



Girls and the Juvenile Court System

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Position on the Treatment of Girls:

- All children deserve to be treated fairly, regardless of gender.
- Policy makers, police officials, officers of the court and correctional providers must work together to remove gender inequities from the juvenile court system.

The Facts on Girls and the Juvenile Court System:

- Delinquent girls have often experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as have family problems. Many suffer from physical and mental disorders and/or endure academic failure.¹
- Forty to 73% of girls in the juvenile court system have been physically abused. In the general United States population, 26% of teenaged girls report physical abuse.²
- While in custody, young female offenders are more likely than their male peers to be sexual victimized by other detained youth or correctional staff. In state-run juvenile facilities, girls account for 11% of the total custody population, but 34% of the victims in substantiated incidents of sexual violence in those facilities are female. In local or privately operated juvenile facilities, the population and victimization percentages among girls is 17% and 37%, respectively.³
- Girls are three times more likely than boys to be sexually abused, and sexual abuse has been recognized as a cause of mental health disorders. Sexual abuse is also related to increased truancy, prostitution and violence, among other destructive behaviors.⁴
- In early adolescence, the incidence of depression rises significantly among girls, but not among boys; depression is a much stronger predictor of delinquency for girls than boys.⁵
- Girls were 27% of the juvenile court population in 2003, yet they accounted for 60% of juvenile arrests for running away and nearly 70% of juvenile arrests for prostitution.⁶

¹ Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D., et al, Medical College of Virginia Commonwealth University, Archives of General Psychiatry, 2000.

² Girls, Inc., *Girls and Juvenile Justice Facts*, New York, NY, August 2002.

³ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*, Washington, DC, 2006.

⁴ The Common Wealth Fund, *Survey on the Health of Adolescent Girls*, New York, NY, November 1997.

⁵ [Handle With Care: Serving the Mental Health Needs of Young Offenders](#), CJJ, 2000.

⁶ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*, Washington, DC, 2006.