the Gender-Responsive Program, *Girls...Moving On*. *Feminist Criminology*. 17(2):223-251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15570851211065900>.

⁴¹ Gertseva, Arina and Mocha, Claire (2022). *Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report*. Olympia, WA. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), Administrative Office of the Courts (forthcoming).

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in how youth are viewed by court personnel can foster youths' engagement in treatment, create trust between court professionals and youth, and support youths' positive outcomes.

One of the most important aspects of a girls' court is the high level of the judge's involvement in each case. The judge can get to know each participant on a more personal level and can create a culture of empathy, compassion, and trusting relationships, which in turn can improve youth engagement with the program. The creation of a girls' court program can help courts expand services for youth. The community outreach component of the program enables court staff to develop working relationships with a variety of community-based service providers, which provides girls access to services not available in the court.

Benefits to families⁴²

The girls' court model acknowledges that positive family relationships help young people stay healthy and avoid risky behavior.⁴³ That is why a key strategy of the girls' court program is to engage families in the treatment process. Program staff assist families in understanding trauma and its effects on youth behavior. This can bolster caregiver–youth relationships, strengthen family communication patterns, and improve overall family functioning. In addition, the comprehensive package of services available through the program (i.e., life-skills training, mentoring, school counseling, family counseling, mental health, and substance abuse treatment) can improve a youth's social competence and communication skills, which in turn can enhance family connectedness and communication.

Benefits to communities

While most research on girls' court programs has focused on benefits to participants and their families, there is reason to believe that these benefits spill over to impact surrounding systems and communities. This is an example of the *curb cut effect*,⁴⁴ a phenomenon in which programs designed to benefit the most marginalized individuals can have a positive impact on the broader community and society.

The girls' court model brings together the community and the justice system to address local concerns regarding public safety. Within this model, community members and court professionals are working together to address the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system. Connecting the courts to community-based service providers allows for a tighter web of services in which youth become less likely to slip through the cracks of the juvenile system, and, with practice, access to community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient. Since 2019, program staff has developed effective working relationships with 17 community partners. As a result of the program, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication that did not exist before, through monthly court hearings and stakeholder meetings, as well as regular emails and phone calls.

⁴² The court recognizes that a family can include people of various ages who are united through biology, marriage, or adoption or who are so closely connected through friendships or shared experience that they are taken to be family members.

⁴³ Yang, F., Tan, K.-A., and Cheng, W. J. Y. (2013). The effects of connectedness on health-promoting and health-compromising behaviors in adolescents: Evidence from a statewide survey. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 35(1), 33-46; Ackard, D. M., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M., and Perry, C. (2006). Parent-child connectedness and behavioral and emotional health among adolescents. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 30(1), 59-66.

⁴⁴ Angela Glover Blackwell (2017). The Curb-Cut Effect, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 28-33.

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This collaborative approach to community problem solving can foster public trust and confidence in the court systems, as members of the community have the opportunity to observe and even contribute to service provision. Also, research suggests that any benefits in school achievements can positively impact future education outcomes of the girls and potentially lower the risk of re-offending.⁴⁵ Reduced recidivism means reductions in crime in the community, leading to increased safety.



SECTION 2: PROGRAM DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

The Kitsap County Girls Court program is a specialized, trauma-informed, team-based program with a focus on problem solving. It is currently a pre-dispositional therapeutic treatment program for female-identifying youth ages 14-17.⁴⁶ Even though the program was intended to be open to any girl-identified youth (e.g., cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, and gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and gender expansive youth), the participants in this pilot all identified as cis girls. The program is voluntary and was originally intended for youth who are classified⁴⁷ moderate, or high risk as indicated by their Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)⁴⁸ scores and who are not currently on another specialized caseload (such as those for substance use or sex-related offenses). When the program transitioned to a pre-dispositional model, eligibility criteria for the program switched from “risk” to “needs,” meaning, youth who are classified as low risk as indicated by their PACT scores also became eligible.⁴⁹

Program goals include reducing recidivism, improving school performance, increasing confidence and self-efficacy, strengthening interpersonal skills, increasing knowledge of career options and goal setting, and building positive relationships and support systems including, where appropriate, with family. These goals are targeted through the use of treatment (as necessary), life skills building, community mentoring, parental engagement, job training, and education support; all of which reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that participants bring to the

⁴⁵ Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Trajectories of school engagement during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(1), 233–47; Kimberly, L.N., Knight, K.E., & Thornberry, T. P. (2011). School disengagement as a predictor of dropout, delinquency, and problem substance use during adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(2), 156–66; and Hawkins, S.R., Graham, P.W., Williams, J., & Zahn, M.A. (2009). Resilient Girls-Factors That Protect Against Delinquency. Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/220124.pdf>.

⁴⁶ When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated.

⁴⁷ When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, only moderate- and high-risk girls were eligible for the program after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, expanding the eligibility to low-risk girls.

⁴⁸ The PACT is administered as a semi-structured interview protocol with software-scored risk and protective factors using forced-choice response options for each assessment item. [https://www.assessments.com/purchase/detail.asp?SKU=5197#:~:text=The%20PACT%20\(Positive%20Achievement%20Change,a%20semi%2Dstructured%20interview%20protocol](https://www.assessments.com/purchase/detail.asp?SKU=5197#:~:text=The%20PACT%20(Positive%20Achievement%20Change,a%20semi%2Dstructured%20interview%20protocol)

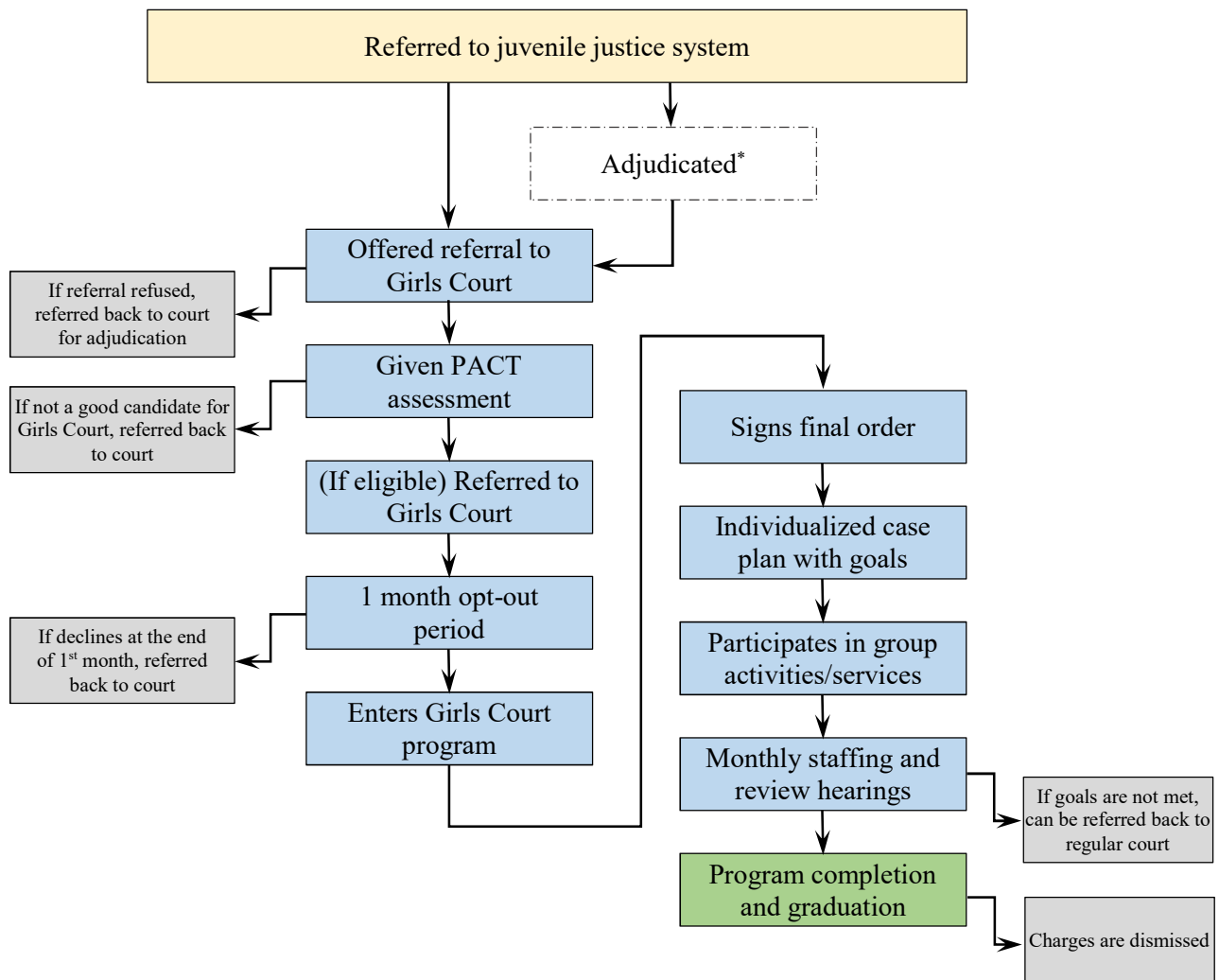
⁴⁹ Research indicates mixing young people who have been assessed at high risk to reoffend with young people assessed at low risk can be problematic when mixed groups are unsupervised. Lipsey, M. W. (2006). The Effects of Community-Based Group Treatment for Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Search for Cross-Study Generalizations. In K. A. Dodge, T. J. Dishion, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions* (pp. 162–184). The Guilford Press. Lipsey did not find any evidence of adverse peer contagion effect in mixed groups if the activities are supervised. *Id.* When Girls Court changed to a pre-dispositional therapeutic model, it shifted focus to the needs of the youth, instead of the risk classification, allowing for mixed grouping. Opportunities for unsupervised interactions within the Girls Court are non-existent. All program activities and group treatment continued to be supervised after the transition to a pre-dispositional model, eliminating the risk of peer contagion.

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justice system. Treatment eligibility is determined by the risk level and/or service provider. For example, eligibility for state-funded evidence-based programs (e.g., Coordination of Services (COS) or Functional Family Therapy (FFT)) is determined by the risk level; while services such as Independent Living Skills are not based on risk level. It is open to all program participants.

Figure 1 presents the Kitsap County Girls Court program flowchart. Additional details are summarized in Table 2 showing the main differences between a traditional court and the Girls Court model. Below is a description of the program structure and activities.

FIGURE 1: THE KITSAP COUNTY GIRLS COURT PROGRAM FLOW CHART



* When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated.

Eligibility and referral

When the Girls Court pilot began, girls were assessed and referred to the program after being adjudicated. Starting in 2021, however, the program switched to intervening pre-adjudication. Under this model, any girl-identified youth ages 14-17 years who are not concurrently part of other alternate court programs, such as Drug Court, Individualized Treatment Court, or Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative, are offered the opportunity for referral during their case setting and may discuss with their defense attorney whether to proceed to eligibility (see Figure 1).

Every young person, offered a referral to the Girls Court program, is assessed using the PACT assessment. Girls who scored as low,⁵⁰ moderate, or high risk on the PACT are eligible for, and referred to, Girls Court. Once determined eligible for Girls Court, the youth observes the program for one month (known as the opt-out period), during which time they observe one court hearing and participate in one scheduled shared activity. This allows the youth to make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate. At the end of this period, if the youth decides they do not want to participate in the program, their case is referred back to the juvenile court for regular adjudication. If the youth decides to participate in Girls Court, they sign a final order and can then withdraw from the program if a request is made to the judge or if they fail to participate and are terminated from the program. Program participation length varies based on the participant's criminal history, severity of charges on the current case, and assessed level of risk and need, from a minimum of nine months for misdemeanors and a minimum of 12 months for felony offenses. It is expected that the program will be completed within two (2) years. The target number of participants is 15-20.

Case Management

All girls referred to the program have an assigned Court Services Officer (CSO),⁵¹ who is trained to use a strength-based approach⁵² when working with youth and their families. The CSO uses the PACT and structured interviewing techniques to assess criminogenic needs and protective factors⁵³ of each girl prior to the program. This assessment is administered again at the end of the program to serve as an indicator of progress and improvement during the program. In addition to risks and needs, the CSO identifies youths' strengths, interests, hobbies, and communication style directly from youth or indirectly from conversations with the parent, staffings,⁵⁴ and written reports such as a social history, psychological evaluation, or court report. The CSO uses these results and engages participants and their families to create individualized case plans that address each participant's

⁵⁰ Thus far we have had one girl who scored as low risk on the PACT who has participated.

⁵¹ Some courts are using "court services officer" terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, dependency, assessments and evaluations (i.e., Kitsap) instead of "probation counselor" and "probation officer" terms.

⁵² **Strength-based approach** is a core component of a gender responsive intervention. A strength-based approach is a specific method of working with and resolving problems experienced by the youth. It does not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties. Rather, it attempts to identify the positive basis of the youth's resources and strengths that will lay the basis to address the challenges resulting from the problems. A strength-based paradigm offers a different language to describe youths' difficulties and struggles. It allows one to see opportunities, hope and solutions rather than just problems and hopelessness. The new paradigm avoids labeling and assumes power in youth to help themselves as well as casting service providers as partners rather than as experts, authorities, initiators and directors of the change process. To learn more see [Principles of Strength-Based Practice](#).

⁵³ Criminogenic needs refer to the factors that are predictive of offending; while, protective factors refer to those factors that reduce the likelihood of adversity leading to negative youth outcomes and behaviors.

⁵⁴ A case staffing is an opportunity for program staff to exchange information about the participant and gain consultation from other professionals. This is a group process in which the CSO invites two or more professionals and others involved with the participant to help identify issues, suggest problem resolution strategies, and recommend service options.

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unique mental and physical health, trauma, and other needs, as well as short- and long-term goals (see Figure 1). Court professionals believe that this additional information helps them better identify appropriate treatments that will help the youth succeed.

Setting goals and steps to achieve them is guided by the Science of Hope.⁵⁵ Using the Hope framework, the CSO encourages youth to set individualized achievable goals, discuss potential pathways (barriers, solutions, social support), identify sources of motivation, and create a visual map of the process (see Figure 2, Appendix). A template for the case plan was designed by the CSO to include the four focus areas of incentive-based programming: 1) long-term goals of probation; 2) short-term goals of probation; 3) responsibility or family goals; and 4) contract goals. Case plans describe the pathways by which goals are achieved.

The CSO helps girls and caregivers understand the conditions of the program while expressing a belief in the girl's ability to make positive changes. Throughout the program, the CSO engages in collective problem-solving and collaborates with girls and their families so they can create positive changes within their relationships and within the community. The CSO uses a strength-based approach in working with girls, helping them identify their strengths and then referring back to those when working with girls to address challenges that arise during the program.

The CSO, the judge, therapists, and other professionals who work with girls are mindful of the importance of developing a collaborative therapeutic relationship with the girls. The CSO meets with program participants frequently (weekly, prior to COVID-19, and every two weeks, during COVID-19) to discuss the girls' progress in the program (e.g., improvements in academics, progress in therapy), any issues (e.g., running away, fighting with other girls), and transition plans if the girl is nearing her exit time (e.g., discussing her home environment or alternative housing options). During case management meetings, goals can be adjusted and realigned to meet the changing needs of the participant.

Participants have an opportunity to voice their concerns, issues, and ideas, and this feedback is used to adapt the case plan. This approach shifts the way that youth are traditionally handled by the juvenile justice system. As one service provider stated: "Girls are not problems; they are partners in their own positive development and growth."

Weekly progress reports are drafted for each girl. These reports help program staff determine the extent to which girls are connected with mentors and prosocial activities in their communities.

"I never want to give up on any of the girls. I think this is what is wrong with the system. Before we had a limited amount of time...and many fell through the cracks of the system, and the system has given up on them. We do not want this perception anymore. I want them [girls] to know that we care and we want to make a difference."

- Judge

⁵⁵ **Hope** is the belief that the future will be better than today, and you have the power to make it so. Hope is based on three main ideas: desirable goals, pathways to goal attainment, and willpower to pursue those pathways. **Goals** are desired outcomes you are trying to accomplish. **Achievement** (positive) goals are those we want to attain. **Pathways** are the roadmaps individuals have in mind that will allow them to begin the journey toward the future; a goal without a pathway is only a wish. **Willpower** is your ability to dedicate mental energy to begin and sustain the journey toward your goals. Ideas developed by Dr. Chan Hellman, professor of social work at the University of Oklahoma and Director of The Hope Research Center. Tulsa Schusterman Center. (2022). To learn more about *Hope Research Center* see <https://www.ou.edu/tulsa/hope>.

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TABLE 2: TRADITIONAL COURT COMPARED TO THE KITSAP GIRLS COURT

Activity	Traditional Court Model	Kitsap Girls Court Program
Eligibility	All risk levels, all genders – standard supervision or deferred disposition.	All risk levels ⁵⁶ female-identifying youth.
Legal status at entry	Post disposition.	Pre-disposition as of August 2021.
Referral and entry	Referred by the prosecuting attorney.	Referred by prosecutor/defense attorney in consultation with CSO to determine eligibility.
Participation	Mandatory.	Voluntary.
Opt-out period	None.	One-month opt-out period, during which the girls observe one court hearing and participate in one scheduled shared activity.
Screening and Assessment	Risk assessment done within 30 days of disposition.	Risk assessment is done at time of contract signing. Additional information is collected from conversations with girls, staffings, reports from parents or caregivers, and written reports such as a social history, or psychological evaluation.
Court appearances/review hearings	For probation violations, if needed. For deferred dispositions, one-time review hearing set at the end of supervision.	Monthly review hearing in front of the judge and one monthly activity that the judge attends and participates.
Judge’s role	Arbiter.	Leader, mentor, advocate, and coach.
Approach	Provides judicial oversight and monitoring as well as access to services provided within the court.	Focuses on problem solving through a coordinated system of community-based care aimed at addressing social/health problems (e.g., mental health, truancy, trauma, substance use).
Case meetings	Determined by risk assessment level. Once or twice a month or weekly.	Weekly contact/meetings with the CSO.
Treatment		After assessment, evidence-based treatment may be provided by the court within a few weeks.

⁵⁶ When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, only moderate- and high-risk girls were eligible for the program after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional therapeutic court model in mid-2021, expanding the eligibility to girls who scored low-risk on the PACT.

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Activity	Traditional Court Model	Kitsap Girls Court Program
	After assessment, evidence-based treatment may be provided by the court within a few weeks.	In addition, a coordinated continuum of non-court, community-based care tailored to girls' specific needs is available, including substance abuse treatment, mental health, and independent living skills (ILS).
Progress reports	No reports.	Weekly reports are used as a quick reference to assist the CSO in ensuring that critical changes in goals and behaviors are captured.
Incentives	Very limited or none.	Ongoing use of incentives (e.g., positive regard from the judge, tangible rewards). Dismissal of charges upon completion without prejudice ⁵⁷ . A graduation ceremony is commonly held at the time charges are dismissed.
Sanctions	Ongoing use of sanctions. Sanctions may be gradual, beginning with simple verbal admonishment, continuing to community service work and confinement.	Extremely limited use of sanctions.
Curfew	Curfew set via court order and can be modified as an incentive or sanction.	Curfew set via court order and can be modified as an incentive or sanction.
Collaboration status	It's not a collaborative model.	Multi-sectoral and highly collaborative model, building on structures in the juvenile justice system and the community.
Shared group activities	No shared in-group activities.	Monthly in-group shared activities that last for approximately two hours.
Staffing meetings	No staffing.	Staffing with team prior to court.

⁵⁷ Case dismissed without prejudice means that a case is thrown out of the court without imposing charges on the defendant.

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Activity	Traditional Court Model	Kitsap Girls Court Program
Program completion	If terms of supervision met and all specific tasks completed. The court may extend probation if the youth does not complete all terms and conditions.	If conditions completed: charges dismissed, favorable disposition. A graduation ceremony is commonly held at the time charges are dismissed. When girls complete the program requirements early, an earlier dismissal/graduation is used as an incentive. If conditions are not completed, case is referred back to regular juvenile justice system.
After care	None.	Relationships between participants and community members developed during the program continue to be a source of support for participants after leaving.

The Girls Court team and program staff

The program team includes internal court system actors (e.g., judge, court administrator, CSO, defense attorney, prosecutor, detention manager, and other court staff) and external community partners (e.g., service providers, volunteers, counselors, education advocates). A dedicated judge oversees all participants and is committed to the program. The judge serves as a leader on the bench, and off, when working with community stakeholders to address the needs of participants.

Staffing with the core Girls Court Team is held pre-court on the day of the review hearing to review each young person’s progress. The core Girls Court Team consists of the CSO, prosecutor, defense attorney, and treatment supervisor.

The CSO is central to all aspects of the program, serving as the point of contact between community organizations, court staff, and program participants. This makes entering the program and connecting with services as seamless as possible. Written reports are completed by the CSO on a weekly basis and submitted to the judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, and supervisor. They are reviewed monthly at the pre-court staffing. Community partners and community-based service providers are permitted to review reports and participate in staffing if a release of information form has been completed (see the Authorization/Disclosure of Information form in the appendix).

A high staff-to-participant ratio means that each participant receives individualized attention from staff who know them well. Through the screening and goal-setting process, staff come to understand each girl’s individual background, which is a core element of the trauma-responsive approach. In moments of negative or disruptive behavior, staff might better understand the issues driving that behavior. Program staff also know and pay close attention to girls in crisis, in order to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all girls. Finally, program staff emphasize the importance of knowing each girl’s material situation and needs including food, shelter, transportation, hygiene products, and clothes, in order to meet those needs.

Family engagement

The engagement of girls' families⁵⁸ is an essential element of the program. On the individual level, families are viewed and treated as partners in the girls' cases as well as in the operation of the program. Conversations with the caregivers start at the initial intake process and continue through the pre-disposition process and supervision. Family members are invited to visit court hearings, either on Zoom or in person. The court hearings are conducted in a way to provide a nonthreatening environment for family members to learn about the program and create an opportunity for families to observe and celebrate each girl's success.

The program staff encourages family members to participate in intake activities, including contributing to individualized case plans. Families are sometimes engaged in identifying their family's strengths and needs, setting goals, and developing case plans. Staff members also check in with caregivers if issues emerge during the program. The CSO works to ensure that family meetings are accessible, setting meeting times and locations that work for each family. The CSO has recently begun engaging parents/guardians by asking them to review youth's weekly goals and encouraging them to communicate their opinions, concerns, or suggestions to adjust future planning.

"I really like involving the parents more in these [weekly] goals so that they can see what my clients are trying to accomplish or what they [parents] would like to accomplish. This way they [parents] can weigh on hopefully and help a system be much more successful".

-Court Services Officer

Community-based activities and services

The Girls Court Program conducted extensive community engagement prior to, and during, program implementation. This allowed the identification of a variety of external service providers, which provided girls with access to a wide array of services both within and outside the court.

"We have been lucky enough to have great community support so that we can make sure that the girls have continuing support during the program, and after the program is over, the girls still have people they can talk to and trust."

-Court Services Officer

The CSO works with community organizations such as schools, service providers, and others to connect girls to services aligned with the girls' case plans. Since 2019, the CSO has developed effective working relationships with 17 community-based organizations (Table 1, Appendix).

Those relationships, once built, will remain to support participants during the program as well as after they have left Girls Court. Program services include the following:

⁵⁸ The court recognizes that a family can include people of various ages who are united through biology, marriage, or adoption or who are so closely connected through friendships or shared experience that they are taken to be family members.

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- **Behavioral health:** Development of the case plan emphasizes fitting services to each girl's particular needs.⁵⁹ Inpatient and outpatient mental health therapy and outpatient substance use treatment are provided by community partners. Services may be provided individually or as part of wrap-around care for the whole family (for example with Functional Family Therapy (FFT), an evidence-based mental health program).⁶⁰
- **Education:** Participants are provided student assistance, counseling support, school reengagement services and dropout intervention, delivered by community providers and participants' home schools.⁶¹ These services help youth navigate the education system as well as provide guidance on career pathways.
- **Life skills, mentoring, and job training:** Participants have access to life skills development programs and job training in a wide variety of community settings. They can also participate in Education Employment Training (EET), an evidence-based program offered to justice-involved youth in Washington State.⁶² Community members may also serve as mentors to individual girls in the program and engage them in discussions about career and life goals.
- **Practical Assistance:** The program provides assistance with transportation and access to basic needs such as clothes and food. For example, clothes and toiletries are provided at no cost to participants.
- **Group activities:** Once a month there is a shared activity in which all youth participate. Consistent schedules for social activities, meals, programming, and court appearances mean that girls have frequent contact with their core support team and with other participants. Many activities use a relationship-based communication model that includes group sharing or problem-solving. For example, during a baking activity (held online due to social distancing protocols), program staff and participants discussed toxic relationships while baking cookies together (Table 2 in the appendix provides a list of recent group activities).

⁵⁹ Among the first year participants, 61% used drugs, 61% had mental health problems, 89% experienced depression or anxiety, and 28% had a history of suicidal ideation. Despite the high rates of mental health problems, only about 22% of the first year program participants underwent mental health treatment or have been prescribed medication prior to the program.

⁶⁰ Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a short-term, high quality intervention program with an average of 12 to 14 sessions over three to five months. FFT works primarily with 11- to 18-year-old youth who have been referred for behavioral or emotional problems by the juvenile justice system. Services are conducted in both clinic and home settings and can also be provided at probation offices by a specially training therapist. FFT consists of five major components: engagement, motivation, relational assessment, behavior change and generalization. Each of these components has its own goals, focus and intervention strategies and techniques. Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. (2022). *Functional Family Therapy (FFT)*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/juvenile-rehabilitation/treatment-programs/fft>.

⁶¹ Among the first year participants, more than two thirds (78%) reported not feeling close to any teachers, staff, or coaches; 56% were not interested in school activities; 60% had behavioral problems at school; and 28% were habitually skipping school. See First Year Girls Court Participants: Experiences and Challenges http://ccvj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/First-year-Girls-Court-Participants_Experiences-and-Challenges_Final.pdf

⁶² Education Employment Training (EET) is comprised of a continuum of educational supports, employment development, and community-based developmental activities that include assessment, job readiness/job retention skills training, vocational counseling, linking based workforce development programming, job shadowing, career exploration and meaningful paid work experience. In addition, the program supports school engagement and use of free time. EET is individualized, self-paced, and range of service is from 3-6 months. EET builds partnerships with the local business community and leadership organizations to offer relevant experiences and internships, engaging young offenders with employers as mentors. Another key element of the project is to identify, support and recognize milestones in individual youth development that will impact the identified risk and protective factors. Personal communication with Shannon Porter, June 2022.

Not engaging in services

Youth who do not engage in program activities or services are not immediately sanctioned. Program staff first take a close look at the youth's overall participation since enrollment and examine any changes in the youth's life to identify whether additional support is needed. This helps the program staff make more informed decisions based on overall program progress rather than individual instances of non-compliance. In extreme cases of disengagement or disruptive behavior, program staff use individualized sanctions that are proportionate to the behavior. Continued non-compliance with the program and/or services can lead to termination from the program.

Incentivizing behavior change

The Girls Court Program uses a well-established system of reward and recognition to positively reinforce desired behavior change. This approach is guided by a micro-economy, a framework for promoting positive change through reward-seeking behavior (which is a normal part of adolescent brain development).⁶³ For example, all participants are given small gifts during the first court hearing. These gifts celebrate the launch of the program and serve as an incentive to promote program participation. Celebrating girls' birthdays and handing out birthday presents (e.g., small toys, food, decorative pencils or pens, T-shirts, etc.) is a regular feature of the program. This practice is believed to instill in participants a sense of belonging and encourage program participation.

Youth who achieve their goals and/or who are in compliance with court-ordered obligations are eligible for rewards and privileges, including gift cards/certificates or special experiences (e.g., special field trips or recreation). These rewards and privileges are provided to participants immediately (or as soon as possible) after the goal is reached, so they can draw a connection between the desired behavior and the incentive. For youth who fully engage in services, they could be eligible to have their supervision time reduced.

Program completion

Criteria for successful program completion include consistent attendance and engagement in assigned treatment, compliance with the check-in requirements with the case manager, and attendance in court. If all conditions of the program are met, the original charges against the girl are dismissed. Girls who complete the program receive a certificate and take part in an acknowledgement ceremony.

Program funding

Funding for the initial pilot was provided by a statewide private non-profit, the Center for Children & Youth Justice, located in Seattle, Washington. Kitsap County was eventually able to absorb program operations into their regular work schedules and budget, but the non-profit continued to provide financial support for some of the independent living programming, staff trainings, and for the evaluation.

⁶³ Doll, Christopher, et al. (2013). "The Token Economy: A Recent Review and Evaluation." *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 2 (1): 131-149.

SECTION 3: EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Because girls' courts are relatively new, and there is limited published research about their effectiveness,⁶⁴ it has been extremely important for the Kitsap County Girls Court team to conduct evaluation. A program evaluation was planned and carried out alongside the pilot program implementation.

The evaluation activities began in June 2019, at the time of program launch, and continued throughout the 3-year pilot program period.⁶⁵ This period covers nine months prior to the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order issued by Washington State Governor Jay Inslee on March 23, 2020, which enacted social distancing protocols and restricted "non-essential" movement outside the home due to COVID-19 and 15 months into the order. COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of the Girls Court program, including youth recruitment, program delivery, maintaining connections with program participants, data collection, and evaluation. Most programming moved to virtual platforms. An original evaluation plan developed prior to the pandemic was updated several times to reflect changes to the program and evaluation priorities. The project team identified design options that were feasible in the context of the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order, and abandoned those options which would be impossible to carry out.

The purpose of the Kitsap County Girls Court pilot evaluation was to measure the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the program. The evaluation contained a process and an outcome evaluation. The process evaluation assessed the extent to which program activities were carried out as planned, and identified any obstacles that were encountered and how these obstacles were overcome. The outcome evaluation was used to examine whether the program achieved its intended goals. It focused on the short-term and intermediate outcomes that occur while a participant is still in the program. The original plan to examine differences in recidivism rates (the number/percentage of youth referred to the courts, measured by court filings, at least once up to 18 months following program completion) between program participants and non-participants was not fully executed due to COVID-19's dramatic impact on program enrollment and time constraints of the pilot. The study only collected the preliminary descriptive data related to recidivism.

"I really think Covid-19 hurt the program... Not being able to meet in person, doing things over Zoom, maintaining virtual contact is not the same as judge being with them in a garden or [name] seeing them every week."

-Kitsap court professional

A variety of evaluation data was collected at different times of the pilot, including program documents (e.g., written meeting notes, operational plans, policies and/or guidelines, case management plans, and weekly progress reports); available local data such as public health

⁶⁴ There have been only two studies published: 1) Davidson, J., Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2011). "She's Way Too Good to Lose": An Evaluation of Honolulu's Girls Court." *Women & Criminal Justice*, 21(4): 308–327; and 2) Luminais, M., Lovell, R., & McGuire, M. (2019). "A Safe Harbor Is Temporary Shelter, Not A Pathway Forward: How Court-Mandated Sex Trafficking Intervention Fails to Help Girls Quit the Sex Trade." *Victims & Offenders*, 14(5): 540– 560.

⁶⁵ The evaluation was conducted by the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), under a grant awarded by the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) and operated by the Kitsap County Juvenile and Family Court. As the result of this evaluation, a series of reports were prepared, including a forthcoming Final Evaluation report. The evaluation reports can be accessed on the CCYJ Web site at: <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

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community assessments, fact sheets, and community surveys; observations of court hearings; post-training assessments; and two sets of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders conducted at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program. Analyses of these data indicated improvements in three major categories: 1) organizational practices; 2) staff competencies; and 3) youth outcomes.

The process evaluation showed that staff successfully built new program structures and developed new partnerships and communication with community stakeholders. As a result of these partnerships, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication and collaboration that did not exist before. Staff developed new knowledge and skills through trainings and found them to be valuable. Stakeholders reported that they were able to create an environment where each team member was encouraged to be open to new ideas, be prepared to address the urgent needs of youth, design and pilot new program activities, and try new engagement strategies during the COVID-19 crisis.

“Many outcomes of our work become evident only after months of work, especially in mental health and substance abuse treatment field.”

-Service provider

Although program staff saw success as a multidimensional concept meaning different things to different stakeholders, they overwhelmingly viewed the program as beneficial to participants. Program staff cited multiple ways the program benefited participants, including problem recognition, improved self-awareness and self-understanding, skills building, symptom reduction, and positive behavior change. Sustained connections between youth and adults (e.g., mentors, service providers, counselors, etc.) after graduation from the program were also mentioned as signs of program success.

For the outcome evaluation, the results suggest that the program’s strengths are in skills building and in enhancing attitudes and behaviors related to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning.

“...girls get lost, they are overwhelmed with so many things required of them [at school] and they do not know where to start and they give up... Luckily, we were able to help some of them how to navigate their school work.”

- Service provider

The pilot has also shown evidence of school improvement, with 43% of girls demonstrating positive changes in academic engagement and/or achievement (i.e., school enrollment status, attitudes toward education, school attendance, academic performance, and school conduct). Girls’ behavioral health gains were very modest.⁶⁶

Preliminary recidivism among participants was low (19%),⁶⁷ compared to a 24% recidivism rate among Kitsap girls (N=38) who were sentenced to community supervision a year prior to the launch of the program. Out of 27 participants in the pilot, only one youth (4%) re-

offended within 18 months after completing the program, and four girls (15%) reoffended while on community supervision with/participating in the Kitsap Girls Court. The girls who reoffended while participating in Girls Court were promptly offered appropriate services through the program.

⁶⁶ For more information see Gertseva, Arina and Mocha, Claire (2022). Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report. Olympia, WA. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), Administrative Office of the Courts (forthcoming).

⁶⁷ Because not enough time has passed since the launch of the program, this finding is preliminary.

SECTION 4: GIRL’S COURT PROGRAM READINESS

This section presents a framework to assess the capacity of an organization and/or community to implement a girls’ court program. This strategy will encourage court systems and/or community organizations to reflect on staff knowledge and experience, structures and functions within the organization, organizational culture, and connections with community partners and to identify what is missing, and plan for next steps.

Table 3 summarizes key considerations when assessing girls’ court program readiness. This list is informed by (1) the recommendations set forth by the OJJDP for gender-responsive intervention for girls,⁶⁸ and (2) the Kitsap County Girls Court program experiences. Going through this list and marking the answers can help create a “to-do” list of elements needed to embark on program implementation. It is unlikely that a court or organization will already have all these elements in place, but many can be developed during the beginning stages of program planning. Importantly, if the answer to many of these questions is “No,” and if it is unclear what capacity exists to address them, it may be worthwhile to identify a community partner to fill in some gaps.

Table 3: Key considerations when assessing readiness to initiate a girls’ court program

Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Need	The caseload of female youth is sufficient to justify the creation of a new program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a clear understanding of the primary needs of justice-involved girls in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a clear understanding of the barriers and resources for addressing the identified issue(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judicial Leadership	There is a dedicated judge, preferably female, willing and with the capacity to oversee the cases and actively participate in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The leadership sees value in the girls’ court program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is commitment from leadership to support the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	There are appropriate resources (e.g., staff, facilities, materials, and technology) to implement and sustain the girls’ court program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There are data systems and processes in place to track and monitor program outputs and outcomes that inform decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff have the time and capacity to provide the intensive, consistent meetings and activities outlined in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

⁶⁸ Kerig, P. K., & Schindler, S. R. (2013). [Engendering the evidence base](#): A critical review of the conceptual and empirical foundations of gender-responsive interventions for girls’ delinquency. *Laws*, 2, 244-28.

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Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Staffing	There is a dedicated team of professionals to support the program (including, but not limited to, probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, social workers, counselors, and education advocates).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff are willing to try different techniques to improve effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a system in place for ongoing training of established employees in gender- and trauma-responsive practice(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trauma-responsive	All staff members are educated about what it means to be a trauma-responsive organization, its importance, and the role of each person in the organization in creating a safe and trusting healing environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members are trained in gender-responsive programming for females, including differences between male and female socialization, female psychosocial development (including relational-cultural theory), female needs and challenges, and female strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members actively apply a trauma-responsive approach across courtrooms, family teams, providers, and stakeholders to ensure youth are met with compassion; and strengths/protective factors are included in all planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members treat families and youth as partners, sharing decision-making and information to the extent possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equity & Social Justice	Staff members actively acknowledge and address issues related to racial equity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interventions are individualized and, whenever possible, reflect family and youth choices.		
	Staff members recognize and validate the strengths and expertise that families and youth bring to the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment and Case Management	There is a screening and assessment process designed to uncover the specific risks, needs, and strengths of girls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The initial intake, assessment, and documentation process includes questions designed to sensitively and respectfully explore prior and current trauma-related experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The case management process is collaborative, growth fostering, and driven by the outcomes of the screening and assessment process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Girls have an opportunity to review the outputs from the assessment process prior to developing a case plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment	There is a physical site(s) available to host activities that is safe and welcoming.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Quality Assurances and Evaluation	There is a data collection system (or systems) that collects and stores information regarding girls' profile data, participation in program activities, and outcome information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a system in place to collect qualitative data to assess girls' perspectives on the services and program activities they participate in to ensure alignment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The staff regularly engage in self-reflection and continuous quality improvement with standardized processes that include data collection, analysis, review, and action.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Connections	There are established connections to community service providers that can provide programming to participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There are connections in the community to provide opportunities to involve girls in community activities through volunteering or internships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff have capacity to conduct community outreach to mobilize community members and engage them in the development of services and opportunities for girls, including volunteering, internships, job shadowing, or employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organization has experience engaging external partners (such as substance use treatment programs, clinicians, and health care providers) to refer the most complicated cases in their care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After the program is launched, program staff who are interested in promoting a more inclusive environment for participants can use a collection of existing tools for assessing gender responsiveness⁶⁹ and trauma responsiveness⁷⁰ of their practices. Although these tools were developed for program administrators, evaluators, and staff working with institutionalized women or girls, many items can be used for a girls' court program.

Of note, because multiracial youth (youth who identify as two or more races) is one of the fastest growing racial groups in the U.S., it is important that the staff and program design are culturally aware and able to provide services that are responsive to the needs and strengths of multiracial girls. Literature suggests that multiracial adolescents experience challenges distinct from their single-race peers that may result in more negative health and educational outcomes.⁷¹

⁶⁹ [Gender-Responsive Program Assessment Tool](#) was developed for program administrators, evaluators, agency monitors and staff to use to evaluate the gender responsiveness of programs for women and girls. The assessment instrument is based on the fundamental elements of quality programming including the guiding principles from the "Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders Report" (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003). Another assessment tool is available here: [grppa-scoring-instrument-v14.pdf \(nicic.gov\)](#).

⁷⁰ Self-assessment tool is available here [Elements of Trauma-Informed Care in Youth Service Settings](#)

⁷¹ Choi, Y., Harachi, T. W., Gillmore, M. R., & Catalano, R. F. (2006). Are multiracial adolescents at greater risk? Comparisons of rates, patterns, and correlates of substance use and violence between mono-racial and multiracial adolescents. *The American journal of orthopsychiatry*, 76(1), 86–97.

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The Multiracial/Ethnic Counseling Concerns (MRECC) Interest Network of the American Counseling Association⁷² has developed a list of competencies that promote the development of professional practices to effectively attend to the diverse needs of multiracial populations. This can be a great resource for working with multiracial girls. Several existing tools might be viable for evaluating [cultural competence](#)⁷³ in organizational settings. Though not an exhaustive review of available tools, the National Library of Medicine provides samples of tools that are within the public domain and can be used for a girls' court program as well as for all justice-involved youth.⁷⁴

Girls' court programs must also be safe and affirming for LGBTQ+ youth. Available research indicates that LGBTQ+ youths compose 5-7% of the nation's youth population, but compose 13-15% percent of youth currently in the juvenile justice system.⁷⁵ And of the female incarcerated juvenile population, LGBTQ+ youths comprise almost 40%.⁷⁶ LGBTQ+ youths face many of the same everyday challenges as their heterosexual peers in the juvenile justice system, and may also face additional obstacles as a result of discriminatory attitudes and practices in response to their sexual orientation and gender identity.⁷⁷

To support and evaluate the LGBTQ+ inclusivity of a program, there are multiple approaches. One approach developed and supported by the Center for Children & Youth Justice is the Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care,⁷⁸ a framework for providing safer and more affirming care to LGBTQ + youth, and a SOGIE Questionnaire⁷⁹ to facilitate data collection and relationship building. Another approach, the Whole Youth Model created by Ceres Policy Research, centers the collection of individual sexual orientation, gender identity, and race data in the context of sequenced practice changes, including training and policy adoption, to support the well-being of young people.⁸⁰ Additionally, an assessment tool⁸¹ created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NORC at University of Chicago, in partnership with LGBTQ+ health experts, school health experts, and non-governmental health and education agencies has many items that can be used for a girls' court program.

⁷² [Multi-Racial/Ethnic Counseling Concerns \(MRECC\) Interest Network of the American Counseling Association](#).

⁷³ Cultural competence "...refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, languages, interpersonal styles, and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff members who are providing such services." Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US). (2014). *Improving Cultural Competence*. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 59. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK248434/>

⁷⁴ The National Library of Medicine has a great collection of tools for assessing cultural competence here [Tools for Assessing Cultural Competence - Improving Cultural Competence - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#).

⁷⁵ Hunt, Jerome, & Aisha C. Moodie-Mills. 2012. *The Unfair Criminalization of Gay and Transgender Youth: An Overview of the Experiences of LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress

⁷⁶ [Unjust: LGBTQ+ Youth Incarcerated In The Juvenile Justice System](#). Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress

⁷⁷ <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/media/document/lgbtqyouthsinthejuvenilejusticesystem.pdf>

⁷⁸ The Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care is available at <https://ccyj.org/our-work/supporting-lgbtq-youth/supporting-lgbtq-youth-protocol/>

⁷⁹ The SOGIE Questionnaire, Guide, and Training Video are available at <http://ccyjresources.org/?s=sogie+questionnaire>. In addition to the implementation sites supported by the Center for Children & Youth Justice, the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, with support from the Washington State Center for Court Research, is piloting SOGIE data collection using a variation of CCYJ's SOGIE Questionnaire in five juvenile courts across Washington State.

⁸⁰ Canfield, A., Wilber, S., Irvine, A., & Larrabee-Garza, M. (2019). *The Whole Youth Model: How Collecting Data About Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE) Helps Probation and Youth Courts Build More Authentic Relationships Focused on Improved Well-Being*. Ceres Policy Research. Oakland, CA: December. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60da0d6e99c93c16e9951f78/t/60feb336f77b35a91e3bde/1627306860833/sogie.practice_guide.17december2019.pdf

⁸¹ [LGBTQ Inclusivity in Schools: A Self-Assessment Tool](#) was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NORC at University of Chicago, an objective non-partisan research institution, in partnership with LGBTQ health experts, school health experts, and non-governmental health and education agencies.



SECTION 5: KITSAP TACTICS IN DETAIL

Views from the bench, court staff, and community partners

In this section key program staff including the judge, court services officer (CSO), prosecutor, and service providers share insights (in their own words) about what it's like to perform their role in the Kitsap County Girls Court program. Examining specific recommendations and lessons learned from key stakeholders suggests the strategies and tactics needed for program success. The original language has been kept as much as possible, with only small edits for clarity or brevity.

The key stakeholders note, first and foremost, that the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges that were logistical (forcing programming to be provided virtually) and also relational (reducing the contact participants had with each other and with program staff). The CSO had to ensure that program logistics and operations were accessible and attractive for girls and their families to participate, for example by scheduling during times of the day when they would be able to attend. The program requires a significant time investment to provide the consistency in communication and contact with program participants that leads to trust and forming positive relationships; and it must be flexible, to adapt to changes in girls' needs and circumstances. Finally, the program has to function in a way that balances holding girls accountable for their actions while also understanding how little control girls have over many of the circumstances of their lives.

Key Lessons Learned from the Judge:

From my perspective, one of the most challenging parts of being a superior court judge is dealing with the youth who are involved in our criminal justice system. Watching youth struggle with substance use disorder, mental health issues, and/or just not having anyone whom they can count on, is often heartbreaking. When CCYJ approached me with starting this program, they told me that this was going to be a new way of providing help to our youth and I was ready to listen. They had been studying our juvenile justice system for a while and they provided me with a lot of research for starting a program like this. From their information, we knew that the number of girls being arrested for more serious or violent crimes had been increasing and we knew that girls entering our justice system generally had greater histories of trauma and other adverse childhood experiences than the boys in the justice system, yet we were still doing the same thing for youth regardless of gender. This did not make sense. When I discussed this with my bench mates, they were immediately on board for trying a different approach.

"I wanted them [the participants] to be provided the treatment they needed in order to unpack and deal with the underlying issues that brought them before our Court in the first place."

-Judge

When we started Girls Court in Kitsap County, I had specific goals for the program. I wanted all the youth who participated in this Court to have a helpful and positive experience going through their probation requirements. I wanted them to be provided the treatment they needed in order to unpack and deal with the underlying issues that brought them before our court in the first place. I also

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wanted to connect each participant to services that would assist in making successful choices for their futures. But, if I could do nothing else, I wanted all of the participants in this program to leave with a larger and more robust support system than they had when they entered it. Each youth comes in with different levels of support, but I wanted to make sure that we provided them with additional healthy adults that would be there for them if they needed to reach out. Luckily, I have a fabulous team that wants the same thing for each girl that enters our program and works tirelessly to make it happen.

To accomplish these goals, we partnered with treatment providers that specialize in chemical dependency issues and mental and behavioral health concerns, so that depending on the issue or issues a participant needs to deal with, we can offer them the help they need to begin to heal and move forward. But to accomplish all of those goals, we needed to go beyond the traditional treatment court model. We needed support and mentorship from our community. Honestly, I was astounded and ecstatic at the response to this call for assistance from the local community. We work with many partners to provide mentorship, teach independent living skills, and assist in setting career goals. To do this, we do monthly activities with our community partners so the girls can learn from and interact with strong women in our community. One month we might be learning how to make cookies while we discuss toxic relationships, and the next month we may have someone from a local bank talking about setting up checking accounts and budgeting. These incredible community service providers want to be there to help our girls not only through their time with the Court but to continue to assist them as they build their futures after they leave their court obligations behind.

So far, I believe that we have succeeded in meeting most of our goals with most of the girls that have come into the program. This has been more difficult than I originally thought, as I had forgotten the resistance that a teenage girl can demonstrate to anything that she does not believe that she wants to do. It had been a while since I was a teenager. However, I see that persistence and continued support demonstrates to them that what we want for them truly is a brighter future. As they begin to trust the team, they begin to try more of the services that we are offering for them, and they begin to progress on their own individual goals.

"This has been more difficult than I originally thought as I had forgotten the resistance that a teenage girl can demonstrate to anything that she does not believe that she wants to do."

-Judge

"So far, I believe that we have succeeded in meeting most of our goals with most of the girls that have come into the program."

-Judge

The pandemic also made achieving our goals more difficult as some of our community partners closed their doors for a while and we lost that personal touch with the girls by going virtual. But we have adapted and made changes and I believe are coming out of the pandemic with a group of partners who are even more committed to helping our youth achieve their goals.

This program is well worth the hard work we put into it, and I look forward to going to every session with the girls. I would definitely recommend it to other courts who are considering starting their own program.

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Key Lessons Learned from the Court Services Officer (CSO):

Girls Court provides CSOs with a new way of working with youth. Girls Court supports the developmental health and well-being of youth in care. It builds capacity and expands community partnerships, and it increases timely access to services for youth. CSOs will work with clients to create individualized case plans and goals, engaging families from the beginning of the process. This involves creating effective, developmentally appropriate case management practices that promote well-being.

“CSOs need to identify and engage supportive team members and community partners to support the program.”

- Court Services Officer

The Girls Court structure was modeled after existing alternative court structures. When designing the program, staff drew on our past experiences and programming ideas to pull the best of those into Girls Court, including drawing on relationships with community partners that had already been developed from existing programs. One particular idea, the clothing closet, was adopted after a chance encounter at one of the alternative schools in the community that provided clothing to one of our youth. We

adapted that idea and now provide youth with basic essentials such as toiletries and clothing. The funding for this program is now provided by a local non-profit organization, Soroptimists, who contacted us after seeing a newspaper article about Girls Court. Over the past few years, the program has evolved from post-disposition to pre-disposition and has influenced other programs currently within the department. Girls Court has continued to evolve since it was implemented and creativity has made it unique to all other programs, but the foundation of the program came from established promising practices within the department.

CSOs need to pay attention to logistics and scheduling, ensuring timely completion of screenings to facilitate a smooth referral to needed services. For example, Girls Court was initially scheduled to be on a Friday afternoon at 3 pm. This was based on the availability of the judge. However, most staff and clients were looking forward to the weekend, so this was not well received. Instead, we found Tuesday at 3 pm to be a better day when youth would be out of school.

Additionally, CSOs need to identify and engage supportive team members and community partners to support the program. One challenge we noted was that it was difficult for some families to participate in programming because of geographical barriers. Kitsap County is geographically very spread out and the transit system is not always convenient. Many youth relied on guardians for transportation to the program activities, but even with a supportive guardian, this can be burdensome due to the cost of gas, inconsistent access to vehicles, and the guardian’s work schedule.

“Many participants have told me while leaving the program that they would not be in a position they are right now if they were not participating in the program. That tells me that whatever we are doing is making a difference.”

--Court Service Officer

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Key Lessons Learned from the Prosecutor:

There were several important key lessons learned. First, the program requires significant time and resources, particularly funding and personnel. Next, the program requires flexibility, as participant needs and context can change. Finally, it's essential to educate all stakeholders on the importance of gender responsive principles.

Some challenges to program implementation included the following:

- Ensuring coordination and inclusion of all stakeholders in the system.
- Ensuring a treatment model exists for gender responsive treatment.
- Establishing intake standards for who would qualify.
- Ensuring confidentiality for medical and mental health disclosures (HIPAA).
- Adopting a non-judgmental and supportive voice.
- Assessing safety issues to ensure the participant is in a safe situation.
- Making sure to identify important relationships in the participant's life.
- Ensuring consistency, while at the same time being flexible, as each individual's needs are different.

The program utilized some practices that, while not necessarily evidence-based, showed great promise. These included:

- Ensuring cultural responsiveness of the intervention.
- Building teamwork and positive reinforcement for participants.
- Developing regular group activities.
- Having a committed team, the same dedicated prosecutor, probation counselor, and judge.
- Teaching life skills and extending the reach of the program beyond Girls Court.

"It's essential to educate all stakeholders on the importance of gender responsive principles."
- Prosecutor

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Key Lessons Learned from Service Providers (Olive Crest):

The involvement of a wide range of service providers in a girls' court program is a critical component of the program's success. As the Girls' Court program focuses on community,

"Providers who are more connected to one another in the community allows for a tighter web of services in which clients become less likely to slip through the metaphorical cracks of full-service care, and the use of community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient."

- Service provider

collaboration, and relationship building, these providers should be utilized in a way that allows for each program participant's unique needs to be met in an effort to improve the outcomes of girls involved in the youth legal system. By taking an active role in Girls' Court, providers will be benefited by having increased access to the target populations they are hoping to serve, and further develop provider-to-provider relationships in their communities. Providers who are more connected to one another in the community allow for a tighter web of services in which clients become less likely to slip through the metaphorical cracks of full-service care, and the use of community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient. In a girls'

court, a strong network of community providers being involved with a young person should, in theory, lend itself towards these youth being less reliant on these services into their young adult lives.

Service providers who are considering partnering with a girls' court program should be prepared to offer trauma-informed, youth-focused interventions that meet each girl where she is at, prepared to respond to her unique risk factors and needs. This involves understanding the unique history of every girl that may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, victimization, exploitation, neglect, and involvement in the child welfare system. Service providers should be mindful that a holistic approach to addressing justice-involved girls means building strong, authentic relationships that honor every girl's background. They should believe in a future where their trajectory can be changed.

Some lessons learned include the following:

During our time as a Kitsap County Girls Court service provider in the pilot years of this program, we offered Individual Living Skills (ILS) to all Girls Court participants 15+. The ILS program prepares them for adulthood by teaching youth the skills they need to be independent, and empowers them to reach their unique goals. The ILS program offered these services well past the youth's "graduation" from the Girls Court Program. Youth are eligible to receive ILS services until they turn 21, and the majority of girls referred chose to continue to engage in this program long after they were off court supervision. Our recommendation is that other service providers adopt this approach, as continued support and relationship with youth after the program is over is an essential factor in a healthy reintegration and reduces the likelihood of recidivism.

This pilot of the Girls Court Program occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made a relationship-based program difficult to execute in unprecedented times. However, we do recommend that relational consistency be an essential cornerstone of implementing a girls' court. Court formally met once a month during this pilot, with an additional option for girls' once-a-month participant activity. We believe that in order to build strong relationships, an increase in time and proximity is essential. We recommend weekly meetings in order to achieve this. An additional two meetings a month could be implemented by contracting a mental health provider to offer "group" where girls engage with the group leader and one another by meeting to discuss their successes and

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challenges. This may also offer additional peer accountability for the girls to complete their court-ordered tasks.

Additionally, judges, CSO, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and service providers should remain mindful of their own consistency, and be required to attend every court and activity. This will lend itself to a stronger feeling of community. It is strongly recommended that court professionals and other service providers prioritize consistency in the staff coming each week, so that the girls are able to learn them by name and become comfortable around them (as opposed to a rotating door of strangers, which will make it difficult to openly discuss complex issues).

In order to streamline services and prevent service gaps, all professionals involved in Girls' Court should engage in regular staffings where cases are discussed and services are appropriately recommended. This will prevent the duplication of services and allow for all providers to have the same knowledge in order to more effectively serve the youth.

“Service providers who are considering partnering with a girls’ court program should be prepared to offer trauma-informed, youth-focused interventions that meet each girl where she is at, prepared to respond to her unique risk factors and needs.”

- Service provider

As Girls' Court is a therapeutic court model, judges, probation counselors, defense attorneys, and prosecutors should develop working guidelines between punitive punishments, fair accountability, and passive rulings.

These guidelines should be based on a balance between two important factors. On the one hand, youth do not always have control of their own environmental factors, but are part of a larger system of care, including family and school systems. For example, if a young person is required to enroll in school before the next court hearing, but their guardian is unwilling to complete the paperwork, this is not a failure of the youth. Girls' Court staff should do

everything in their power to engage the additional parties in a youth's system of care.


On the other hand, therapeutic intervention still requires accountability. Recommendations of the court should honor the youth's unique circumstances while holding them accountable to what is within the youth's sphere of control. Failing to hold youth accountable puts them at risk of believing their actions and choices do not influence their outcomes. When the youth becomes an adult without learning these lessons, they may re-engage in a court system and be surprised by the level of punishment they receive.

Each girl involved in Girls' Court presents their own unique set of needs and challenges. We recommend addressing these needs with a tiered approach, first focusing on basic level needs and crisis management when applicable. For example, a young person in a mental health crisis should first be referred to a qualified therapist and achieve a suitable level of mental stability before being asked to re-enroll in school or participate in other supplemental programs. Once youth have reached the basic markers of stability, they should be referred to service providers that will prepare them for an eventual exit from the program and offer ongoing support post-probation.

When handled with care, Girls' Court can be a powerful tool in improving the outcomes of girls involved in the justice system. Youth can be positively impacted by the involvement of a robust network of diverse service providers who partner with the program. Service providers and the greater community will also be positively affected by this involvement. In the development of future girls' court programs, there remain many areas of exploration in order to improve upon the existing model. Together, we can meet the needs of girls in every community.

Appendix

Figure 1: Authorization for Disclosure Form



SUPERIOR COURT OF KITSAP COUNTY
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT SERVICES

1338 SW Old Clifton Road, Port Orchard, WA 98367-9113
Ph.: (360) 337-5401 Fax: (360) 337-5404

Authorization to use, disclose or obtain protected information

I, _____ hereby authorize an exchange of information between

The Kitsap County Superior Court, Juvenile and Family Court Services, and

- _____, **School**
- _____, **Mental Health Services**
- _____, **Parent/Legal Guardian of above-named youth**
- _____, **Drug and Alcohol Services**
- _____, **Medical Services**
- _____, **DCFS**
- Other: OurGEMS, Olive Crest, Kitsap Recovery Center**
- Other: Coffee Oasis, Work Source**

For Confidential Health Information to be obtained/released and/or exchanged:

- All my medical records, including but not limited to; (client to initial records to be included in use of disclosure)
 - Information related to drug/alcohol abuse including urinalysis results, drug evaluation and treatment reports.
 - Information related to Mental Health treatment, diagnosis and evaluation. (Excluding psychotherapy notes)
- School Records.
- Counseling and Therapy Records.
- Other: _____
- Other: _____

Information will be exchanged either telephonically, hand delivered, mailed or encrypted emailed.

The purpose or need for the exchange and disclosure of this information is to:

- Case Planning/Prepare Court Reports
- Coordinate Continuing Care
- Facilitate Treatment

By my signature below, I consent to the release of the information specified above. I also agree to keep confidential the identity and any information about other clients both during and after my program participation. I also understand that any information released to others is protected by Federal and State confidentiality regulations (42 CFR Part 2, 18.19 RCW, 70.02 RC4) I understand that I may revoke this consent in writing at anytime, except to the extent that the program has already taken action in reliance upon it. Otherwise, this consent will automatically expires one year after being signed. My treatment or payment for my treatment cannot be conditioned on the signing of this authorization.

Patient/Client Signature _____
Date

Witness Signature _____
Date

Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Referral Screening Form

Please fill out the following information and return the form to: Court Services Officer

Personal Information

Full Name		<i>Last</i>		<i>First</i>		<i>Middle</i>	
Aliases / Maiden Name/Other Names Used				Where used?		When Used?	
Date of Birth / /	Age	Do you have a Driver's License?			State	Valid? ○ Yes ○ No	
If Driver's License is not valid explain:							
Race (Check all that apply) If more than one, please indicate your primary racial identification with an asterisk (*).							
<input type="checkbox"/> African American		<input type="checkbox"/> Alaskan Native		<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian		<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian		<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		<input type="checkbox"/> Latino			
<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander				<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Racial (please mark all that apply)			
Primary Language: _____					Ethnicity:		
If primary language is not English, please answer the following:					<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		
Are you able to read and speak English? Yes No					<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Hispanic		
Do you need an Interpreter? Yes No							
Gender M F	Height	Weight	Eye Color (Circle One) Black Blue Brown Green Hazel Other: _____			Hair Color (Circle One) Bald Black Blonde Brown Grey Red White Other: _____	
Current Physical Address		<i>Street</i>		<i>Apt#</i>		<i>City</i> <i>Zip Code</i>	
Mailing Address (if different from physical) Code		<i>Street/PO Box#</i>		<i>City</i>		<i>Zip</i>	

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Who are you currently living with and what is your relationship with them? Please provide full Names, Date of Birth and contact phone numbers and email for adults.

Name:	Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:
DOB:	DOB:	DOB:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:
Email:	Email:	Email:

Home Phone ()	Youth's Cell Phone ()	Youth's Email
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Markings, Scars, Tattoos:

Criminal Justice / Legal History

Prior Convictions outside Washington State? Yes No If prior convictions are outside of Washington state, please list; beginning with the most recent:	
Child Protective Services involvement? Yes No	Previous Convictions of Domestic Violence? Yes No
Previous Convictions of a Sex Offense? Yes No If yes, What: _____ No	Have you ever registered as a sex offender? Yes No If yes, where? _____
Do you have any outstanding warrants for your arrest? Yes No If yes, Where? _____ For what? _____	
Have you ever had any warrants for Failing to Appear in court? Yes No If yes, Where? _____ For what? _____	
Are you currently on Probation? Yes No Probation Officer's Name: _____ If yes, for what? _____ If yes, where are you on probation? _____	
Are you currently on Parole? Yes No Parole Officer's Name: _____ If yes, for what? _____ If yes, where are you on probation? _____	
Do you have any other pending cases that you received notice of? Yes No If so, what type of case are they and in what county/state?	
Have you participated in any of the following programs? <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression Replacement Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Functional Family Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> MRT <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Coordination of Services <input type="checkbox"/>	
If so when did you participate in these programs, did you complete the program, where did you participate in these programs?	

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Substance Abuse History

Drug of Choice:	Prior Substance Abuse Treatment? Yes No Where:
When was the last time you used drugs or alcohol? Date: _____ Drug(s): _____	
Have you used IV drugs in the Past 30 days? Yes No	Do you have a history of IV use? Yes No
Are you currently in a Substance Abuse Treatment Program? Yes No If Yes, Where: _____ Start Date: _____ Type of program: _____	
Age you began using drugs: Drug: _____ Age: _____ Drug: _____ Age: _____	Age you began using alcohol:
Do you still have contact with people you used alcohol and drugs with? Yes No	Are there any alcohol or drugs where you are living? Yes No If So, what is present in the home?

Medical and Mental Health History

Current medications, medication dose, and prescribing physician (psychological conditions only):			
Medication:	Dose:	Frequency:	Prescribing Physician and Reason:
Have you ever been diagnosed with a Mental Health Condition? Yes No If so, what is the diagnosis(s): _____			
Current Therapist information: please provide name, office and contact information _____			
Medical Insurance Information: Name of Insurance Provider: _____ ID Numbers: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Indian Health Services <input type="checkbox"/> Tricare <input type="checkbox"/> uninsured <input type="checkbox"/> other _____			

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Education/Employment History

Current Grade Level in School: Name of School attending:	Last/Current school Attended: <input type="checkbox"/> Currently Enrolled <input type="checkbox"/> Suspended <input type="checkbox"/> Expelled If Suspended or Expelled, when can you return to school?
Educational Status: <input type="checkbox"/> Currently Enrolled <input type="checkbox"/> GED <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated High School <input type="checkbox"/> not enrolled; if so why:	
Do you have an IEP? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes Yes	
Do you have a 504 Plan at school? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
If so, what is the IEP or 504 plan for?	
Are you employed: <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes if yes, where, and contact information:	

Relationships/Interests/Community Engagements

Why do you want to enter Treatment Court?	List one goal you would like to obtain in the next six months?
What are your Hobbies and Interests?	
What is something you would like us to know about you?	
List those in your support circle:	

Thank you! Please Return to the Juvenile Court Services Officer


Last Updated: July 9, 2019

Figure 2: Kitsap Case Management Form with Goals

DATE _____ *You've got this!* _____

TODAY I'M GRATEFUL FOR _____

TODAY'S EMOTIONS



APPOINTMENTS FOR THE WEEK:

MY RESPONSIBILITY/FAMILY GOAL:

MY SHORT TERM/PROBATION GOAL: _____

- BENEFITS _____
- BARRIERS _____
- SUPPORT _____
- CONSEQUENCES _____

STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

G
o
a
l
s

MY LONG-TERM/LIFE GOAL:

BENEFITS OF GOAL:

ACTION STEP:

ACTION STEP:

BARRIERS:

SUPPORT:

INCENTIVES/REWARDS:

CONSEQUENCES:

ACTION STEPS TO ACHIEVE SHORT TERM GOALS

GOAL START DATE	ACTION STEPS	INCENTIVE/REWARDS	REVIEW DATE
AFFIRMATION & CELEBRATION	WHAT COULD I DO BETTER?	WHAT DID I DO WELL?	

DATE _____ *Results!* _____

My Contract Goals:

Points available/Points earned: _____

MY SHORT TERM/PROBATION GOAL:

Points available/Points earned: _____

MY LONG TERM/LIFE GOAL:

Points available/Points earned: _____

MY RESPONSIBILITY/FAMILY GOAL:

Points available/Points earned: _____

Circle one:



Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Table 1: Kitsap Community Partners and Services Provided⁸²

Services	Provider	# girls served
Mental health therapy	Kitsap mental health or private	17
Intensive mental health and substance use	Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISE)	10
Inpatient mental health	Daybreak Youth Services	< 5
Behavioral rehabilitation services	Kitsap County & Peninsula , Catholic Community Services	< 5
Mental health treatment, employment assistance, educational advising, housing support services	Scarlett Road	5
Independent living skills, educational and career advancement counseling regarding attainment of general equivalency diploma (GED)	OliveCrest	5
Outpatient chemical dependency treatment	Agape	10
Mentoring (enrichment, social skills, career skills, school based advocacy health & wellness, financial literacy)	OurGEMS	9
Housing	Youth housing authority	9
Student Advocate	South Kitsap School District	8
Job preparation and internships	The Coffee Oasis	< 5
Family Assessment Response	FAR/DCYF	5
Job preparation, including successful work ethic and attitude models	OESD 114 Early Learning	< 5
Providing professional clothing for school, interview for a job, or court hearing	Kitsap Juvenile Court, funded by Soroptimists	< 5
Individualized services, customized one-on-one programs for youth	Hope Inc	< 5
Education and training skills, empowerment	Soroptimists	10
Alternative to detention/activity provider	Alternatives to detention	10-15
Activities provider	Kitsap Credit Union	10

⁸² Numbers less than 5 are suppressed to protect disclosure of individual data

Table 2: Shared in-Group Activities

Activity	Provider
Money, finances, budgeting	Kitsap Federal Credit Union
Making tie die t-shirts	Kitsap Federal Credit Union
Table and conversational etiquette while being served a multi-course dinner.	OurGEMS
Scavenger hunt (online)	OurGEMS
Two back to back activities using their “Dream It Be It” material – setting goals	Soroptimists
Brought in local artist and she taught the girls how to paint a floral picture from scratch. She also discussed positivity during the session and overcoming ones insecurities. We then planted flowers around the juvenile department and each youth took home a plant they had transplanted.	Local artist
Baking cookies	Program staff
Growth and self-care	Program staff
Gardening	Program staff

Table 3: Trainings, description, providers, and the dates

Training	Provider	Date
<p>Girl-Centered Practices and Gender Responsiveness Key topics included research and data on gender disparities in the juvenile justice system, distinctions in physical, mental, emotional, and social health needs for girls, trust and relationship building with at-risk girls, and strategies for resolving interpersonal conflicts with at-risk girls.</p>	The Justice for Girls Coalition	5/7/2019
<p>Serving LGBTQIA+ Youth This training was designed for youth serving professionals (but open to all) who want to learn more about supporting LGBTQ+ youth.</p> <p>Key topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why we need specific protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth; ● What it means to be LGBTQ+, including the definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE); ● Some fundamental protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth; ● Some promising practices for discussing sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) with youth; and ● Two steps they can take toward making their court, agency, or organization safer and more affirming. ● 	The Center for Children & Youth Justice	8/19/2019
<p>Serving Child Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation This training provided information on the what, who, how, and why of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children, with a focus on victim engagement and a detailed discussion of identification and the “red flags.”</p>	The Center for Children & Youth Justice	9/9/2019
<p>Nutrition and Trauma (“Protein For All”) The training was designed to train court officials to use food to improve their own energy, mental clarity, and decision making. For the court officials using the food helps to reduce secondary trauma and burnout. For the clients, food helps engage their responsive brain versus their reactive brain to increase engagement.</p>	Kristen Allott, ND, MS	10/28/2019

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Training	Provider	Date
<p>Race Equity Training Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Session 1: Welcome & laying the groundwork</i></p> <p>This session introduced core concepts such as systemic/structural racism, equity vs. equality, race equity, and implicit bias, and why these key concepts are critical for justice system workers to know, understand, and integrate into their work.</p> <p><i>Session 2: Structural racism & systems thinking.</i></p> <p>This session described the historical context of the law and justice system and explained how systems become oppressive.</p> <p><i>Session 3: Addressing bias & interrupting racism & oppression (part 1)</i></p> <p>This session helped participants examine the impact their lived experiences, assumptions, and interpersonal interactions have on clients and colleagues.</p> <p><i>Session 4: Addressing bias & interrupting racism & oppression (part 2)</i></p> <p>This session offered strategies to interrupt racism and bias to support engaging more competently with court participants and colleagues of color.</p> 	<p>JustLead Washington</p>	<p>3/2/2021 – 3/23/2021</p>
<p>Science of Hope Trainings Series</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <p><i>Session 1: Science of Hope - Overview</i></p> <p>This presentation presented an overview of the science of hope and its ability to 1: buffer adversity and stress, 2: lead to positive outcomes, and 3: is a strength that can be nurtured with targeted intervention.</p> <p><i>Session 2: Regulation, Neuroscience of Motivation, and Tools for Building Hope.</i></p> <p>Review the science of hope framework and dive-deep into the neuroscience of regulation and motivation. Participants will be invited to explore practical tools/solutions for increasing agency thinking, pathway thinking, and visioning.</p> 		<p>01/05/2021 -10/12/ 2021</p>