



The Girl Connection

FOR THOSE WHO SERVE ADOLESCENT FEMALES INVOLVED WITH OR AT RISK FOR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM
THE IOWA COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN / DECEMBER 2000

As a group seeking to assure that adolescent females and young women in the juvenile justice system receive equitable services, the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force recognizes that it takes committed professionals at all levels of service provision and policy making to create meaningful, comprehensive, and lasting change in how girls are served. Because of this understanding, in 1999, we established the Courageous Advocacy Awards to acknowledge and honor those professionals whose work has positively impacted this process and the lives of Iowa girls. We also intend for the awards to inspire others to join with the greater community of advocates for girls as we move towards the goal of equitable services.

Courageous Advocacy is a leadership model adapted by girl-advocate Linda Albrecht and described in Guiding Principles of Promising Female Programming (OJJDP, 1998). Leaders who exemplify Courageous Advocacy engage in the following behaviors.

1. Challenging the process.

These leaders recognize that the traditional model of juvenile justice does not adequately meet the needs of the overwhelming majority of adolescent females. They realize that girls' unique needs have historically been overlooked and are still too often dismissed. Rather than silently acquiescing to a process that fails to serve girls well, they challenge the structures that perpetuate this, including the attitudes and policies that work against the holistic empowerment of girls

2. Inspiring a shared vision.

For some professionals, recognition of the need for meaningful and effective services for girls is not readily achieved. It is often preceded by a personal re-examination of one's values about girls and women and their life experiences.

Leaders recognize this and create safe opportunities for personal reflection among their peers. Through this process and across differences of culture, gender, and race/ethnicity, they encourage a common vision for appropriate and gender-responsive services for girls.

3. Enabling others to act.

Leaders who exemplify Courageous Advocacy share the resources and contacts necessary for others to engage in action that facilitates change towards equitable services for girls. Through collaboration and coalition building, they enable others to develop the reciprocal relationships necessary for system change.

4. Modeling the way.

These leaders know that necessary system changes cannot happen by continuing to do "business as usual." By modeling new ways of individual and group interaction, they demonstrate the value of shared power and shared investment in mutual relationships. Further, these leaders are reflective and able to self-redirect when old habits of traditional hierarchical relationships challenge their progress. They know that system change happens when myriad small changes combine, and they value the small changes that may otherwise go unrecognized by the larger power structure.

5. Encouraging the heart.

Knowing that system change can be a slow process with setbacks and discouragement, leaders utilize opportunities to uplift others in their work. They speak and act with empathy about girls' lives and encourage compassion rather than fear in the attitudes and policies of the juvenile justice system. Leaders who exemplify Courageous Advocacy encourage others to find the often deeply personal motivations for their professional involvement in girls' lives, reconnecting them to the humanity of improving girls' lives.

In 1999, the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force honored three individuals who demonstrate the characteristics of Courageous Advocacy in their work with girls. Awards were given in three categories of nomination—administrator, direct-service provider, and policy shaper.



*Gwen Seward-Lewis, Lori Rinehart, Judy Davis
1999 Courageous Advocacy Award Recipients*

Judy Davis, Administrator

In her leadership of the Young Women's Resource Center in Des Moines, Judy Davis led the Center through an innovative mission revision project. Rather than merely recreating the status quo, she fostered the development of a new shared vision for the Center that has enabled it to become a leader in serving young women. In this process, she sought out information and feedback not only from staff and board members, but from the Center's collaborating partners, volunteers, and clients. The end result is that the Young Women's Resource Center is intentionally doing business in a different way, helping to improve the lives of even more young women both directly and through our influence with community collaborations. Furthermore, Judy worked hard to provide her staff with a variety of new skills designed to enhance both their professional and personal lives. She understands the importance of demonstrating to employees that they are valued members of the organization. Her words, actions, and willingness to be flexible are continual reminders of the lengths to which she is willing to go to help others.

*Gwen Seward-Lewis,
Direct-Service Provider*

For approximately 20 years, Gwen Seward-Lewis has provided direct service to at-risk children and families as a Department of Human Services

Foster Care Worker and as a Juvenile Court Officer in Polk County. She is recognized within the Polk County Juvenile Court System for putting the needs of her clients above the established protocol of the court system. For example, if she believes that the system is not adequately considering the specific needs of her female clients, she is not afraid to openly question the logic behind the standard practice. She has long advocated for improving the quality of care in treatment programs serving females as it relates to making young women physically and emotionally safe. She holds accountable the various players in the system including defense attorneys, county attorneys, and members of her own office. This rarely earns Gwen a pat on the back. Even so, everyone in the system—including the young women she serves—benefits on a daily basis from her vision, passion, insight, and understanding of the issues surrounding girls.

Lori Rinehart, Policy Shaper

Using the 1992 reauthorization of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act related to State Challenge activities, Lori Rinehart took a small amount of money and license from the federal language to begin a statewide initiative for gender-specific services for Iowa girls in the juvenile justice system. As a result, the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force was started. In these initial efforts, she also coordinated one of the first studies of the Iowa juvenile justice system in relationship to the girls it serves, Female Juvenile Justice. Additionally, she crafted RFP language that allows for funding of girls programs through JJDP Act Formula Grant funds and was instrumental in the creation of funding for aftercare services for girls. She has provided hundreds of hours training, advocating, and planning for girls' needs with other professionals across the state and nation. She is active in a variety of organizations related to planning and policies for girls, including the Coalition for Family and Children Services in Iowa, the Annual Summer School for Helping Professionals, the State Youth Development Task Force, and, of course, the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force.

For more information, contact the
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
(800) 558-4427 or (515) 281-6915

The Courageous Advocacy Awards

2001 Nomination Form

To make a nomination, fill out the information below and provide a one-page narrative that addresses how your nominee exemplifies Courageous Advocacy in his/her professional work. Please limit your comments to one double-spaced, typewritten page.

Copy this form as needed. You may nominate someone in each category. If you have questions about nominations, please call (515) 281-6915.

Return five copies of your nomination materials (this form and the narrative) and your nominee's resume by April 6, 2001 to the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force, c/o Iowa Commission on the Status of Women, Lucas State Office Building, Des Moines IA 50319. Materials received after that date will not be considered.

Circle category of nomination:

administrator

direct-service provider

policy shaper

Nominee's Name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ **E-mail** _____

Your name _____

Organization _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ **E-mail** _____

Thank you for your nomination!

A committee of five Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force members will review the nominations and make the final selections.

The awards will be presented on Wednesday, May 2, 2001 at the annual statewide conference, "Whispers & Screams." Award recipients and their nominators will be notified prior to the conference.