

# Girls' Pathways Through The Juvenile Criminal Justice System

## GIRLS' ARREST RATES

Arrest rates were highest for:

- Misdemeanors and technical violations of probation
- Survival crimes: stealing food/clothing, breaking into buildings for shelter and to hide, lying to law enforcement officers
- Status offenses: running away, truancy (girls are arrested at higher rates than boys on these charges)
- Drug and alcohol use
- Increasing arrests for cyber crimes



## GIRLS OF COLOR

Girls of color are disproportionately suspended, arrested and incarcerated.

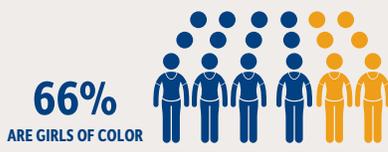
- While girls of color represent 22% of the general youth population, they represent 66% of incarcerated girls.
- Black girls represent 16% of enrolled students and constitute 37% of girls arrested at school.
- Black girls represent 16% of enrolled students and constitute 52% of girls who receive multiple suspensions.

Black girls are more likely to be disciplined than other girls.



\* Such as: dress code violations or inappropriate cell phone use.

Girls of color are over-represented in juvenile justice facilities.



## ABUSE AND TRAUMA

Many of the behaviors leading to girls' arrests and school suspensions are evidence of abuse and trauma suffered by girls.

- 1 in 4 American girls will experience some form of sexual violence before the age of 18, including dating violence, rape, and sex trafficking.
- 3 in 4 girls in the juvenile justice system have a history of sexual or physical abuse, frequently committed by family or household members.

## CONFLICTS THAT LEAD TO GIRLS' INTERACTIONS WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

- **Caregivers**—Neglectful, violent, overly critical and negative mothers, sexual and physical abuse from fathers, stepfathers, mothers' boyfriends and other male relatives
- **Other Girls**—Peer pressure to engage in delinquent behavior, trouble making friends can lead to aggressive behavior, fights with friends or rejection
- **Boys**—Relationship problems leading to violence with boys and other girls

## SYSTEMIC FAILURES OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Failure to provide gender-appropriate responses to girls:**

- Lack of gender-specific physical and mental health assessment screenings
- Lack of gender-responsive training for staff
- Lack of sexual health resources/counseling, treatment for STDs, and care for expecting mothers

**Failure to provide adequate physical and mental health services means the system...**

- is ill-equipped to identify and treat trauma.
- re-traumatizes and causes new incidents of abuse.
- does not offer adequate mental health resources.
- does not offer rehabilitation services.

## WHY GIRLS BECOME SYSTEM-INVOLVED

- Many engage in “illegal” behaviors associated with trauma and abuse: risk taking, substance and alcohol abuse, chronic truancy, extreme defiance and aggression.
- Many engage in disputes with caregivers, boyfriends and other girls
- Many engage in survival crimes (crimes committed by youth in an attempt to stay alive and safe):
  - Multiple, fake identification cards
  - Violating city or county curfew
  - Stealing food and clothing
  - Breaking and entering into buildings/homes to sleep and hide from abusers

- Many are victims of counter-productive, harsh school responses:
  - Punitive responses (suspensions/expulsions, school-based arrests) to truancy, aggression or other responses to trauma/abuse instead of support and services
  - Lack of supportive interventions and mental health resources
  - School’s refusal to re-enroll student after expulsion

## WHY GIRLS RUN AWAY FROM HOME

- Violence or abuse by parents and other family/household members
- Substance abuse by parents in the presence of children
- Neglect
- Family dysfunction
- Sexual abuse in the household



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