


**MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICES
JUVENILE INSTITUTIONS**

Subject: Girl's Unit Programming and Services		Policy Number: 16
Number of Pages: 7		Section: XIII
Attachments A. Property Matrix		Related Standards & References ACA 3-JTS-5C-01
Effective Date: May 15, 2008		Approved:  Kathy Pittman, Director

I. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Mississippi Department of Human Services, Division of Youth Services (DYS), to provide programs that address the unique needs of female juvenile offenders (hereinafter referred to as "girls" or young women) housed in the DYS Oakley Training School. These programs shall provide young women with opportunities to better understand their personal growth and development and the pathways to adulthood, to receive counseling and treatment specifically designed for girls, and to observe and interact with positive role models.

II. DEFINITIONS

As used in this policy and procedure, the following definitions apply:

- A. **Gender Responsive Programming** – Gender responsive programming is the expansion and/or customization of normal practices to better address the unique needs of one gender.
- B. **Gender Specific Treatment Materials** – Gender specific treatment materials are materials designed for use in mental health treatment, psycho-educational counseling, and/or education which specifically address the unique needs of one gender.
- C. **Relational** – Girls have a high need for and place high value around relationships. A "relational" program strives to build and maintain relationships between a girl in the program and other girls, staff, family members, and members of the community.
- D. **Peer Coaches** – Peer coaches are other girls in the girl's program who have been assigned to help orientate girls who have recently arrived on the girl's unit.
- E. **Good Days** – A "good day" is a day where the girl has met all programming requirements or expectations, and has not been written up for a major or minor disciplinary infraction.

III. PROCEDURE

The procedures defined herein do not replace other related policies and procedures, but amplify how those policies and procedures shall be implemented to provide programs and services specifically designed for girls.

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A. **Philosophy** – The girl’s unit embraces female responsive values, while striving to equip young women with the necessary skills to attain their goals, focusing on responsibility, accountability, competency and public safety. The program is inclusive: looking at the girl’s whole life and not just her criminal behaviors. Recognizing girls are affected by sexism, racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression the girl’s program seeks to address all these issues simultaneously. The program is relational: including family and other significant people in the girl’s lives, that are a part of a positive support system. The programs acknowledges the role that relationships play in the girl’s offending lives, as well as understands the function relationships play in the development of healthy skills. The program is restorative: recognizing that the girls have caused harm to victims, to their families, themselves, and to their communities and they are held accountable for their offending behaviors through restitution and community restoration. The program is mindful of societal influences: recognizing that the lives of girls in the program mirror the experiences of girls in our society the young women are taught how the media has an influence on their self-esteem and self-worth. The program is female responsive on multi-levels: advocating for girls in and out of the system as well as teaching the girls in the program to be advocates for themselves and others.

The program actively creates an environment that fosters feelings of safety and belonging by creating daily living experiences that provide opportunities for the girls to have their needs met, learn about themselves, and develop healthy relationships with others. The program creates an environment that meets the underlying needs of girls through relational and strengths-based approaches and trauma-informed, culturally competent and holistic practices. This includes balancing limit setting with accountability, boundaries, and touch policies.

Girls are led by example. All employees are expected to serve as role models for the girls. In order to help girls develop respect for adults and authority figures staff must behave in a respectable manner. Staff shall not use profanity or make obscene gestures or statements in the presence of the girls. Staff behavior shall be respectful of others and reflect the desired behaviors of the girls. Staff must maintain appropriate boundaries with the girls by doing so the girls are encouraged to develop their ability to have productive relationships with others.

The girls shall receive one-on-one staff attention on a regular basis getting attention from staff without having to create a crisis or do something against the rules. Staff shall seek opportunities to provide encouragement as a means of providing attention to the girls. Staff shall look for opportunities to publicly praise girls who are practicing desired behaviors. The behavior modification program includes relational rewards, including extra contact with key healthy relationships, so that girls are not forced to “earn” relational time through negative behavior.

B. **Programming** – Programming in the girl’s unit shall be distinct from that in the boy’s units. While the hours of meals and educational classes shall be consistent across the facility, the routine of the girl’s unit may vary to accommodate the specific programming developed for the unit.

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1. **Orientation** – It is important to let each girl know immediately that she is welcome and accepted. To ease new girl’s transition into the program Orientation begins at Intake and shall be completed within 72 hours of Admission. Once she arrives at Oakley she shall receive a thorough orientation to the residential program. (See policy XIII.1: Admission, Intake and Orientation) The orientation phase of treatment is designed to help girls adjust to being in the program by emphasizing program compliance and participation in various program functions. Assessments and continuous care planning starts on the first day of admission. Girls shall be provided assistance in understanding the orientation materials. Each girl shall be assigned a peer coach who shall assist and encourage the new girl during the orientation phase. Peer coaches must be on level 4 and have a total of 30 “good days” days.
2. **Open Unit** – During evening hours (from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm) and on weekends, the girl’s unit shall operate as an open unit. The doors to the housing units and the activity area shall remain unlocked and open. Red lines at the entrances to the housing units, courtyard, outdoor recreation area, and activity area shall serve as programming barriers. Girls may not cross those lines without a written pass issued by a staff member authorizing them to be in the area. Girls may enter and leave their own housing unit but may not enter another unit unless they have a pass.
3. **Counseling/Treatment** – Following the assessment completed during the initial days after arrival at the facility, a comprehensive service plan shall be developed. These areas shall not be addressed in sequence but simultaneously. Consequently, it is possible a girl may be involved in three “treatment” functions a week – individual counseling for trauma, a treatment group for social skill development, and a class on gender specific issues. For specific information regarding the assessment process, case planning process and the treatment process, see policies XIII.3: Youth Screening and Assessment, XIII.5: Service Plans, and XIII.11: Counseling, Programs and Progress Notes.
 - a. **Mental Health Services** – Girls assessed to have a need for mental health services shall receive those services. This may include receiving psychotropic medication and/or individual and group counseling.
 - b. **Reduction of Areas of High Risk/Need** – Girls who are assessed to be high risk in areas such as social skills or anti-social thinking shall be placed in groups, classes or individual counseling to address these issues. In addition to other programs, the following shall be offered:
 - i. “Cognitive Intervention” programs shall be provided as needed in the Girls Unit. These interventions will teach *cognitive interpersonal skills*, i.e. thinking skills used to cope with life situations; while also providing for *cognitive restructuring* to

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take place, i.e. shaping new pro-social attitudes, beliefs, and the thinking patterns.

c. **Gender Specific Programming** – Throughout their stay at the training school, girls shall receive gender specific programming. In addition to other programs, the following shall be offered:

i. **VOICES** – Girls shall attend and complete the VOICES curriculum.

ii. **Girls Circle** – Girls shall attend “Girl’s Circle Groups as required.

4. **Master Schedule** – A master schedule shall be developed weekly. It shall be posted on the bulletin boards in the housing units and the activity area. The schedule shall define what shall take place from the time girls get up in the morning until they go to bed at night (See policy XIII.14: Structured Programming). The master schedule shall be monitored by the administrator on duty on a regular basis and by DYS consultants and monitors, as needed.

C. **Housing** – The girl’s unit shall be located in Unit I and shall comprise four units or functional areas. The housing units shall serve multiple functions.

1. **G Pod** – G pod shall house girls who are higher security risks and who have just arrived at the training school. G pod shall serve as the intake unit. In general, girls on rank levels 1 and 2 shall be housed on G pod. However, if necessary, girls of any rank may be housed in the unit. G pod may house girls on suicide watch, for specifics on the management of such youth see Policy XIII.12: Suicide Prevention. The four cells closest to the control station shall be utilized for girls on a pending status and for disciplinary segregation, see policies VII.9: Youth Discipline and XIII.8: SMU-OMU.

2. **E Pod** – E pod shall, in general, house girls on rank levels 3 and 4. However, if necessary, girls of any rank may be housed in the unit. E pod may house girls on suicide watch.

3. **C Pod** – C pod is a dry pod and does not have toilets in the individual rooms. It shall function as an overflow unit and shall not be used to house girls unless G and E pods are full. If it is used to house girls, it shall be operated as an honor’s unit for those girls on rank level 4. Doors shall remain unlocked except during a major incident, and then be locked only until the incident is resolved. C pod shall not be used to house girls on a suicide watch. The day room of C pod shall also serve as a school area and as an area for treatment groups and recreational activities.

4. **Activity Area** – The activity area across from G pod shall be used as a multipurpose area, including for meals, educational classes, treatment programming, medical, and for leisure activities.

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5. **Courtyard** – The interior courtyard used to access the end of the building containing G pod, E pod, and the activity area shall be used for recreation, and access to fresh air and exercise.
 6. **Recreation Yard** – A fenced recreation yard accessed through the hall door between G pod and the activity area shall be used for outdoor activities. The door to the recreation yard shall remain locked unless a staff member is on duty outside in the recreation area.
 7. **Out-of-facility Activities** – Girls who have achieved Level/Rank 3 and 4 are eligible to participate in activities outside of Unit I. The master schedule which is published weekly shall include specific activities for Rank 3 and 4 girls which shall be held outside the perimeter of Unit I.
- D. **Education** – Girls shall receive educational services. These educational services shall include elementary, junior high and high school programs, vocational education, and special education. Where sufficient numbers of students exist, educational classes shall for the girls and the boys shall be provided separately. However, if small numbers of girls and boys need a specific program, they may be placed in the same class provided safety and security requirements can be met. For example, if only one boy and one girl need an elementary school curriculum, this may be provided by placing them in the same classroom.
- E. **Services** – Specific services for the girls unit shall include the services listed below. Other institutional services shall be provided in ways similar to those provided to the boys.
1. **Laundry** – The girl’s clothing shall be laundered in the girls unit according to daily schedule. Care should be taken to ensure detergents utilized for undergarments do not contain caustic chemicals which may cause genital inflammation. Bedding and linens may be laundered in a central laundry. REMINDER: All caustic and toxic materials must be inventoried daily and stored in a secure area (See policy VIII.1: Inventory and Control of Caustic and HAZMAT Materials).
 2. **Property** – Personal care and hygiene items appropriate for girls and young women from a variety of racial and cultural backgrounds shall be provide. Girls shall be allowed personal property in accordance with DYS policy and the girl’s unit level system. In order to foster and encourage bonding with female youth and their children, any female youth with children shall be allowed a photo of her children regardless of her level status.
 3. **Health Care** – In order to provide a comprehensive girl’s program, the delivery of health care services for girls must differ from boys. The goal of delivery of gender-specific health care to girls is to incorporate into the DYS continuum of services, health care services that reflect an understanding of female development and the specific issues of the adolescent female. It is important

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that staff understand the adolescent girl's growth and development process and the medical and mental health issues that are related to adolescent girls, particularly within the context of the girl's culture and ethnicity

4. **Recreation** – The girls shall receive a comprehensive recreation program that includes large muscle exercise, access to fresh air and sunshine, hobby craft, and fine arts. While competitive sports such as basketball and volleyball may be part of the large muscle exercise program, non-competitive activities (such as dance, stretching, and riding bicycles) of interest to the girls shall also be provided on a regular basis. The master activity schedule shall specify the specific activities that shall be provided on a given day and shall not simply say “recreation.”
- F. **Training** – Staff assigned to work in the girl's unit shall receive special training about the unit before being assigned to work in the unit. This training shall include the following subjects:
1. **Girl's Unit Operation** – Staff shall receive specialized training in the operation of the girl's unit. This training shall include training in the operation of the unit, the unit's property procedures, master schedule, housing unit operation, rank/classification structure,
 2. **Suicide Prevention** – Direct care staff shall complete suicide prevention training before being assigned to work in the girl's unit. (For further information about specific training requirements on suicide prevention, Policy XIII.12: Suicide Prevention.)
 3. **Supervision of Girls** – Staff shall receive training on the growth and development of young women and on the unique aspects of working with girls. This shall include specialized communications training, differences between working with girls and boys, and recognizing and confronting dysfunctional behavior. Staff members, shall be trained to recognize and respond to behaviors that may be the result of a girl's history of abuse (problems at bedtime, bad dreams, and issues of hygiene).
 4. **Gender Responsive Services** – Staff shall receive training in female responsive values and principles which:
 - a. acknowledge the implications of gender and treatment of young women in the juvenile justice;
 - b. create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity;
 - c. recognize safety, respect, and dignity are fundamental to behavioral change;
 - d. are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community;

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- e. address substance abuse, trauma and mental health issues; and
- f. provide girls with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.

B. **Quality Assurance** – The unit manager of the girl’s unit shall be responsible for monitoring unit performance, collecting performance data, and participating in quality assurance activities including monthly performance review meetings and quality assurance audits.

1. **Quality Assurance Files** – The unit manager shall maintain the QA files developed for the girl’s unit. These files shall be kept current and available for audit when needed.
2. **Computer Database** – As the Division expands the use of the computer database for tracking information about the youth in the facility and the operation of the facility, the unit manager shall work with assigned staff to assure the appropriate data is entered into the CMS system.
3. **Monthly Performance Review** – The manager of the girl’s unit shall collect and submit the data needed for the Division’s monthly performance review process, and shall participate in the monthly performance review meetings.
4. **Quality Assurance Audits** – The manager of the girl’s unit shall be a member of the DYS Internal Audit team and shall participate in audits scheduled and conducted by that unit.