



Girl Connection

For those who serve adolescent females

April 2007

Written by: Kathy Nesteby

Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force

Review: Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force

What to know, how to help and how to benefit.

What is the Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force (IGSSTF)?

The IGSSTF is a progressive force within the state of Iowa advocating for equitable services for girls involved with or at risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system. It engages key stakeholders in Iowa's juvenile justice system, particularly forward-thinking individuals and groups committed to comprehensive system change that reflects gender equity for girls and young women.

Who belongs to the IGSSTF?

Our members represent a range of professional expertise. They include program administrators, direct-service staff, juvenile court officers, social workers, researchers, educators, representatives from various State departments, and others who are concerned about the quality of life for Iowa girls.

How did the IGSSTF get its start?

Since 1995, the State of Iowa has committed itself to the improvement of services for adolescent females in its juvenile justice system. First, the Iowa Juvenile Justice Advisory Council along with the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning formed a task force to address the issue. Soon thereafter, they applied for and received a federal grant to fund the IGSSTF efforts.

What are the goals of the IGSSTF?

The IGSSTF seeks to facilitate a comprehensive fundamental change in the juvenile justice system that will enhance the understanding and utilization of innovative gender-responsive approaches in all programs and services, particularly those that serve the adolescent female population of Iowa's juvenile justice system. Objectives designed to assist in reaching this goal have changed from year to year in response to the needs of young women as well as to changes that have occurred within the system.

What are the ongoing activities of the IGSSTF?

Beginning in 1997 and continuing annually since, the IGSSTF has provided a major conference entitled *Whispers & Screams are hard to hear: Creating an audience for girls' voices*. Participants come from all over the state, Midwest and even Canada to hear keynote speakers, workshop presenters, each other and the voices of young women. The IGSSTF also recognizes four *Courageous Advocacy* award winners during the conference.

The IGSSTF coordinator and members offer training and technical assistance. Some frequently addressed areas include gender specific services 101, understanding gender differences, relational aggression, self-harming behaviors, community planning, men working with girls and dealing with girls' anger, among others. In the fall of each year, the IGSSTF offers a training retreat where attendees can spend some time relaxing while also learning in depth about a topic related to services for girls.

Publications offered by the IGSSTF include:

"Providing Gender Specific Services for Adolescent Female Offenders: Guidelines & Resources"

"Promising Directions: Programs that Serve Iowa Girls in a Single-Sex Environment"

"Female Juvenile Justice"

The Girl Connection newsletter (bimonthly)

All publications are available online. Hard copies can be requested as well at no charge.

How can I become involved in the Iowa Gender Specific Services Task Force?

1. Visit the website: www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw/girls
2. Join the Girl Connection newsletter eList. The newsletter addresses a variety of topics and the eList ensures you will also receive information regarding the Whispers & Screams conference.*
3. Join the IGSSTF eList. Receive emails weekly (approximately) regarding funding opportunities, events, research, news articles and much more related to working with young women.*
4. Visit or join the IGSSTF. Monthly meetings occur the first Friday of each month (except July) from 10 am - Noon at the Urbandale Public Library, 3520 86th St., Urbandale, Iowa. Meetings are announced via the IGSSTF eList as well. Those who join the IGSSTF and live outside the Des Moines area are eligible to request reimbursement for mileage when traveling to the meeting. Also, once a member for a year and with adequate meeting attendance (6 of 11), IGSSTF members are eligible to be reimbursed for expenses related to attending the Whispers & Screams conference and the annual retreat.
5. Request training for your agency/community.*

*Contact Kathy Nesteby, IGSSTF Coordinator, kathy.nesteby@iowa.gov or (515) 281-6915

April 2007 ~ Task Force Review The Girl Connection

newsletter is provided as a service of the Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force.
For back issues of *The Girl Connection*, more information about the Gender-Specific Services Task Force,
or if you are willing to receive future issues via e-mail to save mailing costs, please contact us:

Kathy Nesteby, Coordinator
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
1-800-558-4427 or (515) 281-6915
Kathy.Nesteby@iowa.gov
www.state.ia.us/dhr/sw/girls

**PLEASE
COPY
AND
DISTRIBUTE
WIDELY**

Iowa Gender-Specific Services Task Force
Iowa Commission on the Status of Women
Lucas State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319