



Gender-Responsive Programming and Male Staff

Gender-responsive (GR) programming for girls is inclusive yet has specific recommendations and limitations regarding the issue of male staff working with girls. In general, it is considered that male staff members can provide an additional level of support and positive reinforcement for girls. However, male staff members must successfully complete training on female development, socialization and other gender-specific issues. Furthermore, there are important recommendations and guidelines to prevent the girls' interaction with male staff from becoming exploitative, abusive or re-traumatizing. These recommendations prohibit male guards from participating in day-to-day security, strip searches or restraints. Similarly, male guards must not be allowed alone in common living areas, bathrooms or private rooms of the girls.

UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners

In 1977, the Office of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights released an international standard for the treatment of prisoners. The standard suggests that when possible, women and men should be housed in separate facilities. When in co-ed facilities, female prisoners should be under the "authority of a responsible woman officer."¹ Additionally, only female guards should supervise and attend to female inmates. Male guards may only interact with women when accompanied by a female officer. However, the Standards allow male doctors and teachers to interact with female prisoners for professional duties.¹ The UN suggests that interactions between male guards and female prisoners should occur only when necessary and in those cases, should always be supervised.

Importance of Gender When Staffing Gender-Responsive Programs

In 1998, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) published guidelines for creating effective gender-responsive programs. OJJDP recommends, that when possible, program staff should "reflect the diversity of the population being served."² Girls reportedly appreciate when staff had similar life experience suggesting that it added to the relevance and authenticity of the relationship. Thus, many gender-responsive programs have an all-female staff. Importantly, female staff members are critical in "providing good role models and modeling healthy relationship skills."²

Male staff can occupy an important, though limited role, within the framework of gender-responsive programming. OJJDP (1998) suggests that male staff members can be an effective addition to a gender-responsive program. If male staff members are trustworthy, empathetic and nurturing, they can act as positive male role models for the girls.³ Additionally, interactions

¹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. (1977). Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/treatmentprisoners.htm>

² OJJDP. (1998). *Guiding Principles for Promising Female Programming*. Available at: http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/principles/ch3_3.html

³ Morgan, M & Patton, P. (2002). Gender Responsive Programming in the Justice System – Oregon's Guidelines for Effective Programming for Girls. *Federal Probation*, 66(2). Available at: <http://www.migima.com/pdf/migima-article5-gender-responsive-programing.pdf>

between male and female staff can model healthy male-female relationships that are neither “exploitative nor abusive.”⁴

Guidelines for Male Staff

Although male staff members can add a positive influence in a gender-responsive program, there are guidelines for their level of involvement. Inappropriate behavior of male staff members could retraumatize girls, create sexually inappropriate situations or cause girls to feel unsafe.

- *Male staff members should never conduct or be present for strip searches.* Many girls who enter the juvenile justice system have histories of sexual abuse. When males perform strip searches, girls can be reminded of their previous abuse and consequently experience re-traumatization. Additionally, strip searches create an “atmosphere for disrespect” which if done by a man can perpetuate the girls’ negative views about men.⁵
- *Male staff members should never supervise girls during “high vulnerability and privacy times, such as nighttime sleeping hours, toileting, showering, performing personal hygiene, during clothes changes, and for health and medical care.”⁶*
- *Male staff should never subdue or restrain girls.⁷* When restrained, girls who are abused can re-experience their trauma. The invasive nature of male staff restraining girls can cause them to confuse the male “authority figure with their aggressor and act defiantly toward those in charge.”⁷
- *Male staff must be trained in female development, socialization and the gender-responsive model.* Male staff members need to be familiar with important developmental milestones in order to effectively care for incarcerated females. Also, “male staff may label the behavior of young women as sexual or manipulative if they do not understand their own male socialization about females.”⁸

Implications of Male Clinicians

There has been an increasing body of research suggesting that adult females express difficulties and anxieties when paired with a male therapist or counselor.⁹ The histories of abuse common to many girls in the juvenile justice system present unique therapeutic challenges to male clinicians. Male clinicians working with a female juvenile justice population face issues in dealing with the sensitive nature of “clients’ sexual behavior, abuse allegations and [the use of] physical restraints.”¹⁰ Okamoto (2002) explored these issues by interviewing clinicians that work with at-risk girls. Okamoto (2002) suggests that the relationship between male therapist and female

⁴ Amicus (2010). Amicus Girls Study: Paying Attention to Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. Available at: <http://www.amicususa.org/pubs/AmicusGirlsStudy503small.pdf>;

⁵ Acoca, L. Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy. *Juvenile Justice*, 6(1). Available at: http://www.ncjrservhttp.org/pagirls/pubs/Investing%20in%20girls_Acoca.pdf

⁶ Schaefer, P. (2008). Girls in the juvenile justice system.. *GPSolo*, April/May, 16-21.

⁷ Quinn, M.M., Poirier, J.M. & Garfinkel, L. (2005) Girls with Mental Health Needs in the Juvenile Justice System: Challenges and Inequities Confronting a Vulnerable Population. *Exceptionality*, 13(2). Available at: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/ftinterface~content=a784761346~fulltext=713240930~frm=content>

⁸ Morgan, M & Patton, P. (2002). Gender Responsive Programming in the Justice System – Oregon’s Guidelines for Effective Programming for Girls. *Federal Probation*, 66(2). Available at: <http://www.migima.com/pdf/migima-article5-gender-responsive-programing.pdf>

⁹ Orlinsky, D. E., & Howard, K. I. (1976). The effects of sex of therapist on the therapeutic experiences of women. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 13(1).

¹⁰ Okamoto, S. (2002). The Challenges of Male Practitioners Working with Female Youth Clients. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 21(4). Available at: <http://www.springerlink.com/content/bmcnrxdg4k9b3gt/fulltext.pdf>

youth client, specifically abused girls, “evolves in three sequential stages – transference onto the practitioner, rage against the practitioner and therapeutic work.”¹¹

During stages one and two, the abused girl may find “safety” in revictimization by attempting to manipulate the therapeutic relationship to mirror the abusive relationships of her past. However, as the patient moves toward the “therapeutic work” stage, having a male clinician can be extremely beneficial because “the female client’s experience with an emotionally supportive and caring male appears to be an extremely powerful intervention in itself.”

Program Environments

In a 2010 report by Bureau of Justice Statistics, 5% of girls in juvenile justice programs reported sexual abuse by male staff.¹² In that same report, evening hours from 6pm till midnight were identified as the time of day incidents occurred, in shower and sleeping areas.¹³ Program environments must be physically and emotionally safe for girls. The NCCD Center for Girls and Young Women describes how to operationalize this in practice: 1) All physical and sexual abuse allegations by staff are reported to department and investigated by child welfare services; 2) Male staff members are prohibited from being alone with females in every program aspect. All pat down and searches are handled by female staff; 3) Direct questioning is handled only by female staff during the intake and evaluation process regarding abuse history, types of prior restraint, and reactions to prior restraint; 4) Sexual relationships between girls and male or female staff members are prohibited and fully prosecuted to the extent of the law.¹⁴

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Sexual Victimization in Juvenile Facilities Reported by Youth, 2008-09 BJS Statisticians. Available at: <http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=2113>

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ NCCD Center for Girls Gender Responsive Program Assessment Protocol