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FACT SHEET: Girls in Juvenile Justice

Pathways for Girls into the Juvenile Justice System

Girls present with higher rates of serious mental health conditions including post traumatic stress disorder, psychiatric disorders, attempts of self harm, and suicide.¹

- Up to 92% of incarcerated girls have experienced one or more forms of physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse
- 70% have been exposed to trauma
- 65% experience symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder (50% more likely to experience PTSD than boys)
- 45% have been beaten or burned at least once
- 40% have been raped
- 32% have current or past sexually transmitted disease
- 32% have chronic health problems
- Girls are 11 times more likely to die while incarcerated²

Trauma is linked to higher rates of substance abuse³

- 60-80% of girls need substance abuse treatment
- 50% report drug use by a parent⁴

Higher rates of family and parental issues

- 70% experienced family issues/conflict⁵

Girls' Arrest and Incarceration Tied to Differential Treatment

Girls are predominantly arrested for status offenses (truancy, runaway, curfew violations, etc) or violations of probation

- Of all youth incarcerations, 42% of girls are 15 and younger, compared to 31% of boys 15 and younger.
- Girls are incarcerated for status offenses (18%) compared to boys (4%).⁶
- Girls are more likely to be returned to detention for longer periods for technical violations for minor infractions such as contempt of court or violations of probation.⁷
- Girls are more likely to be sexually victimized in juvenile facilities than are boys. Girls constitute 11% of the incarcerated population but were victims of 34% of substantiated abuse cases.⁸

¹ National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Programs, Policy Research Associates, NY, www.ncmhjj.com/pdfs/Adol-girls.pdf

² Statistics from Health and Justice for Youth Campaign, Unique Needs of Girls in the Juvenile Justice System, Physicians for Human Rights, <http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/juvenilejustice/factsheets/girls/pdf>.

³ National Center for Mental Health

⁴ Health and Justice Youth Campaign

⁵ NCCD, Rallying Cry for Change, 2006.

⁶ OJJDP Trend Data

⁷ Health and Justice Youth Campaign

⁸ Health and Justice Youth Campaign