

Female Responsive Protocol for Adolescent Offenders



Female Responsive Protocol for Adolescent Female Offenders



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Introduction

In the United States, the development of juvenile justice systems, theories, and program models were shaped by the needs and experiences of adult male offenders. Meanwhile, the needs of the relatively small population of adolescent girls in the juvenile justice system went unmet as the system strove to provide adequate and appropriate services for adolescent boys. Young women were required to fit into existing service resources that were not equipped to meet their specific needs.

Since the early 1990's, Iowa has made efforts to correct this deficiency. In 1995, the Iowa Task Force for Young Women (formerly the Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force) was created. The Iowa Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, with funding via the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act through the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning, formed the Task Force to examine gender issues in the development and provision of services by Iowa's juvenile justice system. Since then, the Task Force has sought to support the development and adoption of policies to maximize use of female responsive services in placement and treatment of adolescent females involved in as well as at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system.

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This is a guide to the female responsive approach. It is intended primarily for Juvenile Court officers, Department of Human Services personnel, school staff and service providers. It offers a description of the female responsive framework for creating quality services for adolescent female offenders and young women in high-risk situations. The components outlined in this publication are for use in any setting and were originally established in "Providing Gender-Specific Services for Adolescent Female offenders: Guidelines & Resources", another Task Force publication.

The expansion of them herein is based in equal parts on statistical data/verifiable developmental research related to adolescent girls (detailed in the Recommended Reading/Bibliography section) and the accumulated knowledge/experience of the Iowa Task Force for Young Women members and staff.

Ultimately, we hope this protocol will facilitate a change in the way services are provided to adolescent female offenders and young women in high-risk situations, and will facilitate the healthy development of all of Iowa's young women.

Young Women at Risk

While by no means a comprehensive picture of every aspect of the adolescent female offender population, this section provides a foundation for understanding trends related to the adolescent female in Iowa's juvenile justice system, in particular how she differs from her male counterpart. The following characteristics are based on data drawn from Iowa's Justice Data Warehouse and presented at the Girls' Summits hosted by the Iowa Task Force on Young Women since 2007.

Characteristics that Distinguish a Young Woman from a Young Man in the Juvenile Justice System in Iowa

- *She is more likely to be held in detention for a misdemeanor offense.
- *If she re-offends, the probability that she will commit a property offense decreases and the probability that she will commit a violent offense increases.
- *She is white; however African American girls like African American boys are a significantly higher proportion of the juvenile justice population than they are of the general population.
- *She is at the "front end" of the juvenile justice system. As juveniles penetrate deeper into the system, numbers of young women diminish.
- *She has been charged with shoplifting, liquor law violations, simple assault or disorderly conduct (top four offenses for young women).
- *She is more likely to be taken into custody for running away.

The data, conclusions and recommendations from the inaugural Girls Summit as well as subsequent Girls Summits can be found on the Task Force website (www.women.iowa.gov/girls).

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Psychological research shows that while there are similarities between the genders, there are unique issues specific to the processes of female physical, emotional and cognitive development. For example, emerging research indicates hormonal differences in brain development between the genders which can influence behavior in disparate ways. (Steinberg, 2009) Moreover, juvenile justice research reveals that adolescent females' patterns of offending often vary in scope and motivation from those of adolescent males (Girls Study Group, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2010). These differences must be considered when designing effective interventions.

Likewise, in program planning, equality of service delivery does not mean simply allowing adolescent girls access to the services traditionally provided for adolescent boys. Instead, boys and girls must have parity in basic program requirements - quality of staff, financial support, and quality of the physical structure. However, in treatment, equality must be redefined to mean providing opportunities that are equally meaningful to each gender. So, while equal in quality, effective treatment services will differ depending on whether males or females are served.

Furthermore, the problems presented by adolescent girls involved in or at risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system are rooted in society's gender role expectations of girls and women. There is a connection between women's roles in greater society, the societal barriers to healthy female growth and development, and specific treatment issues for girls (National Institute of Corrections, 2003). It is then essential that young women be guided to an awareness of this connection. In effect, each girl must recognize her treatment issues as related to larger societal issues and as relative to her specific culture. Lasting change will occur only when it involves not only individual and relational aspects, but community and societal aspects as well.

# ***The Female Responsive Approach***

The female responsive approach intentionally allows gender identity and development to affect and guide program design and service delivery. Certainly, female responsive programs and services extend beyond simply targeting adolescent girls as an audience. They meet the standard of being specific to the female experience and free from sexism. In order to be effective, female responsive programs and services must reflect an understanding of female development and the specific issues of contemporary adolescent females.

## ***Female Responsive Program Components***

The following eleven components are essential to any female responsive program that attempts to holistically address the needs and issues of adolescent girls who are involved with, or at risk for involvement with, the juvenile justice system.

- 1. Programs must provide emotional and physical safety**
- 2. Programs must be culturally appropriate**
- 3. Programs must be relationship-based**
- 4. Programs must provide female role models and mentors**
- 5. Programs must address the abuse in girls' lives**
- 6. Programs must address sexuality, pregnancy and parenting**
- 7. Programs must be strength-based**
- 8. Programs must provide opportunities that promote educational success and employability**
- 9. Programs must address the unique health needs of females, including nutritional concerns and regular physical activity**
- 10. Programs must provide opportunities for spiritual expression**
- 11. Programs must involve members of girls' families and/or support networks**

The eleven sections that follow break down the components into checklists to facilitate user identification of program/staff strengths and areas for improvement. Ongoing assessment of this nature is necessary in order to provide effective and quality female responsive programming to young women.

Users may find that not all items under any given component are applicable for their setting. Additionally, the resource and recommended reading sections will assist with strengthening all aspects of female responsive programming.

## **1. Programs must provide emotional and physical safety.**

- ☐ Staff ask and young women can honestly indicate that they feel safe
- ☐ Staff are thoroughly screened prior to beginning employment
- ☐ Staff receive sufficient, appropriate and ongoing training
- ☐ Staff understand and follow program structure, policies and procedures
- ☐ Staff are trained to appropriately address self-harm behaviors
- ☐ Staff teach young women that self-care is important
- ☐ Staff address behavioral issues consistently
- ☐ Staff respect for privacy, particularly related to abuse issues, is demonstrated
- ☐ Staff honor young women's individuality
- ☐ Staff understand and address relational aggression and other bullying
- ☐ Staff teach young women about personal safety, self-defense, and safe coping mechanisms
- ☐ Staff allow young women to share feelings without judgment or criticism
- ☐ Programs take young women's concerns for safety seriously and act upon them
- ☐ Programs ensure young women are safe from all forms of abuse by staff
- ☐ Programs provide a single-gender environment
- ☐ Programs keep young women safe from any inappropriate demands of their families
- ☐ Programs ensure that confidentiality is respected, expected, and consequence when breached
- ☐ Programs favor non-intrusive security practices
- ☐ Program environments are free from discrimination (e.g., sexism, racism)
- ☐ Program environments are free from narrow gender role stereotypes
- ☐ Programs allow young women to have a space that belongs only to them
- ☐ Programs provide private meeting rooms
- ☐ Programs solicit suggestions from young women about what they need in order to feel safe
- ☐ Programs have clear and simple grievance procedures that are made explicit to young women

## **2. Programs must be culturally appropriate.**

- \_\_\_ Staff approach the cultural differences of young women in ways that support cultural identity
- \_\_\_ Staff assist young women with identifying cultural strengths/risk factors
- \_\_\_ Staff demonstrate respect for young women's cultural background
- \_\_\_ Staff are capable of functioning effectively in the context of cultural differences
- \_\_\_ Staff value diversity and teach the value of diversity
- \_\_\_ Staff recognize that culture goes beyond race and ethnicity to include class, orientation, etc.
- \_\_\_ Staff allow each young woman to define what her culture(s) mean to her
- \_\_\_ Programs provide services with intention rather than neutrality, as neutrality favors the majority culture
- \_\_\_ Programs seek participatory, collaborative partnerships with different cultural communities
- \_\_\_ Programs hire staff to reflect the diversity of the population being served
- \_\_\_ Programs connect young women with appropriate members of their cultural community
- \_\_\_ Programs optimize effectiveness with services rooted in positive cultural influences
- \_\_\_ Programs recognize and mitigate any negative cultural influences
- \_\_\_ Programs support young women learning about people/events/places important in their cultural heritage
- \_\_\_ Programs allow young women to have experiences with many cultures
- \_\_\_ Programs provide activities that are reflective and inclusive of all cultural groups
- \_\_\_ Program materials are not culturally biased
- \_\_\_ Programs provide appropriate materials and accommodations to all populations from hair care products to wheelchair accessibility as needed
- \_\_\_ Programs communicate respect for all cultures - race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, disability, spirituality, etc.



### **3. Programs must be relationship-based.**

- \_\_\_ Staff teach assertiveness and appropriate expressions of anger and respect
- \_\_\_ Staff de-emphasize passivity, subordination, and disingenuous “niceness”
- \_\_\_ Staff teach young women how to identify and prioritize authentic relationships
- \_\_\_ Staff shift primary discussion away from young women’s relationships with males
- \_\_\_ Staff help young women see any connections between their relationships and their involvement in the juvenile justice system
- \_\_\_ Staff make observations about relationship behaviors without belittling young women
- \_\_\_ Staff understand the significance of young women’s relationships and receive training regarding relational aggression
- \_\_\_ Staff are able to support, challenge and nurture young women
- \_\_\_ Staff demonstrate their respect for healthy relationships with female co-workers
- \_\_\_ Staff relationships with young women are unconditional (not based in behavior compliance)
- \_\_\_ Staff understand adolescent development and its impact on the adolescent view of relationships, and teach age appropriate relationship skills
- \_\_\_ Staff understand how to connect with young women in the juvenile justice system
- \_\_\_ Staff are trained how and when disconnection from young women can and should occur
- \_\_\_ Staff support and prepare young women for separation from unhealthy relationships
- \_\_\_ Positive, non-exploitive male staff have additional responsibilities:
  - encourage clear and direct communication from individuals and within the group
  - establish and maintain clear boundaries in verbal and physical interactions
  - encourage young women to find acceptance and trust from one another and other women
  - understand their own gender role socialization and do not allow it to interfere with their work
  - model non-exploitive relationships with female staff
- \_\_\_ Programs support female/female relationships focused on respect and away from competition
- \_\_\_ Programs are led by females who model genuine respect and concern for other females
- \_\_\_ Programs teach effective communication skills to enhance relationship building
- \_\_\_ Programs differentiate between compromise and excessive self-sacrifice in relationship
- \_\_\_ Programs allow adequate time for relationship building, and policies support those relationships
- \_\_\_ Program transition plans specifically address how new relationship patterns will be maintained

#### **4. Programs must provide positive female role models and mentors.**

- ☐ Female staff role model healthy behaviors and relationships
- ☐ Staff help girls identify women in their lives who are role models for them
- ☐ Staff share images and stories of a variety of women with girls and discuss how their lives differ and are the same
- ☐ Staff share life lessons they have learned from other women and encourage girls to do the same
- ☐ Staff acquaint young women with role models from the wider world in addition to role models already in young women's lives
- ☐ Staff challenge examples of role models from the wider world who support negative or narrow gender role stereotypes
- ☐ Programs celebrate the accomplishments of women in current events and in history, especially if those women share commonalities with program participants
- ☐ Programs access female relatives, neighbors, friends, church and social group members already in young women's lives to act as mentors and role models
- ☐ Programs have a wide array of books, posters, pictures, magazines and videos which represent women from varied backgrounds
- ☐ Programs decline materials that contain damaging sexist or gender role stereotypes (e.g., some donated romance novels) and encourage conversation about ambiguous materials
- ☐ Program environments are ones that support the importance of the role women play in all walks of life
- ☐ Programs make particular use of mentors and role models whose lives show survival and growth as well as resistance and change
- ☐ Programs support strong relationships with individual mentors and role models through time allotted specifically for this purpose
- ☐ Programs enlist mentors with an understanding of the young woman's life experiences

## **5. Programs must address the abuse in girls' lives.**

- \_\_\_ Staff understand the extent of abuse experienced by this population of young women and the significance of its role as a pathway to delinquency
- \_\_\_ Staff receive comprehensive training on emotional, physical, sexual abuse and related issues, including how to respond to disclosed abuse
- \_\_\_ Staff understand that young women's actions are often a complex coping mechanism related to abuse rather than simply unacceptable behavior
- \_\_\_ Staff are trained to use gender- and culturally- specific criteria to determine variations in mood, perception, and behavior that could signal serious distress
- \_\_\_ Staff provide information about physical crisis interventions procedures at initial intake so young women know what to expect
- \_\_\_ Staff inquire about abuse directly and in a manner that is culturally and linguistically sensitive
- \_\_\_ Staff refrain from sharing information about abuse experienced by young women with anyone who does not need to have that information or for which the young woman has not given her express permission
- \_\_\_ Program procedures for physical crisis intervention account for young women's histories of abuse, and avoid retraumatization
- \_\_\_ Program intervention practices do not rely on stress, anxiety or humiliation for behavior compliance
- \_\_\_ Programs require a female presence at all health care screenings
- \_\_\_ Programs integrate mental health, substance abuse, and victim services
- \_\_\_ Programs offer individual and/or group services for survivors of abuse and other trauma
- \_\_\_ Program procedures balance accountability with compassion for trauma-induced behaviors
- \_\_\_ Program procedures around privacy, disrobing and searching young women are sensitive and trauma-informed
- \_\_\_ Programs educate young women about the dynamics of abusive and coercive relationships
- \_\_\_ Programs integrate trauma-informed care into every aspect of services
- \_\_\_ Programs provide swift and strong consequences for staff who breach client confidentiality

## **6. Programs must address sexuality, pregnancy and parenting.**

- \_\_\_ Staff provide accurate, age-appropriate, science-based information
- \_\_\_ Staff teach about positive aspects of sexuality as well as consequences of risky sexual behavior
- \_\_\_ Staff facilitate young women's exploration of media messages about relationships, body image and gender role expectations
- \_\_\_ Staff help young women understand the role of family, culture, religion and politics in sexuality
- \_\_\_ Staff provide young women with the opportunity to identify personal sexual limits and rehearse communicating those to a potential partner
- \_\_\_ Staff help young women understand the dynamics of sexual activity in relationships
- \_\_\_ Staff help young women understand the connection of emotion to sexual feelings
- \_\_\_ Staff possess the ability to empathize and use appropriate humor and self-disclosure around issues of sexuality
- \_\_\_ Staff possess the ability to objectively communicate the range of sexual values present within the greater community in order to assist young women with determining their own values around sexual expression
- \_\_\_ Programs use a holistic approach to address all areas of sexuality
- \_\_\_ Programs have a comprehensive message regarding pregnancy prevention that includes practicing abstinence
- \_\_\_ Programs possess or have access to accurate information regarding pregnancy and parenting
- \_\_\_ Programs teach parenting skills in the context of developmental stages
- \_\_\_ Programs discuss pregnancy and motherhood from physical, emotional, mental, economic and social standpoints
- \_\_\_ Programs employ at least one staff member who is uniquely skilled at and educated about communicating with girls around sexuality issues
- \_\_\_ Programs include accurate, unbiased sexuality information for adolescents who are lesbian, bisexual, questioning their sexual orientation, or who have engaged in same-sex sexual behaviors
- \_\_\_ Programs provide opportunities for young women to demonstrate their independence and growing maturity in healthy and non-sexual ways
- \_\_\_ Programs address conflicting societal messages and double standards about sexual behavior

## **7. Programs must be strength-based.**

- \_\_\_ Staff understand that much of young women's behavior is developmentally normal rather than pathological, anti-social or a sign of relapse
- \_\_\_ Staff understand that behaviors which appear self-destructive may, in fact, be a logical adaptive response to the world in which young women live
- \_\_\_ Staff assist young women in adjusting their maladaptive behaviors into positive strategies for coping with the problems they face
- \_\_\_ Staff are trained to implement a strength-based approach
- \_\_\_ Staff inquire about strengths at intake and underscore what is going well throughout the duration of a young woman's involvement in the program
- \_\_\_ Staff create opportunities for young women to build new skills, leadership, and become empowered
- \_\_\_ Staff assist young women with internalizing success
- \_\_\_ Staff and programs set high expectations for young women
- \_\_\_ Staff validate young women's thinking and ideas
- \_\_\_ Program policies are inclusive and avoid alienation of young women by discontinuing the use of negative labels for them and their behaviors (i.e., acting out, manipulative, attention-seeking)
- \_\_\_ Programs emphasize helping young women to utilize their experience, support, intelligence and inner wisdom to develop strategies that lead to personal success and growth
- \_\_\_ Programs employ staff capable of addressing behaviors from a strength-based position
- \_\_\_ Program policies set positive expectations rather than emphasizing avoidance of negative consequences
- \_\_\_ Program disciplinary procedures seek to provide structure and guidance rather than punishment
- \_\_\_ Programs structure meaningful opportunities for young women to achieve goals and success for themselves
- \_\_\_ Programs assist with the development of new skills via education, safe space to practice, and feedback throughout the learning process
- \_\_\_ Programs emphasize what young women know and in what ways they are strong and smart
- \_\_\_ Programs avoid collaboration with medical professionals who tend to prematurely diagnose and medicate young women in favor of those who spend sufficient time assessing young women and offer alternatives to medication
- \_\_\_ Programs provide opportunities for young women to lead activities

## **8. Programs must provide opportunities that promote educational success and employability.**

- ☐ Staff understand educational bias, school disciplinary measures and sexual harassment as experienced by young women
- ☐ Staff support a variety of learning styles
- ☐ Staff model a high value for education, career development, vocational training and non-traditional careers
- ☐ Staff encourage young women's involvement in school clubs, organizations and extracurricular activities
- ☐ Programs are designed with the understanding of the strong correlation between academic failure and delinquent behavior
- ☐ Programs address the academic, social, and career skill needs of young women
- ☐ Programs support alternatives to traditional classroom instruction, particularly when young women have learning disabilities, learning deficits and/or negative attitudes about their ability to learn
- ☐ Programs offer opportunities for young women to connect classroom study with necessary 'real world' skills
- ☐ Programs invite successful women from a variety of fields to discuss career paths with young women
- ☐ Programs emphasize the importance of science, technology and math to young women while not diminishing their proven verbal skills
- ☐ Programs assure that all academic curricular materials are free from gender-bias and offer young women positive images and balanced information
- ☐ Programs offer books, video, posters and other materials showing women from a variety of backgrounds
- ☐ Program materials should complement primary academic materials with education about issues of sexism, sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in school settings
- ☐ Programs incorporate and support cooperative as well as competitive learning strategies
- ☐ Programs support and encourage arts-based or other alternative options to assist young women who need to overcome patterns of passivity or other challenges in traditional academic settings
- ☐ Programs collaborate with school personnel particularly during any transition periods for young women

**9. Programs must address the unique health needs of females, including nutritional concerns and regular physical activity.**

- \_\_\_ Staff encourage young women to participate in regular physical activity, including organized sports teams
- \_\_\_ Staff encourage young women to take an active role in decisions about their health care, including understanding medication side-effects
- \_\_\_ Staff should communicate regularly with health care providers while maintaining confidentiality
- \_\_\_ Staff demonstrate the value of physical health verbally and through their behavior
- \_\_\_ Programs use a holistic approach in understanding and supporting young women's health needs
- \_\_\_ Programs include substance abuse treatment based on an empowerment model, when necessary
- \_\_\_ Programs provide mental health services that are demonstrably sensitive to gender
- \_\_\_ Programs avoid over-medication of young women
- \_\_\_ Programs consider the nutritional needs of all young women, especially those who may be pregnant
- \_\_\_ Programs strive to offer nutritionally sound foods; particularly fresh fruits and vegetables as well as whole grains and high quality proteins
- \_\_\_ Programs utilize gynecological service providers who are especially sensitive to the sexual abuse and trauma that may have been experienced by young women
- \_\_\_ Programs use female medical provider(s), particularly for gynecological services
- \_\_\_ Programs provide a reasonable range of physical exercise options
- \_\_\_ Programs offer and encourage daily physical activity
- \_\_\_ Programs should offer multiple health care options whenever possible

## **10. Programs must provide opportunities for spiritual expression.**

- \_\_\_ Staff are able to look beyond institutional religious experiences
- \_\_\_ Staff treat all spiritual beliefs, including the absence of belief, with the same respect
- \_\_\_ Staff are supportive of young women's individually stated spiritual beliefs and practices
- \_\_\_ Staff support young women in self-directed spiritual exploration without imposition of their personal beliefs
- \_\_\_ Staff encourage young women to look beyond themselves through service projects
- \_\_\_ Staff provide opportunities for young women to explore their spiritual beliefs, including an absence of belief, through discussions about human's connection to other living things and life's mysteries
- \_\_\_ Staff allow young women to explore different spiritual practices and ask questions, guiding them to seek the answers themselves
- \_\_\_ Staff have knowledge of resources that address spiritual practice in ways that affirm and support females should young women ask for it
- \_\_\_ Programs provide opportunities for young women to participate in worship services if they indicate a desire to do so
- \_\_\_ Programs offer the means for individual spiritual expression through daily quiet time - for journaling, poetry, meditation, prayer, self-reflection, etc.
- \_\_\_ Programs do not use spiritual practice or restriction of spiritual practice as punishment



**11. Programs must involve members of girls' families and/or support networks.**

- \_\_\_ Staff specifically address the important and often complicated mother-daughter relationship
- \_\_\_ Staff encourage involvement by families, especially those generally closed to outside help
- \_\_\_ Staff support multigenerational and extended family interaction as well as non-family support networks as appropriate
- \_\_\_ Staff assist young women with creating a transition plan which includes tools for managing the pressure to revert to previous behaviors upon departure from the program
- \_\_\_ Staff ask young women who they feel supports them outside of family and seeks to involve those people as appropriate
- \_\_\_ Programs implement a structured departure plan regardless of where the young women is headed upon leaving the program
- \_\_\_ Programs make significant efforts to include family members in services as appropriate
- \_\_\_ Programs build in structured family activities during which interaction and open communication are essential without forcing contact if it will re-traumatize the young woman or be detrimental to her rehabilitation
- \_\_\_ Programs assist families lacking adequate resources for participation as needed
- \_\_\_ Program policies strike a balance between family involvement and protection of young women who have experienced abuse at the hands of family members
- \_\_\_ Programs do not use restriction of family visitation as punishment

## ***Characteristics of Staff Who Work Effectively with Young Women***

- \_\_\_ Staff personal values are consistent with female-responsive program values and are communicated clearly to young women
- \_\_\_ Staff set aside any conflicting personal beliefs about gender-based behavior in favor of programming based on female development and research
- \_\_\_ Staff avoid the use and acceptance of thoughtless cliches, behaviors and attitudes about females
- \_\_\_ Staff are open to appropriate adult-child relationships with the young women whom they serve
- \_\_\_ Staff listen without judgment
- \_\_\_ Staff have high expectations for young women
- \_\_\_ Staff provide meaningful opportunities for young women to experience success
- \_\_\_ Staff are educated about adolescent development and gender-based distinctions
- \_\_\_ Staff maintain appropriate physical and emotional boundaries with young women
- \_\_\_ Staff are emotionally available and involved, and maintain that connection despite difficult behaviors displayed by young women
- \_\_\_ Staff understand the reality of young women's lives and current societal expectations
- \_\_\_ Staff provide firm behavioral limits and consistent disciplinary practices
- \_\_\_ Staff offer graduated opportunities for independence and decision-making
- \_\_\_ Staff allow young women to recover from mistakes and do not hold a grudge
- \_\_\_ Staff encourage young women's mastery of developmental tasks and life skills
- \_\_\_ Staff avoid "super-mom" roles that foster over-dependency
- \_\_\_ Staff model growth, change and improvement by being willing to work on their own personal development and learning
- \_\_\_ Staff are politically aware and oriented toward social action, at their personal comfort level, on the issues which are critical for young women
- \_\_\_ Staff are sensitive to gender-based distinctions in risk factors, aggression motivators and self-concept concerns
- \_\_\_ Staff communicate a genuine commitment to the principles of female-responsive programming

## *Characteristics of Staff (cont.)*

- \_\_\_ Staff teach critical and independent thinking skills within an adolescent development framework
- \_\_\_ Staff are able to view young women from a strength, rather than risk, perspective
- \_\_\_ Staff follow through on commitments made to young women
- \_\_\_ Staff demonstrate respect for people regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, spiritual practice, social class or other cultural distinction
- \_\_\_ Staff provide accurate information
- \_\_\_ Male staff avoid stereotypical male-female relationship dynamics with young women
- \_\_\_ Male staff are aware that young women are socialized from an early age to seek their attention
- \_\_\_ Male staff encourage young women to find trust and acceptance among other females
- \_\_\_ Male staff model respect for females with their coworkers
- \_\_\_ Female staff understand their increased responsibility as a female role model
- \_\_\_ Female staff demonstrate how to challenge narrow gender role expectations
- \_\_\_ Female staff recognize any personal disruption caused by gender-based issues without trying to silence the young women who are struggling with them
- \_\_\_ Staff show respect for and confidence in women and girls
- \_\_\_ Staff assist young women with recognizing how their treatment issues relate to larger gender-based societal issues and their specific culture(s), as appropriate

## ***Reflective Questions for Those Who Work with Young Women***

Do I genuinely like young women?

Do I enjoy working with young women or do I often wish I worked with boys instead?

Do I encourage young women to express themselves, or do I silence them for being forceful?

Do I dismiss young women's behavior as attention seeking and manipulative, or do I search for deeper meaning behind their behaviors?

Do I assume I know what motivates young women, or do I ask them for more information?

How do I usually act when young women speak their minds?

Do I encourage or discourage their authentic ways of expressing themselves?

In what ways do I make sure young women feel safe sharing their ideas and opinions?

What program rules discourage young women from authentic self-expression?

Do I show my authentic self to the young women with whom I work?

Can I be supportive and candid while still maintaining my role?

Do I show my authentic self to other professionals?

How do my relationships with other professionals impact my relationships with young women?

How does my attitude toward females in general affect young women's views of themselves and other females?

How does my attitude towards males affect young women's views of males and relationships between males and females?

Am I able to balance roles of encouraging and challenging young women?

Are there program rules that prevent young women from building appropriate relationships with staff or other young women?

Are behavior expectations meaningful and made clear to young women?

Am I able to communicate to young women my disappointment when those expectations are not met, but that I believe they are able to meet them?

Does my demeanor shame, embarrass, encourage or support young women?

What verbal and non-verbal messages do I give young women about anger?

## *Reflective Questions (cont.)*

How do I express anger and respond to their expressions of anger?

If I am a woman, do I balance caring for others with self-love and self-reliance?

If I am a man, do I balance strength with nurturing qualities?

How do I help young women discover, trust and value what they already know?

Am I comfortable with females and males who do not fit gender role expectations?

Am I comfortable with young women who display more masculine qualities?

Can I discuss issues related to sexuality without using words that judge, shame or control?

Do I view sexual expression as a healthy aspect of being human, including potentially controversial issues like masturbation, teen pregnancy or homosexuality?

Does my program have images on its walls of females participating in a range of activities, including athletics and non-traditional careers?

Does my program have images on its walls of females of a variety of races, ethnicities, ages and backgrounds?

Am I comfortable with offering young women choices rather than ultimatums?

Am I capable of disengaging from power struggles?

# ***Iowa Task Force for Young Women Resources and Services***

## **Whispers & Screams Annual Conference**

*Whispers & Screams are hard to hear: Creating an audience for girls' voices* is an annual conference sponsored by the Iowa Task Force for Young Women (ITFYW). In addition to basic and advanced workshops on female responsive program planning, Whispers & Screams offers participants cutting edge information on female adolescent development and experiences, as well as tools for working with young women involved with or at risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.

## **Girls' Summit on the Status of Females in the Juvenile Justice System**

Participants invited to the *Girls' Summit* examine current state-wide and institutional data and trends surrounding and contributing to young women's involvement in the juvenile justice system. They work with experts in the field to explore how policy and administrative level decisions impact those factors.

## **Training/Technical Assistance**

The ITFYW offers training on a variety of topics related to young women in the juvenile justice system and girls at risk and can create or tailor training for the needs of the audience. It can also provide technical assistance with community planning for females as well as program policy and procedures.

## **Publications**

Individuals may sign up to receive the bimonthly Girl Connection newsletter by email or postal mail. This newsletter tackles a new topic related to young women in each issue. Back issues of the Girl Connection newsletter are available on-line along with other ITFYW publications and materials.

*Female Responsive Protocol for Adolescent Offenders (2010)*

*Providing Gender-Specific Services for Adolescent Female Offenders: Guidelines & Resources (1999)*

*Status of Females in the Juvenile Justice System (2009)*

*Status of Females in the Juvenile Justice System (2007)*

*Promising Directions: Programs that Serve Iowa Girls in a Single-Sex Environment (2005)\**

## **Meetings/Involvement**

The ITFYW holds open meetings and welcomes anyone who is interested to join. Individuals may also request to be placed on the ITFYW information eList, which includes meeting notices, articles, research, funding announcements, events and other information pertinent to working with young women.

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*\*not all publications/materials listed*

## ***Recommended Reading/Bibliography***

*The reader will note that materials listed here range widely in year of publication. It is as important to acquaint oneself with older materials, which show the history of female responsive services, as well as emerging materials, which illuminate the current and future direction of female responsive services.*

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