



# GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION

FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2023 (9:30 AM – NOON)

JUSTICE SHERYL GORDON MCCLOUD, CO-CHAIR

JUDGE JACQUELINE SHEA-BROWN, CO-CHAIR

ZOOM: [HTTPS://WACOURTS.ZOOM.US/J/84901262114](https://wacourts.zoom.us/j/84901262114)

PHONE: 253-215-8782 US (TACOMA)

MEETING ID: 869 5190 8455; PASSCODE 823365



## Agenda Page

### 9:30 AM – 9:45 AM WELCOME AND INITIAL BUSINESS

- **Welcome and Introductions** *Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud*  
*Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown*
- **Approval of January 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes** *Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown* **p.1**

### 9:45 AM – 10:30 AM LIAISON, COMMITTEE, AND PROJECT UPDATES

- **Law Student Liaison Updates**
  - Gonzaga University School of Law *Jill Bader*
  - Lewis and Clark School of Law *Zoe Saccio*
  - Seattle University School of Law *Tyler Beckham*
  - University of Washington School of Law *Julia Davis/ Rhea Bhatia*
- **Standing Committee Updates**
  - Incarceration, Gender and Justice Committee *Elizabeth Hendren*
  - Education Committee *Judge Rebecca Glasgow*
  - Domestic and Sexual Violence Committee *Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown*
  - Tribal State Court Consortium *Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith*
  - Legislative Committee *Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud* **p.6**
  - GJ Study Implementation Committee *Barbara Serrano and Dr. Dana Raigrodski*
- **GJC Liaison Updates and Information Sharing**

### 10:30 AM – 10:45 BREAK

### 10:45 AM – 11:45 AM DISCUSSION ITEMS

- **Kitsap County Girls Court Presentation** *Judge Melissa Hemstreet,*  
*Shannon Porter, Dave Hawkins*  
*and Mike Merringer (Kitsap*  
*County Superior Court)*
- Morgan Silverman and Gina*  
*Cumbo (CCYJ)*
- Jennifer Stearns (Olive Crest*  
*Independent Living Services)*  
*Amanda Gilleland (Office of* **p.10**



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Agenda	Page
Public Defense)	
<i>Cami Lewis</i> (Prosecuting Attorney's Office)	
<b>11:50 AM – 12:00 PM ANNOUNCEMENTS AND ADJOURNMENT</b>	
➤ <b>In-Person Meeting Update</b>	
<b>APPENDIX</b>	
➤ 2023 Gender and Justice Commission Meeting Schedule	<b>p.86</b>
<b>NEXT MEETING: May 5, 2023</b>	

 <b>WASHINGTON COURTS</b>	<b>Gender and Justice Commission</b> <b>January 6, 2023</b> <b>9:30 AM – 12:00 PM</b> <b>Zoom Videoconference</b>	 <b>GENDER AND JUSTICE COMMISSION</b> <small>GENDER EQUALITY IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM</small>
<b>MEETING NOTES</b>		

**Members & Liaisons Present**

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud  
 Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown  
 Quinn Dalan  
 Commissioner Jonathan Lack  
 Riddhi Mukhopadhyay  
 Professor Lynn Daggett  
 Jill Bader  
 Jane Smith  
 Victoria Blumhorst  
 Shannon Kilpatrick  
 David Reynolds  
 Judge Rebecca Glasgow  
 Jennifer Ritchie  
 Barbara Serrano  
 Professor Dana Raigrodski  
 Madison Brown  
 Elizabeth Hendren  
 CJ Gonzalez  
 Lillian Hawkins  
 Chief Judge Cindy Smith

**AOC Staff**

Crissy Anderson  
 Kelley Amburgey-Richardson  
 Dr. Arina Gertseva  
 Avery Miller

**Members & Liaisons Absent**

Dua Abudiab  
 Judge Anita Crawford-Willis  
 Kelly Harris  
 Julia Davis  
 Rhea Bhatia

**Guests**

Dr. Carl McCurley  
 Mishani Jack-Gonzalez  
 Kayley Carillo

**WELCOME AND INITIAL BUSINESS****Welcome and Introductions**

- The meeting is called to order at 10:30 AM.
- The Commission members welcomed guests and members introduced themselves. The Commission extends a welcome to Kayley Carillo, who discusses the Family Courthouse

Advisory Committee which is looking to reinvigorate it's work. Commissioner Jonathan Lack volunteers.

- Judge Shea-Brown is replacing Judge Paja as a Co-Chair of the Commission. Justice Gordon McCloud recognizes Judge Paja's hard work on behalf of the Commission and announces some tokens of appreciation from the Commission.

### **November Meeting Minutes**

- The meeting minutes were approved as presented.

## **COMMITTEE AND PROJECT UPDATES**

**LAW STUDENT LIAISON UPDATES** – Jill Bader (Gonzaga), Zoe Saccio (Lewis and Clark), Madison Brown (University of Washington)

- Jill Bader reports that Gonzaga students are working on finalizing the Amicus Brief mentioned at the last meeting, as well as putting on a networking speed dating event in the spring. They will send around the invitation to the Commission and WA Women Lawyers.
- Zoe Saccio states there haven't been any meetings since before finals, and that they are working on hosting social events. The quarter begins on Monday.
- Madison Brown from UW says they are also working on finalizing the brief and partnering with other student organizations on campus to host a DEI panel on February 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**INCARCERATION COMMITTEE**— Elizabeth Hendren

- Elizabeth Hendren is working on court access issues that are familiar for incarcerated women as well as on implementation of several of the 2021 Study Recommendations. They are trying to get a follow up meeting with the Department of Corrections (DOC) from the initial meeting in the fall, as well as tracking the legislative session. A challenge with DOC is there are several different divisions they are trying to work with (ie, re-entry, diversion, legal issues, etc.) and things remain compartmentalized.

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE**— Judge Glasgow

- The main work for the committee is the proposal for Judicial Conferences for CJE, including Superior Court, District and Municipal, Appellate Court conferences are all coming up. Both conferences are doing firearm relinquishment training session. For appellate conferences, there is a session focusing on post- Dobbs issues.
- There is a big shift going on for the Fall Conference. Justice Whitener has implemented changes to have a standing spot for all the Commissions, which means there is now a

presumption that the Commission's session will go forward. Judge Glasgow suggests the Commission put forward more than one proposal, in case there are extra slots.

- There is a quick turnaround this year, and the Committee will turn in proposals on January 20<sup>th</sup> with a national speaker on substance use and coercion in domestic violence.
- Judge Bender and Commissioner Lack are presenting on new conditions and guidelines concerning gender identity and pronouns in the courtroom.
- Elizabeth Hendren presenting on court access issues, more training on sexual abuse to prison pipeline and Stefanie Covington around the issues of complex trauma on women in prison.
- There are a variety of judicial education recommendations in the study, the Committee is strategizing on how to put them forward and get draft proposals ready.
- The Committee is also looking at co-sponsoring with the other Commissions, including Interpreter and Language Access Commission and the Minority and Justice Commission.

#### **DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE COMMITTEE**— Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown

- The Committee has been working on updated chapters of the Domestic and Sexual Violence Bench Guides. These updates will be published before judicial college, and want to acknowledge the members who worked on that, especially Laura Jones.
- Commissioner Terri Farmer is leading Civil Protection Order forums on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of the month for judicial officers, including one relating to service issues and one relating to firearms.
- The committee working on choosing a co-chair.

#### **TRIBAL AND STATE COURT CONSORTIUM**— Chief Judge Cindy Smith

- The consortium has sent out it's first quarterly newsletter on updates for it's activities.

#### **LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE**— Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown

- The Legislative Committee will meet weekly to discuss the legislative session.
- Justice Gordon McCloud met one on one with legislators regarding the 2021 Study Recommendations and Judge Shea-Brown to the Senate Law and Justice Committee.
- The Commission has been asked to testify regarding the Jury Diversity proposal, which continues the study looking at barriers to jury service, including childcare, pay and better data collection. Dr. Dana Raigrodski volunteers to testify.

**IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE— Barbara Serrano**

- This was a very busy committee this year, with weekly meetings on reviewing every aspect within the 2021 Study and it's findings and recommendations. Crissy has been putting together a written year end report, list all the outreach meetings and presentations.
- The committee has been taking a break since November. Now that Dr. Raigrodski is co-chair, the committee will be talking about how to move forward from here. They are hoping to create a subgroup on data collection.
- The Committee is also very interested in jury diversity.
- If any Commission member is interested in getting involved, please reach out.

**LIAISONS**

- Jane Smith from the Access to Justice Board has no major updates.
- The Washington Women's Lawyers liaison, Dua Abudiab, is not present.
- The Board of Judicial Administration is putting forward the Jury Diversity proposal as part of it's package. Their Policy and Planning Committee is also looking at the issue of harassment in the courts.
- Justice Gordon McCloud raises the issue of having a liaison to the Minority and Justice Commission. Judge Bonnie Glenn volunteers
- Justice Gordon McCloud raises the issue of the Disability Justice Task Force, which the commission was asked to support at the previous meeting. The Commission voices support for the concept, but isn't looking at the specifics of the funding request with a fine-tooth comb.
- Dr. Arina Gertseva from Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) reports that the recommendation from Chapter 9 of the study regarding Juvenile Justice and Race to study and report on the status of the Kitsap Girls Court is nearly finished. The final evaluation of the program will be published soon and includes blueprints for implementation of the program in other jurisdictions.

**AOC Staff Update— Kelley Amburgey-Richardson**

- The Minority and Justice Commission is hosting NCREP (the National Conference on Racial Equity and Fairness) in May in Seattle. They will be putting out a request for proposals to highlight local efforts, and staff will ensure that the Commission receives that RFP.

**ADJORNMENT**

## **Announcements**

- Staff have heard back from members regarding meeting format, but there is no update yet on AOC's Seatac offices for in-person meetings, but several people voiced support for it.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.**

DRAFT



# Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission

**Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Co-Chair**  
Washington State Supreme Court

Representative Debra Lekanoff  
Sponsor, HB 1177  
Washington State House of Representatives

**Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown, Co-Chair**  
Benton & Franklin Counties Superior Court

**Ms. Dua Abudiab**  
Washington Women Lawyers

Representative Timm Ormsby  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Washington State House of Representatives

**Ms. Victoria Blumhorst**  
Spokane Counsel for Defense

**Judge Anita Crawford-Willis**  
Seattle Municipal Court

Senator Nikki Torres  
Sponsor, SB 5477  
Washington State Senate

**Professor Lynn Daggett**  
Gonzaga University School of Law

**Ms. Quinn Dalan**  
Yakima County Attorney Services

February 6, 2023

**Judge Rebecca Glasgow**  
Court of Appeals, Division II

Re: Support for HB 1177 and SB 5477

**Mr. Kelly Harris**  
Law Offices of Alan E. Garrett

Dear Representative Lekanoff, Chair Ormsby and Senator Torres:

**Ms. Lillian Hawkins**  
King County District Court, West Division

On behalf of the Supreme Court's Gender and Justice Commission and the Tribal State Court Consortium, please accept this letter as an expression of support for HB 1177 and SB 5477 addressing missing and murdered Indigenous women and people.

**Ms. Elizabeth Hendren**  
Sexual Violence Law Center

**Ms. Shannon Kilpatrick**  
Stritmatter Kessler Koehler Moore

**Commissioner Jonathon Lack**  
King County Superior Court

**Ms. Riddhi Mukhopadhyay**  
Sexual Violence Law Center

**Dr. Dana Raigrodski**  
University of Washington School of Law

These efforts are very much inline with the recommendations made in our recent report, [2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now](#), particularly with regard to gender-based violence and the needs of tribal communities. Indigenous women are murdered at significantly higher rates than women of other races and the study highlighted critical gaps in quality data collection and the need for the criminal justice system to better serve Native American women.

**Honorable Dave Reynolds**  
Whatcom County Clerk


Thank you for your efforts in addressing this very important issue.


**Ms. Jennifer Ritchie**  
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

Sincerely,

**Ms. Barbara Serrano**  
Office of the Governor

**Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith**  
Suquamish Tribal Court

  
Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud  
Co-Chair  
Washington Supreme Court

  
Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown  
Co-Chair  
Benton/Franklin Superior Court





# Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission

**Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Co-Chair**  
Washington State Supreme Court

The Honorable Rebecca Saldaña, 37<sup>th</sup> Legislative District

**Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown, Co-Chair**  
Benton & Franklin Counties Superior Court

January 11, 2023

**Ms. Dua Abudiab**  
Washington Women Lawyers

Re: Support for SB 5046

**Ms. Victoria Blumhorst**  
Spokane Counsel for Defense

Dear Senator Saldaña:

**Judge Anita Crawford-Willis**  
Seattle Municipal Court

On behalf of the Supreme Court's Gender and Justice Commission (GJC), we express our support for passage of SB 5046 regarding post-conviction access to counsel.

**Professor Lynn Daggett**  
Gonzaga University School of Law

**Ms. Quinn Dalan**  
Yakima County Attorney Services

One of the overall goals in our recent report, [2021: How Gender and Race Affect Justice Now](#), is to improve access to the courts. That includes access to the courts for those who have been convicted of crimes and who raise new legal decisions, new statutes, or new critical facts, for the courts to consider. The GJC is especially concerned about this, because our research showed that the number of incarcerated women in Washington state jails and prisons has increased over the last decade, even while the number of incarcerated men began to decline.

**Judge Rebecca Glasgow**  
Court of Appeals, Division II

**Mr. Kelly Harris**  
Law Offices of Alan E. Garrett

**Ms. Lillian Hawkins**  
King County District Court, West Division

**Ms. Elizabeth Hendren**  
Sexual Violence Law Center

**Ms. Shannon Kilpatrick**  
Stritmatter Kessler Koehler Moore

**Commissioner Jonathon Lack**  
King County Superior Court

**Ms. Riddhi Mukhopadhyay**  
Sexual Violence Law Center

**Dr. Dana Raigrodski**  
University of Washington School of Law

**Honorable Dave Reynolds**  
Whatcom County Clerk

**Ms. Jennifer Ritchie**  
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

**Ms. Barbara Serrano**  
Office of the Governor

**Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith**  
Suquamish Tribal Court

SB 5046 is a step towards that goal of access. It provides meaningful and timely access to legal counsel to challenge unjust convictions in certain circumstances. Importantly, SB 5046 also directs the state Office of Public Defense (OPD) to oversee provision of counsel in appropriate post-conviction cases. We are confident that OPD's years of experience providing counsel in other matters prepares them well for this role.

Appointment of counsel – and the research, advice, and organized presentations that counsel can provide – helps courts examine potentially unfair and unconstitutional convictions more thoughtfully and critically. Our support of SB 5046 is in line with the Commission's mission to make recommendations regarding the equal treatment of all parties and working toward communities free of bias.

Sincerely,

Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud  
Co-Chair  
Washington Supreme Court

Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown  
Co-Chair  
Benton/Franklin Superior Court



# Washington State Supreme Court Gender and Justice Commission

**Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud, Co-Chair**  
Washington State Supreme Court

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Benton & Franklin Counties Superior Court

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**Honorable Dave Reynolds**  
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**Ms. Jennifer Ritchie**  
King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office

**Ms. Barbara Serrano**  
Office of the Governor

**Chief Judge Cindy K. Smith**  
Suquamish Tribal Court

*Sent via Email*

Representative Timm Ormsby  
Chair, Appropriations Committee  
Washington State House of Representatives

Representative Drew Stokesbary  
Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee  
Washington State House of Representatives

Senator Christine Rolfes  
Chair, Ways and Means Committee  
Washington State Senate

Senator Lynda Wilson  
Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee  
Washington State Senate

February 23, 2023

Re: Support for Courthouse Security Budget Package

Dear Representative Ormsby, Senator Rolfes, Representative Stokesbary and Senator Wilson:

On behalf of the Supreme Court's Gender and Justice Commission, we would like to express support for the judicial branch cost-sharing courthouse security budget package. The Commission feels strongly about this because courthouse violence has a significant nexus to gender and race-based violence. This is probably most clear for cases involving intimate partner violence, protection orders, and family law.

The data shows that this is certainly true on the national scene. According to the National Center for State Courts, judges and court staff identify cases involving intimate partner violence as the most dangerous cases in the courthouse.<sup>1</sup> Many Washingtonians are familiar with the domestic violence related Blackwell murders, which occurred inside the King County Courthouse, and resulted in the shooting deaths of three separate women.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to litigant safety concerns, across the country there has been an alarming upward trend in threats against judicial officers in recent years. The data shows that this is also true in our state. In Washington

<sup>1</sup> National Center for State Courts/Center for Court Innovation. (2020). *Recommended Court Security Measures for Cases Involving Domestic Violence*.

<sup>2</sup> Egan, T. (1996, May 26). Mail-Order Marriage, Immigrant Dreams and Death. *New York Times*.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1996/05/26/world/mail-order-marriage-immigrant-dreams-and-death.html>

State, threats to judicial staff have increased 76.3% since 2020.<sup>3</sup> The Commission is also concerned, based upon national reporting and anecdotal reports within our state, that female judges and judges of color are likely disproportionately the targets of threats of violence.<sup>4</sup>

Victim advocates and the litigants they assist have also reported significant safety concerns within our state courthouses. Over 60% of responding victim advocates in Washington have experienced one or more security incidents on courthouse premises, and over 75% of advocates indicate their clients express concerns regarding personal safety in the courthouse.<sup>5</sup> Fear of violence within the courthouse should not be an additional barrier faced by our most vulnerable populations.

We hope you will consider this information when making your decision and appreciate your efforts to ensure our courts are safe and accessible to all.

Sincerely,



Justice Sheryl Gordon McCloud  
Co-Chair  
Washington Supreme Court



Judge Jacqueline Shea-Brown  
Co- Chair  
Benton/Franklin Superior Court

cc: Washington State Senate, Ways and Means Committee Members  
Washington State House of Representatives, Appropriations Committee Members

<sup>3</sup> Data provided to the Administrative Office of the Courts as required by General Rule 36. *Washington Courts Incident Reports 2020-2022*.

<sup>4</sup> Deliso, M. (2020, August 2). Threats to Judges are Increasing, and Experts Say Misogyny is a Problem. *ABC News*. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/threats-judges-increasing-experts-misogyny-problem/story?id=72061296>

<sup>5</sup> Board for Judicial Administration Courthouse Security Task Force Survey. (2020). *Courthouse Security: Safety from the Lens of the Victim Advocate*.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program Blueprint for Implementation



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

This publication was made possible through the funding from the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), support of the Kitsap County Superior Court and its community partners, and technical assistance of the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR).

The publication was prepared by WSCCR Researcher Arina Gertseva, Ph.D. and Claire Mocha, Research Analyst with the Washington State Department of Health. Direction was provided by Carl McCurley, Ph.D., Manager of the Washington State Center for Court Research.

## **Washington State Center for Court Research**

Dr. Arina Gertseva, Senior Research Associate

Dr. Carl McCurley, Manager

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Shannon Porter, Court Services Officer, Kitsap County Juvenile and Family Court Services

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Todd Dowell, Senior Deputy Prosecutor, Kitsap County Prosecutor's Office

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Sarah Dubitzky (Friedman), MSW, LSWAIC, ILS Programs Manager, Olive Crest

Jennifer Stearns, ILS Case Manager, Olive Crest

## **For questions related to this report, please contact:**

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This publication is also available on the CCYJ Web site at: <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	1
Terminology.....	3
<b>Section 1: Why Girls Court?</b> .....	4
Why are girls’ court programs needed? .....	4
What is a girls’ court program and how is it different? .....	6
What are the potential benefits of girls’ courts? .....	7
Benefits to participants .....	7
Benefits to court systems.....	8
Benefits to families.....	9
Benefits to communities.....	9
<b>Section 2: Program Design and Activities</b> .....	10
Eligibility and referral.....	12
Case management .....	12
The Girls Court team and program staff.....	16
Family engagement.....	17
Community engagement and community-based activities and services.....	17
Not engaging in services.....	19
Incentivizing behavior change .....	19
Program completion.....	19
Program funding .....	19
<b>Section 3: Evaluation Overview</b> .....	20
<b>Section 4: Girl’s Court Program Readiness</b> .....	22
<b>Section 5: Kitsap Tactics in Detail: In Their Own Words</b> .....	26
Key lessons learned from the Judge.....	26
Key lessons learned from the court services officer (CSO).....	28
Key lessons learned from the prosecutor .....	29
Key lessons learned from service providers (Olive Crest) .....	30
<b>Appendix</b> .....	32

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome to the Girls Court Program Blueprint for Implementation.

This toolkit describes the girls' court model and outlines recommendations and strategies for communities interested in having their own girls' court program. The Kitsap County, Washington, Girls Court<sup>1</sup> pilot program is used as an example of girls' court implementation. This toolkit is designed for judicial leaders, administrators, probation counselors/officers,<sup>2</sup> frontline staff, and community partners who want to align juvenile justice practices with a gender-responsive approach to meet the needs of justice-involved girls more effectively. We also hope this blueprint will assist leaders outside the court systems in bringing community stakeholders to the table and engaging with them about whether, and how, this program can help to address the developmental and social needs of girls and young women in their local communities.

This toolkit is not intended to be comprehensive but rather serves as an illustration of how gender-responsive court-based programming was implemented in a small, semi-urban county in Washington State. It is important to note that not all girls' courts need to be identical; what works for one community may not work for another. However, principles and core elements of this model can be applied across communities while enabling the courts to adapt the model in response to local needs.

The Girls Court pilot in Kitsap County<sup>3</sup> was initiated in response to a growing concern among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers regarding the ability of a traditionally male-oriented justice system to address gender-specific needs of girls<sup>4</sup> in a developmentally appropriate manner. The 1992 reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) mandated states to provide gender-responsive services.<sup>5</sup> Kitsap County became the first jurisdiction in Washington State (and one of the first in the country<sup>6</sup>) to implement a court-based program to address the limitations of the “one-size-fits-all” approach of the juvenile justice system.

The Kitsap County Girls Court pilot was initially funded for three years. It began in June of 2019 and continued through May 31, 2022.<sup>7</sup> During this time, 27 girls participated in the program<sup>8</sup>. When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated. Participation is

<sup>1</sup> Throughout the document, “girls' court” refers to the general model, and “Girls Court” refers to the pilot program in Kitsap County.

<sup>2</sup> Courts use “probation counselor” and “probation officer” terms interchangeably. [RCW 13.04.035](#) uses “probation counselor” language, while [RCW 13.04.050](#) has some references to “probation officer.” Yet, some courts are using “court services officer” terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, special supervision, dependency, assessments and evaluations (i.e., Okanogan, Kitsap).

<sup>3</sup> See [Kitsap County Profile](#), Washington State Employment Security Department.

<sup>4</sup> “Girls” and “female” refer to cisgender and transgender girls as well as gender-expansive youth (non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any female-identified youth).

<sup>5</sup> Chesney-Lind, M., & Irwin, K. (2008). *Beyond bad girls: Gender, violence and hype*. New York, NY: Routledge.

<sup>6</sup> Girls court models have been implemented in several states, including Hawaii, California (Orange County), Michigan (Genesee County), and Florida.

<sup>7</sup> At the time of writing this toolkit (Summer 2022) Kitsap County continues to operate the program.

<sup>8</sup> The program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but COVID-19 has had a profound impact on program enrollment.



## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

entirely voluntary. Unlike the traditional court, the Kitsap County Girls Court seeks to resolve the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system, rather than merely holding the youth accountable.

The program has enacted many gender-responsive best practices, along with several innovative local solutions, by leveraging existing community resources. As a result, all participants have access to trauma-informed, gender-responsive services and non-court interventions based on individualized case management plans. These interventions promote positive behavioral change in a non-traditional (particularly, a non-adversarial) manner. Upon successful program completion, all charges are dismissed.

A program evaluation began shortly after the launch of the program and has since indicated improvements in three major categories: 1) organizational practices; 2) staff competencies; and 3) youth outcomes.

According to interviews with key stakeholders, the pilot resulted in several important changes to organizational practice. For example, the program staff invested heavily in external relationship-building, significantly expanding the network of formal and informal community partners and gaining the support of local school leaders. As a result of these partnerships, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication and action that did not exist before, which led to improvements in coordination with, and referrals to, community-based resources.

All program staff—supervisors, managers, service providers, and support staff—underwent multiple phases of training on various topics related to trauma, nutrition, equity, serving LGBTQ+ youth, and gender-responsive approaches.<sup>9</sup> Program staff note that these trainings increased their understanding of gender-responsive programming and their role in improving the system's responses to girls and young women.

Through interviews, program staff noted multiple ways the program benefited participants, including problem recognition, trauma relief, improved self-awareness, skills building, and symptom reduction. Youth outcome data have shown that the program increased participant social skills and improved attitudes and behaviors relating to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning. There was some evidence of improvements in school performance, and modest improvements in behavioral health.

The pilot also faced some challenges, including logistical challenges (such as delays in contract finalization with service providers), and programming challenges (such as engaging families and youth). By far the biggest challenge, however, was the COVID-19 pandemic, which affected the ability to recruit new girls to the program and to maintain the continuity of activities. In response to COVID-19, both court professionals and youth-serving providers transitioned to virtual programming, including case management, court hearings, program activities, and service provision.

Despite these challenges, program staff and their community partners are determined to continue the program. The Kitsap team has already begun to think about how to expand program options and create opportunities for serving all youth in the juvenile justice system, including girls,<sup>10</sup> boys,

<sup>9</sup> A list and short description of trainings can be found in Table 3 of the Appendix.

<sup>10</sup> The pilot was intended to be open to all female-identifying youth (e.g., cisgender and transgender girls as well as gender-expansive youth such as non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, and gender queer youth). Although the program



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

LGBTQ+ youth, and youth from traditionally underserved communities (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)). By creating and sustaining inclusive practices, the program staff is hoping to promote equity by supporting all youth entering the juvenile justice system.

The development of this toolkit has allowed the Kitsap team to reflect on lessons they learned from this pilot, and they are excited to share their experiences with other communities.

The toolkit is divided into five sections, each addressing a specific topic. Users can apply the toolkit in its entirety, or they may find certain portions of it particularly relevant to their needs.

- Section 1 discusses the rationale for a girls' court, gives a short description of the Kitsap County Girls Court program and how it is different from a traditional court, and lists some benefits of the girls' court model.
- Section 2 describes specifics of the Kitsap County Girls Court program structure, including operations, activities, and key operational program staff.
- Section 3 gives a brief overview of the program evaluation planning and findings.
- Section 4 gives a checklist and important steps for other jurisdictions or court systems interested in implementing a girls' court program of their own to assess readiness and begin implementation.
- Section 5 gives specific recommendations and lessons learned from key operational program staff including the judge, court services officer<sup>11</sup>, prosecutor, and service providers.

The toolkit also includes an Appendix that provides additional resources (e.g., referral forms, a case management template created by the Kitsap team, and more). Terminology used in this report is explained below.

## TERMINOLOGY

The binary terms “boy/girl” and “male/female”, used in this report to summarize past and current research, refer to sex assigned at birth, not gender identity. Most data and research in the juvenile justice system does not capture or acknowledge gender identity, much less gender expansiveness.

Gender is a social construct composed of norms, behaviors, relationships, and roles. Gender may be categorized as non-binary, as well as man or woman, boy or girl, or many other identities. For many individuals, gender identity is experienced (and gender is expressed) in expansive ways, outside of the girl/woman versus man/boy binary.

Almost all data is about sex assigned at birth and not gender identity. Sex assigned at birth is based on physical characteristics; gender identity is an internal sense of self. We can't know someone's gender identity unless we ask.

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participants in this pilot were mostly cis white girls, program staff were trained and prepared to provide supportive environment for gender-expansive youth.

<sup>11</sup> Kitsap Superior Court is using “court services officer” terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, dependency, assessments and evaluations instead of “probation counselor” and “probation officer” terms.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## SECTION 1: WHY GIRLS' COURT?

### *Why are girls' court programs needed?*

While males account for the majority of youth in the juvenile justice system, the proportion of females has been steadily growing over the past several years.<sup>12</sup> For example, the female share of juvenile arrests nationwide increased from 18% in 1980 to 31% in 2019.<sup>13</sup> For non-violent drug and property offenses in 2019, the female share was even higher, as with liquor law violations (42%), larceny-theft (40%), simple assault (38%), and disorderly conduct (37%). For adjudicated girls, the likelihood of being placed on formal probation slightly increased from 62% in 2005 to 68% in 2019.<sup>14</sup> Research suggests that LGBTQ+ identified girls<sup>15</sup> and girls of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the growing number of girls in the juvenile justice system, policy measures, practices, and programs within that system have historically been designed for boys and applied to girls without consideration of their distinct realities and life experiences.<sup>17</sup> Boys and girls entering the juvenile justice system share many of the same challenges; however, some issues are much more commonly disclosed by girls. For example, girls under probation supervision in Washington State<sup>18</sup> are more likely to have been exposed to violence at home and to have been victims of physical abuse, sexual abuse, and child neglect, when compared to their male counterparts and girls in the general youth population (Table 1).<sup>19</sup>

Exposure to violence and victimization affects girls' mental health, substance use, involvement with violent partners, re-victimization, and subsequent offending behavior.<sup>20</sup> Although victimization is found among justice-involved boys, feminist criminologists have identified victimization as a particularly salient risk factor for female offending, with violent victimization often considered to be the first step in girls' pathways to crime.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>12</sup> All reported data trends reflect the data collected prior to COVID-19.

<sup>13</sup> Juvenile arrests, 2019, Office of Justice Programs, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/publications/juvenile-arrests-2019.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> National Center for Juvenile Justice (2019). Juvenile court statistics: <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/njcda/pdf/jcs2019.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Irvine, A., & Canfield, A. (2016). [The Overrepresentation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Questioning, Gender Nonconforming and Transgender Youth within the Child Welfare to Juvenile Justice Crossover Population](https://www.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2012/06/pdf/juvenile_justice.pdf). *Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 24(2):249. See also Hunt, Jerome, & Moodie-Mills. (2012). *The Unfair Criminalization of Gay and Transgender Youth: An Overview of the Experiences of LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress. [http://www.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2012/06/pdf/juvenile\\_justice.pdf](http://www.americanprogress.org/wpcontent/uploads/issues/2012/06/pdf/juvenile_justice.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> OJJDP Statistical Briefing Book. Case processing characteristics of delinquency offenses by gender and race, 2019. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/special\\_topics/qa11604.asp?qaDate=2019](https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/special_topics/qa11604.asp?qaDate=2019) Released on February 24, 2022.

<sup>17</sup> Chesney-Lind, M., & Pasco, L. (2004). *The female offender: girls, women and crime*. Sage Publications.

<sup>18</sup> Gertseva, A. (2017). *Girls on Probation: Challenges and Outcomes*. Washington State Center for Court Research.

<sup>19</sup> Finkelhor, D., Turner, H., Shattuck, A., Hamby, S., & Kracke, K. (2015). *Children's Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: An Update*. Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/248547.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Chesney-Lind, M., & Shelden, R. G. (2004). *Girls, delinquency, and juvenile justice* (3rd Ed.). Thompson Wadsworth; Jasinski, J. L., Williams, L. M., & Siegel, J. (2000). Childhood physical and sexual abuse as risk factors for heavy drinking among African American women: A prospective study. *Child Abuse and Neglect*, 24(8), 1061-1071; Widom, C. S., Marmorstein, N. R., & White, H. R. (2006). Childhood victimization and illicit drug use in middle adulthood. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, 20(4), 394-403; Casey, E. A., & Nurius, P. S. (2005). Trauma exposure and sexual re-victimization risk: Comparisons across single, multiple incident, and multiple perpetrator victimizations. *Violence against Women*, 11(4), 505-530; Makarios, M. D. (2007). Race, abuse, and female criminal violence. *Feminist Criminology*, 2(2), 100-116.

<sup>21</sup> Belknap, J., & Holsinger, K. (2006). The gendered nature of risk factors for delinquency. *Feminist Criminology*, 1(1):48-71; Gavazzi, S., Yarcheck, C., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2006). Global risk indicators and the role of gender in a juvenile detention sample. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 33(5), 597-612.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

**Table 1: Exposure to Violence, Youth on Probation vs. Youth in the Population**

	<i>Youth on probation</i>		<i>Youth in the population</i>	
	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
Witnessed violence at home	56%	42%	21%	21%
Witnessed violence in the community	52%	48%	25%	30%
Experienced sexual abuse	34%	8%	11%	8%
Experienced physical abuse	44%	31%	8%	11%
Experienced child neglect	33%	21%	14%	15%

Justice-involved girls are also particularly affected by family-related challenges such as interpersonal problems, parental alcohol and drug abuse, and family conflict.<sup>22</sup> These adversities, although experienced by youth of any gender, may be particularly stressful for girls because many girls have been socialized from a young age to value interpersonal relations and emotional exchanges.<sup>23</sup> When faced with relational and other adversities, girls are more likely than boys to generate strong self-directed emotions (e.g., depression, anxiety, shame, and guilt) that can lead to a variety of self-destructive behaviors (e.g., running away from home, self-harm, suicide, and substance use). In contrast, boys, in response to stress, are more likely to generate outward-directed emotions (e.g., anger and hostility) that lead to behavioral outbursts directed toward others.<sup>24</sup>

These gendered coping strategies are more likely to cause severe health-related effects in girls than in boys. For example, girls are more likely than boys to suffer from mental health disorders (e.g., depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress syndrome, psychotic disorders, borderline personality disorders, and eating disorders) and substance use disorders.<sup>25</sup> Gender-responsive researchers argue that girls should be taught positive ways to cope with the aftermath of their victimization, otherwise they may continue to deal with the emotional and physical pains of victimization through risky behaviors and substance use.

With these differences in mind, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers have raised concerns regarding the ability of a traditionally male-oriented justice system to address the gender-specific needs of girls in a developmentally appropriate manner.

In response to these concerns, in 2015, the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released *Girls and the Juvenile Justice System Policy Guidance*. This guidance explicitly stated that girls in the juvenile system differ from boys in terms of their offenses, background characteristics, and needs; specifically, girls commit less serious crimes and for different reasons (e.g., running away from abusive homes, economic marginalization), and are more likely to experience victimization, substance abuse, and mental health issues. This guidance called for a national commitment to increase “gender and culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and developmentally appropriate approaches” when working with girls in the juvenile justice system.

<sup>22</sup> American Bar Association & National Bar Association. (2001). *Justice by gender: The lack of appropriate prevention, diversion and treatment alternatives for girls in the justice system*. Washington, DC: American Bar Association. <https://scholarship.law.wm.edu/wmjowl/vol9/iss1/5/>

<sup>23</sup> Loeber, R., & Hay, D. (1997). Key issues in the development of aggression and violence from childhood to early adulthood. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 48: 371-393.

<sup>24</sup> Mirowsky, J., & Ross, C. (1995). Sex Differences in Distress: Real or Artifact? *American Sociological Review*. 60: 449-468.

<sup>25</sup> Timmons-Mitchell, J., Brown, C., Schulz, S. C., Webster, S. E., Underwood, L. A., & Semple, W. E. (1997). Comparing the mental health needs of female and male incarcerated juvenile delinquents. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, 15, 195-202.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

While numerous task forces and committees were developed across the country to implement gender-responsive services,<sup>26</sup> nationally, only a few programs have been created specifically for girls. A 2009 analysis of a database of juvenile justice program evaluations revealed that only 4% of the programs in the country exclusively served girls, while 87% served only or mostly boys.<sup>27</sup> This is particularly problematic given that girls comprise about 28% of the juvenile court population in Washington State.<sup>28</sup>

Girls' court programs provide an example of how court systems in our state can address girls' unique needs by "creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content, and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of girl's lives and addresses the issues of the participants."<sup>29</sup>

## *What is a girls' court program and how is it different?*

A girls' court program is an alternative to the traditional court model that is specifically designed for female-identifying youth. This is a specialized form of therapeutic court that provides trauma-informed, gender-responsive services and non-court interventions to promote behavior change in a non-traditional, non-adversarial manner. Unlike traditional courts, a girls' court seeks to resolve the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system, rather than merely holding the youth accountable. This type of court focuses on providing treatment and support to the participants instead of sanctioning youth for their behaviors.

The girls' court model incorporates gender-responsive elements from feminist pathways theory (e.g., addressing trauma, victimization, abuse, and neglect)<sup>30</sup> and relational/cultural theory that emphasize relationships as building blocks for youths' wellness (e.g., centrality of relationships, inclusion of girls' voices, and sense of connection to others).<sup>31</sup>

According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington, a gender-responsive court seeks to create an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that girls bring to the justice system; it adjusts strategies and practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions.<sup>32</sup> This involves understanding the unique history of each girl. These histories may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, victimization, eating disorders, homelessness, running away, exploitation, neglect, using and abusing alcohol/drugs, and

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*"A gender-responsive court seeks to create an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that girls bring to the justice system and appropriately responds to those conditions."*

*-Bloom et al., 2005*

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<sup>26</sup> Walker, S. C., Muno, A., & Sullivan-Colglazier, C. (2015). Principles in practice: A multistate study of gender-responsive reforms in the juvenile justice system. *Crime & Delinquency*, 61, 742-766.

<sup>27</sup> Lipsey, M. W. (2009). The primary factors that characterize effective interventions with juvenile offenders: A meta-analytic overview. *Victims & Offenders*, 4, 124-147.

<sup>28</sup> See: [2020 WA-PCJJ Governor's Report](#), p.63.

<sup>29</sup> Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2005). *Gender-responsive strategies for women offenders: A summary of research, practice, and guiding principles for women offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections. <https://s3.amazonaws.com/static.nicic.gov/Library/020418.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> Wattanaporn, K.A., & Holtfreter, K. (2014). The Impact of Feminist Pathways Research on Gender-Responsive Policy and Practice. *Feminist Criminology*. 9(3), 191-207.

<sup>31</sup> Cannon, K., Hammer, T., Reicherzer, S., & Gilliam, B. (2012). Relational-Cultural Theory: A Framework for Relational Competencies and Movement in Group Work with Female Adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 7(1), 2-16.

<sup>32</sup> Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2005). *Gender-responsive strategies for women offenders: A summary of research, practice, and guiding principles for women offenders*. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

involvement in the child welfare system. A key difference between the traditional court and the girls' court model is that the latter takes a holistic approach to working with girls by building strong, authentic relationships that honor every girl's background. By shifting from asking, "what is wrong with you?" to asking, "what happened to you?" a girls' court recognizes and responds to girls' experiences by creating a safe, therapeutic, and engaging environment.

This change in focus and operation requires strong, committed leadership. A key role in girls' court is the visible judicial leader who demonstrates a commitment to establishing and carrying out the program and who leads a diverse group of stakeholders. This group includes both internal court system stakeholders (e.g., court administration, defense attorneys, prosecutors, clerks, and other court staff) and external stakeholders (e.g., service providers, volunteers, and non-profit organizations). The judge in the girls' court takes a more hands-on approach, beyond evidence and legal process, by closely monitoring the progress of each girl and having more frequent contact and communication with program participants. The judge participates not only in court hearings but also in shared activities outside the courtroom. This differs from a traditional court in which the judge serves as an impersonal, objective, and remote decision maker.

Another key characteristic of a girls' court program is collaboration with community partners. A girls' court relies heavily on community resources by linking the girls to local service providers, including behavioral health providers, counselors, and mentors. The extensive community outreach component of the program enables girls to be served in their local communities instead of relying on services available within the juvenile justice system. Finally, unlike the traditional court, the goal of the girls' court program is to ensure that girls have options to remain connected to services even after completing the program.

## *What are the potential benefits of girls' courts?*

There is a body of research supporting the theoretical framework of a girls' court program and its benefits not only to the program participants,<sup>33</sup> but also to the court system, the families, and the wider community.

### **Benefits to participants**

Accumulated anecdotal reports and preliminary evaluations from the Kitsap County pilot and other U.S. girls' court programs suggest a wide array of benefits to participants. For example, there is some evidence that gender-specific programs have positive outcomes in the areas of education, employment, interpersonal relationships, self-esteem, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and social development.<sup>34</sup> The literature provides evidence that young women receiving trauma-informed services have shown improvements in trauma-related symptomatology, reductions in PTSD, and positive substance use outcomes.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Due to practically non-existent research on how girls' court framework impacts gender-diverse youth (transgender girls/women, transgender boys/men, as well as youth who are gender fluid, genderqueer, non-binary, agender, etc.), we can only hypothesize that program's services can positively impact these youths.

<sup>34</sup> Zahn, M., Day, J., Mihalic, S., & Tichavsky, L. (2009). Determining What Works for Girls in the Juvenile Justice System. *Crime & Delinquency*. 55(2), 266–293.

<sup>35</sup> Morrissey, J.P., Ellis, A.R., & Gatz, M. (2005). Outcomes for women with co-occurring disorders and trauma: Program and person-level effects. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*. 28(2), 121–133.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Zahn et al. (2009)<sup>36</sup> examined nine gender-responsive programs and found a general pattern of improvement in school performance and interpersonal relationships. Research also shows that expanding girls' social support networks through creating relationships with supportive, non-parental adults has a positive impact on a youth's overall mental health<sup>37</sup> and is the most common protective factor in helping young people be resilient in difficult life circumstances.<sup>38</sup>

Evaluation of Honolulu's Girls' Court<sup>39</sup> found that the core gender-responsive elements of intensive case management that focused on building healthy relationships and individualized therapy to address trauma significantly decreased girls' law violations. The most recent evaluation of the gender-responsive program, *Girls...Moving On (GMO)* demonstrated significant reductions in risk scores and increases in strength scores as well as improvements in self-efficacy.<sup>40</sup>

The Kitsap County Girls Court evaluation<sup>41</sup> showed a range of benefits to participants, including increased problem solving (e.g., consequential thinking, goal setting, skills for dealing with difficult situations, skills for controlling impulsive behaviors, and aggression), improved emotional stability (e.g., ability to regulate impulsivity, having empathy for victims, respecting others' property, respecting authority, and accepting responsibility for behavior), and academic improvement (i.e., school enrollment status, attitudes toward education, school attendance, academic performance, and school conduct).

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*"Many participants have told me while leaving the program that they would not be in a position they are right now if they were not participating in the program. That tells me that we are making a difference."*

*-Kitsap court professional*

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## Benefits to court systems

At a time when courts are under increasing pressure to be more responsive and accessible, investing in gender-responsive programming can have a transformative effect on the entire juvenile justice system. When court staff are educated about what it means to be a trauma-responsive organization, why it's important, and how every person in the organization plays a role in creating a safe and trusting environment, this can benefit not only girls in the program but also youth whom court professionals encounter in the mainstream juvenile justice system. By learning more about the origins and manifestations of trauma, justice professionals can incorporate trauma-responsive practices into all court hearings and other court activities and interactions. This shift

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*"Our goal is to make probation therapeutic. If we are successful with [the] Girls Court Program, we can use the same model for all youth on probation."*

*-Kitsap court professional*

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<sup>36</sup> Zahn, M. A., Day, J. C., Mihalic, S. F., & Tichavsky, L. (2009). Determining what works for girls in the juvenile justice system: A summary of evaluation evidence. *Crime & Delinquency*, 55(2), 266-293.

<sup>37</sup> Scales, P.C., Benson, P.L., & Mannes, M. (2006). The contribution to adolescent well-being made by nonfamily adults: An examination of developmental assets as contexts and processes. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(4), 401-413.

<sup>38</sup> Rutter, M. (1987). Psychological resilience and protective mechanisms. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 57(3), 316-331.

<sup>39</sup> Davidson, J. T., Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2011). "She's way too good to lose": An evaluation of Honolulu's Girls Court. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 21, 308-32.

<sup>40</sup> Belisle, L.A., Salisbury, E.J., Keen, J. (2022). Did They Move on? An Outcome Evaluation of the Gender-Responsive Program, *Girls...Moving On*. *Feminist Criminology*. 17(2):223-251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15570851211065900>.

<sup>41</sup> Gertseva, Arina and Mocha, Claire (2022). *Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report*. Olympia, WA. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), Administrative Office of the Courts (forthcoming).

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

in how youth are viewed by court personnel can foster youths' engagement in treatment, create trust between court professionals and youth, and support youths' positive outcomes.

One of the most important aspects of a girls' court is the high level of the judge's involvement in each case. The judge can get to know each participant on a more personal level and can create a culture of empathy, compassion, and trusting relationships, which in turn can improve youth engagement with the program. The creation of a girls' court program can help courts expand services for youth. The community outreach component of the program enables court staff to develop working relationships with a variety of community-based service providers, which provides girls access to services not available in the court.

## Benefits to families<sup>42</sup>

The girls' court model acknowledges that positive family relationships help young people stay healthy and avoid risky behavior.<sup>43</sup> That is why a key strategy of the girls' court program is to engage families in the treatment process. Program staff assist families in understanding trauma and its effects on youth behavior. This can bolster caregiver–youth relationships, strengthen family communication patterns, and improve overall family functioning. In addition, the comprehensive package of services available through the program (i.e., life-skills training, mentoring, school counseling, family counseling, mental health, and substance abuse treatment) can improve a youth's social competence and communication skills, which in turn can enhance family connectedness and communication.

## Benefits to communities

While most research on girls' court programs has focused on benefits to participants and their families, there is reason to believe that these benefits spill over to impact surrounding systems and communities. This is an example of the *curb cut effect*,<sup>44</sup> a phenomenon in which programs designed to benefit the most marginalized individuals can have a positive impact on the broader community and society.

The girls' court model brings together the community and the justice system to address local concerns regarding public safety. Within this model, community members and court professionals are working together to address the underlying issues that have brought the girl into contact with the justice system. Connecting the courts to community-based service providers allows for a tighter web of services in which youth become less likely to slip through the cracks of the juvenile system, and, with practice, access to community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient. Since 2019, program staff has developed effective working relationships with 17 community partners. As a result of the program, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication that did not exist before, through monthly court hearings and stakeholder meetings, as well as regular emails and phone calls.

<sup>42</sup> The court recognizes that a family can include people of various ages who are united through biology, marriage, or adoption or who are so closely connected through friendships or shared experience that they are taken to be family members.

<sup>43</sup> Yang, F., Tan, K.-A., and Cheng, W. J. Y. (2013). The effects of connectedness on health-promoting and health-compromising behaviors in adolescents: Evidence from a statewide survey. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 35(1), 33-46; Ackard, D. M., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M., and Perry, C. (2006). Parent-child connectedness and behavioral and emotional health among adolescents. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 30(1), 59-66.

<sup>44</sup> Angela Glover Blackwell (2017). The Curb-Cut Effect, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 28-33.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

This collaborative approach to community problem solving can foster public trust and confidence in the court systems, as members of the community have the opportunity to observe and even contribute to service provision. Also, research suggests that any benefits in school achievements can positively impact future education outcomes of the girls and potentially lower the risk of re-offending.<sup>45</sup> Reduced recidivism means reductions in crime in the community, leading to increased safety.



## SECTION 2: PROGRAM DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

The Kitsap County Girls Court program is a specialized, trauma-informed, team-based program with a focus on problem solving. It is currently a pre-dispositional therapeutic treatment program for female-identifying youth ages 14-17.<sup>46</sup> Even though the program was intended to be open to any girl-identified youth (e.g., cis girls, trans girls, non-binary youth, and gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth and gender expansive youth), the participants in this pilot all identified as cis girls. The program is voluntary and was originally intended for youth who are classified<sup>47</sup> moderate, or high risk as indicated by their Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT)<sup>48</sup> scores and who are not currently on another specialized caseload (such as those for substance use or sex-related offenses). When the program transitioned to a pre-dispositional model, eligibility criteria for the program switched from “risk” to “needs,” meaning, youth who are classified as low risk as indicated by their PACT scores also became eligible.<sup>49</sup>

Program goals include reducing recidivism, improving school performance, increasing confidence and self-efficacy, strengthening interpersonal skills, increasing knowledge of career options and goal setting, and building positive relationships and support systems including, where appropriate, with family. These goals are targeted through the use of treatment (as necessary), life skills building, community mentoring, parental engagement, job training, and education support; all of which reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that participants bring to the

<sup>45</sup> Li, Y., & Lerner, R. M. (2011). Trajectories of school engagement during adolescence. *Developmental Psychology*, 47(1), 233–47; Kimberly, L.N., Knight, K.E., & Thornberry, T. P. (2011). School disengagement as a predictor of dropout, delinquency, and problem substance use during adolescence and early adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 41(2), 156–66; and Hawkins, S.R., Graham, P.W., Williams, J., & Zahn, M.A. (2009). Resilient Girls-Factors That Protect Against Delinquency. Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/220124.pdf>.

<sup>46</sup> When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated.

<sup>47</sup> When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, only moderate- and high-risk girls were eligible for the program after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, expanding the eligibility to low-risk girls.

<sup>48</sup> The PACT is administered as a semi-structured interview protocol with software-scored risk and protective factors using forced-choice response options for each assessment item. [https://www.assessments.com/purchase/detail.asp?SKU=5197#:~:text=The%20PACT%20\(Positive%20Achievement%20Change,a%20semi%2Dstructured%20interview%20protocol](https://www.assessments.com/purchase/detail.asp?SKU=5197#:~:text=The%20PACT%20(Positive%20Achievement%20Change,a%20semi%2Dstructured%20interview%20protocol)

<sup>49</sup> Research indicates mixing young people who have been assessed at high risk to reoffend with young people assessed at low risk can be problematic when mixed groups are unsupervised. Lipsey, M. W. (2006). The Effects of Community-Based Group Treatment for Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Search for Cross-Study Generalizations. In K. A. Dodge, T. J. Dishion, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions* (pp. 162–184). The Guilford Press. Lipsey did not find any evidence of adverse peer contagion effect in mixed groups if the activities are supervised. *Id.* When Girls Court changed to a pre-dispositional therapeutic model, it shifted focus to the needs of the youth, instead of the risk classification, allowing for mixed grouping. Opportunities for unsupervised interactions within the Girls Court are non-existent. All program activities and group treatment continued to be supervised after the transition to a pre-dispositional model, eliminating the risk of peer contagion.

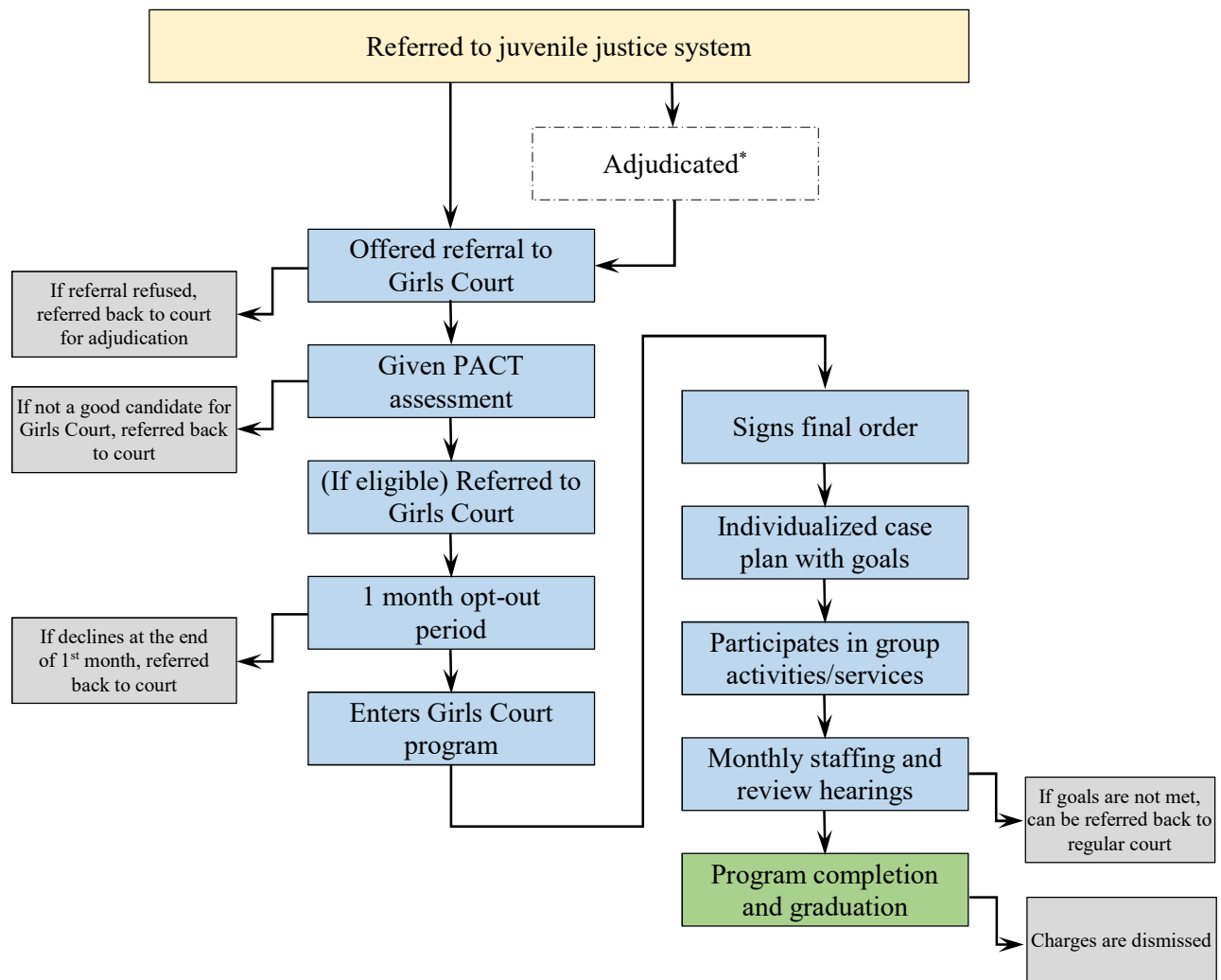


# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

justice system. Treatment eligibility is determined by the risk level and/or service provider. For example, eligibility for state-funded evidence-based programs (e.g., Coordination of Services (COS) or Functional Family Therapy (FFT)) is determined by the risk level; while services such as Independent Living Skills are not based on risk level. It is open to all program participants.

Figure 1 presents the Kitsap County Girls Court program flowchart. Additional details are summarized in Table 2 showing the main differences between a traditional court and the Girls Court model. Below is a description of the program structure and activities.

**FIGURE 1: THE KITSAP COUNTY GIRLS COURT PROGRAM FLOW CHART**



\* When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Eligibility and referral

When the Girls Court pilot began, girls were assessed and referred to the program after being adjudicated. Starting in 2021, however, the program switched to intervening pre-adjudication. Under this model, any girl-identified youth ages 14-17 years who are not concurrently part of other alternate court programs, such as Drug Court, Individualized Treatment Court, or Special Sex Offender Disposition Alternative, are offered the opportunity for referral during their case setting and may discuss with their defense attorney whether to proceed to eligibility (see Figure 1).

Every young person, offered a referral to the Girls Court program, is assessed using the PACT assessment. Girls who scored as low,<sup>50</sup> moderate, or high risk on the PACT are eligible for, and referred to, Girls Court. Once determined eligible for Girls Court, the youth observes the program for one month (known as the opt-out period), during which time they observe one court hearing and participate in one scheduled shared activity. This allows the youth to make an informed decision as to whether they want to participate. At the end of this period, if the youth decides they do not want to participate in the program, their case is referred back to the juvenile court for regular adjudication. If the youth decides to participate in Girls Court, they sign a final order and can then withdraw from the program if a request is made to the judge or if they fail to participate and are terminated from the program. Program participation length varies based on the participant's criminal history, severity of charges on the current case, and assessed level of risk and need, from a minimum of nine months for misdemeanors and a minimum of 12 months for felony offenses. It is expected that the program will be completed within two (2) years. The target number of participants is 15-20.

## Case Management

All girls referred to the program have an assigned Court Services Officer (CSO),<sup>51</sup> who is trained to use a strength-based approach<sup>52</sup> when working with youth and their families. The CSO uses the PACT and structured interviewing techniques to assess criminogenic needs and protective factors<sup>53</sup> of each girl prior to the program. This assessment is administered again at the end of the program to serve as an indicator of progress and improvement during the program. In addition to risks and needs, the CSO identifies youths' strengths, interests, hobbies, and communication style directly from youth or indirectly from conversations with the parent, staffings,<sup>54</sup> and written reports such as a social history, psychological evaluation, or court report. The CSO uses these results and engages participants and their families to create individualized case plans that address each participant's

<sup>50</sup> Thus far we have had one girl who scored as low risk on the PACT who has participated.

<sup>51</sup> Some courts are using "court services officer" terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the Superior Court and Juvenile Department in the areas of diversion, probation, dependency, assessments and evaluations (i.e., Kitsap) instead of "probation counselor" and "probation officer" terms.

<sup>52</sup> **Strength-based approach** is a core component of a gender responsive intervention. A strength-based approach is a specific method of working with and resolving problems experienced by the youth. It does not attempt to ignore the problems and difficulties. Rather, it attempts to identify the positive basis of the youth's resources and strengths that will lay the basis to address the challenges resulting from the problems. A strength-based paradigm offers a different language to describe youths' difficulties and struggles. It allows one to see opportunities, hope and solutions rather than just problems and hopelessness. The new paradigm avoids labeling and assumes power in youth to help themselves as well as casting service providers as partners rather than as experts, authorities, initiators and directors of the change process. To learn more see [Principles of Strength-Based Practice](#).

<sup>53</sup> Criminogenic needs refer to the factors that are predictive of offending; while, protective factors refer to those factors that reduce the likelihood of adversity leading to negative youth outcomes and behaviors.

<sup>54</sup> A case staffing is an opportunity for program staff to exchange information about the participant and gain consultation from other professionals. This is a group process in which the CSO invites two or more professionals and others involved with the participant to help identify issues, suggest problem resolution strategies, and recommend service options.

## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

unique mental and physical health, trauma, and other needs, as well as short- and long-term goals (see Figure 1). Court professionals believe that this additional information helps them better identify appropriate treatments that will help the youth succeed.

Setting goals and steps to achieve them is guided by the Science of Hope.<sup>55</sup> Using the Hope framework, the CSO encourages youth to set individualized achievable goals, discuss potential pathways (barriers, solutions, social support), identify sources of motivation, and create a visual map of the process (see Figure 2, Appendix). A template for the case plan was designed by the CSO to include the four focus areas of incentive-based programming: 1) long-term goals of probation; 2) short-term goals of probation; 3) responsibility or family goals; and 4) contract goals. Case plans describe the pathways by which goals are achieved.

The CSO helps girls and caregivers understand the conditions of the program while expressing a belief in the girl's ability to make positive changes. Throughout the program, the CSO engages in collective problem-solving and collaborates with girls and their families so they can create positive changes within their relationships and within the community. The CSO uses a strength-based approach in working with girls, helping them identify their strengths and then referring back to those when working with girls to address challenges that arise during the program.

The CSO, the judge, therapists, and other professionals who work with girls are mindful of the importance of developing a collaborative therapeutic relationship with the girls. The CSO meets with program participants frequently (weekly, prior to COVID-19, and every two weeks, during COVID-19) to discuss the girls' progress in the program (e.g., improvements in academics, progress in therapy), any issues (e.g., running away, fighting with other girls), and transition plans if the girl is nearing her exit time (e.g., discussing her home environment or alternative housing options). During case management meetings, goals can be adjusted and realigned to meet the changing needs of the participant.

Participants have an opportunity to voice their concerns, issues, and ideas, and this feedback is used to adapt the case plan. This approach shifts the way that youth are traditionally handled by the juvenile justice system. As one service provider stated: "Girls are not problems; they are partners in their own positive development and growth."

Weekly progress reports are drafted for each girl. These reports help program staff determine the extent to which girls are connected with mentors and prosocial activities in their communities.

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*"I never want to give up on any of the girls. I think this is what is wrong with the system. Before we had a limited amount of time...and many fell through the cracks of the system, and the system has given up on them. We do not want this perception anymore. I want them [girls] to know that we care and we want to make a difference."*

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*- Judge*

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<sup>55</sup> **Hope** is the belief that the future will be better than today, and you have the power to make it so. Hope is based on three main ideas: desirable goals, pathways to goal attainment, and willpower to pursue those pathways. **Goals** are desired outcomes you are trying to accomplish. **Achievement** (positive) goals are those we want to attain. **Pathways** are the roadmaps individuals have in mind that will allow them to begin the journey toward the future; a goal without a pathway is only a wish. **Willpower** is your ability to dedicate mental energy to begin and sustain the journey toward your goals. Ideas developed by Dr. Chan Hellman, professor of social work at the University of Oklahoma and Director of The Hope Research Center. Tulsa Schusterman Center. (2022). To learn more about *Hope Research Center* see <https://www.ou.edu/tulsa/hope>.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

**TABLE 2: TRADITIONAL COURT COMPARED TO THE KITSAP GIRLS COURT**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Traditional Court Model</b>	<b>Kitsap Girls Court Program</b>
Eligibility	All risk levels, all genders – standard supervision or deferred disposition.	All risk levels <sup>56</sup> female-identifying youth.
Legal status at entry	Post disposition.	Pre-disposition as of August 2021.
Referral and entry	Referred by the prosecuting attorney.	Referred by prosecutor/defense attorney in consultation with CSO to determine eligibility.
Participation	Mandatory.	Voluntary.
Opt-out period	None.	One-month opt-out period, during which the girls observe one court hearing and participate in one scheduled shared activity.
Screening and Assessment	Risk assessment done within 30 days of disposition.	Risk assessment is done at time of contract signing.  Additional information is collected from conversations with girls, staffings, reports from parents or caregivers, and written reports such as a social history, or psychological evaluation.
Court appearances/review hearings	For probation violations, if needed. For deferred dispositions, one-time review hearing set at the end of supervision.	Monthly review hearing in front of the judge and one monthly activity that the judge attends and participates.
Judge's role	Arbiter.	Leader, mentor, advocate, and coach.
Approach	Provides judicial oversight and monitoring as well as access to services provided within the court.	Focuses on problem solving through a coordinated system of community-based care aimed at addressing social/health problems (e.g., mental health, truancy, trauma, substance use).
Case meetings	Determined by risk assessment level. Once or twice a month or weekly.	Weekly contact/meetings with the CSO.
Treatment		After assessment, evidence-based treatment may be provided by the court within a few weeks.

<sup>56</sup> When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, only moderate- and high-risk girls were eligible for the program after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional therapeutic court model in mid-2021, expanding the eligibility to girls who scored low-risk on the PACT.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Activity	Traditional Court Model	Kitsap Girls Court Program
	After assessment, evidence-based treatment may be provided by the court within a few weeks.	In addition, a coordinated continuum of non-court, community-based care tailored to girls' specific needs is available, including substance abuse treatment, mental health, and independent living skills (ILS).
Progress reports	No reports.	Weekly reports are used as a quick reference to assist the CSO in ensuring that critical changes in goals and behaviors are captured.
Incentives	Very limited or none.	Ongoing use of incentives (e.g., positive regard from the judge, tangible rewards). Dismissal of charges upon completion without prejudice <sup>57</sup> . A graduation ceremony is commonly held at the time charges are dismissed.
Sanctions	Ongoing use of sanctions. Sanctions may be gradual, beginning with simple verbal admonishment, continuing to community service work and confinement.	Extremely limited use of sanctions.
Curfew	Curfew set via court order and can be modified as an incentive or sanction.	Curfew set via court order and can be modified as an incentive or sanction.
Collaboration status	It's not a collaborative model.	Multi-sectoral and highly collaborative model, building on structures in the juvenile justice system and the community.
Shared group activities	No shared in-group activities.	Monthly in-group shared activities that last for approximately two hours.
Staffing meetings	No staffing.	Staffing with team prior to court.

<sup>57</sup> Case dismissed without prejudice means that a case is thrown out of the court without imposing charges on the defendant.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Activity	Traditional Court Model	Kitsap Girls Court Program
Program completion	If terms of supervision met and all specific tasks completed. The court may extend probation if the youth does not complete all terms and conditions.	If conditions completed: charges dismissed, favorable disposition. A graduation ceremony is commonly held at the time charges are dismissed. When girls complete the program requirements early, an earlier dismissal/graduation is used as an incentive. If conditions are not completed, case is referred back to regular juvenile justice system.
After care	None.	Relationships between participants and community members developed during the program continue to be a source of support for participants after leaving.

## The Girls Court team and program staff

The program team includes internal court system actors (e.g., judge, court administrator, CSO, defense attorney, prosecutor, detention manager, and other court staff) and external community partners (e.g., service providers, volunteers, counselors, education advocates). A dedicated judge oversees all participants and is committed to the program. The judge serves as a leader on the bench, and off, when working with community stakeholders to address the needs of participants.

Staffing with the core Girls Court Team is held pre-court on the day of the review hearing to review each young person's progress. The core Girls Court Team consists of the CSO, prosecutor, defense attorney, and treatment supervisor.

The CSO is central to all aspects of the program, serving as the point of contact between community organizations, court staff, and program participants. This makes entering the program and connecting with services as seamless as possible. Written reports are completed by the CSO on a weekly basis and submitted to the judge, prosecutor, defense counsel, and supervisor. They are reviewed monthly at the pre-court staffing. Community partners and community-based service providers are permitted to review reports and participate in staffing if a release of information form has been completed (see the Authorization/Disclosure of Information form in the appendix).

A high staff-to-participant ratio means that each participant receives individualized attention from staff who know them well. Through the screening and goal-setting process, staff come to understand each girl's individual background, which is a core element of the trauma-responsive approach. In moments of negative or disruptive behavior, staff might better understand the issues driving that behavior. Program staff also know and pay close attention to girls in crisis, in order to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all girls. Finally, program staff emphasize the importance of knowing each girl's material situation and needs including food, shelter, transportation, hygiene products, and clothes, in order to meet those needs.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Family engagement

The engagement of girls' families<sup>58</sup> is an essential element of the program. On the individual level, families are viewed and treated as partners in the girls' cases as well as in the operation of the program. Conversations with the caregivers start at the initial intake process and continue through the pre-disposition process and supervision. Family members are invited to visit court hearings, either on Zoom or in person. The court hearings are conducted in a way to provide a nonthreatening environment for family members to learn about the program and create an opportunity for families to observe and celebrate each girl's success.

The program staff encourages family members to participate in intake activities, including contributing to individualized case plans. Families are sometimes engaged in identifying their family's strengths and needs, setting goals, and developing case plans. Staff members also check in with caregivers if issues emerge during the program. The CSO works to ensure that family meetings are accessible, setting meeting times and locations that work for each family. The CSO has recently begun engaging parents/guardians by asking them to review youth's weekly goals and encouraging them to communicate their opinions, concerns, or suggestions to adjust future planning.

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*"I really like involving the parents more in these [weekly] goals so that they can see what my clients are trying to accomplish or what they [parents] would like to accomplish. This way they [parents] can weigh on hopefully and help a system be much more successful".*

*-Court Services Officer*

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## Community-based activities and services

The Girls Court Program conducted extensive community engagement prior to, and during, program implementation. This allowed the identification of a variety of external service providers, which provided girls with access to a wide array of services both within and outside the court.

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*"We have been lucky enough to have great community support so that we can make sure that the girls have continuing support during the program, and after the program is over, the girls still have people they can talk to and trust."*

*-Court Services Officer*

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The CSO works with community organizations such as schools, service providers, and others to connect girls to services aligned with the girls' case plans. Since 2019, the CSO has developed effective working relationships with 17 community-based organizations (Table 1, Appendix).

Those relationships, once built, will remain to support participants during the program as well as after they have left Girls Court. Program services include the following:

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<sup>58</sup> The court recognizes that a family can include people of various ages who are united through biology, marriage, or adoption or who are so closely connected through friendships or shared experience that they are taken to be family members.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

- **Behavioral health:** Development of the case plan emphasizes fitting services to each girl's particular needs.<sup>59</sup> Inpatient and outpatient mental health therapy and outpatient substance use treatment are provided by community partners. Services may be provided individually or as part of wrap-around care for the whole family (for example with Functional Family Therapy (FFT), an evidence-based mental health program).<sup>60</sup>
- **Education:** Participants are provided student assistance, counseling support, school reengagement services and dropout intervention, delivered by community providers and participants' home schools.<sup>61</sup> These services help youth navigate the education system as well as provide guidance on career pathways.
- **Life skills, mentoring, and job training:** Participants have access to life skills development programs and job training in a wide variety of community settings. They can also participate in Education Employment Training (EET), an evidence-based program offered to justice-involved youth in Washington State.<sup>62</sup> Community members may also serve as mentors to individual girls in the program and engage them in discussions about career and life goals.
- **Practical Assistance:** The program provides assistance with transportation and access to basic needs such as clothes and food. For example, clothes and toiletries are provided at no cost to participants.
- **Group activities:** Once a month there is a shared activity in which all youth participate. Consistent schedules for social activities, meals, programming, and court appearances mean that girls have frequent contact with their core support team and with other participants. Many activities use a relationship-based communication model that includes group sharing or problem-solving. For example, during a baking activity (held online due to social distancing protocols), program staff and participants discussed toxic relationships while baking cookies together (Table 2 in the appendix provides a list of recent group activities).

<sup>59</sup> Among the first year participants, 61% used drugs, 61% had mental health problems, 89% experienced depression or anxiety, and 28% had a history of suicidal ideation. Despite the high rates of mental health problems, only about 22% of the first year program participants underwent mental health treatment or have been prescribed medication prior to the program.

<sup>60</sup> Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a short-term, high quality intervention program with an average of 12 to 14 sessions over three to five months. FFT works primarily with 11- to 18-year-old youth who have been referred for behavioral or emotional problems by the juvenile justice system. Services are conducted in both clinic and home settings and can also be provided at probation offices by a specially training therapist. FFT consists of five major components: engagement, motivation, relational assessment, behavior change and generalization. Each of these components has its own goals, focus and intervention strategies and techniques. Washington State Department of Children, Youth & Families. (2022). *Functional Family Therapy (FFT)*. <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/juvenile-rehabilitation/treatment-programs/fft>.

<sup>61</sup> Among the first year participants, more than two thirds (78%) reported not feeling close to any teachers, staff, or coaches; 56% were not interested in school activities; 60% had behavioral problems at school; and 28% were habitually skipping school. See First Year Girls Court Participants: Experiences and Challenges [http://ccvj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/First-year-Girls-Court-Participants\\_Experiences-and-Challenges\\_Final.pdf](http://ccvj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/First-year-Girls-Court-Participants_Experiences-and-Challenges_Final.pdf)

<sup>62</sup> Education Employment Training (EET) is comprised of a continuum of educational supports, employment development, and community-based developmental activities that include assessment, job readiness/job retention skills training, vocational counseling, linking based workforce development programming, job shadowing, career exploration and meaningful paid work experience. In addition, the program supports school engagement and use of free time. EET is individualized, self-paced, and range of service is from 3-6 months. EET builds partnerships with the local business community and leadership organizations to offer relevant experiences and internships, engaging young offenders with employers as mentors. Another key element of the project is to identify, support and recognize milestones in individual youth development that will impact the identified risk and protective factors. Personal communication with Shannon Porter, June 2022.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Not engaging in services

Youth who do not engage in program activities or services are not immediately sanctioned. Program staff first take a close look at the youth's overall participation since enrollment and examine any changes in the youth's life to identify whether additional support is needed. This helps the program staff make more informed decisions based on overall program progress rather than individual instances of non-compliance. In extreme cases of disengagement or disruptive behavior, program staff use individualized sanctions that are proportionate to the behavior. Continued non-compliance with the program and/or services can lead to termination from the program.

## Incentivizing behavior change

The Girls Court Program uses a well-established system of reward and recognition to positively reinforce desired behavior change. This approach is guided by a micro-economy, a framework for promoting positive change through reward-seeking behavior (which is a normal part of adolescent brain development).<sup>63</sup> For example, all participants are given small gifts during the first court hearing. These gifts celebrate the launch of the program and serve as an incentive to promote program participation. Celebrating girls' birthdays and handing out birthday presents (e.g., small toys, food, decorative pencils or pens, T-shirts, etc.) is a regular feature of the program. This practice is believed to instill in participants a sense of belonging and encourage program participation.

Youth who achieve their goals and/or who are in compliance with court-ordered obligations are eligible for rewards and privileges, including gift cards/certificates or special experiences (e.g., special field trips or recreation). These rewards and privileges are provided to participants immediately (or as soon as possible) after the goal is reached, so they can draw a connection between the desired behavior and the incentive. For youth who fully engage in services, they could be eligible to have their supervision time reduced.

## Program completion

Criteria for successful program completion include consistent attendance and engagement in assigned treatment, compliance with the check-in requirements with the case manager, and attendance in court. If all conditions of the program are met, the original charges against the girl are dismissed. Girls who complete the program receive a certificate and take part in an acknowledgement ceremony.

## Program funding

Funding for the initial pilot was provided by a statewide private non-profit, the Center for Children & Youth Justice, located in Seattle, Washington. Kitsap County was eventually able to absorb program operations into their regular work schedules and budget, but the non-profit continued to provide financial support for some of the independent living programming, staff trainings, and for the evaluation.

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<sup>63</sup> Doll, Christopher, et al. (2013). "The Token Economy: A Recent Review and Evaluation." *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 2 (1): 131-149.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## SECTION 3: EVALUATION OVERVIEW

Because girls' courts are relatively new, and there is limited published research about their effectiveness,<sup>64</sup> it has been extremely important for the Kitsap County Girls Court team to conduct evaluation. A program evaluation was planned and carried out alongside the pilot program implementation.

The evaluation activities began in June 2019, at the time of program launch, and continued throughout the 3-year pilot program period.<sup>65</sup> This period covers nine months prior to the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order issued by Washington State Governor Jay Inslee on March 23, 2020, which enacted social distancing protocols and restricted “non-essential” movement outside the home due to COVID-19 and 15 months into the order. COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of the Girls Court program, including youth recruitment, program delivery, maintaining connections with program participants, data collection, and evaluation. Most programming moved to virtual platforms. An original evaluation plan developed prior to the pandemic was updated several times to reflect changes to the program and evaluation priorities. The project team identified design options that were feasible in the context of the “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” order, and abandoned those options which would be impossible to carry out.

The purpose of the Kitsap County Girls Court pilot evaluation was to measure the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the program. The evaluation contained a process and an outcome evaluation. The process evaluation assessed the extent to which program activities were carried out as planned, and identified any obstacles that were encountered and how these obstacles were overcome. The outcome evaluation was used to examine whether the program achieved its intended goals. It focused on the short-term and intermediate outcomes that occur while a participant is still in the program. The original plan to examine differences in recidivism rates (the number/percentage of youth referred to the courts, measured by court filings, at least once up to 18 months following program completion) between program participants and non-participants was not fully executed due to COVID-19's dramatic impact on program enrollment and time constraints of the pilot. The study only collected the preliminary descriptive data related to recidivism.

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*“I really think Covid-19 hurt the program... Not being able to meet in person, doing things over Zoom, maintaining virtual contact is not the same as judge being with them in a garden or [name] seeing them every week.”*

*-Kitsap court professional*

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A variety of evaluation data was collected at different times of the pilot, including program documents (e.g., written meeting notes, operational plans, policies and/or guidelines, case management plans, and weekly progress reports); available local data such as public health

<sup>64</sup> There have been only two studies published: 1) Davidson, J., Pasko, L., & Chesney-Lind, M. (2011). “She’s Way Too Good to Lose”: An Evaluation of Honolulu’s Girls Court.” *Women & Criminal Justice*, 21(4): 308–327; and 2) Luminais, M., Lovell, R., & McGuire, M. (2019). “A Safe Harbor Is Temporary Shelter, Not A Pathway Forward: How Court-Mandated Sex Trafficking Intervention Fails to Help Girls Quit the Sex Trade.” *Victims & Offenders*, 14(5): 540– 560.

<sup>65</sup> The evaluation was conducted by the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR) within the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), under a grant awarded by the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) and operated by the Kitsap County Juvenile and Family Court. As the result of this evaluation, a series of reports were prepared, including a forthcoming Final Evaluation report. The evaluation reports can be accessed on the CCYJ Web site at: <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

community assessments, fact sheets, and community surveys; observations of court hearings; post-training assessments; and two sets of semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders conducted at the beginning of the program and at the end of the program. Analyses of these data indicated improvements in three major categories: 1) organizational practices; 2) staff competencies; and 3) youth outcomes.

The process evaluation showed that staff successfully built new program structures and developed new partnerships and communication with community stakeholders. As a result of these partnerships, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication and collaboration that did not exist before. Staff developed new knowledge and skills through trainings and found them to be valuable. Stakeholders reported that they were able to create an environment where each team member was encouraged to be open to new ideas, be prepared to address the urgent needs of youth, design and pilot new program activities, and try new engagement strategies during the COVID-19 crisis.

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*“Many outcomes of our work become evident only after months of work, especially in mental health and substance abuse treatment field.”*

*-Service provider*

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Although program staff saw success as a multidimensional concept meaning different things to different stakeholders, they overwhelmingly viewed the program as beneficial to participants. Program staff cited multiple ways the program benefited participants, including problem recognition, improved self-awareness and self-understanding, skills building, symptom reduction, and positive behavior change. Sustained connections between youth and adults (e.g., mentors, service providers, counselors, etc.) after graduation from the program were also mentioned as signs of program success.

For the outcome evaluation, the results suggest that the program’s strengths are in skills building and in enhancing attitudes and behaviors related to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning.

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*“...girls get lost, they are overwhelmed with so many things required of them [at school] and they do not know where to start and they give up... Luckily, we were able to help some of them how to navigate their school work.”*

*- Service provider*

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The pilot has also shown evidence of school improvement, with 43% of girls demonstrating positive changes in academic engagement and/or achievement (i.e., school enrollment status, attitudes toward education, school attendance, academic performance, and school conduct). Girls’ behavioral health gains were very modest.<sup>66</sup>

Preliminary recidivism among participants was low (19%),<sup>67</sup> compared to a 24% recidivism rate among Kitsap girls (N=38) who were sentenced to community supervision a year prior to the launch of the program. Out of 27 participants in the pilot, only one youth (4%) re-

offended within 18 months after completing the program, and four girls (15%) reoffended while on community supervision with/participating in the Kitsap Girls Court. The girls who reoffended while participating in Girls Court were promptly offered appropriate services through the program.

<sup>66</sup> For more information see Gertseva, Arina and Mocha, Claire (2022). Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report. Olympia, WA. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), Administrative Office of the Courts (forthcoming).

<sup>67</sup> Because not enough time has passed since the launch of the program, this finding is preliminary.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## SECTION 4: GIRL'S COURT PROGRAM READINESS

This section presents a framework to assess the capacity of an organization and/or community to implement a girls' court program. This strategy will encourage court systems and/or community organizations to reflect on staff knowledge and experience, structures and functions within the organization, organizational culture, and connections with community partners and to identify what is missing, and plan for next steps.

Table 3 summarizes key considerations when assessing girls' court program readiness. This list is informed by (1) the recommendations set forth by the OJJDP for gender-responsive intervention for girls,<sup>68</sup> and (2) the Kitsap County Girls Court program experiences. Going through this list and marking the answers can help create a "to-do" list of elements needed to embark on program implementation. It is unlikely that a court or organization will already have all these elements in place, but many can be developed during the beginning stages of program planning. Importantly, if the answer to many of these questions is "No," and if it is unclear what capacity exists to address them, it may be worthwhile to identify a community partner to fill in some gaps.

**Table 3: Key considerations when assessing readiness to initiate a girls' court program**

Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Need	The caseload of female youth is sufficient to justify the creation of a new program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a clear understanding of the primary needs of justice-involved girls in the community.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a clear understanding of the barriers and resources for addressing the identified issue(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Judicial Leadership	There is a dedicated judge, preferably female, willing and with the capacity to oversee the cases and actively participate in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The leadership sees value in the girls' court program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is commitment from leadership to support the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resources	There are appropriate resources (e.g., staff, facilities, materials, and technology) to implement and sustain the girls' court program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There are data systems and processes in place to track and monitor program outputs and outcomes that inform decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff have the time and capacity to provide the intensive, consistent meetings and activities outlined in the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<sup>68</sup> Kerig, P. K., & Schindler, S. R. (2013). [Engendering the evidence base](#): A critical review of the conceptual and empirical foundations of gender-responsive interventions for girls' delinquency. *Laws*, 2, 244-28.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Staffing	There is a dedicated team of professionals to support the program (including, but not limited to, probation officers, prosecutors, defense attorneys, social workers, counselors, and education advocates).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff are willing to try different techniques to improve effectiveness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a system in place for ongoing training of established employees in gender- and trauma-responsive practice(s).	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trauma-responsive	All staff members are educated about what it means to be a trauma-responsive organization, its importance, and the role of each person in the organization in creating a safe and trusting healing environment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members are trained in gender-responsive programming for females, including differences between male and female socialization, female psychosocial development (including relational-cultural theory), female needs and challenges, and female strengths.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members actively apply a trauma-responsive approach across courtrooms, family teams, providers, and stakeholders to ensure youth are met with compassion; and strengths/protective factors are included in all planning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	All staff members treat families and youth as partners, sharing decision-making and information to the extent possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Equity & Social Justice	Staff members actively acknowledge and address issues related to racial equity.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Interventions are individualized and, whenever possible, reflect family and youth choices.		
	Staff members recognize and validate the strengths and expertise that families and youth bring to the program.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Assessment and Case Management	There is a screening and assessment process designed to uncover the specific risks, needs, and strengths of girls.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The initial intake, assessment, and documentation process includes questions designed to sensitively and respectfully explore prior and current trauma-related experiences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The case management process is collaborative, growth fostering, and driven by the outcomes of the screening and assessment process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Girls have an opportunity to review the outputs from the assessment process prior to developing a case plan.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Environment	There is a physical site(s) available to host activities that is safe and welcoming.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Core components	Readiness item	Yes	No
Quality Assurances and Evaluation	There is a data collection system (or systems) that collects and stores information regarding girls' profile data, participation in program activities, and outcome information.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There is a system in place to collect qualitative data to assess girls' perspectives on the services and program activities they participate in to ensure alignment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The staff regularly engage in self-reflection and continuous quality improvement with standardized processes that include data collection, analysis, review, and action.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community Connections	There are established connections to community service providers that can provide programming to participants.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	There are connections in the community to provide opportunities to involve girls in community activities through volunteering or internships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Staff have capacity to conduct community outreach to mobilize community members and engage them in the development of services and opportunities for girls, including volunteering, internships, job shadowing, or employment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The organization has experience engaging external partners (such as substance use treatment programs, clinicians, and health care providers) to refer the most complicated cases in their care.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

After the program is launched, program staff who are interested in promoting a more inclusive environment for participants can use a collection of existing tools for assessing gender responsiveness<sup>69</sup> and trauma responsiveness<sup>70</sup> of their practices. Although these tools were developed for program administrators, evaluators, and staff working with institutionalized women or girls, many items can be used for a girls' court program.

Of note, because multiracial youth (youth who identify as two or more races) is one of the fastest growing racial groups in the U.S., it is important that the staff and program design are culturally aware and able to provide services that are responsive to the needs and strengths of multiracial girls. Literature suggests that multiracial adolescents experience challenges distinct from their single-race peers that may result in more negative health and educational outcomes.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>69</sup> [Gender-Responsive Program Assessment Tool](#) was developed for program administrators, evaluators, agency monitors and staff to use to evaluate the gender responsiveness of programs for women and girls. The assessment instrument is based on the fundamental elements of quality programming including the guiding principles from the "Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders Report" (Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003). Another assessment tool is available here: [grppa-scoring-instrument-v14.pdf \(nicic.gov\)](#).

<sup>70</sup> Self-assessment tool is available here [Elements of Trauma-Informed Care in Youth Service Settings](#)

<sup>71</sup> Choi, Y., Harachi, T. W., Gillmore, M. R., & Catalano, R. F. (2006). Are multiracial adolescents at greater risk? Comparisons of rates, patterns, and correlates of substance use and violence between mono-racial and multiracial adolescents. *The American journal of orthopsychiatry*, 76(1), 86–97.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

The Multiracial/Ethnic Counseling Concerns (MRECC) Interest Network of the American Counseling Association<sup>72</sup> has developed a list of competencies that promote the development of professional practices to effectively attend to the diverse needs of multiracial populations. This can be a great resource for working with multiracial girls. Several existing tools might be viable for evaluating [cultural competence](#)<sup>73</sup> in organizational settings. Though not an exhaustive review of available tools, the National Library of Medicine provides samples of tools that are within the public domain and can be used for a girls' court program as well as for all justice-involved youth.<sup>74</sup>

Girls' court programs must also be safe and affirming for LGBTQ+ youth. Available research indicates that LGBTQ+ youths compose 5-7% of the nation's youth population, but compose 13-15% percent of youth currently in the juvenile justice system.<sup>75</sup> And of the female incarcerated juvenile population, LGBTQ+ youths comprise almost 40%.<sup>76</sup> LGBTQ+ youths face many of the same everyday challenges as their heterosexual peers in the juvenile justice system, and may also face additional obstacles as a result of discriminatory attitudes and practices in response to their sexual orientation and gender identity.<sup>77</sup>

To support and evaluate the LGBTQ+ inclusivity of a program, there are multiple approaches. One approach developed and supported by the Center for Children & Youth Justice is the Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care,<sup>78</sup> a framework for providing safer and more affirming care to LGBTQ + youth, and a SOGIE Questionnaire<sup>79</sup> to facilitate data collection and relationship building. Another approach, the Whole Youth Model created by Ceres Policy Research, centers the collection of individual sexual orientation, gender identity, and race data in the context of sequenced practice changes, including training and policy adoption, to support the well-being of young people.<sup>80</sup> Additionally, an assessment tool<sup>81</sup> created by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NORC at University of Chicago, in partnership with LGBTQ+ health experts, school health experts, and non-governmental health and education agencies has many items that can be used for a girls' court program.

<sup>72</sup> [Multi-Racial/Ethnic Counseling Concerns \(MRECC\) Interest Network of the American Counseling Association.](#)

<sup>73</sup> Cultural competence "...refers to the ability to honor and respect the beliefs, languages, interpersonal styles, and behaviors of individuals and families receiving services, as well as staff members who are providing such services." Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US). (2014). *Improving Cultural Competence*. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 59. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK248434/>

<sup>74</sup> The National Library of Medicine has a great collection of tools for assessing cultural competence here [Tools for Assessing Cultural Competence - Improving Cultural Competence - NCBI Bookshelf \(nih.gov\)](#).

<sup>75</sup> Hunt, Jerome, & Aisha C. Moodie-Mills. 2012. *The Unfair Criminalization of Gay and Transgender Youth: An Overview of the Experiences of LGBT Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*. Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress

<sup>76</sup> [Unjust: LGBTQ+ Youth Incarcerated In The Juvenile Justice System](#), Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress

<sup>77</sup> <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh176/files/media/document/lgbtqyouthsinthejuvenilejusticesystem.pdf>

<sup>78</sup> The Protocol for Safe & Affirming Care is available at <https://ccyj.org/our-work/supporting-lgbtq-youth/supporting-lgbtq-youth-protocol/>

<sup>79</sup> The SOGIE Questionnaire, Guide, and Training Video are available at <http://ccyjresources.org/?s=sogie+questionnaire>. In addition to the implementation sites supported by the Center for Children & Youth Justice, the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, with support from the Washington State Center for Court Research, is piloting SOGIE data collection using a variation of CCYJ's SOGIE Questionnaire in five juvenile courts across Washington State.

<sup>80</sup> Canfield, A., Wilber, S., Irvine, A., & Larrabee-Garza, M. (2019). *The Whole Youth Model: How Collecting Data About Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE) Helps Probation and Youth Courts Build More Authentic Relationships Focused on Improved Well-Being*. Ceres Policy Research. Oakland, CA: December. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60da0d6e99c93c16e9951f78/t/60febbaa336f77b35a91e3bde/1627306860833/sogie.practice\\_guide.17december2019.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60da0d6e99c93c16e9951f78/t/60febbaa336f77b35a91e3bde/1627306860833/sogie.practice_guide.17december2019.pdf)

<sup>81</sup> [LGBTQ Inclusivity in Schools: A Self-Assessment Tool](#) was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and NORC at University of Chicago, an objective non-partisan research institution, in partnership with LGBTQ health experts, school health experts, and non-governmental health and education agencies.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## SECTION 5: KITSAP TACTICS IN DETAIL

### Views from the bench, court staff, and community partners

In this section key program staff including the judge, court services officer (CSO), prosecutor, and service providers share insights (in their own words) about what it's like to perform their role in the Kitsap County Girls Court program. Examining specific recommendations and lessons learned from key stakeholders suggests the strategies and tactics needed for program success. The original language has been kept as much as possible, with only small edits for clarity or brevity.

The key stakeholders note, first and foremost, that the COVID-19 pandemic created challenges that were logistical (forcing programming to be provided virtually) and also relational (reducing the contact participants had with each other and with program staff). The CSO had to ensure that program logistics and operations were accessible and attractive for girls and their families to participate, for example by scheduling during times of the day when they would be able to attend. The program requires a significant time investment to provide the consistency in communication and contact with program participants that leads to trust and forming positive relationships; and it must be flexible, to adapt to changes in girls' needs and circumstances. Finally, the program has to function in a way that balances holding girls accountable for their actions while also understanding how little control girls have over many of the circumstances of their lives.

#### *Key Lessons Learned from the Judge:*

From my perspective, one of the most challenging parts of being a superior court judge is dealing with the youth who are involved in our criminal justice system. Watching youth struggle with substance use disorder, mental health issues, and/or just not having anyone whom they can count on, is often heartbreaking. When CCYJ approached me with starting this program, they told me that this was going to be a new way of providing help to our youth and I was ready to listen. They had been studying our juvenile justice system for a while and they provided me with a lot of research for starting a program like this. From their information, we knew that the number of girls being arrested for more serious or violent crimes had been increasing and we knew that girls entering our justice system generally had greater histories of trauma and other adverse childhood experiences than the boys in the justice system, yet we were still doing the same thing for youth regardless of gender. This did not make sense. When I discussed this with my bench mates, they were immediately on board for trying a different approach.

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*"I wanted them [the participants] to be provided the treatment they needed in order to unpack and deal with the underlying issues that brought them before our Court in the first place."*

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*-Judge*

When we started Girls Court in Kitsap County, I had specific goals for the program. I wanted all the youth who participated in this Court to have a helpful and positive experience going through their probation requirements. I wanted them to be provided the treatment they needed in order to unpack and deal with the underlying issues that brought them before our court in the first place. I also



## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

wanted to connect each participant to services that would assist in making successful choices for their futures. But, if I could do nothing else, I wanted all of the participants in this program to leave with a larger and more robust support system than they had when they entered it. Each youth comes in with different levels of support, but I wanted to make sure that we provided them with additional healthy adults that would be there for them if they needed to reach out. Luckily, I have a fabulous team that wants the same thing for each girl that enters our program and works tirelessly to make it happen.

To accomplish these goals, we partnered with treatment providers that specialize in chemical dependency issues and mental and behavioral health concerns, so that depending on the issue or issues a participant needs to deal with, we can offer them the help they need to begin to heal and move forward. But to accomplish all of those goals, we needed to go beyond the traditional treatment court model. We needed support and mentorship from our community. Honestly, I was astounded and ecstatic at the response to this call for assistance from the local community. We work with many partners to provide mentorship, teach independent living skills, and assist in setting career goals. To do this, we do monthly activities with our community partners so the girls can learn from and interact with strong women in our community. One month we might be learning how to make cookies while we discuss toxic relationships, and the next month we may have someone from a local bank talking about setting up checking accounts and budgeting. These incredible community service providers want to be there to help our girls not only through their time with the Court but to continue to assist them as they build their futures after they leave their court obligations behind.

So far, I believe that we have succeeded in meeting most of our goals with most of the girls that have come into the program. This has been more difficult than I originally thought, as I had forgotten the resistance that a teenage girl can demonstrate to anything that she does not believe that she wants to do. It had been a while since I was a teenager. However, I see that persistence and continued support demonstrates to them that what we want for them truly is a brighter future. As they begin to trust the team, they begin to try more of the services that we are offering for them, and they begin to progress on their own individual goals.

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*“This has been more difficult than I originally thought as I had forgotten the resistance that a teenage girl can demonstrate to anything that she does not believe that she wants to do.”*

*-Judge*

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The pandemic also made achieving our goals more difficult as some of our community partners closed their doors for a while and we lost that personal touch with the girls by going virtual. But we have adapted and made changes and I believe are coming out of the pandemic with a group of partners who are even more committed to helping our youth achieve their goals.

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*“So far, I believe that we have succeeded in meeting most of our goals with most of the girls that have come into the program.”*

*-Judge*

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This program is well worth the hard work we put into it, and I look forward to going to every session with the girls. I would definitely recommend it to other courts who are considering starting their own program.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## *Key Lessons Learned from the Court Services Officer (CSO):*

Girls Court provides CSOs with a new way of working with youth. Girls Court supports the developmental health and well-being of youth in care. It builds capacity and expands community partnerships, and it increases timely access to services for youth. CSOs will work with clients to create individualized case plans and goals, engaging families from the beginning of the process. This involves creating effective, developmentally appropriate case management practices that promote well-being.

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*“CSOs need to identify and engage supportive team members and community partners to support the program.”*

*- Court Services Officer*

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The Girls Court structure was modeled after existing alternative court structures. When designing the program, staff drew on our past experiences and programming ideas to pull the best of those into Girls Court, including drawing on relationships with community partners that had already been developed from existing programs. One particular idea, the clothing closet, was adopted after a chance encounter at one of the alternative schools in the community that provided clothing to one of our youth. We

adapted that idea and now provide youth with basic essentials such as toiletries and clothing. The funding for this program is now provided by a local non-profit organization, Soroptimists, who contacted us after seeing a newspaper article about Girls Court. Over the past few years, the program has evolved from post-disposition to pre-disposition and has influenced other programs currently within the department. Girls Court has continued to evolve since it was implemented and creativity has made it unique to all other programs, but the foundation of the program came from established promising practices within the department.

CSOs need to pay attention to logistics and scheduling, ensuring timely completion of screenings to facilitate a smooth referral to needed services. For example, Girls Court was initially scheduled to be on a Friday afternoon at 3 pm. This was based on the availability of the judge. However, most staff and clients were looking forward to the weekend, so this was not well received. Instead, we found Tuesday at 3 pm to be a better day when youth would be out of school.

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*“Many participants have told me while leaving the program that they would not be in a position they are right now if they were not participating in the program. That tells me that whatever we are doing is making a difference.”*

*--Court Service Officer*

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Additionally, CSOs need to identify and engage supportive team members and community partners to support the program. One challenge we noted was that it was difficult for some families to participate in programming because of geographical barriers. Kitsap County is geographically very spread out and the transit system is not always convenient. Many youth relied on guardians for transportation to the program activities, but even with a supportive guardian, this can be burdensome due to the cost of gas, inconsistent access to vehicles, and the guardian’s work schedule.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## *Key Lessons Learned from the Prosecutor:*

There were several important key lessons learned. First, the program requires significant time and resources, particularly funding and personnel. Next, the program requires flexibility, as participant needs and context can change. Finally, it's essential to educate all stakeholders on the importance of gender responsive principles.

Some challenges to program implementation included the following:

- Ensuring coordination and inclusion of all stakeholders in the system.
- Ensuring a treatment model exists for gender responsive treatment.
- Establishing intake standards for who would qualify.
- Ensuring confidentiality for medical and mental health disclosures (HIPAA).
- Adopting a non-judgmental and supportive voice.
- Assessing safety issues to ensure the participant is in a safe situation.
- Making sure to identify important relationships in the participant's life.
- Ensuring consistency, while at the same time being flexible, as each individual's needs are different.

The program utilized some practices that, while not necessarily evidence-based, showed great promise. These included:

- Ensuring cultural responsiveness of the intervention.
- Building teamwork and positive reinforcement for participants.
- Developing regular group activities.
- Having a committed team, the same dedicated prosecutor, probation counselor, and judge.
- Teaching life skills and extending the reach of the program beyond Girls Court.

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*"It's essential to educate all stakeholders on the importance of gender responsive principles."*  
*- Prosecutor*

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# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## *Key Lessons Learned from Service Providers (Olive Crest):*

The involvement of a wide range of service providers in a girls' court program is a critical component of the program's success. As the Girls' Court program focuses on community,

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*"Providers who are more connected to one another in the community allows for a tighter web of services in which clients become less likely to slip through the metaphorical cracks of full-service care, and the use of community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient."*

*- Service provider*

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collaboration, and relationship building, these providers should be utilized in a way that allows for each program participant's unique needs to be met in an effort to improve the outcomes of girls involved in the youth legal system. By taking an active role in Girls' Court, providers will be benefited by having increased access to the target populations they are hoping to serve, and further develop provider-to-provider relationships in their communities. Providers who are more connected to one another in the community allow for a tighter web of services in which clients become less likely to slip through the metaphorical cracks of full-service care, and the use of community resources becomes more streamlined and efficient. In a girls'

court, a strong network of community providers being involved with a young person should, in theory, lend itself towards these youth being less reliant on these services into their young adult lives.

Service providers who are considering partnering with a girls' court program should be prepared to offer trauma-informed, youth-focused interventions that meet each girl where she is at, prepared to respond to her unique risk factors and needs. This involves understanding the unique history of every girl that may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, victimization, exploitation, neglect, and involvement in the child welfare system. Service providers should be mindful that a holistic approach to addressing justice-involved girls means building strong, authentic relationships that honor every girl's background. They should believe in a future where their trajectory can be changed.

### **Some lessons learned include the following:**

During our time as a Kitsap County Girls Court service provider in the pilot years of this program, we offered Individual Living Skills (ILS) to all Girls Court participants 15+. The ILS program prepares them for adulthood by teaching youth the skills they need to be independent, and empowers them to reach their unique goals. The ILS program offered these services well past the youth's "graduation" from the Girls Court Program. Youth are eligible to receive ILS services until they turn 21, and the majority of girls referred chose to continue to engage in this program long after they were off court supervision. Our recommendation is that other service providers adopt this approach, as continued support and relationship with youth after the program is over is an essential factor in a healthy reintegration and reduces the likelihood of recidivism.

This pilot of the Girls Court Program occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made a relationship-based program difficult to execute in unprecedented times. However, we do recommend that relational consistency be an essential cornerstone of implementing a girls' court. Court formally met once a month during this pilot, with an additional option for girls' once-a-month participant activity. We believe that in order to build strong relationships, an increase in time and proximity is essential. We recommend weekly meetings in order to achieve this. An additional two meetings a month could be implemented by contracting a mental health provider to offer "group" where girls engage with the group leader and one another by meeting to discuss their successes and

## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

challenges. This may also offer additional peer accountability for the girls to complete their court-ordered tasks.

Additionally, judges, CSO, defense attorneys, prosecutors, and service providers should remain mindful of their own consistency, and be required to attend every court and activity. This will lend itself to a stronger feeling of community. It is strongly recommended that court professionals and other service providers prioritize consistency in the staff coming each week, so that the girls are able to learn them by name and become comfortable around them (as opposed to a rotating door of strangers, which will make it difficult to openly discuss complex issues).

In order to streamline services and prevent service gaps, all professionals involved in Girls' Court should engage in regular staffings where cases are discussed and services are appropriately recommended. This will prevent the duplication of services and allow for all providers to have the same knowledge in order to more effectively serve the youth.

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*“Service providers who are considering partnering with a girls’ court program should be prepared to offer trauma-informed, youth-focused interventions that meet each girl where she is at, prepared to respond to her unique risk factors and needs.”*

*- Service provider*

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As Girls' Court is a therapeutic court model, judges, probation counselors, defense attorneys, and prosecutors should develop working guidelines between punitive punishments, fair accountability, and passive rulings.

These guidelines should be based on a balance between two important factors. On the one hand, youth do not always have control of their own environmental factors, but are part of a larger system of care, including family and school systems. For example, if a young person is required to enroll in school before the next court hearing, but their guardian is unwilling to complete the paperwork, this is not a failure of the youth. Girls' Court staff should do

everything in their power to engage the additional parties in a youth's system of care.

On the other hand, therapeutic intervention still requires accountability. Recommendations of the court should honor the youth's unique circumstances while holding them accountable to what is within the youth's sphere of control. Failing to hold youth accountable puts them at risk of believing their actions and choices do not influence their outcomes. When the youth becomes an adult without learning these lessons, they may re-engage in a court system and be surprised by the level of punishment they receive.

Each girl involved in Girls' Court presents their own unique set of needs and challenges. We recommend addressing these needs with a tiered approach, first focusing on basic level needs and crisis management when applicable. For example, a young person in a mental health crisis should first be referred to a qualified therapist and achieve a suitable level of mental stability before being asked to re-enroll in school or participate in other supplemental programs. Once youth have reached the basic markers of stability, they should be referred to service providers that will prepare them for an eventual exit from the program and offer ongoing support post-probation.

When handled with care, Girls' Court can be a powerful tool in improving the outcomes of girls involved in the justice system. Youth can be positively impacted by the involvement of a robust network of diverse service providers who partner with the program. Service providers and the greater community will also be positively affected by this involvement. In the development of future girls' court programs, there remain many areas of exploration in order to improve upon the existing model. Together, we can meet the needs of girls in every community.

## **Appendix**







# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Referral Screening Form

Please fill out the following information and return the form to: Court Services Officer

### Personal Information

Full Name		<i>Last</i>		<i>First</i>		<i>Middle</i>	
Aliases / Maiden Name/Other Names Used				Where used?		When Used?	
Date of Birth / /		Age	Do you have a Driver's License?			State	Valid? ○ Yes ○ No
If Driver's License is not valid explain:							
Race (Check all that apply) If more than one, please indicate your primary racial identification with an asterisk (*).							
<input type="checkbox"/> African American		<input type="checkbox"/> Alaskan Native		<input type="checkbox"/> American Indian		<input type="checkbox"/> Asian	
<input type="checkbox"/> Caucasian		<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		<input type="checkbox"/> Latino			
<input type="checkbox"/> Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander				<input type="checkbox"/> Multi-Racial (please mark all that apply)			
Primary Language: _____					Ethnicity:		
If primary language is not English, please answer the following:					<input type="checkbox"/> Hispanic		
Are you able to read and speak English? Yes No					<input type="checkbox"/> Non-Hispanic		
Do you need an Interpreter? Yes No							
Gender M F	Height	Weight	Eye Color (Circle One) Black Blue Brown Green Hazel Other: _____			Hair Color (Circle One) Bald Black Blonde Brown Grey Red White Other: _____	
Current Physical Address		<i>Street</i>		<i>Apt#</i>		<i>City</i>	<i>Zip Code</i>
Mailing Address (if different from physical) Code			<i>Street/PO Box#</i>		<i>City</i>		<i>Zip</i>

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Who are you currently living with and what is your relationship with them? Please provide full Names, Date of Birth and contact phone numbers and email for adults.		
Name:	Name:	Name:
Relationship:	Relationship:	Relationship:
DOB:	DOB:	DOB:
Phone:	Phone:	Phone:
Email:	Email:	Email:
Home Phone ( )	Youth's Cell Phone ( )	Youth's Email
<b>Markings, Scars, Tattoos:</b>		

## Criminal Justice / Legal History

Prior Convictions outside Washington State? Yes No If prior convictions are outside of Washington state, please list; beginning with the most recent:	
Child Protective Services involvement? Yes No	Previous Convictions of Domestic Violence? Yes No
Previous Convictions of a Sex Offense? Yes No If yes, What: _____ No	Have you ever registered as a sex offender? Yes No If yes, where? _____
Do you have any outstanding warrants for your arrest? Yes No If yes, Where? _____ For what? _____	
Have you ever had any warrants for Failing to Appear in court? Yes No If yes, Where? _____ For what? _____	
Are you currently on Probation? Yes No Probation Officer's Name: _____ If yes, for what? _____ If yes, where are you on probation? _____	
Are you currently on Parole? Yes No Parole Officer's Name: _____ If yes, for what? _____ If yes, where are you on probation? _____	
Do you have any other pending cases that you received notice of? Yes No If so, what type of case are they and in what county/state?	
Have you participated in any of the following programs? <input type="checkbox"/> Aggression Replacement Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> Functional Family Therapy <input type="checkbox"/> MRT <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Health Counseling <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring <input type="checkbox"/> Coordination of Services <input type="checkbox"/>	
If so when did you participate in these programs, did you complete the program, where did you participate in these programs?	

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Substance Abuse History

Drug of Choice:	Prior Substance Abuse Treatment? Yes No Where:
When was the last time you used drugs or alcohol? Date: _____ Drug(s): _____	
Have you used IV drugs in the Past 30 days? Yes No	Do you have a history of IV use? Yes No
Are you currently in a Substance Abuse Treatment Program? Yes No If Yes, Where: _____ Start Date: _____ Type of program: _____	
Age you began using drugs: Drug: _____ Age: _____ Drug: _____ Age: _____	Age you began using alcohol:
Do you still have contact with people you used alcohol and drugs with? Yes No	Are there any alcohol or drugs where you are living? Yes No If So, what is present in the home?

## Medical and Mental Health History

Current medications, medication dose, and prescribing physician ( <i>psychological conditions only</i> ):			
Medication:	Dose:	Frequency:	Prescribing Physician and Reason:
Have you ever been diagnosed with a Mental Health Condition? Yes No If so, what is the diagnosis(s): _____			
Current Therapist information: please provide name, office and contact information _____			
<b>Medical Insurance Information:</b> Name of Insurance Provider: _____ ID Numbers: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid <input type="checkbox"/> Medicare <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Indian Health Services <input type="checkbox"/> Tricare <input type="checkbox"/> uninsured <input type="checkbox"/> other _____			

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

## Education/Employment History

<p>Current Grade Level in School:</p> <p>Name of School attending:</p>	<p>Last/Current school Attended:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Currently Enrolled <input type="checkbox"/> Suspended <input type="checkbox"/> Expelled</p> <p>If Suspended or Expelled, when can you return to school?</p>
<p>Educational Status:</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Currently Enrolled <input type="checkbox"/> GED <input type="checkbox"/> Graduated High School <input type="checkbox"/> not enrolled; if so why:</p>	
<p>Do you have an IEP? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p>Do you have a 504 Plan at school? <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes</p> <p>If so, what is the IEP or 504 plan for?</p>	
<p>Are you employed: <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes if yes, where, and contact information:</p>	

## Relationships/Interests/Community Engagements

<p>Why do you want to enter Treatment Court?</p>	<p>List one goal you would like to obtain in the next six months?</p>
<p>What are your Hobbies and Interests?</p>	
<p>What is something you would like us to know about you?</p>	
<p>List those in your support circle:</p>	

**Thank you! Please Return to the Juvenile Court Services Officer**

Last Updated: July 9, 2019


# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Figure 2: Kitsap Case Management Form with Goals

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ *You've got this!* \_\_\_\_\_

TODAY I'M GRATEFUL FOR \_\_\_\_\_

**TODAY'S EMOTIONS**



**APPOINTMENTS FOR THE WEEK:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**MY RESPONSIBILITY/FAMILY GOAL:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**MY SHORT TERM/PROBATION GOAL:** \_\_\_\_\_

- BENEFITS \_\_\_\_\_
- BARRIERS \_\_\_\_\_
- SUPPORT \_\_\_\_\_
- CONSEQUENCES \_\_\_\_\_

**STRENGTHS AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

G
o
a
l
s

**MY LONG-TERM/LIFE GOAL:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**BENEFITS OF GOAL:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION STEP:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION STEP:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**BARRIERS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPORT:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**INCENTIVES/REWARDS:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**CONSEQUENCES:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION STEPS TO ACHIEVE SHORT TERM GOALS**

GOAL START DATE	ACTION STEPS	INCENTIVE/REWARDS	REVIEW DATE
<b>AFFIRMATION &amp; CELEBRATION</b>	<b>WHAT COULD I DO BETTER?</b>	<b>WHAT DID I DO WELL?</b>	

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

DATE \_\_\_\_\_ *Results!* \_\_\_\_\_

**My Contract Goals:**

---

---

---

Points available/Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_

**MY SHORT TERM/PROBATION GOAL:**

---

---

---

Points available/Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_

**MY LONG TERM/LIFE GOAL:**

---

---

---

Points available/Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_

**MY RESPONSIBILITY/FAMILY GOAL:**

---

---

---

Points available/Points earned: \_\_\_\_\_

Circle one:



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

**Table 1: Kitsap Community Partners and Services Provided<sup>82</sup>**

Services	Provider	# girls served
Mental health therapy	<a href="#">Kitsap mental health</a> or private	17
Intensive mental health and substance use	Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISE)	10
Inpatient mental health	<a href="#">Daybreak Youth Services</a>	< 5
Behavioral rehabilitation services	<a href="#">Kitsap County &amp; Peninsula</a> , Catholic Community Services	< 5
Mental health treatment, employment assistance, educational advising, housing support services	<a href="#">Scarlett Road</a>	5
Independent living skills, educational and career advancement counseling regarding attainment of general equivalency diploma (GED)	<a href="#">OliveCrest</a>	5
Outpatient chemical dependency treatment	<a href="#">Agape</a>	10
Mentoring (enrichment, social skills, career skills, school based advocacy health & wellness, financial literacy)	<a href="#">OurGEMS</a>	9
Housing	Youth housing authority	9
Student Advocate	South Kitsap School District	8
Job preparation and internships	<a href="#">The Coffee Oasis</a>	< 5
Family Assessment Response	FAR/DCYF	5
Job preparation, including successful work ethic and attitude models	OESD 114 Early Learning	< 5
Providing professional clothing for school, interview for a job, or court hearing	Kitsap Juvenile Court, funded by Soroptimists	< 5
Individualized services, customized one-on-one programs for youth	Hope Inc	< 5
Education and training skills, empowerment	Soroptimists	10
Alternative to detention/activity provider	Alternatives to detention	10-15
Activities provider	Kitsap Credit Union	10

<sup>82</sup> Numbers less than 5 are suppressed to protect disclosure of individual data



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

**Table 2: Shared in-Group Activities**

Activity	Provider
Money, finances, budgeting	Kitsap Federal Credit Union
Making tie die t-shirts	Kitsap Federal Credit Union
Table and conversational etiquette while being served a multi-course dinner.	<a href="#">OurGEMS</a>
Scavenger hunt (online)	<a href="#">OurGEMS</a>
Two back to back activities using their “Dream It Be It” material – setting goals	Soroptimists
Brought in local artist and she taught the girls how to paint a floral picture from scratch. She also discussed positivity during the session and overcoming ones insecurities. We then planted flowers around the juvenile department and each youth took home a plant they had transplanted.	Local artist
Baking cookies	Program staff
Growth and self-care	Program staff
Gardening	Program staff

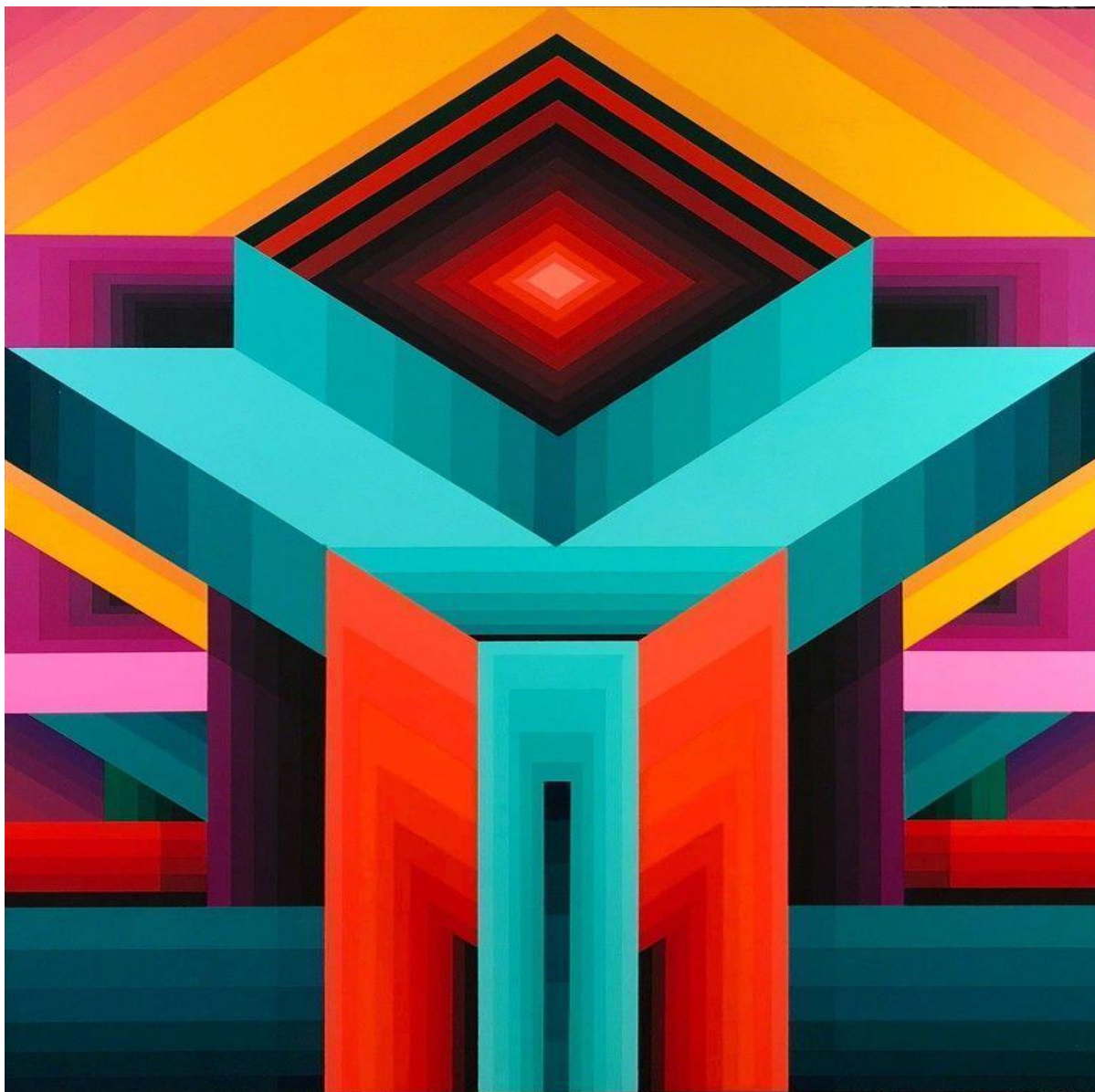
# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

**Table 3: Trainings, description, providers, and the dates**

<b>Training</b>	<b>Provider</b>	<b>Date</b>
<p><b>Girl-Centered Practices and Gender Responsiveness</b> Key topics included research and data on gender disparities in the juvenile justice system, distinctions in physical, mental, emotional, and social health needs for girls, trust and relationship building with at-risk girls, and strategies for resolving interpersonal conflicts with at-risk girls.</p>	The Justice for Girls Coalition	5/7/2019
<p><b>Serving LGBTQIA+ Youth</b> This training was designed for youth serving professionals (but open to all) who want to learn more about supporting LGBTQ+ youth.</p> <p>Key topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why we need specific protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth;</li> <li>● What it means to be LGBTQ+, including the definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE);</li> <li>● Some fundamental protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth;</li> <li>● Some promising practices for discussing sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) with youth; and</li> <li>● Two steps they can take toward making their court, agency, or organization safer and more affirming.</li> <li>●</li> </ul>	The Center for Children & Youth Justice	8/19/2019
<p><b>Serving Child Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation</b> This training provided information on the what, who, how, and why of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children, with a focus on victim engagement and a detailed discussion of identification and the “red flags.”</p>	The Center for Children & Youth Justice	9/9/2019
<p><b>Nutrition and Trauma (“Protein For All”)</b> The training was designed to train court officials to use food to improve their own energy, mental clarity, and decision making. For the court officials using the food helps to reduce secondary trauma and burnout. For the clients, food helps engage their responsive brain versus their reactive brain to increase engagement.</p>	Kristen Allott, ND, MS	10/28/2019

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation

Training	Provider	Date
<p><b>Race Equity Training Series</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Session 1: Welcome &amp; laying the groundwork</i> This session introduced core concepts such as systemic/structural racism, equity vs. equality, race equity, and implicit bias, and why these key concepts are critical for justice system workers to know, understand, and integrate into their work.</li> <li>● <i>Session 2: Structural racism &amp; systems thinking.</i> This session described the historical context of the law and justice system and explained how systems become oppressive.</li> <li>● <i>Session 3: Addressing bias &amp; interrupting racism &amp; oppression (part 1)</i> This session helped participants examine the impact their lived experiences, assumptions, and interpersonal interactions have on clients and colleagues.</li> <li>● <i>Session 4: Addressing bias &amp; interrupting racism &amp; oppression (part 2)</i> This session offered strategies to interrupt racism and bias to support engaging more competently with court participants and colleagues of color.</li> </ul>	JustLead Washington	3/2/2021 – 3/23/2021
<p><b>Science of Hope Trainings Series</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Session 1: Science of Hope - Overview</i> This presentation presented an overview of the science of hope and its ability to 1: buffer adversity and stress, 2: lead to positive outcomes, and 3: is a strength that can be nurtured with targeted intervention.</li> <li>● <i>Session 2: Regulation, Neuroscience of Motivation, and Tools for Building Hope.</i> Review the science of hope framework and dive-deep into the neuroscience of regulation and motivation. Participants will be invited to explore practical tools/solutions for increasing agency thinking, pathway thinking, and visioning.</li> </ul>		01/05/2021 -10/12/ 2021



# **Kitsap County Girls Court Pilot Program**

## **Final Evaluation Report**

**January 2023**



This publication was made possible through the funding from the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ), support of the Kitsap County Superior Court and its community partners, and technical assistance of the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR).

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## **January 2023**

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This publication is also available on the CCYJ Web site at: <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Executive summary</b> .....	1
Terminology .....	1
Key findings of the evaluation .....	3
Lessons learned.....	5
<b>Evaluation Questions</b> .....	6
<b>Methods and Data</b> .....	9
Community Assessment.....	9
Observations .....	9
Post-training Feedback Surveys.....	10
Program Document Review .....	10
Key Stakeholder Interviews.....	10
Administrative Data .....	10
<b>Results: Process Evaluation</b> .....	11
What was the community context for the program?.....	11
Characteristics of program participants .....	13
Building Staff Competencies .....	15
Evolution of Partnership with Community Partners.....	18
Alignment of the Program with the Core Elements of the Gender-Responsive Approach .....	19
<b>Results: Outcome Evaluation</b> .....	22
Community-based Service Engagement .....	22
Intermediate Program Outcomes .....	24
Long-term Program Outcomes .....	25
<b>Evaluation Limitations</b> .....	27
<b>Recommendations</b> .....	28

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2019, Kitsap County became the first jurisdiction in Washington State to launch a 3-year long girls' court pilot program<sup>1</sup>. The Kitsap County Girls Court<sup>2</sup> is a specialized, trauma-informed, gender-responsive, problem-solving court program designed to meet the unique needs of justice-involved girls<sup>3</sup> in a developmentally appropriate manner. Program goals include reducing recidivism, improving school performance, increasing confidence and self-efficacy, strengthening interpersonal skills, increasing goal setting, improving well-being, and building positive relationships and support systems. These goals are targeted through treatment (as necessary), a collaborative program team, life skills building, community mentoring, family<sup>4</sup> engagement, job training, and education support in an environment that reflects an understanding of the realities and life experiences that girls bring to the justice system. These experiences might include, but are not limited to, school-related challenges, family problems, trauma, mental health issues, and substance use. The program has utilized many gender-responsive best practices, along with several innovative local strategies, by leveraging existing community resources.

Being the first girls' court program in the state, it has been important for the Kitsap County Girls Court team to track program implementation and monitor if the desired outcomes are being achieved. A program evaluation was planned and carried out by the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR),<sup>5</sup> under a grant awarded by the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ). The evaluation activities began in June 2019, at the time of program launch, and have continued throughout the 3-year pilot period.

It is important to acknowledge that a large portion of the evaluation activities were carried out during the "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" order enacted on March 23, 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 has impacted every aspect of the Girls Court Program, including youth recruitment, program delivery, maintaining connections with program participants, data collection, and evaluation. For example, the program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but only 27 girls participated in the pilot. Low enrollment has had direct implications for the logistics of collecting data and the evaluation activities. Eligibility for the program also changed midway through the program. When the Kitsap County Girls Court began, the program was post-dispositional, meaning that girls were referred after being adjudicated. The program switched to a pre-dispositional model in mid-2021, meaning that girls are identified and, if eligible, referred before being adjudicated. When Girls Court changed to a pre-dispositional therapeutic model, it shifted focus to the needs of the youth, instead of the risk classification, allowing for youth who are classified moderate or high to participate in activities with youth who are classified low risk, as indicated by their Positive

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<sup>1</sup> Though initial funding for the pilot ended in spring of 2022, at the time of writing this report (summer 2022) Kitsap County continues to operate the program.

<sup>2</sup> For a more detailed description, see Gertseva, A., & Mocha, C. (2023). *Girls Court Program: Blueprint for Implementation*. Olympia, WA. Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), Administrative Office of the Courts. This publication is available on the CCYJ Web site at: <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

<sup>3</sup> "Girls" and "female" refer to cisgender and transgender girls as well as gender-expansive youth (non-binary youth, gender non-conforming youth, gender queer youth, and any female-identified youth). Although participants in this pilot were mostly cis white girls, program staff were trained and prepared to provide supportive environment for gender-expansive youth.

<sup>4</sup> The court recognizes that a family can include people of various ages who are united through biology, marriage, or adoption or who are so closely connected through friendships or shared experience that they are taken to be family members.

<sup>5</sup> Although WSCCR is administratively located inside the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), it has been able to maintain an independent capacity for objective research within the judicial branch since 2004, when it was established by order of the Washington State Supreme Court.



Achievement Change Tool (PACT).<sup>6</sup> Expanding eligibility has impacted program delivery as well as study methodology and data collection considerations.

Despite these challenges, program staff are determined to continue the program. The Kitsap team has already begun to think about how to expand program options and create opportunities for serving all youth in the juvenile justice system, including girls, boys, LGBTQ+ youth, and youth from traditionally underserved communities (i.e. Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)). By creating and sustaining inclusive practices, the program staff is hoping to promote equity by supporting all youth entering the juvenile justice system.

An original evaluation plan developed prior to the pandemic was updated several times to reflect program changes during the pandemic. The project team prioritized evaluation activities and identified design options that were feasible in the context of virtual programming and social distancing protocols, and discarded those that would be challenging, if not impossible, to carry out. Although the evaluation process has been constantly evolving to adjust to the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic, all efforts were made to ensure that the findings and recommendations from the evaluation would help the Kitsap team monitor their performance and identify opportunities for improvement in program management and service delivery.

This consolidated report concludes a series of five separate evaluation reports prepared at different times of the pilot.<sup>7</sup> It provides a synthesis of evaluation activities and data collected throughout the 3-year pilot period, and presents the lessons learned along the way. By sharing practical tools and tips used to evaluate the Girls Court Program in one community, we hope to inspire others to invest in program evaluation when implementing a girls' court in their own communities. Our approach is not one size fits all. Rather, it should be tailored to local conditions, existing resources, opportunities, and programming objectives. Terminology used in this report is explained below.

## TERMINOLOGY

The binary terms “boy/girl” and “male/female”, used in this report to summarize past and current research, refer to sex assigned at birth, not gender identity. Most data and research in the juvenile justice system does not capture or acknowledge gender identity, much less gender expansiveness.

Gender is a social construct composed of norms, behaviors, relationships, and roles. Gender may be categorized as non-binary, as well as man or woman, boy or girl, or many other identities. For many individuals, gender identity is experienced (and gender is expressed) in expansive ways, outside of the girl/woman versus man/boy binary. Almost all data is about sex assigned at birth and not gender identity. Sex assigned at birth is based on physical characteristics; gender identity is an internal sense of self. We can't know someone's gender identity unless we ask.

---

<sup>6</sup> Research indicates mixing young people who have been assessed at high risk to reoffend with young people assessed at low risk can be problematic when mixed groups are unsupervised. Lipsey, M. W. (2006). The Effects of Community-Based Group Treatment for Delinquency: A Meta-Analytic Search for Cross-Study Generalizations. In K. A. Dodge, T. J. Dishion, & J. E. Lansford (Eds.), *Deviant peer influences in programs for youth: Problems and solutions* (pp. 162–184). The Guilford Press. Lipsey did not find any evidence of adverse peer contagion effect in mixed groups if the activities are supervised. *Id.*

Opportunities for unsupervised interactions within the Girls Court are non-existent. All program activities and group treatment continued to be supervised after the transition to a pre-dispositional model, eliminating the risk of peer contagion. At the time of writing this report (Fall 2022), there was only one girl who scored as low risk on the PACT who has participated in the program.

<sup>7</sup> To view the previous five evaluation reports visit <https://ccyj.org/our-work/girls-court/>

### *Key Findings of the Evaluation*

The evaluation identified a number of program strengths as well as relevant findings about participants. The key findings can be summarized in the following:

#### **1. The program led to changes in staff capacity, partnerships, and program environment**

- Court staff were successful in building new partnerships with community stakeholders that made youth's access to community resources more streamlined and efficient. Since 2019, program staff has developed effective working relationships with 17 community organizations. These relationships started with networking and, over time, evolved to incorporate many elements of collaboration.
- As a result of the program, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication that did not exist before through monthly court hearings and stakeholder meetings, as well as regular emails and phone calls.
- All program staff reported developing new knowledge and skills in gender-responsive programming through a series of trainings, which, according to staff, enhanced their ability to use trauma-informed practices, whether they work directly with program participants or with other staff.
- The program elements and activities incorporated many core elements identified as meeting criteria for gender-responsive programming set by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program (OJJDP).<sup>8</sup>

#### **2. Participants reported a wide range of needs at program entry**

- Program participants reported numerous needs at program entry, including histories of trauma, mental health issues, substance abuse, unhealthy relationships, family dysfunction, academic failure, and school disengagement.
- Based on the programmatic needs of the girls, the program staff created personalized treatment plans that support each girl's needs.
- Willingness to participate with mental health and a substance abuse treatment plan was identified by staff as crucial to achieve intended outcomes, and also an area of pushback from some girls, especially with in-patient treatment.

#### **3. The program delivered a range of services and treatment, according to each participant's needs**

- Nearly 80% of all participants received some form of mental health and/or substance use treatment during the program, including 11% who received inpatient mental health treatment.
- Nearly 50% of participants participated in life skills development programs, as well as job training in a wide variety of community settings.

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<sup>8</sup> Kerig, P. K., & Schindler, S. R. (2013). [Engendering the evidence base](#): A critical review of the conceptual and empirical foundations of gender-responsive interventions for girls' delinquency. *Laws*, 2, 244-28.

- Over two-thirds were provided student assistance, independent living skills, counseling support, school reengagement services, and dropout intervention.

#### 4. The program created positive changes for participants

The program's strengths are in skills building and in enhancing attitudes and behaviors related to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning. For example, almost two-thirds of Girls Court participants (67%) improved in prosocial moral reasoning and problem solving, and 57% improved in emotional stability (e.g., ability to regulate impulsivity, having empathy for victims, and accepting responsibility for behavior).

- The pilot has also shown evidence of school improvement, with 47% of girls demonstrating positive changes in academic engagement (i.e., school enrollment status, attitudes toward education, school attendance, academic performance, and school conduct).
- Girls' behavioral health gains were very modest, with 40% showing positive changes in substance use and 28% showing improvement in mental health.

#### 5. Recidivism was lowered<sup>9</sup>

- Recidivism among program participants was lower (19%), compared to a 24% recidivism rate among Kitsap girls (N=38) who were sentenced to community supervision a year prior to the launch of the program.
- Out of 27 participants in the pilot, only one youth (4%) re-offended<sup>10</sup> after completing the program, and four girls (15%) reoffended while on community supervision with/participating in the Kitsap Girls Court. The girls who reoffended while participating in Girls Court were promptly offered appropriate services through the program. One of those girls still was able to come off supervision early due to her positive efforts after the new offense occurred.

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<sup>9</sup> The original plan to examine differences in recidivism rate (the number/percentage of youth referred to the courts, measured by court filings, at least once up to 18 months following program completion) between program participants and non-participants was not fully executed due to COVID-19's dramatic impact on program enrollment and time constraints of the pilot. That is why in this report, instead of program completion date, we used the program start date as the start date for tracking recidivism. The presence or lack of re-offending behavior was measured by a new court referral based on the offender matter.

<sup>10</sup> Recidivism was measured by a court referral that represented a juvenile referred to court on an offender matter regardless of the number of violations committed by the juvenile. This does not automatically indicate that a referral has been formally processed, nor does it imply the outcome of the case (deferred, diverted, dismissed, or found guilty). All of these cases were included.

### *Lessons Learned*

The following lessons proved essential to the success of the Kitsap County Girls Court implementation during COVID-19 and could be useful to other girls' courts. Social distancing protocols, restricted "non-essential" movement outside the home and school closures have impacted participating youth, including their connections with others and engagement with social activities. The pandemic-related changes have also posed challenges for service providers and court professionals to deliver the program the way it was originally planned. It is important to note that what works for one community may not work for another. However, the lessons learned in Kitsap in response to COVID-19 can be applied across communities in a post-COVID world.

- **Provide hybrid programming:**<sup>11</sup> Most program staff said they intend or hope to combine the best practices of digitally-enabled care with in-person elements to ensure a meaningful balance between the two modes of program delivery. Digital technology enabled staff to maintain considerable flexibility in the way they connected with program participants, but face-to-face communication was viewed as paramount for building trust and positive relationships with the girls.
- **Start small:** When introducing new practices and/or activities, start small, learn if it works, and then decide whether to use it in the future. This trial-and-error method was reported by program staff to be the most suitable in the environment where in-person contact with youth was largely interrupted due to COVID-19 and the level of uncertainty about service effectiveness was high.
- **Be flexible:** The program strategies and tactics must be flexible. This includes being ready to adapt to a quickly-changing environment, being open to new ideas, being prepared to address the urgent needs of youth, designing and piloting new program activities, and trying new engagement strategies.
- **Provide crisis support:** Many stakeholders emphasized the importance of providing crisis counseling (e.g., on-line, over messaging, and/or face-to-face) to help youth deal with the COVID-19 and other life crises. Particular attention should be given to youth with pre-existing mental health conditions and/or substance use disorders.
- **Continue program performance monitoring:** Many of the program gains only began to manifest during the pilot. Additional research is warranted. Program staff should establish a continuous process for self-assessment, tracking progress, identifying challenges, and taking steps to address them. Within this process, it is important to solicit input from youth and families regarding their experiences with the program. Program staff can collect this input using various mechanisms, such as surveys, focus groups, and informal conversations.

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<sup>11</sup> In response to COVID-19, court professionals and youth-serving providers transitioned to virtual programming including case management, court hearings, program activities, and service provision. For case management, court professionals during the pandemic continued their standard practices, but increasingly leveraged virtual modes (Zoom or phone) with an option of conducting an in-person meeting for the initial intake and assessment. Zoom emerged as the most commonly reported platform for doing assessments, delivering case management and conducting video calls. Practically all stakeholders described using this application to virtually connect with youth. For court hearings, Kitsap County Superior Court was also utilizing the Zoom platform. All respondents agreed that Zoom (and other virtual platforms) was a valuable tool in many instances.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

A program evaluation began shortly after the launch of the program.<sup>12</sup> It started with generating a theory of change that is visually represented by a logic model<sup>13</sup> in Figure 1. Building this model was an iterative process; it has been updated several times based on local conditions and feedback from program staff to reflect program changes over time. The final logic model served as a basis for the entire evaluation process. The top of the diagram (Figure 1) portrays the sequence and a concise description of six program elements leading to outcomes: 1) inputs (e.g., resources); 2) activities (e.g., program events or strategies); 3) outputs (e.g., results of program activities); 4) short-term outcomes (immediate effects of the program); 5) intermediate effects (the intended effects that occur over the midterm of the project period); and 6) impact (e.g., long-term effects of the program).

The evaluation included a process and an outcome evaluation. The process evaluation was used to assess the extent to which program activities were carried out as planned and to identify any obstacles that were encountered, as well as how these obstacles were overcome.

Among the key questions considered in the process evaluation were:

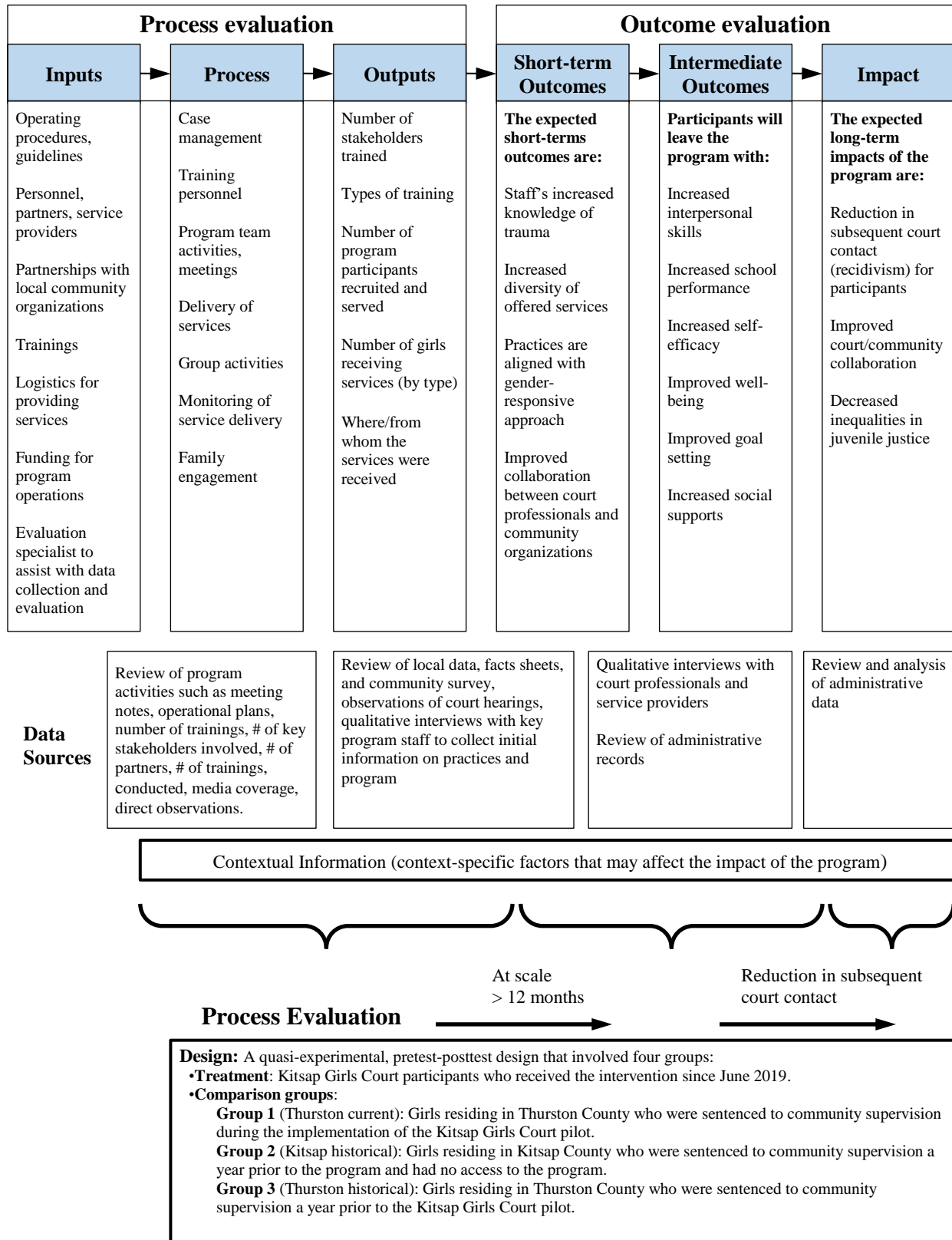
1. What is the community context for the program?
2. Who are the Kitsap County Girls Court participants? What is their demographic make-up and in what ways are program participants different from other girls sentenced to community supervision?
3. What are the primary needs of girls participating in the program?
4. How many girls have been served by the Kitsap County Girls Court pilot?
5. Was the Kitsap County Girls Court implemented following the intended model?
  - Are the program activities aligned with the core components of gender-responsive programming?
6. How do staff view the services provided to participants during the pandemic?
  - How did court professionals adjust and innovate in response to the changing needs of youth during the pandemic?
  - Do staff think they were able to ensure continuity of services during transition to virtual work in response to COVID-19?
7. What were key lessons learned from implementing the program during the pandemic?

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<sup>12</sup> In May 2019, the Washington State Center for Court Research (WSCCR), was contracted by the by the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) to conduct evaluation of the Girls Court pilot. Although WSCCR is administratively located inside the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC), it has been able to maintain an independent capacity for objective research within the judicial branch since 2004, when it was established by order of the Washington State Supreme Court.

<sup>13</sup> Funnell, S.C. & Rogers, P. J. (2011). Purposeful program theory: Effective use of theories of change and logic models. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass/Wiley. [http://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde\\_1/article/view/496/444](http://journals.sfu.ca/jmde/index.php/jmde_1/article/view/496/444)

## Figure 1: Kitsap Girls Court Program Logic Model





# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

The outcome evaluation was used to examine whether the program achieved its intended goals.<sup>14</sup> It mostly focused on short-term and intermediate outcomes that occur while a participant is still in the program. Because long-term impacts of the program usually take a long time to be seen (sometimes up to three years after the program), the evaluation could only measure recidivism that took place during the evaluation period (or between June 15, 2019 and August 31, 2022).

Among the key questions considered in the outcome evaluation were:

1. How has the program influenced the stakeholder community, and what capacities has it built?
2. Does the program deliver the intended services?
3. Does participation in the program lead to improved life circumstances, developmental competencies, needs, challenges, and characteristics for participants compared to those who did not participate?
4. If it does, what are the areas where the biggest change happened and the areas where little or no change occurred?

Figure 1 also presents sources of relevant data collected at different times of the pilot. The logic model also briefly describes a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design that was used in the study to compare the Girls Court participants with three comparison groups of girls who did not participate in the program.<sup>15</sup> One consisted of Kitsap girls sentenced to probation prior to program implementation, and the other two consisted of girls residing in Thurston County (Fig.2).

Thurston County was chosen as a comparison community because of its similarity to Kitsap in regard to several indicators such as population size (252,264 people in Thurston and 251,133 in Kitsap), household median income (\$60,930 and \$59,549, respectively), poverty (10% of the population below the poverty line in Thurston and 9.4% in Kitsap), prevalence of female headed households (11% and 10%, respectively), alcohol-or-drug related deaths, per 100 deaths (14.41 and 14.71, respectively), and victims of child abuse and neglect in accepted referrals, per 1,000 children (0-17) (32.85 and 36.22, respectively).

**Figure 2: Kitsap and Thurston Counties**



<sup>14</sup> The evaluation reports are posted on the CCYJs' website. To view them click [here](#).

<sup>15</sup> This method was utilized to evaluate the impact of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) in an urban county in a Midwestern state: Haight, W., Bidwell, L., Seok Choi, W., and Choa, M. (2016). An evaluation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM): Recidivism outcomes for maltreated youth involved in the juvenile justice system, *Children and Youth Services Review* 65: 78–88.



## METHODS AND DATA

This section describes the methods and data sources used in the evaluation.

### *Community Assessment*

Several publicly available data sources were used, such as public health program tracking, fact sheets, reports, and community surveys, to examine community contextual factors. Particular attention was paid to key factors identified by service providers and program staff as the top three challenges specific to program participants during in-person key stakeholders interviews conducted between July and September of 2020. These key dimensions included school-related challenges, substance use, and mental health.

The following data sources were used:

- 2019 Kitsap Community [Health Assessment](#) (KCHA)
  - 2019 Kitsap Community Health Priorities [Survey Results](#)
  - 2019 [Qualitative Findings](#) from Kitsap Community Input
- 2018 Healthy Youth Survey (Kitsap County)
- 2018 Kitsap County Core Public [Health Indicators](#) Report
- 2020 Kitsap County Risk and Protective [Profile](#) for Substance Abuse Prevention (RDA)
- 2020 Kitsap Community Risk Profile [Summary](#), by school district (RDA)

These data allowed us to understand the local environment in which the girls' court program is operating, identify the existing community challenges, discuss possible implications of these challenges for the program, and suggest recommendations for program implementation.

### *Observations*

A WSCCR researcher visited the Kitsap Juvenile Court four times in 2019 to observe on-site training sessions, staff meetings, and court sessions. These observations provided information about how the program staff responded to the trainings and whether they are applying the gender-responsive approach<sup>16</sup> at program planning meetings and/or court hearings. During court sessions, the researcher observed what was happening in the courtroom, including but not limited to the interactions between the judge, program participants, and court staff. The researcher also observed whether the girls had an opportunity to voice their concerns during hearings and whether the judge engaged youth at the hearings (e.g., whether the judge explained hearing purpose and process, whether the judge spoke directly to and addressed the girls by their first name, whether the judge asked if youth had questions, making sure participants understand what was happening during the hearing and what comes next, whether the progress of each participant was meaningfully discussed, including what was going well and where additional support was needed).

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<sup>16</sup> Kerig, P. K., & Schindler, S. R. (2013). [Engendering the evidence base](#): A critical review of the conceptual and empirical foundations of gender-responsive interventions for girls' delinquency. *Laws*, 2, 244-28.

### *Post-training Feedback Surveys*

All program staff, including the judge, prosecutor, probation manager, court supervisor, detention manager, detention alternative staff, program director, and local service providers received a series of trainings from consultants and other experts brought to the site. Several post-training feedback surveys were used to measure the staffs' reactions to training they received, and the degree to which training participants acquired the intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, confidence, and commitment to the gender-responsive approach. These surveys provided information about staff knowledge and readiness for the program, to identify what was missing, and to address those gaps.

### *Program Document Review*

A WSCCR researcher reviewed program documents, including an assessment tool, program referral form, case management form, and weekly progress reports to better understand the operations and practices of the program and to ascertain they are aligned with the core components of the gender-responsive approach and Hope Principles.<sup>17</sup> This information helped to understand how the program is implemented and how it operates.

### *Key Stakeholder Interviews*

Two sets of key stakeholder interviews were conducted via video conference, first at the beginning of the program and again at the end of the program. The interviews were designed to better understand the effectiveness of the program through the lens of key experts who are directly involved with the program and with its participants. This includes internal court system stakeholders (e.g., court administration, attorneys, prosecutors, clerks, and other court staff) and external stakeholders from the community (e.g., service providers, volunteers, and non-profit organizations). The first wave of interviews, conducted between July and September of 2020, provided a deeper understanding of the program's structure, procedures, and practices established during the first year of implementation, while the second wave of interviews, conducted between September and December of 2021, identified changes that were made to the program in response to COVID-19.

### *Administrative Data*

Two sources of administrative data were used: 1) the Judicial Information System (JIS), the primary information system for courts in Washington, and 2) the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT),<sup>18</sup> which captures risk and needs assessment information on all youth placed on probation.

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<sup>17</sup> The Kitsap Juvenile Court contracted with [Kitsap Strong](#) to receive consulting around utilization of the science of Hope in their practices. **Hope** is the belief that the future will be better than today, and you have the power to make it so. Hope is based on three main ideas: desirable goals, pathways to goal attainment, and willpower to pursue those pathways. **Goals** are desired outcomes you are trying to accomplish. **Achievement** (positive) goals are those we want to attain. **Pathways** are the roadmaps individuals have in mind that will allow them to begin the journey toward the future; a goal without a pathway is only a wish. **Willpower** is your ability to dedicate mental energy to begin and sustain the journey toward your goals. Ideas developed by Dr. Chen Hellman, professor of social work at the University of Oklahoma and Director of The Hope Research Center. Tulsa Schusterman Center. (2022). *Hope Research Center*. <https://www.ou.edu/tulsa/hope>.

<sup>18</sup> Prior to the program, court staff performed risk and needs assessments using the Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT), a 126-item, multiple choice in-depth assessment instrument, which produces risk level scores measuring a girl's risk of re-offending. The PACT helps to match a girl's needs with the appropriate programs and services. PACT reassessments inform the court professionals of the girl's improvements.

The administrative data were used to:

1. Identify girls sentenced to community supervision between 2018 and 2019 in Kitsap and Thurston County (for comparison) and create four study groups: a treatment group (Kitsap girls who participated in the program since its launch, June 2019) and three comparison groups (girls who did not participate in the program) (see the Logic Model, p. 8).
2. Examine selected pre-pilot characteristics (e.g., school experiences, family relationships, mental health issues, and substance use) of youth who participated in the program (the treatment group), compared with youths who did not participate in the program (the comparison groups).
3. Examine the extent to which a participant's life circumstances, developmental competencies, and characteristics (these are frequently referred to as protective and risk factors) change over the course of the program, compared with those who had no access to the program.
4. Monitor the recidivism among program participants by capturing referral for a new felony or misdemeanor charge while participating in the Kitsap Girls Court program, as well as within 18 months following program completion date, as measured by a court referral/arrest.<sup>19</sup>

## RESULTS: PROCESS EVALUATION

### *What was the community context for the program?*

The program operated within the larger context of Kitsap County. This section discusses the contextual characteristics of the local community that could facilitate or impede successful implementation of the Girls Court program. This approach follows an ecological framework of effective program implementation, which was originally developed to promote success of community-based health programs.<sup>20</sup> The community assessment focused on three factors identified by the program staff (via in-person interviews) as the top three challenges facing program participants: 1) school-related challenges; 2) substance use; and 3) mental health.

The analysis of the Healthy Youth Survey (HYS)<sup>21</sup> data related to school factors showed that in 2018, more than 40% of Kitsap County 8<sup>th</sup>-, 10<sup>th</sup>-, and 12<sup>th</sup>-grade girls experienced academic failure (e.g., having mostly C's, D's, and F's grades) and low commitment to school. About a fifth of Kitsap girls in 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades (21%, 23%, and 29%, respectively) believed that school work is not meaningful and more than a fourth of 8th and 12th graders (27% and 28%,

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<sup>19</sup> Due to time constraints of the pilot, we were not able to track recidivism for every participant within an 18-month follow-up period. For some girls who completed the program in 2022, the follow-up period was less than three months. The Kitsap team continues monitoring and reporting how many girls committed a new offense, what offenses they committed, or how many offenses they committed while being in the program as well as during the 18-month mark of follow up, measured by court referral.

<sup>20</sup> Durlak, J. A. & DuPre, E.P. (2008) "Implementation matters: A review of research on the influence of implementation on program outcomes and the factors affecting implementation." *American Journal of Community Psychology*; 41:327-350.

<sup>21</sup> [The Healthy Youth Survey](#) (HYS) is a collaborative effort of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Department of Health, the Health Care Authority's Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery, and the Liquor and Cannabis Board. In fall 2018, students in grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 answered questions about mental health, substance use, safety and violence, and related risk and protective factors.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

respectively) and more than a third of Kitsap girls in 10th grade (34%) indicated that learning is not important for the future. The percentage of Kitsap girls skipping school increased from middle school throughout high school, reaching its highest rate in 12th grade (23% for Kitsap and 26% for the state), and approximately 1 in 10 Kitsap girls in all grades reported missing school because they felt unsafe at school.

Substance abuse, according to more than half of the 2019 Kitsap Community Health Priority Survey respondents, is one of the three biggest health problems impacting the health of Kitsap youth (ages 11-18). The HYS data showed that more than a quarter of high school girls in Kitsap (28%) reported easy availability of drugs in the community and the belief that the norms in their community are favorable to drug use. This means that in a typical-sized Kitsap 12th grade classroom,<sup>22</sup> at least 4 girls can easily access drugs. Prescription drugs are the second most abused illicit drug, behind marijuana, among 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders in Kitsap. Though the percentage of girls abusing prescription drugs is still relatively low (7-8%) compared to marijuana use (17-29%), there are troubling signs that youth nationwide view abusing prescription drugs as safer than illegal drugs.<sup>23</sup>

Mental health needs (treatment, medication, suicide prevention, etc.) were identified by almost half of community members as one of the three biggest health problems impacting youth in Kitsap County.<sup>24</sup> Based on the HYS data from 2018, more than 30% of Kitsap girls in 8th, 10th and 12th grades reported having seriously considered suicide, over 20% reported having made a suicide plan, and just over 10% reported having attempted suicide. This means that in a typical-sized Kitsap high school classroom, chances are one or two girls have attempted suicide in the past year.

The Girls Court program was designed to buffer the adverse community circumstances by providing services designed to increase confidence and self-efficacy, strengthen interpersonal skills, and improve school performance and goal setting by building positive relationships and support systems. Research shows that expanding girls' social support network through creating relationships with formal mentors, "very important non-parental adults" (VIPs),<sup>25</sup> and adults providing social support in their community improves girls' social connectedness. Youth who feel connected at school, at home, and in the community were found in the recent CDC study to be as much as 66% less likely to experience health risk behaviors related to sexual health, substance use, violence, and mental health in adulthood.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> About 30 students with 50/50 gender ratio.

<sup>23</sup> National Survey Results of Drug Use (2020)

<sup>24</sup> Kitsap county 2019 community health priorities survey results participation [summary](#)

<sup>25</sup> Beam MR, Chen C, Greenberger E. (2002). "The nature of adolescents' relationships with their "very important" non-parental adults. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30:305-325.

<sup>26</sup> Steiner, R. J., Sheremenko, G., Lesesne, C., Dittus, P.J., Sieving, R.E., and Ethier, K.A. (2019). "Adolescent Connectedness and Adult Health Outcomes." *Pediatrics*, 144(1): 2018-3766.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

## *Characteristics of program participants*

Within the evaluation context, examining participants' pre-program needs provides useful information for understanding who the clients are and what they bring into the treatment setting. This analysis serves as a baseline measure, against which subsequent progress can be assessed.<sup>27</sup>

The program began in June of 2019 and continued through May 31, 2022.<sup>28</sup> During this time, 27 girls participated in the program.<sup>29</sup> The PACT data were available for only 24 girls. All results in this section are based on PACT data for these 24 participants (see Table 1).

For the most part, the program participants were representative of the girls in the general Kitsap female population (ages 12-17) with a majority of participants being White (63%), except that program participants included a higher percentage of Black girls (8% in the program vs. 3% in the general Kitsap's female population) and higher proportion of Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander girls (8% and 1%, respectively). Also, participants consisted of a lower percentage of multiracial girls (0% vs. 13%). The average age of girls in the program was 15, with the youngest girl being 13 and the oldest girls being 17 years of age.

**Table 1: Demographic characteristics of program participants**

	<i>Kitsap female population (ages 12-17)</i>		<i>Kitsap Girls Court participants</i>	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
White	5,695	64%	15	63%
Black/African American	265	3%	2	8%
Asian	534	6%	1	4%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	132	1%	2	8%
Hispanic/Latinx	1,008	11%	3	13%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	157	2%	-	-
Two or more races	1,115	13%	-	0%
Unknown	-	-	1	4%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8,906</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>100%</b>

The characteristics of program participants were further examined based on their PACT responses to sets of items related to school status, family relationships, trauma, alcohol/drug use, and mental health status.

<sup>27</sup> The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) assessment data were used for this analysis. PACT is a software-scored/automated version of the Washington State Juvenile Court Assessment [WSJCA] that is administered to every youth sentenced to community supervision. The PACT is comprised of 12 domains: criminal history, demographics, school, use of free time, employment, relationships, family, alcohol and drugs, mental health, attitudes, aggression, and social skills.

<sup>28</sup> At the time of writing this report (Fall 2022), Kitsap County continues to operate the program.

<sup>29</sup> The program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but COVID-19 has had a profound impact on program enrollment.

## Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

Our results showed that school-related issues were very common among girls entering the program. Nearly 29% of participants had special education needs at intake, with 17% reporting having learning disabilities and 25% being diagnosed with ADHD. The majority (83%) had a history of conduct problems in school at intake. These included behavior problems reported by teachers (29%) and problems resulting in calling parents and/or police (54%). The majority (79%) has had a history of school expulsions. Of those program participants with a history of expulsions, 71% were between 10 and 13 years of age at the time of their first expulsion. Previous research had established a link between early exclusionary school discipline (out-of-school suspensions and expulsions) and student outcomes such as lower test scores, truancy, dropout, grade retention, and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Consistent with this research, the majority of program participants were skipping school (66%), reported not being close to any teachers, school staff, or coaches (71%), and 33% had failing grades at the time of the assessment (grades Ds and mostly Fs).

A large proportion of participants (75%) had a history of running away from home, 42% were victims of neglect, 33% had a history of dependency, 29% had a history of out-of-home placement, and 8% were in foster care at the time of the assessment. The majority of participants (88%) were exposed to family conflict and/or violence. In particular, more than half (50%) experienced verbal intimidation, yelling, and heated arguments in the family, while 29% experienced domestic violence. Almost a half (46%) of program participants witnessed violence, 38% were victims of physical abuse and 42% were victims of sexual abuse. More than half (54%) had a history of mental health problems, 38% reported experiencing consistent feelings of depression/anxiety, and 8% reported impairment in everyday tasks due to depression/anxiety. Despite the high rates of mental health problems, only about 22% of program participants had undergone mental health treatment or had been prescribed medication prior to the program. Further, more than half (66%) used drugs and 33% used alcohol within 6 months prior to entering the program.

In interviews, program staff reported a shared understanding of the primary needs of girls entering the program. All agreed that although needs vary from girl to girl, they are generally within the same areas of concern, including histories of trauma, mental health issues, substance abuse, unhealthy relationships, family dysfunction, academic failure, school disengagement, and lack of social support. These needs intersect and correlate with one another resulting in multi-layered personal, school, and familial issues affecting their lives. Based on the programmatic needs of the girls, the program staff creates personalized treatment plans that support each girl's needs. The majority of program staff agreed that the success of participants in the program depends on whether trauma-related issues are addressed and where the girls are in their recovery process.

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*“If they [girls] can overcome trauma that they experienced, work on mental health and substance abuse issues, they can eventually deal with other issues. If these issues are not taken care of, they can cause other problems down the road and result in the same behaviors that brought the girl in the system in the first place.”*

*-Kitsap court professional*

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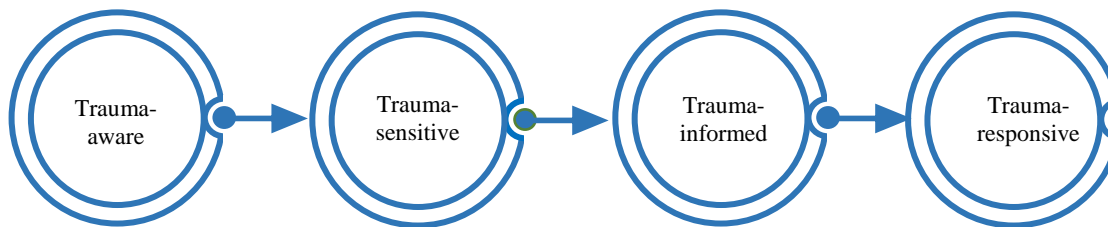


## Building Staff Competencies

All program staff, including the judge, prosecutor, probation manager, court supervisor, detention manager, detention alternative staff, program director, and local service providers received a series of trainings from consultants and other experts brought to the site. The purpose of the trainings was to help program staff in planning for, implementing and sustaining a trauma-informed organizational change process. The trainings focused on topics that constitute core elements of gender-responsive interventions such as girl-centered practices and gender responsiveness, trauma and trauma-informed care, serving LGBTQ + youth, sexual exploitation, and racial equity. Each training included interactive activities that allowed participants to discuss how the knowledge and skills the training taught will be used in the workplace. Table 1 provides a list of training topics, experts conducting each training, and the dates when each training occurred.

Figure 1 illustrates four stages of an ongoing organizational change process that emerged as the result of these trainings. This assessment is based on post-training surveys, key stakeholder interviews, court hearing observations, and informal conversations with court professionals and service providers. As a result of the trainings, program staff developed new skills and knowledge that allowed them to evolve from being trauma-aware (staff know the definition of trauma and its impact on people) to being trauma-sensitive (staff value and prioritize the trauma lens in their work), and then to being trauma-informed (staff apply new knowledge about trauma to their specific work), while demonstrating some elements of being trauma-responsive (staff have made trauma-responsive practices a part of programming, staff presumes that all girls have experienced trauma (i.e., universal precautions approach.) and all program participants are screened for trauma).<sup>30</sup>

**Figure 1: A Developmental Framework for Trauma-Responsive Care**



Most program staff agreed that, as the result of the trainings, they not only became more knowledgeable about the lifelong effects of trauma, recovery needs, and implementation of trauma-focused treatment interventions, but also better positioned to use trauma-informed practices, whether they work directly with girls coming into contact with the juvenile justice system or with other staff.

<sup>30</sup> Adopted from the three sessions of NIC’s 2020 Becoming Trauma-Informed Webinar series. Videos and other details about these sessions can be found on the <http://nicic.gov> website. Becoming Trauma-informed and moving to trauma-responsive webinar is here [Becoming Trauma Informed and Moving to Trauma Responsive, Part 3 | National Institute of Corrections \(nicic.gov\)](#)



In addition to trainings, three learning sessions were conducted, each following the release of a new evaluation report. The intent of these sessions was to help the Kitsap team engage in a discussion about what is working and what is not working, diagnose what they need to improve, and use that information to make changes. Based on several comments from court professionals, learning sessions enabled program staff to identify potential solutions, determine whether the ability to make change lies within the team’s control, and identify who is responsible for making the change.

**Table 1: Trainings, description, providers, and the dates**

Training	Provider	Date
<p><b>Girl-Centered Practices and Gender Responsiveness</b>                      Key topics included research and data on gender disparities in the juvenile justice system, distinctions in physical, mental, emotional, and social health needs for girls, trust and relationship building with at-risk girls, and strategies for resolving interpersonal conflicts with at-risk girls.</p>	<p>The Justice for Girls Coalition</p>	<p>5/7/19</p>
<p><b>Serving LGBTQIA+ Youth</b>                      This training was designed for youth serving professionals (but open to all) who want to learn more about supporting LGBTQ+ youth.                      Key topics included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Why we need specific protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth;</li> <li>● What it means to be LGBTQ+, including the definitions of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE);</li> <li>● Some fundamental protections and supports for LGBTQ+ youth;</li> <li>● Some promising practices for discussing SOGIE with youth; and</li> <li>● Two steps they can take toward making their court, agency, or organization safer and more affirming.</li> </ul>	<p>The Center for Children &amp; Youth Justice</p>	<p>8/19/19</p>
<p><b>Serving Child Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation</b>                      This training provided information on the what, who, how, and why of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of children, with a focus on victim engagement and a detailed discussion of identification and the “red flags.”</p>	<p>The Center for Children &amp; Youth Justice</p>	<p>9/9/19</p>

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

Training	Provider	Date
<p><b>Nutrition and Trauma (“Protein For All”)</b></p> <p>The training was designed to train court officials to use food to improve their own energy, mental clarity, and decision making. For the court officials, using the food helps to reduce secondary trauma and burnout. For the clients, food helps engage their responsive brain versus their reactive brain to increase engagement.</p>	Kristen Allott, ND, MS	10/28/19
<p><b>Race Equity Training Series</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Session 1: Welcome &amp; laying the groundwork</i> This session introduced core concepts such as systemic racism, equity vs. equality, race equity, and implicit bias, and why these key concepts are critical for justice system workers to know, understand, and integrate into their work.</li> <li>● <i>Session 2: Structural racism &amp; systems thinking.</i> This session described the historical context of the law and justice system and explained how systems become oppressive.</li> <li>● <i>Session 3: Addressing bias &amp; interrupting racism &amp; oppression (part 1)</i> This session helped participants examine the impact their lived experiences, and interpersonal interactions have on clients and colleagues.</li> <li>● <i>Session 4: Addressing bias &amp; interrupting racism &amp; oppression (part 2)</i> This session offered strategies to interrupt racism and bias to support engaging more competently with court participants and colleagues of color.</li> </ul>	JustLead Washington	3/2/21 – 3/23/21
<p><b>Science of Hope Trainings Series</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <i>Session 1: Science of Hope - Overview</i> This presentation presented an overview of the science of hope and its ability to 1: buffer adversity and stress, 2: lead to positive outcomes, and 3: is a strength that can be nurtured with targeted intervention.</li> <li>● <i>Session 2: Regulation, Neuroscience of Motivation, and Tools for Building Hope.</i> Review the science of hope framework and dive-deep into the neuroscience of regulation and motivation. Participants will be invited to explore practical tools/solutions for increasing agency thinking, pathway thinking, and visioning.</li> </ul>	Kitsap Strong	01/05/21- 10/12/21

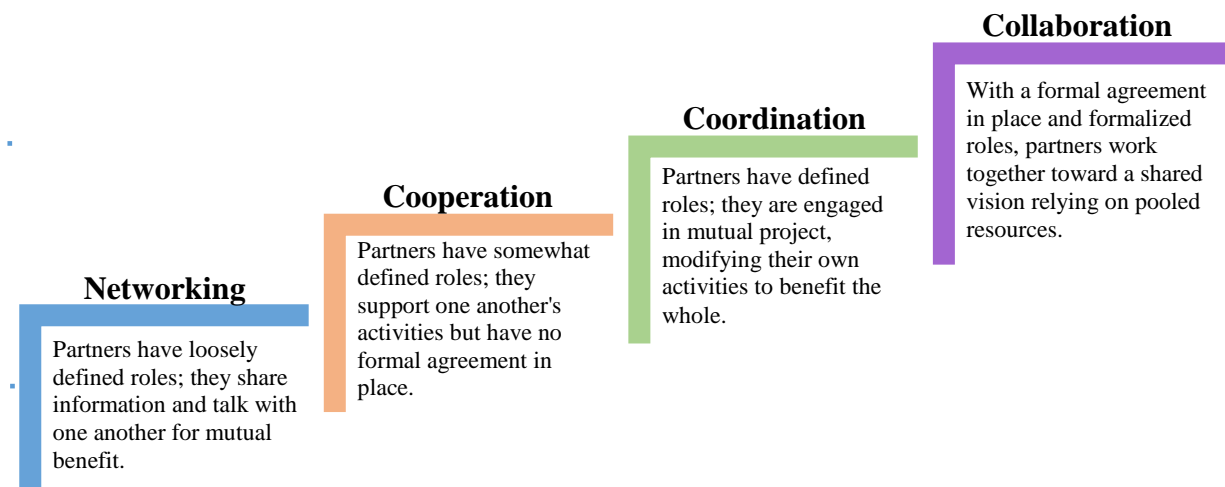
# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

## *Evolution of Partnership with Community Organizations*

Figure 3 illustrates four stages of partnership evolution between the Kitsap court and local service providers that emerged as the result of the program. This assessment is based on key stakeholder interviews, court hearing observations, and informal conversations with court professionals and service providers. The analysis is grounded in the Prevention Collaboration in Action Framework<sup>31</sup> that was developed to help public health systems determine their current level of involvement with various partners, as well as options for deepening these relationships over time.<sup>32</sup>

Successful collaboration with local partners, according to program staff, was possible because of strong judicial leadership and the program’s proactive outreach approach in finding and bringing together local community-based organizations such as schools, service providers, and others. Since 2019, program staff has developed effective working relationships with 17 community organizations. These relationships started, prior to the launch of the program, with networking involving informal communication among partners about existing programs, activities, or services that could benefit the Kitsap Girls Court Program participants. Over time these relationships progressed into the next stage – cooperation— when program staff and community members were engaged in informal supportive relationships while creating collaborative structures that involved top administrators and middle managers. After the launch of the program, the partnership between the Kitsap court team and community partners evolved to incorporate many elements of coordination at first, (e.g., shared decision-making, regular communication), and then collaboration (e.g., formalized roles and signed memorandum of understanding, common trainings and learning sessions, established guidelines and procedures, shared decision-making, developing new services and funding for collaborative service delivery, etc.).

**Figure 3: Kitsap Team Collaboration Progression**



Adopted from the Prevention Collaboration in Action, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Center

<sup>31</sup> Prevention Collaboration in Action was developed under the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies task order: [Levels of Collaboration \(edc.org\)](https://www.edc.org/)

<sup>32</sup> Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27(3), 383–392.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

As a result of the program, community stakeholders and court professionals have developed channels for communication that did not exist before, through monthly court hearings and stakeholder meetings, as well as regular emails and phone calls. Although the communication among these two groups of stakeholders varied throughout the pilot from regular (e.g., weekly) to occasional contacts that occurred on an as-needed basis, the majority of program staff indicated that team members worked well together and that digital technology enabled program staff to maintain considerable flexibility in the way they connected with each other and with program participants.

These relationships, once built, will remain to support participants during the program as well as after they have left Girls Court. For example, the Individual Living Skills (ILS) program<sup>33</sup> offers services to participants well past the youth's "graduation" from the Girls Court Program. Youth are eligible to receive ILS services until they turn 21, and the majority of girls referred chose to continue to engage in this program long after they were off court supervision.

## *Alignment of the Program with the Core Elements of the Gender-Responsive Approach*

Becoming a gender-responsive program requires knowledge of the principles of gender-responsive care and a commitment to change. A "gender-responsive approach" is not a program model that can be implemented and then simply monitored by a checklist. Rather, it is a paradigm shift in knowledge, perspective, attitudes and skills that continues to deepen and unfold over time.

Table 2 provides an overview of the Kitsap Girls Court Program strategies and activities that have been identified as meeting criteria for gender-responsive programming set by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program<sup>34</sup> and which incorporate theoretically informed gender-responsive elements from feminist pathways theory (e.g., addressing trauma, victimization, abuse, and neglect)<sup>35</sup> and relational/cultural theory that emphasizes relationships as building blocks for youths' wellness (e.g., centrality of relationships, inclusion of girls' voices, and sense of connection to others).<sup>36</sup>

This assessment is based on program documents review, key stakeholder interviews, court staff meetings, and court observations. In sum, many Kitsap Girls Court Program activities are aligned with the core principles and elements of gender-responsive interventions grouped into the following practice areas: 1) community-based; 2) relational; 3) behavioral needs; 4) trauma-responsive; 5) communication-based; 6) comprehensive/holistic; and 7) resources.

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<sup>33</sup> The ILS program prepares them for adulthood by teaching youth the skills they need to be independent, and empowers them to reach their unique goals

<sup>34</sup> Kerig, P. K., & Schindler, S. R. (2013). [Engendering the evidence base](#): A critical review of the conceptual and empirical foundations of gender-responsive interventions for girls' delinquency. *Laws*, 2, 244-28.

<sup>35</sup> Wattanaporn, K.A., & Holtfreter, K. (2014). The Impact of Feminist Pathways Research on Gender-Responsive Policy and Practice. *Feminist Criminology*. 9(3), 191-207.

<sup>36</sup> Cannon, K., Hammer, T., Reicherzer, S., & Gilliam, B. (2012). Relational-Cultural Theory: A Framework for Relational Competencies and Movement in Group Work with Female Adolescents. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health* 7(1), 2-16.

**Table 2: Kitsap Girls Court Program Components Matching Gender-Responsive Elements**

Gender-Responsive Elements	Kitsap Girls Court Program Components
Community-based	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Girls are served in their local communities</li> <li>• Since 2019, program staff has developed effective working relationships with 17 community-based organizations</li> <li>• Community partners are permitted to review progress reports and participate in staffing</li> <li>• Girls have the option to remain connected to community services even after completing the program</li> <li>• Relationships between participants and community members developed during the program may continue to be a source of support for participants after leaving the program</li> </ul>
Relational focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a dedicated judge (female) who oversees the cases and actively administers the program</li> <li>• The judge participates not only in court hearings but also in shared activities outside the courtroom</li> <li>• There is a high staff-to-participant ratio<sup>37</sup></li> <li>• Each participant receives individualized attention from staff who know them well on a personal level</li> <li>• There is a focus on participants building positive relationships with other Girls Court participants, program staff, community service providers, and family members</li> <li>• There are weekly contact/meetings with the Court Services Officer<sup>38</sup></li> <li>• Participants take part in monthly in-group shared activities that enable girls to connect with each other</li> <li>• The program engages families in the treatment process</li> <li>• The program supports ongoing positive relationships with mentors, family and peers</li> </ul>
Behavioral health needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inpatient and outpatient mental health therapy and outpatient substance use treatment are provided</li> <li>• Individualized therapy/counseling are offered as needed</li> <li>• Individual goal planning is used with each participant</li> </ul>

<sup>37</sup> The target number of participants is 15-20, with a 1 to 3 ratio of staff to participants.

<sup>38</sup> Courts use “probation counselor” and “probation officer” terms interchangeably. [RCW 13.04.035](#) uses “probation counselor” language, while [RCW 13.04.050](#) has some references to “probation officer.” Yet, some courts are using “court services officer” terminology to describe a position providing statutory, support, supervisory and counseling services for the superior court and juvenile department in the areas of diversion, probation, special supervision, dependency, assessments and evaluations (i.e., Okanogan, Kitsap).

Gender-Responsive Elements	Kitsap Girls Court Program Components
Trauma-responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All staff members received training in gender-responsive programming</li> <li>• Individualized therapy is used to address trauma</li> <li>• Through the screening and goal-setting process, staff come to understand each girl’s individual background</li> <li>• There is a physical site(s) available to host activities that is safe and welcoming</li> <li>• Program staff pays close attention to girls in crisis to ensure the physical and emotional safety of all girls</li> </ul>
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program provides communication skills building services/activities</li> <li>• The program strengthens family communication patterns and improves overall family functioning</li> <li>• Parents and caregivers are invited to visit court hearings (when held in person)</li> <li>• Parents and caregivers are included in the process of goal setting</li> </ul>
Comprehensive /holistic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The program integrates family, school, and other community-based agencies</li> <li>• The program creates opportunities for positive changes to benefit girls on an individual level, within their relationships and within the community</li> <li>• The program takes into account girls’ needs for support, safety and intimacy</li> <li>• In moments of negative or disruptive behavior, staff look beyond the behavior to understand the issue driving that behavior</li> <li>• Program staff emphasize the importance of knowing each girl’s material situation and needs (e.g., food, shelter, transportation, hygiene products, and clothes) in order to support meeting those needs</li> </ul>
Resources for girls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants have access to life skills development programs as well as job training in a wide variety of community settings</li> <li>• Participants receive student assistance, counseling support, school reengagement services and dropout intervention</li> <li>• Girls can access assistance with transportation and/or access to basic needs such as clothes and food</li> <li>• There is a rewards-based system based on girls’ individualized interests</li> <li>• The program uses incentives to motivate behavior change (e.g., positive regard from the judge, tangible rewards)</li> </ul>

## RESULTS: OUTCOME EVALUATION

### *Community-based Service Engagement*

According to key stakeholders, not every girl requires the same types of resources. In order to provide an adequate level of care to a participant, the program staff relies on the Court Services Officer (CSO), who uses the PACT and structured interviewing techniques to assess criminogenic needs and protective factors of each girl prior to enrolling in the program. In addition to risks and needs, the CSO identifies youths' strengths, interests, hobbies, and communication style, and engages participants and their families in creating individualized case plans. Development of the case plan emphasizes fitting services to each girl's particular needs. Weekly progress reports are drafted for each girl. These reports help program staff determine the extent to which girls are connected with needed services and make adjustments as needed.

Since June of 2019, 27 girls have participated in the program.<sup>39</sup> Table 3 shows the number of participants who were engaged in community-based services (by service type) throughout the pilot. Nearly 80% of all participants received some form of mental health and/or substance use treatment, including 11% who received inpatient mental health treatment. Nearly 50% of participants participated in life skills development programs, as well as job training in a wide variety of community settings.

Over two-thirds were provided student assistance, counseling support, school reengagement services, and dropout intervention. The majority of professionals we interviewed reported that service delivery depends on girls' motivation to participate and engage. Willingness to participate with mental health counseling/treatment and substance abuse treatment services was identified as crucial, and also an area of pushback from some girls, especially regarding in-patient treatment. Some girls are resistant to treatment for personal reasons, such as a lack of trust in the system, a feeling of being trapped or forced into treatment, and a belief that they do not have a choice or cannot change their circumstances. Several service providers noted that girls' engagement is affected by how much they know about the program and/or the community partner either through court staff or peers.

The more girls know about the program and services, the more willing they may be to participate. As one service provider stated: "We have some girls who really bought into the program and responded very well, they were satisfied with the outcomes and services." The introduction of incentive-based programming,<sup>40</sup> in addition to weekly progress reports, according to program staff, proved to be effective for improving participants' engagement with the program. This approach is rooted in a micro-economy framework for promoting behavior change in youth through reward-seeking behavior<sup>41</sup> that has been successfully applied in various settings.

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<sup>39</sup> The program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but COVID-19 has had a profound impact on program enrollment.

<sup>40</sup> At the end of June 2021, staff started incentive-based programming, an approach that relies on offering incentives to participating youth for meeting weekly goals. Within this approach, probation staff and youth worked together to develop a case plan that included defining weekly goals and milestones.

<sup>41</sup> Doll, Christopher, et al. (2013). "The Token Economy: A Recent Review and Evaluation." *International Journal of Basic and Applied Science*, 2 (1): 131–149.



# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

**Table 3: Kitsap Community Partners and Services Provided<sup>42</sup>**

Services	Provider	# Girls served (N=27)
Mental health therapy	Kitsap mental health or private	17
Intensive mental health and substance use	Wraparound with Intensive Services (WISe)	10
Inpatient mental health	Daybreak Youth Services	< 5
Behavioral rehabilitation services	Kitsap County & Peninsula, Catholic Community Services	< 5
Mental health treatment, employment assistance, educational advising, housing support services	Scarlett Road	5
Independent living skills, educational and career advancement counseling regarding attainment of general equivalency diploma (GED)	Olive Crest	5
Outpatient chemical dependency treatment	Agape	10
Mentoring (enrichment, social skills, career skills, school-based advocacy health & wellness, financial literacy)	OurGEMS	9
Housing	Youth housing authority	9
Student Advocate	South Kitsap School District	8
Job preparation and internships	The Coffee Oasis	< 5
Family Assessment Response	FAR/DCYF	5
Job preparation, including successful work ethic and attitude models	OESD 114 Early Learning	< 5
Providing professional clothing for school, interview for a job, or court hearing	Kitsap Juvenile Court, funded by Soroptimists	< 5
Individualized services, customized one-on-one programs for youth	Hope Inc	< 5
Education and training skills, empowerment	Soroptimists	10
Alternative to detention/activity provider	Alternatives to detention	10-15
Activities provider	Kitsap Credit Union	10

<sup>42</sup> Numbers less than 5 are suppressed to protect disclosure of individual data

### *Intermediate Program Outcomes*

The outcome evaluation mostly focused on intermediate outcomes of the program that were measured at the end of the program and/or community supervision. In this report, “intermediate outcomes” refer to changes in the youth’s life circumstances, developmental competencies, skills, needs, challenges, and characteristics (these are frequently referred to as protective and risk factors measured by PACT<sup>43</sup>) among girls who participated in the program (treatment), compared with those who had no access to the program (comparison). The current analyses include the girls who received both the initial and final risk and needs assessments. Girls who were assessed only once or who had missing PACT scores were excluded from the analyses. Out of 27 girls who had been participating in the Girls Court pilot, only 21 have had records of both initial and final assessments and, thus, were included in these analyses.

We used a quasi-experimental, pretest-posttest design in which Girls Court participants with available PACT scores (n=21) were compared to three comparison groups of girls who resided either in Kitsap or Thurston County either during the program (Thurston) or a year prior to the program (Kitsap and Thurston). Youth were not randomly assigned to four groups, but rather selected from the administrative data based on the place and the timing of their community supervision. All four groups were compared based on the baseline measures to control for pre-intervention group differences.<sup>44</sup> The groups were largely comparable; of the 25 variables examined, differences between the treatment and comparison groups were identified for only six variables.<sup>45</sup>

The evaluation examined the effect of the program on 10 distinct PACT domains: (1) school, (2) employment, (3) use of free time, (4) living arrangements, (5) alcohol and drug use, (6) mental health, (7) relationships, (8) antisocial attitudes, (9) aggression, and (10) social skills.

The key findings include the following:

- Overall, 67% of girls participating in the program showed improvement by the end of the program, as indicated by the reduction in risk scores or by the enhancement in protective scores in at least one domain.
- The areas in which the largest percentage of program participants, compared with the comparison groups, showed improvement were: 1) skills (67% for program participants vs. 44-58% for comparison groups) and 2) attitudes and behaviors (57% for program participants vs. 30-55% for comparison groups). Skills include items such as consequential thinking, goal setting, problem solving, situational perception, skills for dealing with difficult situations, feelings/emotions, and others, and skills for controlling impulsive

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<sup>43</sup> The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT), is a 126-item, multiple choice in-depth assessment instrument which produces risk level scores measuring a girl’s risk of re-offending. The PACT provides information for a case plan specific to the girl’s identified needs and helps to match a girl’s needs with the appropriate programs and services. PACT re-assessments inform the court professionals of the girl’s improvements.

<sup>44</sup> Of note, the results in this report must be interpreted carefully, because they are based on a small number of observations. Small sample sizes did not allow us to use a propensity score matching technique to reduce the differences between the treatment and the comparisons groups. In smaller sample studies, propensity score matching leaves too few cases for meaningful analysis. For the future, we recommend considering the creation of comparison groups using propensity score matching to minimize pre-intervention differences.

<sup>45</sup> Because of an insufficient number of girls sentenced to community supervision in Kitsap, this created difficulties for using the propensity score matching technique to control for pre-intervention differences between the treatment and the comparison group.

# Kitsap Girls Court Program: Final Evaluation Report

behaviors. The attitudes and behaviors domain includes items such as emotions, optimism, impulsivity, self-control, empathy for victims, sympathy, and respect for others' property, authority, law-abiding behavior, and accepting responsibility for behavior. Broadly speaking, this domain is about emotional stability and cognitive reasoning.

- The program shows promise in reducing school-related risk factors. A positive change in this domain was observed among 43% of program participants. This improvement is smaller than two comparison groups (55% for Kitsap historical, and 47% for Thurston historical groups), but we still consider it meaningful given the high prevalence of school-related problems experienced by program participants at the beginning of the program. The majority were skipping school (66%), were not close to any teachers, school staff, or coaches (71%), had behavioral problems at school (89%), and has a history of school expulsions (79%)
- In mental health, 28% of program participants showed improvement. This progress was larger than three comparison groups (17% for Kitsap historical, 22% for Thurston current and 10% for Thurston historical group). While not large, this positive change between the initial and final assessments is encouraging, given a high prevalence of mental health issues experienced by the girls coming to the program and the juvenile justice system, in general.

Overall, the results suggest that the program's strengths are in skills building and in enhancing attitudes and behaviors related to emotional stability and cognitive reasoning. These outcomes are closely related to the stated program's goals such as strengthening interpersonal skills, increasing goal setting and self-efficacy.

## *Long-term Program Outcomes*

Because long-term impacts of the program usually take some time to be seen (sometimes up to three years after the program), the evaluation could only measure the outcomes that took place during the evaluation period (or between June 15, 2019 and August 31, 2022). The original plan to examine differences in recidivism rate (the number/percentage of youth referred to the courts, measured by court filings, at least once up to 18 months<sup>46</sup> following program completion) between program participants and non-participants was not fully executed due to COVID-19's dramatic impact on program enrollment and time constraints of the pilot.

As practice showed, not every girl found eligible for the program would finish the program. Given a small number of participants, even a small change in denominator can result in shifts in recidivism estimates. That is why in this report, instead of the program completion date, we used the program start date as the start for tracking recidivism. The presence or lack of re-offending behavior was measured by a new court referral based on the offender matter. Court referral is a proxy of the arrest. This does not automatically indicate that a case has been formally processed, nor does it imply the outcome of the case (deferred, diverted, dismissed, or found guilty). All these cases were included in the current analyses.

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<sup>46</sup> The 18-month tracking period was selected because it was decided that recidivism beyond 18 months would be less likely to be related to the interventions provided during the period of juvenile probation supervision.

Overall recidivism among 27 girls who participated in the program at any point between June 15, 2019 and August 31, 2022 was lower (19%), compared to a 24% recidivism rate among Kitsap girls (N=38) who were sentenced to community supervision a year prior to the launch of the program. There was only one youth (4%) who was referred to the juvenile court for a new offense after completing the program (this girl returned to the program). Four girls, or 15% of participants, had new referrals while on community supervision with the Kitsap Girls Court. These girls were promptly offered coordinated and appropriate services. One of those girls was able to come off supervision early due to her positive efforts after the new offense occurred.

### *Evaluation Limitations*

It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this evaluation. The first challenge was a small number of participants. The program was expected to serve approximately 25 girls per year (or approximately 75 girls during the 3-year long pilot period), but COVID-19 has had a profound impact on program enrollment. Since program launch, 27 girls participated in the program. The results produced on 27 participants must be interpreted carefully. When the number of observations is small, the analysis can overestimate or underestimate the magnitude of the effect.

The second challenge was related to completeness of administrative data at the time of data extraction. Court administrative records are not always up to date and may be inaccurate for many reasons. For example, for cases when a youth is transferred from a jurisdiction outside of Washington State, records are not always updated quickly and some data, like PACT scores, might be missing. Further, a change in program status may not be updated immediately. It can take a few weeks for the status to be updated. Even if case files are up to date, the information may not make it into the court case management system for some time.

Due to COVID-19, some data elements were not available at all, and some were gathered in a way that limited their generalizability, or could not fully inform questions related to program effectiveness. For example, the original plan to examine differences in recidivism rate (the number/percentage of youth referred to the courts, measured by court filings, at least once up to 18 months following program completion) between program participants and non-participants was not fully executed due to COVID-19's dramatic impact on program enrollment and time constraints of the pilot. In particular, recidivism reported in this evaluation (19%) was measured starting from the entry into a program. Out of 27 participants in the pilot, only one youth (4%) was referred within 18 months after completing the program, and four girls (15%) were referred while on community supervision with/participating in the Kitsap Girls Court.

Further, direct observations of court hearings and program activities were conducted only prior to COVID-19. The move to virtual programming demonstrated the adaptability of the program to COVID-19, but it also presented some new data collection challenges, including difficulties with primary data collection. Obtaining qualitative data from youth was a particular challenge during the pandemic. During the last year of the pilot, several attempts to interview program participants were made. Shortly after securing Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, active outreach activities were initiated to recruit participants for a focus group. These activities included distributing a flier explaining the purpose of the study, offering an incentive (\$25 gift card), and providing a researcher's contact information for inquiries about the study and/or focus group participation. Out of four girls participating in the program at that time, none chose to participate in the focus group.

When an original plan of conducting focus groups with program participants was not feasible, it was substituted by an option of interviewing the youth in a one-on-one format. When no participants responded to the call to interview, a web survey was designed as an alternative to interviewing, but no participants responded to the survey. Researcher notes indicated that several potential participants shared with the CSO that they had "too much going on", suggesting participation was perceived as burdensome.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are recommendations to better support and sustain the Kitsap Girls Court Program. These suggestions are based on the interviews with court professionals and service providers conducted during the last year of the pilot.

### 1. Strengthen Parent/Caregiver involvement

The girls' court model acknowledges that close, positive family relationships help young people stay healthy and avoid risky behavior.<sup>47</sup> Program staff recognized the value of family involvement, and they also acknowledged the barriers to engaging parents in general, and during COVID-19 in particular. We recommend continued collaboration with [Kitsap Strong](#) to develop adaptive strategies for parent/caregiver involvement. Hosting periodic activities that include parents/caregivers is an excellent way to get them involved. Also, the CSO could continue engaging parents/caregivers by asking them to review youth's weekly goals and encouraging them to communicate their opinions, concerns, or suggestions to adjust future planning.

### 2. Build trust

Continue building trust with program participants. The topic of trust was consistently mentioned by stakeholders as a foundation for program success. The research shows a significant relationship between youth trust, behavior, and school outcomes.<sup>48</sup> When asked about ways to establish a trusting relationship, common responses included demonstrating commitment to follow through, taking a personal interest in the well-being of participants, and being consistent and patient.

### 3. Monitor performance

Performance measures and sources of data can be developed locally by program staff, and assistance and support for this process can be provided by the AOC. Performance monitoring and regular sharing of such information with community members, partners, grant funders, local public health agencies, and other local governmental agencies will allow program staff to have more empirical evidence to validate the original findings and also enhance self-capacity to track their own progress.

### 4. Conduct exit interviews

We recommend conducting exit interviews with program participants. The exit interview allows the program staff to see the program through the eyes of the participant and get a better idea of the program's effectiveness. The interviews should address the following topics: if the needs of girls are being met, how responsive girls are to the services provided, if the services are effective in helping participants achieve stated goals, and how to improve the overall program approach.

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<sup>47</sup> Yang, F., Tan, K.-A., and Cheng, W. J. Y. (2013). The effects of connectedness on health-promoting and health-compromising behaviors in adolescents: Evidence from a statewide survey. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 35(1), 33-46; Ackard, D. M., Neumark-Sztainer, D., Story, M., and Perry, C. (2006). Parent-child connectedness and behavioral and emotional health among adolescents. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 30(1), 59-66.

<sup>48</sup> Romero, L.S. (2015), "Trust, behavior, and high school outcomes", *Journal of Educational Administration*, Vol. 53 No. 2, pp. 215-236.

# Gender and Justice Commission

## 2023 Meeting Dates

Virtual Meetings held via Zoom Videoconference

Contact Avery Miller ([Avery.Miller@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Avery.Miller@courts.wa.gov)) for Zoom access information.

Date	Time	Location
January 6 <sup>th</sup>	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Zoom Videoconference
March 10 <sup>th</sup>	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Zoom Videoconference
May 5 <sup>th</sup>	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	In-Person TBD
September 1 <sup>st</sup>	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	In-Person TBD
November 3 <sup>rd</sup>	9:30 AM – 12:00 PM	Zoom Videoconference

Please contact Crissy Anderson with any questions at (360) 764-3198 or [Crissy.Anderson@courts.wa.gov](mailto:Crissy.Anderson@courts.wa.gov).