Girls and Gangs: Improving Understanding and Responsiveness

Estivaliz Castro, Researcher, and Caroline Glesmann, Researcher
Today’s Agenda

- Introductions
- Study Overview
- Methodology
- Key Findings
- Recommendations
- Q&A
Overview of the Study

- Key goals
- Guided by advisory board
- Funding for project
Methodology

- Key stakeholder interviews
- Cross-sectional interviews with female youth
Profile of Girls

- About half (48%) of interview participants were ages 17 to 19.
- Most (81%) had previously worked or were working at the time of the interview.
- Nearly half (40%) were pregnant or already a parent.
Profile of Girls (continued)

Race/Ethnicity

- Latino/Hispanic: 44%
- White: 1%
- Pacific Islander: 2%
- More Than One Race/Ethnicity: 14%
- Native American: 3%
- Black/African American: 36%
Justice and Gang Involvement of Families Members

- Family Member Arrested: 96%
- Family Member in Jail or Prison: 92%
- Family Member in a Gang: 86%
- Dating Gang Member: 81%
Justice and Gang Involvement of Girls

- Arrested: 71%
- Placement or Detention: 51%
- Probation: 49%
Why do girls join gangs?

- Gang-involved family members
- Neighborhood/environment
- Gang-involved peers
Why do girls join gangs?

- Belonging and acceptance
- Family conflict/lack of supervision
- Dating a gang member
Gang Activities

Percentages of girls interviewed who were asked, forced, or volunteered to:

• Commit a violent act: 72%
• Deal drugs: 66%
• Hide a gun: 61%
Girls’ Victimization and Substance Use

Percentages of girls interviewed who:

• Witnessed violence in the gang: 85%

• Were the victim of a violent act as part of the gang (excluding being jumped or sexed into the gang): 48%

• Have used drugs of some sort: 94%
Girls’ Roles in Gangs

- Supportive Role
- Fighter Role
- Leadership Role
Why do girls desist from gang activity?

- Pregnancy/parenting
- Maturing out/desire for a better lifestyle
- Incarceration
Strengths of Gang-Involved Girls

- Strong/Resilient
- Great Interpersonal Skills
- Smart
Role of Services and Service Providers

- Sought help from program or service: 47%
- Referred to program or service: 59%
- Received tutoring, mentoring, sex education, visited a clinic: 64%
- Treated for drug/alcohol issue: 27%

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Girls’ Needs According to Girls

- “A place to stay”
- Emotional support/behavioral health
- Basic financial assistance
- Educational support
- Job training and employment
Girls’ Needs According to Stakeholders

- Trained staff and consistent programming
- Client-centered relationships
- Coordinated prevention services
- Family/parenting support
Girls’ Needs According to Stakeholders (continued)

- Employment opportunities
- Mentorship
- Exposure to opportunities
- Services for women
Recommendations

• Use intentional language.
• Place intersectionality at the forefront.
• Understand girls’ embedded lives.
• Provide gender-responsive services for girls.
• Build on girls’ strengths.
Thank you!

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