

Sexual Assault to Prison Pipeline

We urge your support for legislation that emphasizes restorative, trauma-informed approaches to dealing with behavior issues that arise in girls who are victims of sexual assault. One place to start is to examine how we can better protect girls in our Wisconsin juvenile detention facilities by adding juvenile correctional officers to the list of professionals who must report suspected abuse and neglect of children.

By criminalizing girls who have been sexually abused we are further traumatizing them and not fixing the root of the problems that caused their delinquent behavior. Much more needs to be done to provide incarcerated girls proper mental health treatment as well as an effective educational and community based support system. These girls are not criminals, but victims.

Key Points:

- "The most common crimes for which girls are arrested-running away, substance abuse, and truancy-are also the most common reactions to abuse." (NOW.org)
- Many aspects of incarceration (such as strip searches and lack of privacy) can be re-traumatizing.
- "Among the study's many findings are data confirming that sexual abuse is a "primary predictor" for involvement with the juvenile-justice system, and that girls of color-particularly African-Americans, Native Americans, and Latinas-are disproportionately affected." ("The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline," Education Week. 10/13/15)

Supportive Facts:

- In a 2006 study in Oregon, 96 percent of the girls in the juvenile justice system had a history of sexual abuse, and 76 percent had experienced one incident of sexual or physical abuse before age thirteen. (NOW.org)
- "Native American girls are in residential placements at a rate of 179 per 100,000; African-American girls at a rate of 123 per 100,000; and Latinas at a rate of 47 per 100,000. By comparison, 37 per 100,000 of non-Hispanic white girls are confined." The report also finds that the sexual-abuse rate of girls in the juvenile-justice system at 31% is more than four times higher than the rate for boys, at 7%. ("The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline," Education Week. 10/13/15)

Note: information provided by Eileen Zeiger, Director of Education and Outreach Programming, Rape Crisis Center, Inc. at the International Women's Day Advocacy Training on February 25, 2017.

The ASK: We urge your support for SB35 which would add juvenile correctional officers to the list of mandatory reporters required to report cases of child abuse and neglect.

