



Department of Juvenile Justice Services

JDAI GIRLS Initiative

Final Research Report

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BACKGROUND

Historically, girls have been an invisible part of the juvenile justice system. A new focus on girls has emerged as statistics show that the arrest rates of girls have been increasing at a rate much higher than that for boys (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Girls have gone from representing 20% of the juvenile arrests in the 1980's to over 30% in 2004 (Chesney-Lind, Morash & Stevens, 2008). More dramatic is the increase seen in caseloads in juvenile courts. From 1982 to 2002, juvenile courts saw a 92% increase in female cases in comparison to only a 29% increase for males (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). In 2002, one-quarter of delinquency cases heard involved female juveniles (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006).

Changes have been seen with the detention and placement of girls as well. In contrast to the previous trend of de-institutionalizing juvenile delinquents, between 1991 and 2003 there was a 98% increase in detention of girls and only a 29% increase in detention of boys (Chesney-Lind, et al., 2008). A second measure of the increased detention of girls was the sharp increase in commitment of girls to placements such as 'long term secure' facilities with an 88% increase in these placements compared to only a 23% increase for boys (Snyder & Sickmund, 2006). JDAI research has revealed that female juveniles are detained more often for less serious offenses than their male counterparts are (Sherman, 2005). Girls are detained more often for family-related crimes (e.g., incorrigibility, family related physical altercations) whereas boys are detained for more "serious" crimes (e.g., robbery, aggravated assault) (Gavazzi, Yarcheck & Chesney-Lind, 2006).

Contrary to the stereotype promoted by the media, there has not been a rapid increase in violence perpetrated by girls but instead the rise in arrest rates can largely be attributed to enforcement against minor crimes or "zero tolerance" policies (Shelden, 2008). These enforcement trends highlight an urgency to develop intervention and prevention programs

targeting at-risk girls (Chesney-Lind et al., 2008). Quantitative and qualitative research is needed to understand the challenges facing delinquent girls (Sherman, 2005) and to guide the development of new delinquency prevention and intervention programs.

Delinquent Girls

While we are lacking a comprehensive national profile on delinquent girls, the research that has emerged from different sites suggests the issues facing delinquent girls differ from those for boys. Girls, for example, run away at a similar rate as boys do but girls are more likely to be arrested for the status offense of running away (Chesney-Lind & Shelden, 2004). Girls are often running away from abuse or family dysfunction and girls in detention are 15 times more likely to report unwanted sexual contact than boys in detention (Alemagno, Shaffer-King, & Hammel, 2006).

Many of the risk factors for delinquency in boys are also significant predictors of female delinquency. For example, a history of antisocial behavior, delinquent peers, negative attitudes and antisocial personality correlated with delinquency in a meta-analysis of delinquency research (Hubbard & Pratt, 2002).

Delinquent girls appear to have more complex needs when compared to delinquent boys. Compared to male juvenile offenders, females tend to exhibit higher levels of psychopathology and family dysfunction as well as a greater suicide risk (Alemagno, et al., 2006; Gavazzi et al., 2006). Adolescent females are more likely to suffer from trauma, unwanted sexual contact, substance abuse, involvement with other deviant peers, high-risk sexual behavior, sexually transmitted infections and co-morbidity in mental health problems such as depression and anxiety disorder (Alemagno et al., 2006; Lederman, Dakof, Larrea & Li, 2004). Failing to address the health, psychological and emotional issues facing delinquent girls perpetuates their victimization and delinquent behavior becomes an endless cycle.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study was initiated by the Clark County Department of Juvenile Justice Services (DJJS) as a part of its biennial Detention Review conducted through its Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative grant requirements. In recognition of the special needs of teenage female offenders and the increasing need for services in the population served by DJJS, the administration convened a GIRLS Initiative Workgroup to examine the specific needs and issues of the girls in the Clark County Juvenile Detention Center (CCJDC).

The workgroup decided that the only way to concretely understand the needs of the DJJS population was to ask them directly. The team developed a survey modeled on an intake survey for girls used in San Francisco, the CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey, and the survey developed by Owen & Bloom (2000). The final survey used in Clark County is available in Appendix A. The survey was modified slightly following a preliminary analysis of the first 19 girls surveyed in March of 2007. For example, more detailed questions about high-risk sexual behavior were included.

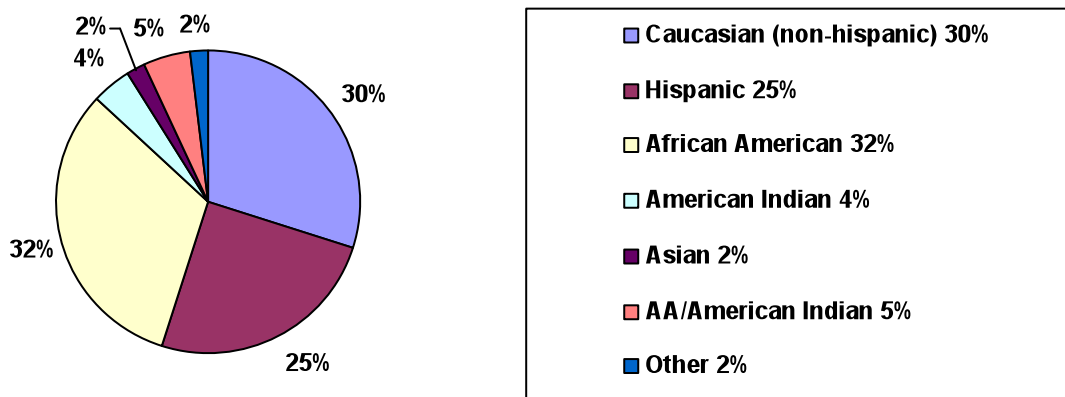
The survey was administered face-to-face by researchers from the Nevada Institute for Children's Research & Policy and graduate level research assistants from the Department of Criminal Justice. The decision to conduct individual interviews was made to protect the confidentiality of the responses provided by study participants, which promotes honesty in answering questions. The first 19 surveys were administered March 3, 2007. Data collection continued December 16, 2007 through July 27, 2008. An additional 97 interviews were conducted during this period. On April 13, 2008 girls detained at Caliente were interviewed adding another 45 surveys to the group. This report highlights some of the specific needs and problems experienced by the girls in Clark County detention

RESULTS

Demographics

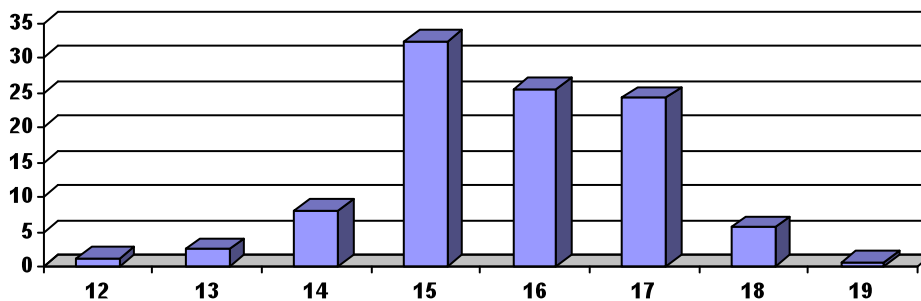
Overall among the 161 girls, the largest racial group represented was African American, then non-Hispanic Caucasian, followed by Hispanic. The 4 girls in the 'Other' category included girls who were additional mixed categories (i.e., mixed across 3 or more categories) or single ethnic groups (i.e., Indo-Asian). All but 4 of the participants reported being born in the United States.

Percentage of Respondents in Each Racial Category



The majority of the girls were between the ages of 15 and 17.

Age of Participants (percentage)



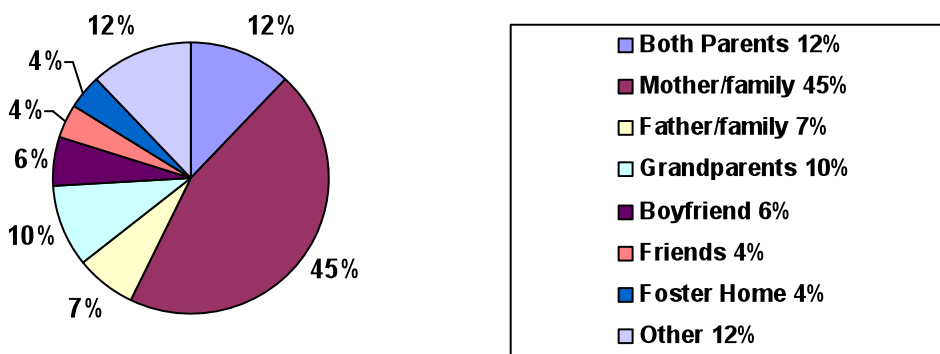
Education & Employment

The girls had positive attitudes towards school with nearly 74% saying that they liked school. Only 23% said they did not like school with another 3% stating they liked it sometimes. There was a high rate of suspension with over 84% reporting having been suspended. Over 45% of the 161 girls reported having been expelled from school. Nearly 9% reported not attending school because they had to care for family members. Just under 7% reported not attending school due to being pregnant. The vast majority of the girls want to continue their education with 71% wanting to go to college and another 20% wanting to go to vocational school. Only 4% indicated that they wouldn't seek further education.

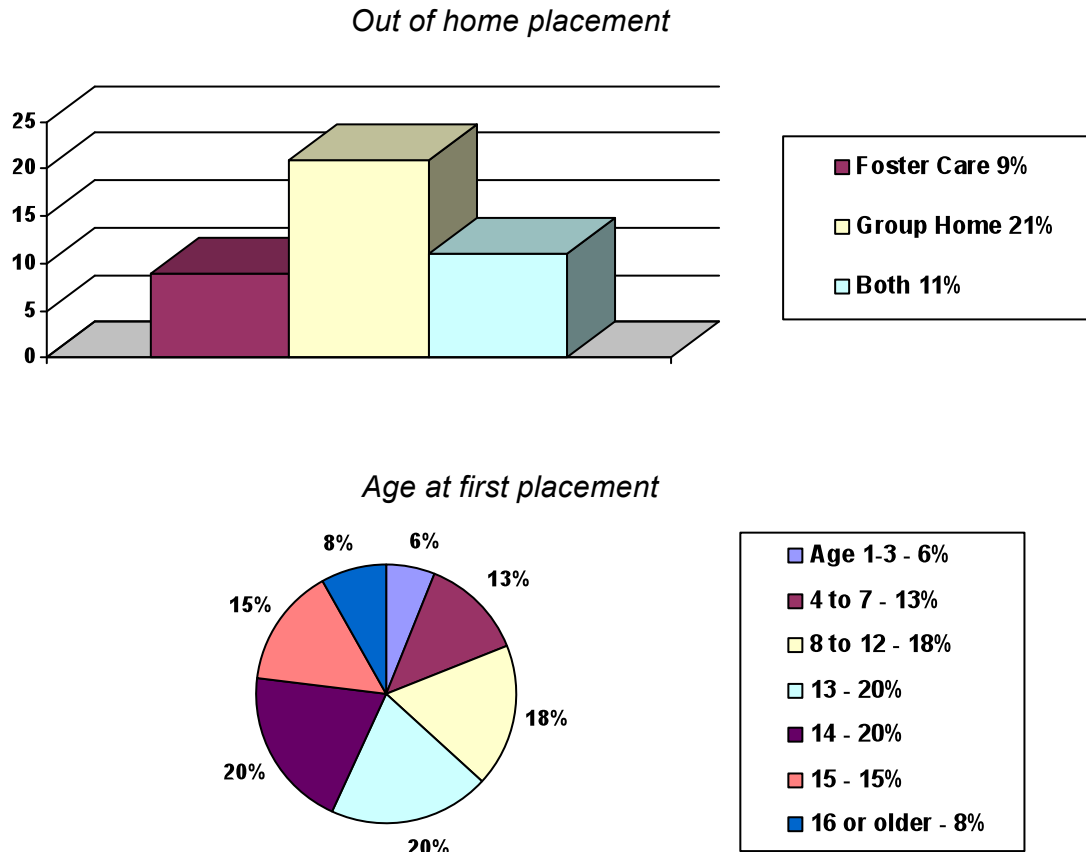
Family

The living situation prior to detention is presented in the graph below. Nearly three-quarters of the girls were living with family members. The majority reported positive relationships with 39% rating their relationship with the people that they were living with as good and another 34% as very good. Another 15% reported their relationship as fair, 9% as bad and 3% as very bad.

Living Situation



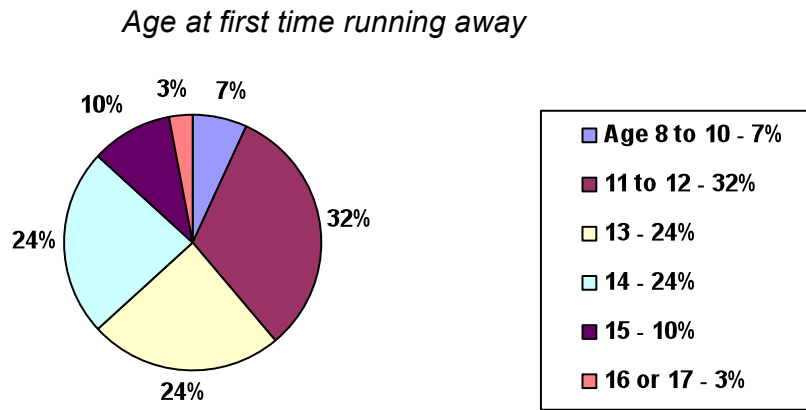
Over a third (34.8%) of the girls reported having been taken away from their parents by the state. Over 22% reported having been in Child Haven. The figure below presents the rates of placement outside of the home and their ages at first placement.



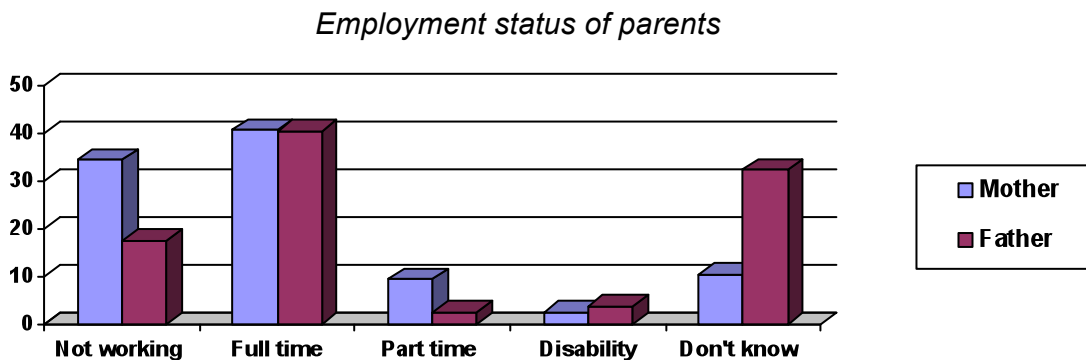
All of the girls but three had siblings. They reported being from larger than average families with the average being 4.4 siblings. A quarter of the girls reported having 6 or more siblings.

Three-quarters (75%) of the girls reported having run away. The 120 girls who disclosed running away reported a broad range of 1 to 50 times with an average of 7.8 times. The more instructive statistic may be the median response being 5, so half of the girls had run

away 5 or more times. The age of at which the girls first ran away is presented in the next figure.



Questions were asked about the financial stability of their homes and just under half (49%) reported receiving welfare. Over half (58%) reported receiving food stamps. The employment status of their parents is presented in the figure below.



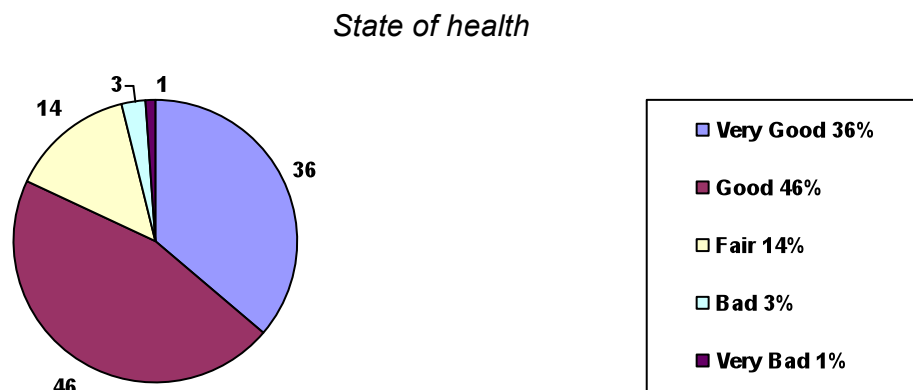
When asked about the educational attainment of their parents, the following was reported for mothers: 22% did not complete high school; 40% completed high school; 5% completed technical or vocational training; 16% completed college; and the remaining 17% of educational levels were unknown. For fathers: 14% did not complete high school; 28%

completed high school; 4% completed technical or vocational training; 10% completed college; and 44% of the remaining educational levels were unknown.

Nearly 60% reported having a family member who had been in juvenile detention. Over 18% reported a parent as being their family member having been in juvenile detention. Over 42% reported that their siblings had been in juvenile detention. Over 78% reported having had a family member in jail or prison. The majority (57%) of girls had a parent who had been to jail or prison: 14% the mother; 21% their father; and, 22% both parents.

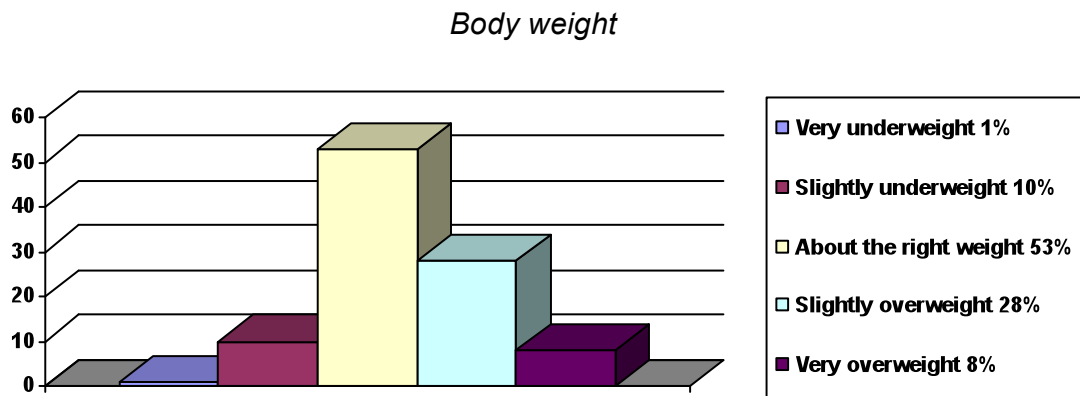
Health & Well Being

Nearly two-thirds (65.8%) of the girls reported having health insurance. Another 12.5% were not sure if they did and 21.7% indicated that they did not have any insurance. Overall, the majority of the girls reported being in very good or in good health as shown below.



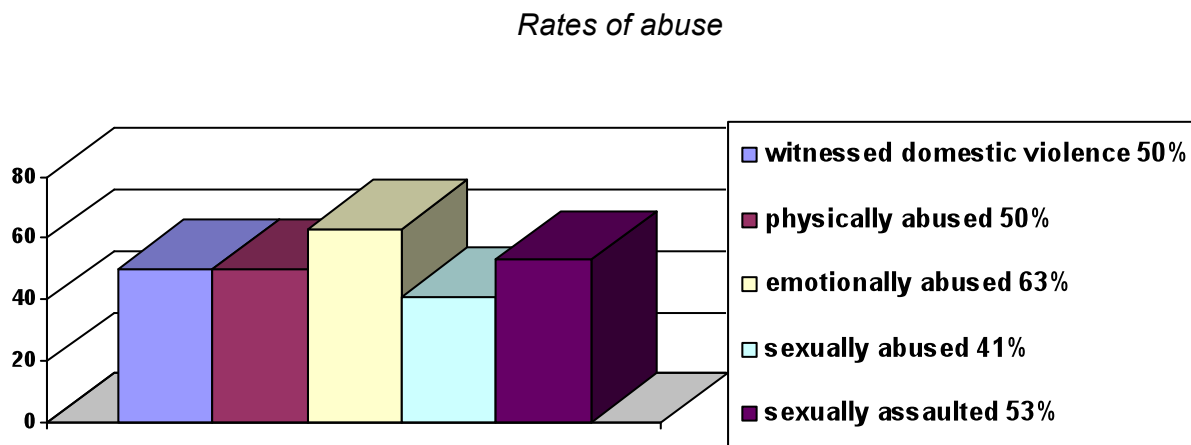
The majority of the girls were happy with their bodies (64%) with another 4% reporting they were sometimes happy with their bodies. Their self-reported weights are presented in the

next figure. Despite general levels of happiness, 50% of the girls trying to do something to change their weight (two-thirds trying to lose weight, one-third trying to gain weight).



Abuse History

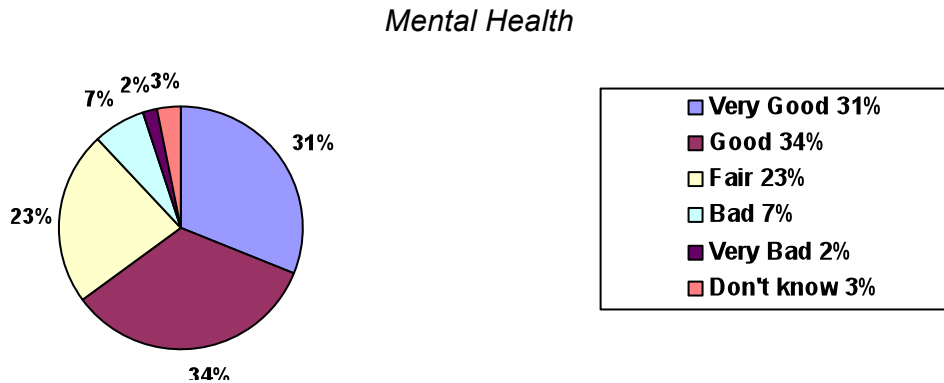
The self-disclosed rates of abuse are presented below.



Only 43% of the girls had received any counseling for their abuse. Only 28 girls (25%) reported receiving counseling in detention.

Mental Health

The majority of the girls were positive about their mental health with 65% rating it as very good or good.



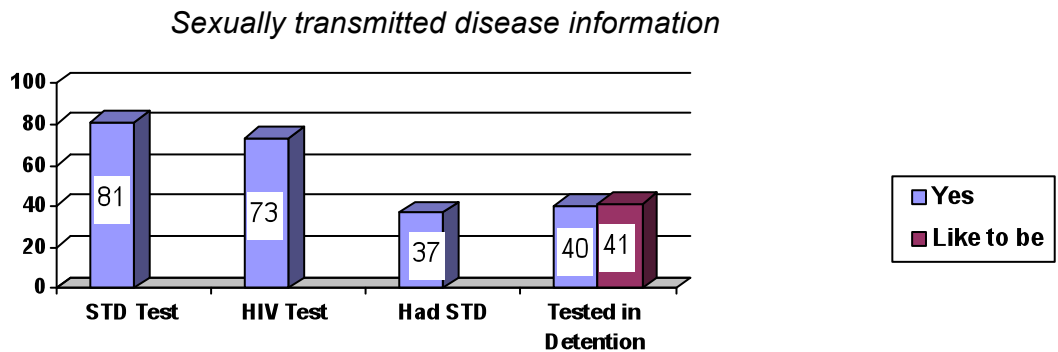
When asked about specific mental health challenges, 51% of the girls reported that they had received counseling for mental health or emotional issues. Over a quarter (27.7%) of the girls had been hospitalized for mental health issues. Over 44% of the girls disclosed having been formally diagnosed with a mental illness. A much higher percentage (59%) than those formally diagnosed described themselves as having a mental illness (e.g., depression, bipolar disorder, post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder).

The vast majority (81%) of the girls reported feeling sad or depressed. Less than half (47%) said that they had not talked to anyone about their feelings. Over 40% reported having thought about harming themselves and slightly more (40.6%) reported having thoughts of committing suicide. Over a quarter of the girls (25.5%) reported having attempted suicide. Over a third (42.5%) reported engaging in cutting behavior.

Additional general mental health and emotional health questions were asked. Almost two-thirds (64%) of the girls felt that they had control over things that happened in their lives. A very high percentage (94%) felt that their life had a purpose. When asked about trust, only 39% responded that they do not trust other people. Another 27% said that they do not trust everyone and 34% said that they do trust other people. The girls were also asked if they felt that they had a responsible adult that they could talk to if they had a problem. Over 85% reported that they had an adult that they could turn to.

Sexual Health

The vast majority (91%) of the girls were sexually active. Of concern is that fact that 85% of the girls reported that they did not have a regular form of birth control. Another 44% reported that they did not use a condom the last time that they had sex. Information on sexually transmitted diseases and testing are presented in the figure below.



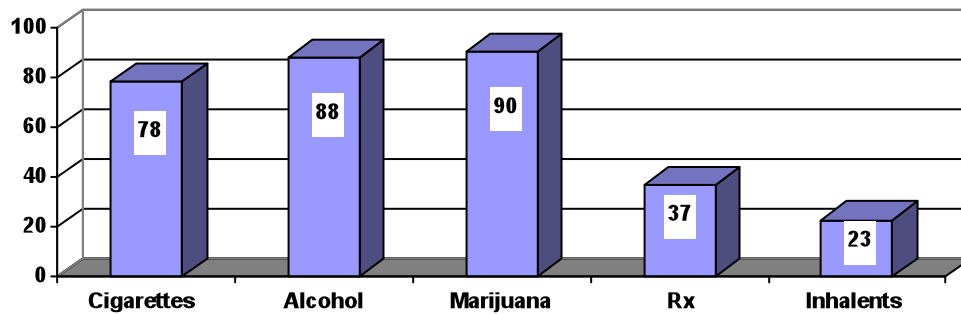
Nearly half of the girls (47%) reported having been pregnant. Only 4 girls reported having been pregnant 3 or 4 times. Only 18 of the girls reported having children. Among those 18,

1 gave birth at age 12, 4 at age 14, 7 at age 15, 3 at age 16 and 1 at 17. Eight girls also disclosed that they were currently pregnant.

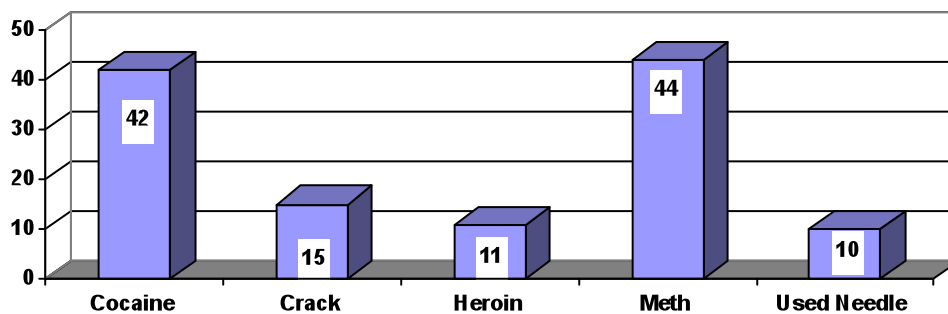
Substance Abuse

The use of alcohol (88%), cigarettes (78%) and marijuana (90%) were quite common. Abuse of prescription drugs and sniffing inhalants was less common. Also less common but still widespread, was the use of other drugs such as cocaine, crack, heroine, meth, and using needles to inject drugs. Rates of use are presented in the two following figures.

Use of drugs (part 1)



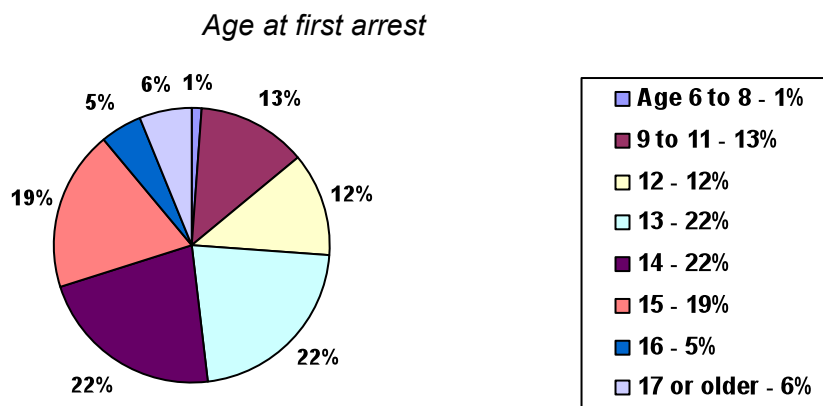
Use of drugs (part 2)



Despite the high rates of usage, only 35.5% of the girls had been in an alcohol or drug treatment program. One third (33.3%) of the girls were interested in participating in a treatment program while in detention and 41% were interested in participating upon their release. Over half (57%) of the girls reported having sold drugs.

Delinquency History

The vast majority (88.8%) of the girls had been arrested prior to the current arrest. Over a quarter (28%) had been arrested in another state. The age of their first arrests are presented in the figure below.

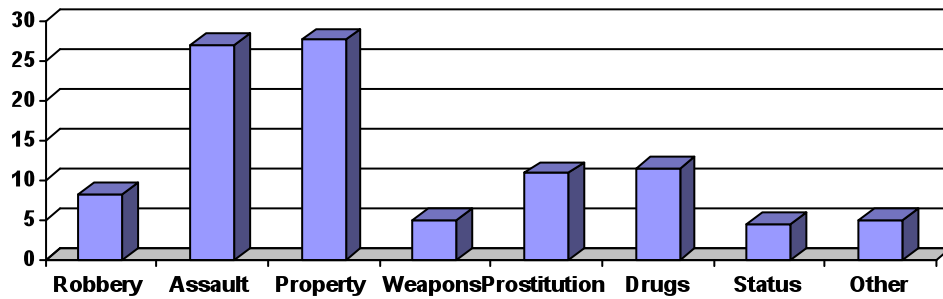


The most serious crime that the girls had been arrested for are presented below. Crimes against the person were the most common crime type representing a total of 38.4% of the crimes.

Among the assault charges, 20.5% were for aggravated assault and 6.4% for simple assault.

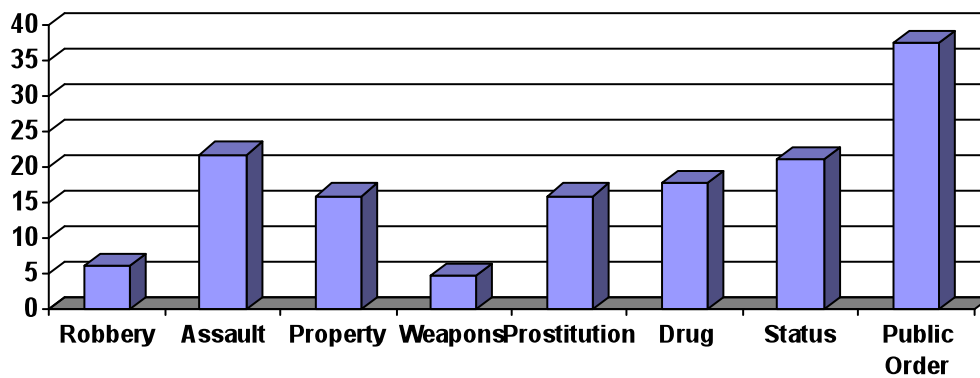
Property represented 27.3% of the most serious charges with burglary being the most common (10.9%).

Most serious charge



The charges laid against the girls follows in the next figure. More than one charge was identified by some of the girls. Across charge groups, 30% of the girls had crimes against the person charges, 30% had property charges, 37.4% had public order charges, 17.7% had drug charges and 21.2% had status charges filed against them. Almost a third (31.8%) had been charged with obstruction of justice.

Current charges

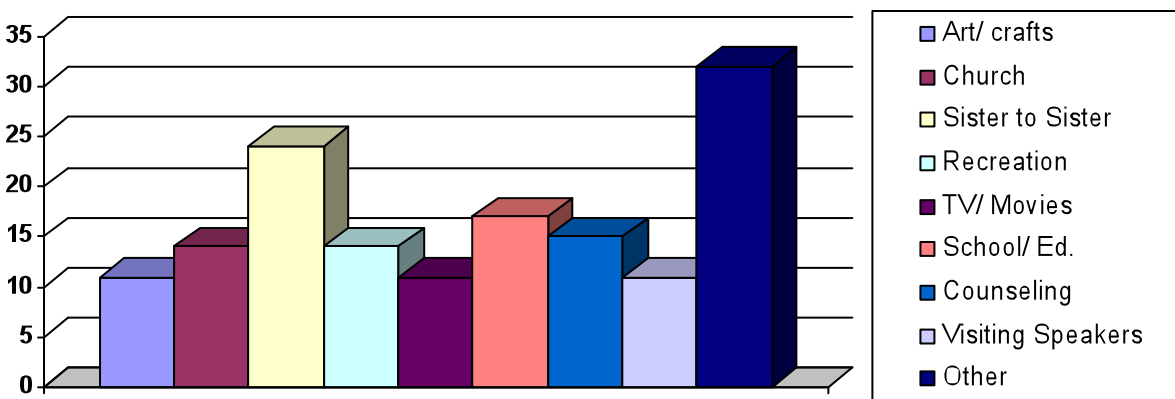


Detention programs

Girls were asked if there were programs in detention that they liked or felt were useful.

More than half (61%) of the girls stated there were programs that they liked or that they felt were useful. Girls were then asked to list the programs they specifically liked. Their responses are presented below.

Preferred programs

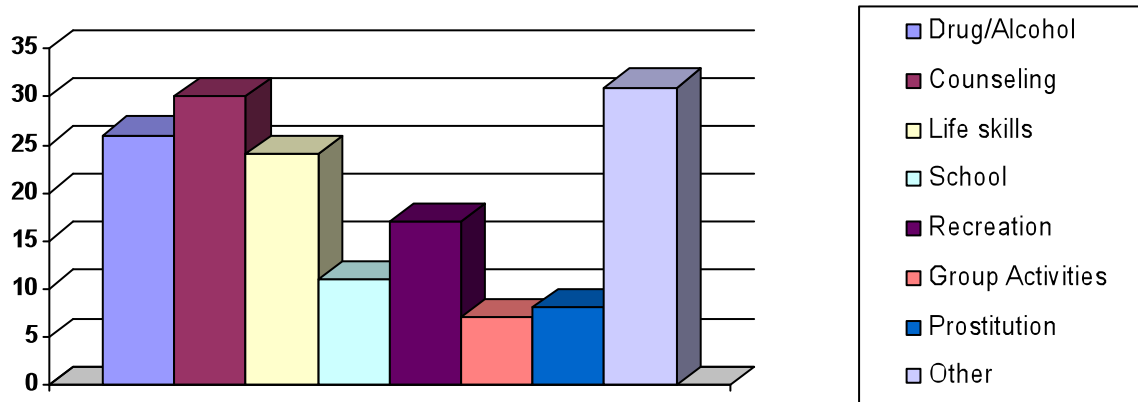


Girls were also asked if there were programs they dislike or feel are not useful. Half (50%) stated there were programs they did not like. The most common responses were as follows: too much time spent watching movies or TV; some aspect of school including coursework and teachers; too much time in the rooms; and, specific programs including the coroner's program and rape crisis. It was interesting to note there was no mention of 'sister to sister' or of counseling programs in these responses.

Girls were then asked to list programs they thought would be helpful while they were in detention. 147 girls chose to respond to this open ended question, 15 responded with "nothing" or "don't know". Out of the girls that mentioned a specific program, their

responses are presented below. The 'other' responses included suggestions such as learning about the legal system and gang programs.

Potential programs for detention



Girls were also asked what they thought would be an effective reward for good behavior. Suggestions included: food or candy; phone calls or visits; being allowed out of their room more often or even field trips; telling the judge about the good behavior; or, early release.

Commercial Sexual Exploitation

Introduction

Nevada, and Las Vegas in particular, face one of the most serious Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) problems in the United States. Between 1994 and 2006 there were 1,496 CSEC victims identified by law enforcement (Kennedy & Pucci, 2007). The annual average of apprehending 150-200 victims was repeated again in 2007 and 2008 with another 30 girls arrested between January 1 and March 30 of 2009¹. These youth are funneled through a single juvenile delinquency docket presided over by Judge William Voy. Between August 24, 2005 and May 31, 2007, Judge Voy adjudicated 226 minors charged with prostitution related offenses. Over 60% of these minors were not from the State of Nevada .

Children identified as CSEC victims are traditionally drawn into the Juvenile Delinquency system and placed in detention due to the lack of alternative secure shelters. Children in detention that are identified as being involved in prostitution are held on average longer than other children - 17 days on average in 2006 (Kennedy & Pucci, 2007). Kennedy and Pucci's rapid assessment also found that CSEC victims also receive harsher penalties than other Clark County juveniles arrested for misdemeanors. From January through July of 2007, nearly 13% of the girls sent to Caliente, had been adjudicated for the misdemeanor of prostitution.

Risk Factors in Clark County, Nevada

There are a number of factors that put youth at risk of being lured into prostitution. This first risk factor that is seen nationally is a history of running away. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) estimates that each year in the U.S. approximately 450,000 children run away from home. They also estimate that one-third of runaways will be lured into prostitution each year (Sedlak, Finklehor, Hammer & Schultz, 2002).

¹ Vice testimony, April 1, 2009 State hearing for Assembly Bill No. 380, Las Vegas, Nevada.

In addition to high rates of running away, Clark County and specifically Las Vegas, contends with a number of environmental risk conditions that may compound the risk for commercial sexual exploitation. First, Clark County has experienced a serious lack of infrastructure resources due to its rapid population increases. The Clark County population growth rate between 2000 and 2008 was 35.6%, over 4 times the national average (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). Neither governmental nor nongovernmental resources have been able to accommodate this rapid growth and in the new environment of fiscal scarcity it is unlikely that services will increase adequately.

Another risk factor is the high percentage of children living in town designed for adults - 26.4% of the Clark County population is under the age of 18, a percentage higher than the national average. This largely invisible but growing juvenile population has strained all juvenile institutions, especially the education system, juvenile justice system, child protective services, and health care services.

Another risk factor in Las Vegas is its unique, hyper-sexual atmosphere. The city of Las Vegas has an economy dependent on the gaming and entertainment industry and is not focused on the needs of children. The impact of a 24-hour-a-day entertainment environment creates a high-risk community setting (e.g., increased alcohol availability and use, access to drugs, extensive promotion of sexualized entertainment). The popular tourist slogan "What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas" promotes an environment attractive to both traffickers who want to profit from the millions of visitors to Las Vegas each year and to the tourists who opportunistically or purposefully engage in commercial sexual activity with minors.

Comparisons

The following analyses were conducted to look for differences between girls involved in commercial sexual exploitation and those who were not. Girls were identified as sexually exploited if they disclosed involvement in prostitution through the following measures: past or current charges for prostitution; disclosing that they had ever had sex in exchange for food, drugs, shelter or money; or answering affirmatively to the question as to whether they considered themselves to be involved in prostitution.

Nearly a third (32.3%) of the girls disclosed involvement in prostitution hereinafter referred to as commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) victimization. Among the 52 disclosing involvement, 23 had not been charged for prostitution related offenses (44%). The percentages of involvement varied by location of interview – only 27% of the girls interviewed at CCJDC disclosed involvement (32/116) but over 44% of those interviewed at Caliente did (20/45).

Statistical analyses were conducted to see if CSEC victims differed from delinquent girls not involved in prostitution. Significant differences are highlighted in bold. Table 1 presents some demographic information and family history. There were no significant differences between the groups based on age or ethnicity. Only 2 of the 8 measures of family stability differed significantly. CSEC victims were more likely to have been removed by the state from their parents. They were also more likely to have had either their mother or father in jail or prison than the non CSEC victims.

Table 2 presents comparisons based on education and health. The two groups did not vary on educational attainment and educational disruption for most measures. Also presented is self-reported information on physical and mental health. While the groups did not differ on their global self-assessments of physical and mental health, it is clear that CSEC victims were experiencing significantly more mental health crises (e.g. hospitalization and diagnoses).

Table 1. *Demographics and Family History*

| Variable | Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (n = 52) | Non CSEC girls (n = 109) |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Age</i> | | |
| (average) | 16 | 15.6 |
| <i>Ethnicity</i> | | |
| <i>(percentage)</i> | | |
| Caucasian | 36.5% | 26.6% |
| African American | 26.9 | 28.4 |
| Hispanic | 11.5 | 26.6 |
| American Indian | 1.9 | 2.8 |
| Mixed/Other | 11.1 | 23.1 |
| <i>Family History (% replying yes)</i> | | |
| Ever taken away from parents* | 46% | 29% |
| Ever been in Child Haven | 21 | 23 |
| Ever been in a Foster Home | 52 | 37 |
| Family member ever been to jail or prison | 79 | 79 |
| Parent ever been to jail or prison** | 71 | 50 |
| Family received welfare | 65 | 76 |
| Family received food stamps | 73 | 71 |
| Money a problem growing up | 83 | 83 |

Significant differences are highlighted in bold. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 2. *Education and Health*

| Variable | Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (n = 52) | Non CSEC girls (n = 109) |
|---|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Education (% replying yes)</i> | | |
| Ever held back a grade | 38% | 47% |
| Ever in special education ** | 39 | 19 |
| Ever needed extra help in school | 37 | 47 |
| Ever suspended | 83 | 85 |
| Ever expelled | 43 | 47 |
| Plan to go on for more education | 100 | 99 |
| <i>Health</i> | | |
| Self-rated physical health (1 = very bad, 5 = very good) | 4.16 | 4.14 |
| Self-rated mental health (1 = very bad, 5 = very good) | 3.87 | 3.90 |
| <i>History (% replying yes)</i> | | |
| Ever received counseling for mental health issues * | 65% | 44% |
| Ever been hospitalized for mental health issues ** | 44 | 20 |
| Ever been diagnosed with a mental illness * | 57 | 38 |
| Ever felt sad or depressed | 85 | 79 |
| Ever cut self | 52 | 38 |
| Ever thought about suicide | 48 | 37 |
| Ever attempted suicide | 35 | 21 |

Significant differences are highlighted in bold. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 3 presents comparisons on abuse history and sexual experienced. Here there are significant differences on most measures. The only abuse measure that does not differ is witnessing domestic violence. CSEC girls reported experiencing significantly higher rates of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and sexual assault. Some sexual assaults reported were committed by family members so sexual abuse and sexual assault were not two completely separate types of victimization. Sexual victimization rates were calculated by looking for either type of victimization and CSEC victims reported significant higher overall rates.

CSEC victims reported significantly higher levels of sexual activity and began their activity at a significantly younger age than non CSEC involved girls. CSEC victims were on average sexual active at age 12 as opposed to age 14 for the other girls. CSEC victims were also more likely to have had a sexually transmitted infection. They were not significantly more likely to have used a condom at their sexual act nor were they more likely to have been pregnant.

Table 4 presents substance abuse information. CSEC victims were more likely to have smoked cigarettes, used alcohol and used most other drugs. Generally the age of first use did not vary between the two populations. Every single CSEC victim reported using alcohol and the rates of drug use were always higher than the non CSEC group.

Table 5 presents information on delinquency. CSEC victims had a history of running away that was significantly higher than non exploited girls. While, there was a higher percentage who ran away, the two groups did not differ on number of times they had run away or the age at which they first ran. The two groups did not differ significantly on whether they had been previously arrested, the age of their first arrest or whether they had been part of a gang.

Finally, some general attitudes were polled and the only item on which the groups varied was the assessment of whether Las Vegas was a difficult city to be a teenager in. The CSEC victims were significantly more likely to agree with this statement.

Table 3. Abuse History and Sexual Experience

| Variable | Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (n = 52) | Non CSEC girls (n = 109) |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Abuse History (% replying yes)</i> | | |
| Ever witnessed domestic violence | 50% | 50% |
| Been physically abused *** | 72 | 40 |
| Been emotionally abused ** | 75 | 57 |
| Been sexually abused * | 56 | 34 |
| Been sexually assaulted or raped ** | 71 | 44 |
| Victim of sexual violence (either abuse, assault or both) * | 73 | 52 |
| <i>Sexual Experience</i> | | |
| <i>(% replying yes or age in years)</i> | | |
| Oral sex *** | 86% | 56% |
| Vaginal sex * | 100 | 87 |
| Anal sex *** | 36 | 8 |
| Age of 1st oral (years old)*** | 12.6 | 14.3 |
| Age of 1st vaginal (years old) *** | 12.5 | 14.0 |
| Used a condom at last sex | 62 | 54 |
| Regular birth control method | 37 | 16 |
| Tested for STD/STI * | 90 | 76 |
| Ever had STD/STI ** | 54 | 28 |
| Ever been pregnant | 56 | 42 |

Significant differences are highlighted in bold. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4. Substance Abuse History

| Variable | Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (n = 52) | Non CSEC girls (n = 109) |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Substance Abuse History</i> | | |
| <i>(% replying yes or age in years)</i> | | |
| Cigarettes * | 90% | 72% |
| Age 1 st smoked (<i>years old</i>) | 12.8 | 12.6 |
| Alcohol ** | 100% | 81% |
| Age 1 st drank alcohol (<i>years old</i>) | 12.1 | 12.8 |
| Marijuana | 96% | 87% |
| Age 1st used marijuana * (<i>years old</i>) | 12.0 | 12.9 |
| Cocaine * | 54% | 37% |
| Crack * | 24% | 10% |
| Age 1 st used cocaine (<i>years old</i>) | 13.9 | 14.6 |
| Crystal Meth * | 56% | 38% |
| Age 1st used crystal meth * (<i>years old</i>) | 12.8 | 14.0 |
| Heroin * | 20% | 7% |
| Age 1 st used heroin (<i>years old</i>) | 14.8 | 14.9 |
| Have you ever been in a alcohol or drug treatment program | .48 | .35 |
| Have you ever sold drugs | .65 | .52 |

Significant differences are highlighted in bold. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Table 5. Delinquency History and General Outlook

| Variable | Commercially Sexually Exploited Children (n = 52) | Non CSEC girls (n = 109) |
|--|---|--------------------------|
| <i>Running Away</i> | | |
| Ever run away ** | 88% | 69% |
| How many times have you run away (average) | 9.8 | 8.1 |
| Age you first ran away (years old) | 12.5 | 13.1 |
| <i>Delinquency</i> | | |
| Arrested before this arrest | 94% | 86% |
| Age at 1 st arrest (years old) | 13.2 | 13.6 |
| Ever been in a gang | 50% | 38% |
| <i>General Attitudes</i> | | |
| Feel your life has a purpose | 96% | 93% |
| Feel you have control over things that happen to you | 80 | 84 |
| Feel Las Vegas is a difficult city to be a teenager in * | 83 | 64 |
| Feel that there are more temptations in Las Vegas than in other cities | 76 | 64 |

Significant differences are highlighted in bold. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusion

Negative health behaviors (e.g., smoking, alcohol use, drug use, risk sexual behavior) are seen at higher rates among delinquent children. Tobacco use among delinquent girls in Clark County Juvenile Detention Center (at 78%) was significantly higher than national averages of tobacco use for adolescent girls (18.4%, CDC 2006 National Tobacco Youth Survey). Alcohol use and marijuana use were reported by the girls in the Clark County Juvenile Detention Center at even higher rates (88% and 90% respectively). Over 91% of these girls reported being sexually active and 85% reported not having a regular form of birth control. Nearly half (44%) reported that they did not use a condom at their last sexual encounter and 37% self-reported having a sexually transmitted infection. These risk factors should be examined in more detail to understand their inter-relatedness.

Family dysfunction and histories of abuse were also reported at levels higher than expected for this delinquent population. The rate of running away (75%) was much higher than research conducted with other female delinquent populations (e.g., 44% in Lederman et al., 2004). Rates of sexual abuse were also higher than expected at 41% (compare it to 25% in Lederman et al.).

Girls who were involved in commercial sexual exploitation showed significantly higher risk factors than girls not involved in prostitution within this population. They reported higher levels of sexual abuse, substance use, sexual activity, sexually transmitted infections, history of running away and mental health issues. With nearly one-third of the girls reporting commercial sexual exploitation, it is critical that programs address their elevated levels of risk.

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