



The Process Evaluation of Connecticut's 2008-2010 Gender Responsive Probation Model

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Final Process Evaluation Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Girls and boys in the juvenile justice system share some common characteristics; but differ in ways that are especially salient to effective intervention and treatment. Research demonstrates that girls in the juvenile justice system often present with unique risk and needs including, “dysfunctional families of origin; histories of physical and sexual abuse; unhealthy and destructive interpersonal relationships with family members and intimate partners; internalizing mental and emotional disorders; involvement with romantic partners who are criminally deviant; and substance abuse” (Cooney, Small & O’Connor, 2008, pg. 3). Developing effective and gender-specific programming is essential to meeting the needs of at-risk and delinquent girls.

In 2006, the Connecticut Court Support Services Division (CSSD) developed an innovative model for supervising at-risk girls in the juvenile justice system – the Gender Responsive Probation Model (GRPM). The model was developed in accordance with the Principles of Effective Intervention to address the growing number of girls in the Connecticut juvenile justice system; the high proportion of girls entering the system for status offenses; and the unique risks, needs, strengths and protective factors of girls.¹ The Initiative includes a pioneering approach to supervision services; extensive training for Gender Responsive Probation Officers; integrated administrative support, quality assurance and fidelity monitoring; and an experimental research

design to evaluate program effectiveness.

A major component of the GRPM was the recruitment and training of Gender Responsive Probation Officers between October 2006 and March 2007. The Gender Responsive training agenda included instruction in the GRPM, gender responsive interventions, the unique challenges of delinquent girls, and the Principles of Effective programs. After completing their training, the Gender Responsive Officers began providing specialized supervision services to at-risk girls who met CSSD’s eligibility criteria. Juvenile girls on supervision are considered eligible for participation in the GRPM if they reside within one of the 10 geographical areas included in the pilot program, and are not otherwise precluded from participation.² The initial screening process determined eligibility, and qualifying cases were then randomly assigned to the GRPM or traditional probation. As of October 2008, the initiative has provided Gender Responsive programming to approximately 1,513 at-risk girls in Connecticut.

The Justice Research Center (JRC) officially commenced its involvement in the project on July 22, 2008. The Gender Responsive Probation Initiative research agenda includes a process and outcome evaluation. The process

¹ GSPO Final Report (January 2008).

² Female probationers who were within 60 days of their sixteenth birthday, or had a sibling under another Probation Officer’s supervision, or were placed with the Department of Children and Families, or designated as a “Youth in Crisis,” could not participate in the GRPM initiative.

evaluation of Connecticut's GRPM examined the Initiative's development, implementation and management for factors that influence program operation and youth outcomes. It was carried out over a two-year time period and included six site visits, staff and client interviews, survey administration, direct observations and archival data analysis. This is the JRC's final report on the *Process Evaluation of the 2008-2010 Connecticut's Gender Responsive Probation Initiative*.

The process evaluation assessment results demonstrated that:

- 🔊 There were established Gender Responsive Officers in all jurisdictions in the State of Connecticut, and within each Juvenile Probation Department.
- 🔊 Staff were well qualified and they received continuous training boosters;
- 🔊 There was strong support for the model, especially among the Gender Responsive Officers;
- 🔊 Risk and need assessments were being utilized to develop and deliver targeted services;
- 🔊 Treatment was driven by girls' individual needs;
- 🔊 Gender Responsive Officers were highly skilled in the GRPM;
- 🔊 There was strong support for the program and the Gender Responsive Officers from administrators and management;
- 🔊 Supervisors were implementing random assignment in eight jurisdictions; and,
- 🔊 A quality assurance system was established to ensure model fidelity.

The State of Connecticut has successfully implemented a pioneering

intervention for at-risk and delinquent girls. Further, the Principles of Effective Intervention guided model development, implementation, operation and management. The following recommendations support the continuation of effective and efficient services for at-risk and delinquent girls in Connecticut's juvenile justice system.

Staffing Characteristics, Qualifications and Training

- 🔊 Continue and expand Gender Responsive trainings and boosters with a focus on Trauma and specific domains of the GRPM including: Relational, Risk Need and Protective Factors; Gender and Cultural Competence; Positive Staff Qualities and Actions; and Healthy and Safe Environment.

Gender Responsive Population

- 🔊 Continue to provide services to girls in each jurisdiction by ensuring that there is a Gender Responsive Officer located at each Juvenile Probation Department throughout the State of Connecticut.

Assessment of Risk and Need

- 🔊 Integrate a validated risk and needs assessment into the GRPM. Develop and validate a quality assurance assessment instrument with special attention on Officer/client interaction.

Services and Treatment Interventions

- 🔊 Reassess the unique needs to Connecticut's youth and make program adjustments as needed.
- 🔊 Explore and adopt new evidence-based services for at-risk and delinquent girls.

Supervision and Management

- 🔊 Identify and hire a Gender Responsive Quality Coordinator to meet the quality assurance criteria of the GRPM.

Internal and External Support

- 🔊 Provide an introductory training to all Probation staff to improve the understanding of the GRPM agency wide, and encourage collaboration and support.
- 🔊 Continue GRPM training for Supervisors to ensure strong administrative support of the Initiative.
- 🔊 Increase collaboration with agency administrators and the Risk Reduction Unit.
- 🔊 Educate partnering agencies (DCF, the courts, and the schools) and community providers on the GRPM and invite them to partner with CSSD on this Initiative. Steps should also be taken to increase collaboration and communication between GR Officers and these agencies and organizations.

Quality Assurance and Model Fidelity

- 🔊 The Project Coordinator, in conjunction with the Quality

Coordinator, should continue monitoring program activities and documenting findings. Results from the fidelity monitoring activities should be shared with the offices as soon as reasonably possible to improve overall skill acquisition.

- 🔊 Review agency wide quality assurance standards and integrate the criteria into the GRPM to ensure consistent evaluation criteria for the program and staff.

Process and outcome evaluations are critical to program success as they provide valuable information on the relative strengths and potential weaknesses of juvenile justice initiatives and can assist policy makers in improving program operations and outcomes for youth. This report provides an overview of all process evaluation activities and assessment results. The discussion will focus on the procedures and methods used to gather information during the process evaluation, a summary of the findings, and recommendations to sustain the Initiative.



PROCESS EVALUATION OF THE GRPM

The growing emphasis on evidence-based programming in child-welfare and juvenile justice systems across the nation has underscored the necessity for probation and residential services that are responsive to the unique risks, needs, and characteristics of girls. Empirical research documents that girls and boys, while at times sharing similar risk factors for involvement in the juvenile justice system, have different pathways to delinquency, varying degrees of risk and criminogenic needs, different responsivity factors, and often require different methods of intervention and treatment to effect positive behavioral change (Cooney, Small & O'Connor, 2008).

In October 2006, CSSD established a specialized statewide juvenile probation model for at-risk girls – the Gender Responsive Probation Model (GRPM). The model was designed to address the growing number of girls in the Connecticut juvenile justice system; the high proportion of girls entering the system for status offenses; and gender differences in the risks, needs, strengths and protective factors of girls.³ The

Gender Responsive Probation Model also incorporates the need to identify and build on girls' strengths in order to reduce delinquency and further involvement in the system. Gender Responsive Officers were trained on how to document strengths and criminogenic risks and needs in case files. Strengths are to be used as the foundation for behavior change.

A major component of the GRPM was the recruitment and training of Gender Responsive Probation Officers between October 2006 and March 2007. The Gender Responsive training agenda included instruction in the following areas:

- 📖 VOICES;
- 📖 Adolescent Female Development and Socialization;
- 📖 Trauma;
- 📖 Relational Aggression;
- 📖 Boundaries and Limit Setting;
- 📖 Assessment Skills;
- 📖 Relational Language;
- 📖 Cultural Competency;
- 📖 Traumatic Events Screening Inventory (TESI) and Coping Skills;
- 📖 Family Mediation skills;
- 📖 Teambuilding;

³ GSPO Final Report (January 2008).

- 🔊 Building Community Resources;
- 🔊 Educational Advocacy;
- 🔊 Girls Circle;
- 🔊 Sexual Assault; and
- 🔊 The Gender Responsive Probation Model.

After completing their training, the Gender Responsive Officers provided targeted supervision services to eligible at-risk girls. Juvenile girls on supervision were considered eligible for participation in the GRPM if they resided within one of the 10 geographical areas included in the pilot program, and were not otherwise precluded from participation.⁴ An assessment instrument was implemented to determine eligibility and placement. Eligible participants were randomly assigned to either the GRPM or regular probation services. As of October 2008, the initiative has provided Gender Responsive programming to approximately 1,513 at-risk girls in Connecticut.

The Justice Research Center (JRC) officially commenced its involvement in this project on July 22, 2008. The objective of the research initiative was to evaluate probation services for girls involved in Connecticut’s Juvenile Justice System. Specifically, the study included the following research questions for the Gender Responsive process evaluation:

Gender Responsive Process Evaluation Research Questions

- 🔊 Are the appropriate youth being served by the Gender Responsive Probation Model?
- 🔊 Is there sufficient administrative and technical support for the program?
- 🔊 Are the Gender Responsive Probation Officers receiving adequate training and booster sessions?
- 🔊 Is the training agenda appropriate for the Initiative? Is there a quality assurance and fidelity monitoring system in place to assess the operation of the Gender Responsive Probation Model?
- 🔊 Do Gender Responsive Probation Officers receive feedback and instruction on service delivery?
- 🔊 Is the program being implemented, operated and managed as designed?
- 🔊 Are there significant deviations from the original program design?
- 🔊 Are program staff and administrators qualified for their positions?
- 🔊 Are program staff and administrators supportive of the GRPM?

⁴ Female probationers who were within 60 days of their 16 birthday, or had a sibling under another JPO’s supervision, or were placed with the Department of Children and Families, or designated as a “Youth in Crisis,” could not participate in the GRPM initiative.



PROCESS EVALUATION RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Evidence-based justice programming has several common characteristics:

- ✚ Well qualified and trained staff;
- ✚ Appropriate clients;
- ✚ Validated assessments of risk and needs;
- ✚ Treatment that is driven by the individual's strengths and growth areas;
- ✚ Internal and external support for the Initiative;
- ✚ Strong supervision and management; and,
- ✚ A well developed quality assurance system that is used to monitor activities, provide feedback and guide program operations.

Each of these qualities was assessed during the two-year process evaluation. Qualitative data was gathered during local site visits and interviews with Gender Responsive Officers, program administrators and agency Supervisors. The process evaluation site visits began in January 2009 and concluded in

September 2010, with assessment activities approximately every three months.

The first and second site visits consisted of qualitative interviews with probation Supervisors and Officers. The first site assessment focused on documenting staff qualifications and training, internal and external support for the Initiative, and quality assurance. For the second site visit, JRC evaluators presented an overview of the GRPM study to Supervisors at a statewide Supervisor's meeting and conducted with participants. Additionally, Gender Responsive Officers were asked to participate in a short online survey to gather information on staff characteristics.

The next phase of the process evaluation (site visits three, four and five) focused on observing and documenting service delivery. JRC staff conducted a thorough review of CSSD's Gender Responsive Probation Model

documentation, capturing the various focus areas and combining them into a Gender Responsive Observational Coding Sheet (See Appendix B for a full list of items within each domain). The observational tool was divided into seven domains:

- 📁 Strengths and Incentives;
- 📁 Relational, Risk, Need and Protective Factors;
- 📁 Assessment and Practical Standards;
- 📁 Gender and Cultural Competence;
- 📁 Positive Staff Qualities and Actions;
- 📁 Healthy and Safe Environment; and,
- 📁 Youth/GSPO Engagement.

For each domain, there were between five and eleven individual items to be scored. Each individual item was rated on a Likert scale of zero to four, with zero being “Absent,” one being “Poor,” two being “Fair,” three being “Good” and four being “Excellent.” In some cases, the specific observational coding item was not applicable (N/A) and thus not included in the overall total score.

Researchers observed GR Officer interaction with clients and collected information on each domain. In total, there were 42 observations conducted for nine Gender Responsive Officers. The observational data included nine GR offices: Bridgeport, Middletown, New Britain, New Haven, Norwalk, Rockville, Torrington, Waterford, and Waterbury. Jurisdictions without GR Officers (due to leave or vacancy), or newly hired GR Officers were excluded from this component of the evaluation. Observations were audio recorded (when appropriate) and conducted at various locations including: the probation office; the client’s school and home; community-based programs; and in

detention facilities. The JRC staff verified their inter-rater reliability with these recordings.

In addition to direct observations, site visits four and five included Gender Responsive case file reviews. Case files were randomly selected for the assessment. Twenty-eight files, approximately 10 percent of the Gender Responsive Officers’ cases, were chosen for review. Three domains were rated on a Likert scale of zero to four relative to how well strengths were documented in the file. Strengths were scored in the following areas of the case file: Case Notes; Pre-Dispositional Studies (PDS), if available; and, the Mitigation of Risk and Need. The 40 Developmental Assets⁵ were used as guide when assessing strengths and the mitigation of criminogenic risk and need.

The final component of the process evaluation (site visit six) identified the Initiative’s strengths and growth areas through qualitative interviews with seven Gender Responsive officers. The interviews covered the Initiative’s strengths and growth areas particularly pertaining to Model Development, Training and Boosters, Internal and External Support, and Fidelity Monitoring and Quality Assurance. The Project Coordinator was also interviewed for the final site visit. In addition to qualitative interviews, seven Gender Responsive Officers and 19 Supervisors were solicited to take part in two online surveys in order to gather quantitative information on growth areas of the project.

⁵ Please visit the Search Institute to see a complete list of the developmental assets at <http://www.search-institute.org/developmental-assets/lists>.

The process evaluation included six on-site assessments of the GRPM. The assessment focused on all aspects of the Initiative including: model development, management, support, staff, assessments, services and quality assurance. Information for the assessment was

collected over a two year period through interviews, surveys, observation and archival analysis. The next section of the report presents the results of the process evaluation.



PROCESS EVALUATION RESULTS

The process evaluation documented the development, implementation and management of the GRPM. The assessment focused on the core elements of effective justice programs: staff, training, clients, assessment, services, management and support, and quality assurance. The results discussion will begin with staff characteristics, qualifications and training; and GRPM clients. Next, the instruments used to assess risk and need, and the services available through the GRPM, are presented. Then the supervision and management style of the Officers is examined followed by a discussion of the level of support for the program, both within CSSD and from external agencies. Finally, the report will discuss the system in place for monitoring service delivery and staff fidelity.

Staffing Characteristics, Qualifications and Training

Empirical research on best practices in program implementation indicates that staff involvement in the creation and design of the initiative is important to program success. Additionally, findings suggest that staff members' academic attainment, training, prior work experience and personal characteristics, are likewise linked to program effectiveness and outcomes.

During the first site visit, all original Gender Responsive Officers (those involved in the project from the beginning) reported being active participants in designing the Gender Responsive Probation Model. They described a collaborative model development process that solicited and valued input from all members of the

Gender Responsive Probation team. Many pointed to this inclusive feature as one of the highlights of the entire Initiative. Given their active involvement during the planning phase, all original Officers were well versed in the program's policies, procedures and principles of Gender Responsive services. There were some Gender Responsive Officers who were relatively new to the project. These Officers were also knowledgeable of these subject areas but were not involved in the initial model development and were still in the process of completing their training.

The GR Probation staff are extremely well-qualified, both in terms of academic achievement and prior work experience. All identified staff members have at least a bachelor's degree and a minimum of two years prior experience working with juvenile populations and at-risk female clients.

Staff preparation and training in evidence-based practices has been strong, in large part due to the efforts of the Connecticut's Court Support Services Division (CSSD) to ensure appropriate trainings are offered and completed by staff. The original GR Officers progressed through the training curriculum as a group and completed all components of the initial training agenda together.

The Gender Specific Probation Officer Statewide Team meetings are used as an opportunity to reinforce the skills and knowledge acquired during that initial training. New hires have not progressed through the training agenda in a standardized format. At the time of the initial site visit, some content areas had not been presented to the newer GR

Officers. Feedback on the initial trainings was mostly positive and all reported that the skills they learned were useful in their daily work with female clients.

At the time of the first site visit, there were two jurisdictions with vacant GR positions and expectations of additional openings in the near future. Early recruiting efforts for the GR project focused on identifying experienced Probation Officers who wanted to transition to the GR Initiative. Additional GR Officers have been selected for jurisdictions with open positions based on experience and an interest in the project. More recent additions to the GR Probation Team have been new probation hires who were assigned to the project.

Throughout the process evaluation period, all the Gender Responsive Officers reported receiving consistent boosters. Most boosters are conducted during the Statewide Team Meetings unless the Officer attends trainings on their own.

Over the course of the process evaluation training and boosters for the GR Officers consisted of DAP case note trainings (D = Describe A = Assess P = Plan), boosters on the Gender Responsive Probation Model and principles, training with adult Probation Officers, Pre-dispositional Study (PDS) boosters, gender and sexual identity trainings and team building exercises. The majority of Officers felt that the boosters they received during the course of the process evaluation helped improve the services they provide to probationers and their families. Additionally, about half of the Supervisors also reported

receiving training which consisted of an overview of the Gender Responsive Probation Model.

Gender Responsive Population

To date, the Gender Responsive Probation Model has served 1,513 girls since October 2008. Of those girls approximately, 36 percent are white, 30 percent are black, 20 percent are Hispanic, 1 percent is Asian or Pacific Islander and 13 percent of where either unknown or missing.

Table 1. Race and Ethnicity of the Girls Served under the GRPM (N=1,516)

	<u>Percent</u>
White	36
Black	30
Hispanic	20
Asian/ Pacific Islander	1
Missing or Unknown	13

Table 2 illustrates the age range of the girls’ served under the GRPM. The age of the girls ranges from 9 to 19 years of age. The average age is 14 years old.

Table 2. Average Age and Range of the Girls Served under the GRPM (N=1,516)

Minimum Age	9
Maximum Age	19
Average Age	14

Since January 1 2010, there have been 523 girls randomly assigned to a Gender Responsive Probation Officer. Data gathered from the random assignment forms validated that girls served were the appropriate target population.

Assessments of Risk and Need

Gender Responsive Probation Officers screen and assess youth and their families before developing their specific treatment plan. They report that success or treatment plan development is a collaborative process involving the juvenile, their family and treatment staff. The client’s success or treatment plan outlines the services and other community-based programming options. GR Officers regularly update the case plans during services to objectively determine client progress, needs and risk reduction.

There are four assessments that girls receive when entering in the system, the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI), the Juvenile Assessment Generic (JAG), the Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI), and Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS). A brief description of each assessment is outlined below.

Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI)⁶

The MAYSI is a standardized, reliable true-false method for screening youth of ages 12-17 that are entering the juvenile justice system, in order to identify potential mental health problems in need of immediate attention. This is not a diagnostic instrument. It serves as a “triage” tool for decisions about the possible need for immediate intervention when little other information is available about the youth.

⁶ For more information on the MAYSI please go to www.assessments.com

Juvenile Assessment Generic⁷

The JAG is a risk and needs assessment is a validated instrument that identifies and addresses an offender's criminogenic needs. It measures an offender's protective factors and arrives at an overall score that assesses the offender's likelihood of recidivating.

Individual Protective Factors Index (IPFI)⁸

The IPFI is a validated instrument which is administered by the Gender Responsive Officer at intake and at discharge. The questionnaire was designed to measure adolescent resiliency in areas concerning social bonding, personal competence, and social competence and delinquent behaviors. This was developed as a tool for evaluating programs for youth in the 10 to 16 age range.

Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS)⁹

The CANS is a document that organizes clinical information collected during a behavioral health assessment in a consistent manner, to improve communication among those involved in planning care for a child or adolescent. This can also be used as a tool to guide care planning, and to track changing strengths and needs over time.

Overall, the instruments used to assess risk and need are validated and aid Gender Responsive Officers in the development of the case plan and appropriately treating girls' needs. Case

⁷ For more information on the JAG please go to www.ctjja.org

⁸ For more information on the IPFI please go to www.emt.org/userfiles/ipfi.pdf

⁹ For more information on the cans go to www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/masshealth/cbhi/cbhi_cans-faqs.pdf

files were reviewed during the process evaluation in order to assess how these instruments were used in the development of individualized treatment goals.

Assessment Results

The findings from the case file reviews are presented next. A summary table of the scores for the file reviews is provided below. Overall, the average scores for the file reviews were moderate to high (the range was 0 to 4, with 4 being the highest score). The findings reveal that the Gender Responsive Officers understand how to document strengths in the case notes to some extent. Additionally, GR Officers recognize and document strengths in Pre-Dispositional Studies a great deal to a lot. Lastly, the findings reveal that Gender Responsive Officers understand how to identify and document the mitigation of criminal risk and need according to the 40 Developmental Assets. Additionally, it was apparent that Gender Responsive Officers were targeting criminogenic risk factors with appropriate need-based services. Finally, these findings also illustrate the need for individualized training to improve upon the ways in which strengths are documents and utilized as a tool to promote behavioral change.

Table 3. Gender Responsive Case File Reviews

	<u>Average Score</u>			<u>N</u>
	<u>Visit IV</u>	<u>Visit V</u>	<u>Total</u>	
Case Notes	2.00	2.13	2.07	28
PDS	3.33	3.50	3.42	12
Mitigation of Risk and Need	2.85	3.31	3.00	28

Services and Treatment Interventions

The GRPM was designed to focus on four core aspects of Gender Responsiveness including: increasing staff's ability to identify risk and needs; effectively intervening in the cycle of court involvement utilizing a relational, strengths-based approach; linking girls' to appropriate programs based on assessment of risks, strengths, and needs; and¹⁰ advocating for the services that girls really need, not just those available.

The GRPM has seven core elements that provide an innovative intervention for at-risk and delinquent girls.

- 📖 Strengths and Incentives highlight girls' strengths and accomplishments and using incentives to build upon those strengths.
- 📖 Relational, Risk, Need and Protective Factors consist of elements which foster an atmosphere of trust, empowerment and growth focusing on the girls key relationships most important to her.
- 📖 Assessment and Practical Standards, focuses on how to be relational while interacting girls.
- 📖 Gender and Cultural Competence, targets girls' life circumstances and experiences and how those affect her decision making.
- 📖 Positive Staff Qualities and Actions, include elements which help develop rapport with girls.
- 📖 Healthy and Safe Environment outlines how to foster an emotionally and physically safe environment for girls.

- 📖 Youth/GSPO Engagement focuses on how engaged both the girl and the Gender Responsive Officer are during each client interaction.

One of the goals of the process evaluation was to measure performance outcomes in regards to the Model.

¹⁰ GRPM, pg 5

Table 4. Gender Responsive Global Measures (N=42)

<u>Gender Responsive Global Measures</u>	<u>Average Score (%)</u>			
	<u>Visit III</u>	<u>Visit IV</u>	<u>Visit V</u>	<u>Total Score</u>
Strengths and Incentives	71	87	66	75
Relational, Risk, Need, and Protective Factors	53	78	66	64
Assessments and Practical Standards	68	88	76	77
Gender and Cultural Competence	75	84	76	78
Positive Staff Qualities and Actions	83	97	89	89
Healthy and Safe Environment	81	86	89	83
Client Engagement	64	96	58	73
GSPO Engagement	85	100	80	89
GSPO Talk Time	70	64	67	67
Gender Responsive Model Fidelity	71	86	75	77

As noted in the methods section, JRC evaluators did this by observing GR Officers interactions with clients and families, and by reviewing case files. The summary findings from these activities are outlined below. The table above summarizes the findings from all observational site visits and the Gender Responsive domain categories. Scores ranged from 64 to 89 percent and the highest score an officer could receive is 100 percent. As noted below, averages reflect moderate overall scores. For a total of 42 observations, the strongest practice areas of Gender Responsive skills and strategies were recorded for the domains of: Positive Staff Qualities and Actions (89%) and GSPO Engagement (89%).

The findings point to strengths in the skills and techniques of Gender Responsive Officers. Averages are mostly high especially for two domains: Positive Staff Qualities and Actions and GSPO Engagement. This demonstrates that Gender Responsive Officers are engaging and are responsive in accordance with the Gender Responsive

Probation Model. For the total average scores for all observations, five domains scored lower than 85 percent, (Healthy and Safe Environment, Gender and Cultural Competence, Assessments and Practical Standards, Strengths and Incentives, and Client Engagement) and only two domains received a score lower than 70 percent (Relational, Risk, Need and Protective Factors, and GSPO Talk Time).

In terms of model fidelity, Officer scores ranged from 88 to 68. This suggest moderate to substantial variation among GR Probation Officers. Average scores were highest for Positive Staff Qualities and Actions and GSPO Engagement. Officers have lower average scores in the categories of Relational, Risk, Need, and Protective Factors and the GSPO Talk Time. Overall, the data reveals that individualized training in certain domains may be beneficial. However, more generally, the Gender Responsive Model Fidelity averages demonstrate beginning proficiency.

Supervision and Management

The Project Coordinator supervises and manages all of the Gender Responsive Officers and provides them with technical assistance. The Project Coordinator also conducts and documents quality assurance activities and provides the Officers with feedback. The Gender Responsive Probation Model outlines the following duties which the Project Coordinator must conduct, including:

- 🔊 Collaborating with the CSSD Program Manager of Girls' Services to ensure fidelity of the female responsive approach;
- 🔊 Disseminating research on best practice to GR Officers, Supervisors and Administration;
- 🔊 Conducting quality assurance which includes reviewing recordings of client contacts and conducting case files reviews on a monthly basis;
- 🔊 Meeting individually with GR Officers to provide feedback on the quality assurance activities on a monthly basis;
- 🔊 Bringing any areas of concern to the attention of the local Supervisor and Deputy Director;
- 🔊 Facilitating a bi-monthly Statewide team meeting for GR Officers to distribute information, promote support and hold booster trainings to ensure the continued development of the Gender Responsive approach; and,
- 🔊 Reporting and updating Administration on the progress, growth areas and needs of the Initiative.

As noted above, the duties outlined in the Gender Responsive Probation Model to supervise and manage all Gender

Responsive Probation Officers and to conduct daily quality assurance activities are demanding. While GR Officers reported a great deal of satisfaction with the management style of Project Coordinator, some Officers indicated that the managing and providing technical assistance was too great a task for one person. They suggested having a technical assistant coordinator to help the Project Coordinator with her duties. This finding is further detailed in the next section.

Internal and External Support for the Initiative

Successful program implementation and program performance are dependent on administrative support and collaboration between upper, middle and lower level management. At the administrative level, decisions about whether a program should be implemented are made, while the implementation phases of the program are dependent on the lower organizational levels, which include project coordinators and managers, Supervisors and project staff. Once commitment to a program is made, upper level management is even more crucial to the underlying success of the program. Administration is critical in leading and motivating all organizational levels in adopting and articulating the vision of the Initiative to program staff.¹¹ Generating enthusiasm at all organizational levels is essential to program success.

During the first and second site visit it was found that the greatest support for the GRPM came directly from the

¹¹ Mihalic, Irwin, Fagan, Ballard, and Elliot (2004). Successful Program Implementation: Lessons from Blueprints. *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*.

Gender Responsive probation staff. The Gender Responsive Officers and the Project Coordinator had the most thorough understanding of their job duties and the ultimate purpose and understanding of why the model is important for delinquent and risky girls.

All organizational levels felt that the project was supported as a whole; however, this level of support was limited due to a lack of understanding around the GR Officers’ job responsibilities and obligations to female probationers. While Supervisors supported their GR Officers within probation units, they were only capable of doing so at the policy level, unless they had prior experience and training in Gender Responsive services.

One of the main purposes of this sixth site visit was to reassess this level of support and to determine whether the understanding for the approach had changed overtime. To do this, both Officers and Supervisors were asked to rank the level of support during the last assessment.

GR Officers were asked, “On a scale from 1 to 10 with 1 being not at all supportive and 10 being very supportive, how you would rate the overall support for the Gender Responsive Probation Model by other Probation Officers, GR Officers, Supervisors, the Project Coordinator, the Risk Reduction Team, and Administration and Central Office.”

Table 5. Gender Responsive Probation Model Support by Gender Responsive Officers (N=7)

	<u>Average</u>
Probation Officers	6.71
GR Officers	9.57
Project Coordinator	9.29
Supervisors	8.71
Risk Reduction Team	4.29
Administration & Central Office	4.57

As noted above, GR Officers rated themselves and other GR Officers as having the highest level of support for the project at 9.57 followed by the Project Coordinator (9.29), and Supervisors (8.71). GR Officers rated the Risk Reduction Team as having lower scores; however, it should be noted that while the Risk Reduction Team ranked the lowest, they have yet to take an official role in the project. Currently, the team focuses on monitoring the Motivational Interviewing and Strength-Based Case Management Initiatives.

Supervisors were also asked to rank the level of the support for the Gender Responsive Probation Model. Supervisors believed that they had the highest level of support for the Initiative at 7.68, followed by the Project Coordinator (6.58), other Probation Officers (6.42), Administration and Central Office (6.21) and the Risk Reduction Team (6.21). Overall, there was moderate variability in the GR Officers’ responses compared to the Supervisors.

Table 6. Gender Responsive Probation Model Support by Supervisors (N=19)

	<u>Average</u>
Probation Officers	6.42
Project Coordinator	6.58
Supervisors	7.68
Risk Reduction Team	6.21
Administration & Central Office	6.21

Based on the results from the sixth assessment, it appears that support for the Gender Responsive Initiative varies at all agency levels. Despite this variation, the overall support for the GRPM has improved since the initial site visits.

External support for the GRPM was also assessed. Initially, the majority of Officers reported that there were some issues early on with how they performed their role as a Gender Responsive Officer and how that relationship was influenced by the partnering agencies within the community. One Officer stated,

“There are not as many roadblocks now but in the past there has been with prosecutors and judges. It took a while for them to understand my perspective and to understand my recommendations that I was making. Now, I think that they have a much better understanding because it is in line with their goals.”

During the sixth site visit the GR Officers reported that the partnering agencies were aware of their role as a Gender Responsive Officer; however, these agencies were only aware because they had been informally educated by the GR Officer within their jurisdiction.

Despite the lack of formality in the level of training by the external agencies, the majority of Officers reported they have worked individually to bridge those gaps and most agencies have an understanding of their job as a Gender Responsive Officer.

In summary, there is strong sense of community among the GR Probation Team. The unique nature of the model has created some sense of isolation among those involved in the Initiative and a desire for more collaboration with other Probation Officers, Supervisors, the Risk Reduction Unit, and Administration and Central Office. Partnering agencies were also highlighted as critical to the success of this approach and additional efforts to strengthen those partnerships have improved throughout the evaluation period because of the undertaking of the Gender Responsive Officers.

Quality Assurance and Model Fidelity

Program success hinges upon two key factors: effective interventions and effective implementation of those interventions. An internal and external system of monitoring service delivery and staff fidelity to evidence-based practices is critical to effective implementation.

At the time of the first site visit, there was an informal quality assurance system in place to monitor and guide the GRPM. The Project Coordinator was conducting regular site visits to each of the GR Probation Officer jurisdictions, observing client interactions, reviewing case files periodically and providing technical assistance to the GR Probation Team. Monthly office visits were being

conducted but there was some variability in how often these occurred. The Project Coordinator was also implementing an audio file review process to provide additional guidance to GR Probation Officers on client services.

By the end of the process evaluation activities, the quality assurance system was much more formalized and developed. There was less variability in when Officers were receiving feedback and guidance.

To date, there is a formal mechanism in place for monitoring the Initiative, providing feedback to staff on the program and measuring project outcomes. Despite the progress that has been made, the quality assurance system is still in its beginning implementation phase. It usually takes several years after program implementation to fully develop a quality assurance system.

While the Project Coordinator is conducting observations and providing feedback, it should be routine and conducted on a monthly basis, in order to collect sufficient quality assurance data and to improve outcomes. Moreover, case file reviews are being conducted much less. Supervisors review these on a monthly basis; however, they do not have sufficient training to monitor them in regards to being Gender Responsive. With time constraints, the Project Coordinator is reviewing these every few months and providing formal feedback on an as needed basis. It is necessary to monitor the quality and the frequency of the use of GR skills and techniques through both direct observations and case file reviews.

By the end of the evaluation, it was also apparent that the quality assurance system and the greater GR Initiative should be linked to the more overarching goals of the Risk Reduction Unit.

In order to do this, the Project Coordinator needs more support in the field from a Quality Coordinator. The Quality Coordinator should lead the data gathering process and provide the majority of the feedback to Officers. Having two GR coordinators would ensure Officers were provided with timely, efficient and effective feedback. More generally, it would allow the Project Coordinator to encompass the greater Risk Reduction principles whereby a more formalized quality assurance system has already been put in place to monitor other initiatives. If the GR Initiative can be a part of the greater Risk Reduction Initiative, a more formalized quality assurance system could be developed and the project could be further supported.



PROCESS EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are suggested to the State of Connecticut in order to ensure Gender Responsive model fidelity and to promote positive outcomes for girls involved with the juvenile criminal justice system. The recommendations are made in the following areas of best practice: Staffing Characteristics, Qualifications, and Training; Target Population; Assessment of Risk and Need, Services and Treatment Interventions; Supervision and Management, Internal and External Support, and Quality Assurance and Model Fidelity.

Staffing Characteristics, Qualifications and Training

🔧 Continue and expand Gender Responsive trainings and boosters specifically in regards to trauma and the specific domains of the model

including: Relational, Risk Need and Protective Factors; Gender and Cultural Competence; Positive Staff Qualities and Actions and Healthy and Safe Environment.

Gender Responsive Population

🔧 Continue to provide services to girls in each jurisdiction by ensuring that there is a Gender Responsive Officer located at each Juvenile Probation Department throughout the State of Connecticut.

Assessment of Risk and Need

🔧 To date, there is no validated risk and need instrument to assess the risk and needs of girls. Continue research in the areas of best practice and implement a validated

instrument when one becomes available.

- There is no validated instrument concerning observing a Probation Officers interactions with girls when being gender responsive. Continue to update the instrument which was created from Connecticut's model in order to further refine these areas.

Services and Treatment Interventions

- Continue implementing services that are evidence-based.
- Continue to monitor services that may become available which target the needs of girl delinquents.

Supervision and Management

- CSSD should hire or identify a Gender Responsive Quality Coordinator in order to support the Project Coordinator in fulfilling the quality assurance duties outlined in the Model. This will lead to a greater support system for the Officers and the Supervisors.

Internal and External Support

- An effective introductory training should be offered to all Probation staff to improve the agency wide understanding of the GRPM and encourage increased collaboration and support.
- Supervisors should also continue to be trained on the model. In order for the project to be supported as a whole, all individuals at all agency levels should have a broad understanding of the Model and the overall goals of the Initiative.

- Find additional ways in which Administration and the Risk Reduction Unit can become more integrated in the Initiative such as participating in trainings and Statewide meetings, helping in the development of the model, informing the partnering agencies of the Initiative, and having a more active role with GR Officers.

- Partnering agencies (DCF, the courts and the schools) and community providers should also be educated on the GRPM and invited to partner with CSSD on this Initiative. Steps should also be taken to increase collaboration and communication between GR Officers and these agencies and organizations.

Quality Assurance and Model Fidelity

- The Project Coordinator, in conjunction with the Quality Coordinator, should continue to conduct and document findings from the observations and case file reviews. Results from the fidelity monitoring activities should be shared with the offices as soon as reasonably possible to improve overall skill acquisition.
- CSSD should incorporate all quality assurance entities in order to standardize procedures across Initiatives. Thus, the Gender Responsive quality assurance unit should be incorporated into the greater Risk Reduction Unit. This will lead to a more formalized quality assurance system and a greater support system for the Officers and the Supervisors.



GROWTH AND DIRECTION

The Gender Responsive Probation Model was developed according to the Principles of Effective Intervention and represents a fundamental change in the approach to services for female Probationers in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System. System level transformations of this nature require detailed planning, direction and continual monitoring and support to ensure that true change is accomplished. The GRPM was successfully implemented over two years ago and is currently serving clients according to the program design.

The process evaluation assessment results demonstrated that the following accomplishments:

- There are established Gender Responsive Officers in all

jurisdictions in the State of Connecticut and within each Juvenile Probation Department;

- Staff are well qualified and they receive continuous training boosters;
- There is strong support for the model especially among the Gender Responsive Officers;
- Validated assessments of risk and need are being conducted to properly serve and assess girls;
- Treatment is driven by girls individual needs;
- Gender Responsive Officers are highly skilled in the GRPM;
- There is strong supervision and management in place to support the Officers;
- Supervisors are implementing random assignment in eight jurisdictions; and,

 A quality assurance system has been established to ensure model fidelity.

The Gender Responsive Probation Model is an innovative approach to dealing with status offenders and delinquent girls. Overall, the project represents a ground-breaking, evidence-based approach in dealing with female probationers. To date, the State of Connecticut has successfully achieved its goals of implementing a Probation Initiative that incorporates the individual

risks and need of young girls. The process evaluation findings have demonstrated these accomplishments.

In July 2011, the final outcome evaluation will be complete. The final report will provide a detailed examination of program effectiveness by comparing client outcomes for at-risk girls who participated in the GRPM with those who were assigned to regular probation.

APPENDIX A- Gender Responsive Triage Form

THE CONNECTICUT JUDICIAL BRANCH
COURT SUPPORT SERVICES DIVISION

RANDOM ASSIGNMENT PROTOCOL FOR THE GENDER RESPONSIVE
SERVICES ASSESSMENT

Please fill out the information below for all girls who are referred to your jurisdiction. EVERY SECOND GIRL SHOULD BE ASSIGNED TO A GSPO. If for any reason you cannot assign every second girl to a GSPO, please contact Kimball Gage immediately at 203-257-1322.

CL NUMBER: _____ Supervisor's Name: _____

Court Location: _____ Town/City: _____

CMIS Case Number _____ Date (mm/dd/yy): _____ / _____ / _____

Juvenile First Name: _____ Juvenile Last Name: _____

Intake Date: _____ / _____ / _____ Assignment Date: _____ / _____ / _____

DOB (mm/dd/yy): _____ / _____ / _____

Charge/Complaint (Most serious charge): _____

Random Assignment Number (1 or 2): _____

Random Assignment Protocol (Please circle the applicable option):

1. The youth was randomly assigned to a GSPO
2. The youth was randomly assigned to a JPO
3. The girl was excluded because she resides outside of the GSPO's catchment area.
4. The girl was excluded because the GSPO had a capped caseload.
5. The girl was excluded because she had a sibling supervised by a JPO/GSPO.
6. The girl was excluded because she has been previously supervised by a JPO/GSPO.
7. The girl was excluded for another reason (PLEASE SPECIFY AND VERIFY WITH KIMBALL) _____

APPENDIX B- Observational Instrument

GENDER RESPONSIVE OBSERVATIONAL CODING SHEET		
JPO:	Purpose of Meeting with Youth:	
Observer:	Date:	
Youth #:	Start Time:	End Time:
Codes: (N/A= Not applicable; 0= Absent; 1= Poor; 2= Fair; 3= Good; 4= Excellent)		
Gender Responsive Interaction Techniques		
<u>Strengths and Incentives</u>	<u>Code (0-4)</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Asks about the girl's strengths, interests, family and community supports		
Draws from the girls perspective		
Is persistent about having the girl identify and develop strengths		
Provides encouragement when the girl does well		
Offers motivators such as small notions of encouragement (stickers, pens, candy, letter or recommendations)		
Promotes positive relationships in the community (community service, mentor, careers/hobbies, internships)		
Total points (24)=		
<u>Relational, Risk, Need, and Protective Factors</u>	<u>Code (0-4)</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Inquires about her relationship with others (friends, boyfriends, mother, father, uncle, grandmother, teacher, etc)		
Inquires about her individual, family, cultural or religious values (What role does spirituality play in your life?)		
Inquires about her mental health (Have you talked to anyone about your thoughts and feelings?)		
Inquires about her perceived and/or actual safety (Ever witnessed anything violent/traumatic?)		
Inquires about her physical and sexual health (When was the last time you saw a doctor? abortion/pregnancy)		
Inquires about her future goals and aspirations (explore gifts and talents)		
Explores her educational status and achievements (favorite subjects; extra services; tutoring)		
Total points (28)=		
<u>Assessment and Practical Standards</u>	<u>Code (0-4)</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Introduces and explains the overall assessment/interview process		
Explains specifically about each assessment instrument (if applicable)		
Uses a motivational interviewing style of interacting		
Gives attention to risk, needs, protective factors and strengths within the individual (focus is on her)		
Gives attention to risk, need, relational, and protective factors/strengths (focus on her relationship with family and others)		
Gives attention to risk, need, and protective factors/strengths in the community (focus on community engagement)		
Provides a summary at meeting close (including a brief review of meeting, 1+ client strength and positive feedback)		
Total points (28)=		

GENDER RESPONSIVE OBSERVATIONAL CODING SHEET		
Gender and Cultural Competence	Code (0-4)	Notes
Uses gender responsive skills and strategies		
Is engaged and attentive to the girl		
Asks about the girl's family beliefs and customs		
Displays materials that reflects the girl's culture		
Engages in conversation, questions, plans, and expectations appropriate for the girl		
Total points (20)=		
Positive Staff Qualities and Actions	Code (0-4)	Notes
Demonstrates encouraging body language (nods, shakes hands, leans forward, sits near)		
Utilizes empathy, affirmations, friendliness and warmth in interactions		
Develops positive rapport		
Uses humor		
Avoids lecturing		
Uses non-threatening, conversational tone of voice		
Total points (24)=		
Healthy and Safe Environment	Code (0-4)	Notes
Greets client and walks into the meeting office with her		
Asks her how she is doing prior to the interview		
Does not sit behind the office desk the entire meeting		
Has objects present she can hold during meeting		
Has copies of motivational statements to hand out		
Ask girls to draw pictures for your office to relate what they are going through, learning or struggling with		
Ensures that she can sit comfortably with an open path to the door		
Does not display judgmental or offensive materials in office		
Avoids interruptions when possible		
Seems mindful of the meeting's length of time		
Thanks her and walks her out when the meeting is over		
Total points (44)=		
Youth Engagement- (Rank youth engagement by the end of the interview on a scale of 0 to 4)	Code (0-4)	Notes
0= Closed, refused to share information verbally, or angry/hostile		
1= Minimally involved or minimally cooperative		
2= Fairly involved or fairly cooperative		
3= Moderately involved or moderately cooperative		
4= Fully engaged, shared information, participated, agreed and was actively involved in case plan design		
GSPO Engagement- (Rank GSPO engagement by the end of the interview on a scale of 0 to 4)	Code (0-4)	Notes
0= Closed, showed no sign of empathy or GR skills		
1= Used GR skills and strategies minimally		
2= Used GR skills and strategies fairly		
3= Used GR skills and strategies moderately		
4= Fully engaged, shared information, used skills that actively involved youth in case plan design		
Total Score (176)=		
JPO Speaks for: _____ More than half the time _____ Half of the time _____ Less than half the time		