

Impacting the Experiences of Disconnection: Through a Girl-Centered Approach

Derived from "Breaking New Ground," the graphic below elevates girls' experiences to highlight questions and opportunities for the community to develop better policies, programs, and practices for girls.

ISSUE	WHAT GIRLS SHARED	WHAT'S NEEDED	QUESTIONS FOR COMMUNITY
100% of girls had loss/ trauma & 91% believe mother figures can make a positive difference in a girl's life.	The narratives of girls included loss (death of parent / primary caregiver, parental incarceration), abandonment, domestic violence, and living on the streets. Yet, mothers / mother figures were identified as the person that girls see as their source of support and who they will seek when leaving residential lockup.	Community response to support the needs of girls and families facing grief and loss, parent incarceration, trauma and domestic violence, and therapeutic and care management services that include mother figures.	How do we increase our training, collaborations and community resources to reflect an understanding of: 1) the impact of loss on lives of girls, and 2) importance of enhancing the bond between girls and their mother figures?
28% of girls had child involvement and 69% had lived without parents.	Girls reported problems with investigations on allegations of abuse, and not having a safe space visit or someone to call to talk to about their placement.	Alternative policies that provide oversight of youth runaway behaviors, victimization in placements, sexual exploitation, and needs of girls in the child welfare system.	What safeguards are in place to support youth in the child welfare system, preventing involvement in the juvenile justice system?
88% of girls had been suspended, mostly for school truancy.	Girls reported having "no one to turn to" while in school, and that the educational services in the community were not helpful. Also, girls had concerns about the stigma of going back to school after being locked up, or not having many options for school.	Appropriate educational placements, alternative policies and practices rather than suspension for truancy, girl-centered dropout prevention, and working with students in transition.	How can we increase school connectedness and school engagement for marginalized girls in our community?
91% of girls reported using substances.	Girls report using substances when they feel stressed, and to block out feelings. Substance abuse services in the community were not helpful, and girls were concerned about relapse when returning to the community.	Relevant trauma-informed treatment that is developmentally appropriate and follows cultural, relational, girl-centered framework.	How can we connect girls with a gender-appropriate therapeutic model that recognizes trauma and addiction, when developing substance abuse intervention plans?
78% of girls had run away, and 25% were exposed to sexual exploitation.	Girls shared that they ran away for various reasons, including substance use, feeling neglected by family, conflict in the home, and to avoid discipline. Girls who had run away also considered themselves homeless at some point.	Community-based options for housing, medical services, therapy, and legal services, and vocational skills training. Also, group homes or safe houses for girls who are victims of sex trafficking.	What service network exists for youth who are homeless and living in high-risk situations?
50% of commitments were for noncriminal offenses (violations of probation).	Girls emphasized the length of probation, the low oversight provided, the inconsistency in the fairness and severity of probation compared to their offense. Girls shared the reasons they violated probation: running away, breaking curfew, and not attending school.	Community-based alternatives to detention, and residential placement for girls with high needs (including specialized mental health).	How often are we using detention and commitment because we cannot meet the mental health and trauma needs of girls in our community? Or because there is no other safe place for girls to go? Aside from the financial cost, how much will incarceration impact the well-being of girls across the life-span?