

FRONT
PAGE
NEWS

IN THIS ISSUE

Girls Study Group Findings
Take Center Stage.....1

Girls Study Group Findings
Continued.....2

Victim Advocate for
the Elderly.....3

New Coordinator for Phase
III of Delta Program.....3

Justice for the
Mentally Ill.....4

Sen. Webb's Call for
Prison Reform.....5

What Do You Think?.....5



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E-MAIL ALERT!

DCJ is about to launch an e-card program to provide timely announcements, save the dates, and other special information that will supplement our newsletter, *Commentary*.

To be included on our list, please send us your e-mail address. It's easy. Just send an e-mail to **Joan Ciritella** at jciritella@dcjustice.org and in the subject line write "e-mail address for DCJ" and we'll have it!

**Girls Study Group Findings
Take Center Stage at Forum**

The Delaware Center for Justice's Delaware Girls Initiative sponsored an all day forum on "Understanding Girls in the Juvenile Justice System," which took place on October 22, 2008. About 175 service providers, policymakers, and interested citizens gathered in the University of Delaware's Clayton Hall to learn about the research findings of the Girls Study Group, a three-year study funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The study was undertaken to further the field's understanding of female juvenile offending and to identify effective strategies for preventing and reducing female juvenile involvement in delinquency and violence.

After the welcome and opening remarks by Allison Cassidy, coordinator, Delaware Girls Initiative, and the Hon. Chandlee Kuhn, chief judge, Delaware Family Court, Janet Leban, executive director, Delaware Center for Justice, introduced the day's presenters.

Girls and Delinquency

First to speak was the Girls Study Group principal investigator, Dr. Margaret Zahn, acting deputy director, Research and Evaluation Division, National Institute of



Seated: Dr. Margaret Zahn; standing L to R: Shanell Williams, Allison Cassidy, Janet Leban, and Dr. Diana Fishbein.

Justice. Dr. Zahn provided a thorough overview of data relative to girls and delinquency. **The questions to be answered were:**

1. What are the major theories for understanding girls' delinquency?
2. What are the major risk and protective factors and how do they differ for girls and boys?
3. What are the best juvenile justice programs for girls?

Major findings with reference to these questions were:

- While juvenile arrests generally decreased between 1998 and 2007, there was an increase in the occurrence of simple assaults by girls.
- The number of committed delinquent females being held nearly doubled between 1991 and 2001, marking a steady increase of girls in custody.

(Continued on page 2)

Girls Study Group Findings

(Continued from page 1)

- Since girls were not more violent, the fact that more were entering the system suggests that policies contributed to the increase—policies like zero tolerance in schools, mandatory arrests in domestic violence where a mother and daughter fight and the daughter usually gets arrested, and by the loosening of the definition for simple assault.
- Girls and boys experience many of the same risk factors, but they differ in sensitivity to and the rate of exposure to these factors, which include harsh and erratic discipline in the home, maltreatment (neglect and abuse), poor and disorganized neighborhoods, exposure to street violence, and fairness and consistent enforcement of rules in schools.
- Over all, the gender differences associated with delinquency are early puberty, depression and anxiety, witnessing family violence, cross-gender peer influence, attachment and bonding to school, and neighborhood disadvantage.
- While evidence is limited, data suggests that effective programs for girls should address the multiple risk factors and provide follow up so long-term results can be realized.

Brain Development and Girls' Delinquency

Dr. Diana Fishbein, director, Transdisciplinary Behavioral Science Program, Research Triangle Institute, followed with a presentation on "Brain Development and Girls' Delinquency." She explained that most research on delinquency has focused on boys. In turning attention to the biological and environmental causes of delinquency in girls, the study aimed to find out how to design treatment programs that specifically met their needs.

As Dr. Zahn had pointed out, factors affecting the behavior of delinquent boys and girls were similar, but their responses to these were different. Therefore, Dr. Fishbein turned her attention to how the affects were processed differently in the brain. The question to consider was this: Can we manipulate the environment to change the way the brain responds?

Dr. Fishbein provided a general overview of the prefrontal cortex and limbic system, areas of the brain where delays or dysfunction are associated with motivation, emotional instability, acting out, drug abuse, and risky behavior. She said that a disconnect in the regulatory system may heighten risk for conduct problems, and

that chronic stress primes the brain for risk behaviors and drug abuse.

With reference to females, Dr. Fishbein found that girls differ in behavioral outcomes of stress effects on the brain because girls:

- Are differentially sensitive to stress, particularly within the family.
- Experience a greater incidence of sexual abuse, maltreatment, and other stressors
- Are prone to psychological and psychiatric illnesses.
- Have brains that develop differently (in the amygdala and hippocampus), heightening stress sensitivity.
- Have adrenal gland sensitivity that negatively alters mood.
- Have estrogen, which amplifies stress responses, increasing mood disturbances.
- Perceive that their stress levels are higher than boys (which may be social or because girls tend to be more victimized).

Dr. Fishbein concluded her remarks with an overview of other brain-related factors that affect girls differently and must be considered when designing and implementing treatment programs for girls in the juvenile justice system. One fact that stood out was how girls' prefrontal-limbic circuitry develops later and is more active than boys, and that means girls will internalize their emotions, causing tension to mount within.

To access the entire **Girls Study Group** findings, visit www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ojjdp.

Film Screening

Following lunch, there was a screening of "Girl Trouble," an award-winning documentary film depicting the stories of three girls caught up in San Francisco's juvenile justice system. Additionally, Shanell Williams, program director, The Center for Young Women's Development in San Francisco, CA, whose work was highlighted in the film, spoke about her experiences in the juvenile justice system and the challenges to overcoming a difficult past and creating a positive future. To learn more about "Girl Trouble" or to order a copy of the film visit www.girltrouble.org.

The forum was funded through the Delaware Criminal Justice Council by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; Juvenile Accountability Block Grant; the Longwood Foundation; the Welfare Foundation; the Eckerd Family Foundation; and, the National Juvenile Justice Network.

Victim Advocate for the Elderly On Board to Run New Program

The Elderly Victims Advocate Program, funded by the Criminal Justice Council, in partnership with the Wilmington Housing Authority (WHA), brings a variety of direct services to aging victims who live in residences owned and operated by the Wilmington Housing Authority. This program targets the unmet needs of elderly victims of violence, including fraud, domestic abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and other offenses.

DCJ is pleased to announce that **Yahna Talley** is now on board to provide direct services, such as crisis counseling, short- and long-term counseling, case management, and referrals to other community-based services. She also provides court accompaniment, transportation to and from court, medical and legal appointments associated with the victimization, and works

closely with her clients to help them develop an understanding of how to better protect themselves from crime and re-victimization.

Yahna is a graduate of the University of Delaware and has over 13 years experience in human services, including work with family, youth, and aging populations.

While the program office is located in the Parkview Apartments at 1800 S. Broom Street, the program also includes outreach to community organizations, providers of elderly care services, other referral partners, and to all WHA senior citizens and employees.

To find out more about the program, please contact Yahna at 302-429-6280 or ytalley@dcjustice.org.

New Coordinator for Phase III of DELTA Program

The Delaware Center for Justice's DELTA Project has received Phase III funding to sustain its efforts at primary prevention of intimate partner violence. We appreciate the support being awarded to us from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through its Coordinated Community Response Unit, the Victims' Rights Task Force.

As DELTA Project moves forward, **Davi Mozie** will serve as the new project coordinator. She comes to us with a Master of Science from Wilmington University in Administration of Justice, and more than 20 years of combined human service and criminal justice experience.

DELTA Phase III will build prevention capacity by working to enhance the knowledge, skills,

resources, motivation, and willingness of advocates throughout Delaware. In addition, the project coordinator will continue educational efforts with adjudicated youth using the "Developing Healthy Relationships" curriculum offered at Mowlds Cottage, Ferris School, and other facilities throughout Delaware. Efforts also continue to ensure future in-service training for Youth Rehabilitative Services/Community Services staff members.

Margaret Tagliaferro, project coordinator since its inception in Delaware five years ago, has resigned to meet family needs. Her dedication and commitment to adjudicated youth has given the project the momentum to move forward in Phase III.

PROGRAMS

IN

ACTION

Justice for the Mentally Ill: What About Andre?

By Janet Kramer, President, DCf Board of Directors

Imagine this: Andre, an 18-year-old young adult with a two-year history of bipolar illness treated with Depakote®, was recently discharged from a private psychiatric hospital after an overdose of over-the-counter medication with suicidal intent.

Today Andre was arrested after he broke into a neighborhood home. When the police confronted Andre after he tripped the burglar alarm, Andre hit the arresting officer.

We must change the paradigm from screening citizens out of health services because of court charges to screening citizens into services appropriate to the level of care the individual needs.

Andre is secured and is taken by police to the lockup to await arraignment on charges of residential burglary, aggravated assault on an officer and resisting arrest. At the intake screening by a correction officer, Andre appears confused and speaks incoherently.

The above fictitious scenario illustrates the common occurrence of a mentally ill individual arrested and charged with criminal behavior; however, Andre does not qualify for the excellent “coordinated program of evaluation, stabilization and treatment of his mental illness or substance abuse” provided by Delaware’s Mental Health Court because Andre is charged with a felony.

Mentally ill individuals involved in a more violent, more serious crime, are immediately arrested and sent to lockup before

arraignment. The arresting officer may note that Andre is not in touch with reality and may transport Andre to Wilmington Hospital for evaluation; however, the evaluation is to determine if Andre is medically stable and is not suicidal or an imminent threat to others. This evaluation would not include a recommendation for immediate treatment or a recommendation to the judge on Andre’s ultimate disposition.

In 2009, our fictitious Andre has the opportunity to spend a number of days/weeks incarcerated in the general population of the jail awaiting arraignment. Although Mental Health Court does save a number of first-time adult offenders from incarceration, the majority of seriously mentally ill who are arrested do not qualify for the coordinated case management and treatment opportunities offered by this specialized court.

In the interest of justice, we do need to advocate for more intense, scientifically based and expert evaluated community mental health programs; for expanding the capacity of Mental Health/Substance Abuse Court to case manage mentally ill/addicted citizens who break the law; for appropriate funding for adequate pre-arraignment mental health evaluation to be shared with the judge prior to sentencing; and, for the most dangerous mentally ill, advocate for providing intense mental health treatment while the individual is confined and for providing reentry linked to the appropriate intensity of mental health services in the community.

We still have quite a way to go before we can celebrate adequate mental health services in Delaware especially for those who are accused of breaking the law. We must change the paradigm from screening citizens out of health services because of court charges to screening citizens into services appropriate to the level of care the individual needs. Where the services are provided and ensuring public safety is the responsibility of the court and law enforcement, the intensity, type and appropriateness of treatment is the responsibility of the treatment team.

Senator Webb’s Call for Prison Reform

From an editorial in the New York Times, January 1, 2009

This country puts too many people behind bars for too long. Most elected officials, afraid of being tarred as soft on crime, ignore these problems. Sen. Jim Webb, a Democrat of Virginia, is now courageously stepping into the void, calling for a national commission to re-assess criminal justice policy. Other members of Congress should show the same courage and rally to the cause.

The United States has the world’s highest reported incarceration rate. Although it has less than 5 percent of the world’s population, it has almost one-quarter of the world’s prisoners. And for the first time in history, more than 1 in 100 American adults are behind bars.

(Continued on the next page)

Senator Webb

(continued)

Many inmates are serving long sentences for nonviolent crimes, including minor drug offenses. It also is extraordinarily expensive. Billions of dollars now being spent on prisons each year could be used in far more socially productive ways.

Senator Webb – a former Marine and secretary of the Navy in the Reagan administration – is in many ways an unlikely person to champion criminal justice reform. But his background makes him an especially effective advocate for a cause that has often been associated with liberals and academics.

In his two years in the Senate, Mr. Webb has held hearings on the cost of mass incarceration

and on the criminal justice system's response to the problems of illegal drugs. He also has called attention to the challenges of prisoner re-entry and of the need to provide released inmates, who have paid their debts to society, more help getting jobs and resuming productive lives.

Mr. Webb says he intends to introduce legislation to create a national commission to investigate these issues. With Barack Obama in the White House, and strong Democratic majorities in Congress, the political climate should be more favorable than it has been in years. And the economic downturn should make both federal and state lawmakers receptive to the idea of reforming a prison system that is as wasteful as it is inhumane.

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

In the past 20 years, state spending on corrections nationwide has grown faster than most, if not all, other state budget items. Despite this, recidivism rates continue to be high, with at least half of all prisoners who are released from prison returning within three years.

In response to this reality, the Council on State Governments, through its Justice Center, has created a "Justice Reinvestment" project that has developed strategies to "advance fiscally sound, data-driven criminal justice policies to break the cycle of recidivism, avert prison expenditures, and make communities safer." In these times of economic crisis, Justice Reinvestment could not be more appropriate.

Justice Reinvestment (JR) staff is providing technical assistance to a few states, and although Delaware is not one of these states, the strategies these states have adopted certainly are applicable to Delaware.

As a first step, in Wichita, Kansas, for example, JR experts review prison admission data to determine what is driving increases in the population, pinpointing to which neighborhoods most prisoners return and how state spending on programs often converge on the same families and communities. Delaware already has much of this information.

A second step is to provide policymakers with options to generate savings and increase public

safety. These include strategies to reduce probation revocation and hold offenders and service providers accountable for the successful completion of programs such as job training and drug treatment.

Third is to determine how much can be saved by adopting the second step and then develop plans for reinvesting a portion of these savings in initiatives in the right neighborhoods.

A fourth step is to set performance measures and projected outcomes, such as the amount of corrections costs saved or avoided, recidivism rates, and indicators of community capacity. In addition, since multiple agencies do not often work collaboratively, systems should be established that span multiple agencies to collect and analyze data to determine whether agencies are implementing new policies effectively.

With available federal funds dedicated to prisoner reentry, Delaware has begun to seriously focus on at least some of the steps outlined above. However, there is much work to be accomplished before we can say that policymakers are improving the success rates for people released from prison and addressing the needs of the communities to which they return.

What do you think?

Visit us with your thoughts on line:

www.dcjustice.org

ON
THE
ISSUES

OPPORTUNITY
PLACE

OUR MISSION:

For 89 years, the Delaware Center for Justice has dedicated itself to building a safer, more secure Delaware through advocacy, education, research, and direct services that work toward restoring justice to all who are involved in and affected by Delaware's criminal justice system, including victims, offenders, their families, and the community.

Become a member and help to ensure justice in Delaware.

Senior Friend	\$20	Organizational Sponsor	\$100
Friend	\$35	Leader	\$250
Advocate	\$50	Patron	\$500+

Individuals and organizations are invited to join by choosing the membership level most appropriate for you, making your check payable to the Delaware Center for Justice. Your support is vital to building a safer, more secure Delaware for every citizen.

Volunteer Opportunity

If you would like to volunteer at BWCI to assist incarcerated mothers with reading books on tape to their children, call Janet Leban at 658-7174, ext. 14.

COMMENTARY

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