

# *From Corrections to Connections*

A Report on the

AMICUS

*GIRLS RESTORATIVE PROGRAM*

A Gender-specific  
Restorative Practices  
Program for  
Serious and Chronic Juvenile Female Offenders

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Corrections professionals are looking for new models that can effectively address the needs of women and girls in the corrections system and take on the unique challenges they pose. For the past four years, the Minnesota Department of Corrections has partnered with AMICUS (a non-profit agency) and a juvenile residential placement facility to provide a gender-responsive program for serious and chronic female juvenile offenders.

“The Girls Restorative Program” is an innovative effort that blends the philosophies of restorative justice with the best practices of gender-responsive programming for girls. Restorative services are provided to girls while they are in residential placement, during their transition and furlough, and after release. The two key components of the program are:

- **Restorative Justice Circles.** Using the principles and practices of restorative justice, “Circles” of significant people in a girl’s life (immediate and extended family, past providers, teachers, probation officers, social workers, elders, friends, and sometimes victims) gather to speak from the heart about the girl, her issues, her past, and her future. Circles are held in the girl’s home community both before and after her release from her residential placement. A restorative justice “talking piece” is passed from hand to hand, allowing each person to speak freely and without interruption.
- **Grief and Trauma Counseling.** Girls participate in a weekly Girls Group with a trained trauma counselor to address their past victimization and abuse and other topics relating to relationships, self-esteem, personal safety, and coping skills. Intensive individual trauma counseling is also provided to each girl.

There are many ways in which the Girls Restorative Justice Program is different than other, more traditional juvenile offender programs. In particular, when compared to other programs, this program:

- Accepts, encourages, and even immerses itself in the complexities and difficulties of the girls’ lives;
- Focuses on the process by which girls are healed and supported;
- Takes a holistic approach to both program delivery and the measurement of program success, and
- Explores and supports both the personal (e.g., hope and faith) and interpersonal (e.g., family and community relationship) dynamics of healing, making amends, and ultimately moving forward.

Outcomes for girls in the Girls Restorative Program vary greatly and are not easy to define. However, patterns of changed attitudes, behaviors, and commitments on the part of the girls, their families, their communities, their victims, and their professional staff are clearly evident. Relationships are healed, and change and commitment occur – sometimes in stunning ways. Stories of the girls’ experiences with the program (names have been changed) are shared throughout to illustrate “what this program is all about” in a concrete way. The paper includes “lessons learned” to assist those who may wish to replicate the Girls Restorative Program.

# INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT BACKGROUND

The increase in the number of women and girls in the criminal justice system has become a challenge and concern for corrections over the past 20 years. Corrections professionals are coming to understand that “gender matters.” Women and girls do not respond to the same interventions that have proven effective with males. As women’s corrections expert Mary Scully Whitaker has said, “Taking the urinals out of the bathroom and painting the walls pink is not enough.” Corrections professionals are looking for new models that effectively address the needs of women and girls in the corrections system and take on the unique challenges they pose.

In the late 1980s and the 1990s, Minnesota became a leader in this effort. Under the direction of the Minnesota Department of Corrections’ Planning for Female Offenders Unit (PFO), Minnesota developed nationally recognized programming at its women’s prison, MCF (Minnesota Correctional Facility)-Shakopee.

In the mid-1990s, the PFO unit began developing, from the ground up, programming specifically designed to meet the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system.<sup>1</sup> The program would serve Minnesota’s small (typically less than a dozen girls), culturally diverse population of “state-commit” girls: serious and chronic juvenile offenders who had committed at least one felony-level offense and who were deep in the juvenile system.<sup>2</sup>

The vision: to use cutting-edge, gender-responsive methods to hold these girls accountable to their behaviors, address the trauma and victimization in their lives, and support them through their transition from residential placement to home and community. The ultimate goal: to break the cycle of failed placements and community living attempts for these girls and empower them to make lasting changes in their lives.

By 2000, Minnesota’s new Girls Restorative Program was ready to launch.<sup>3</sup> The vision of the program had evolved to merge gender-responsive programming with the principles and techniques of restorative justice, another area in which Minnesota has been an innovator. The chosen approach was to provide services to the girls via a three-way partnership between the Department of Corrections; a privately operated residential facility for juveniles; and AMICUS, a non-profit agency that would provide restorative justice services.

What has developed since then is a unique and fluid way of serving girls and the larger community, one that has both confirmed the importance (and rarity) of specifically addressing girls’ needs in an often rigid male-centered system and provided important information in our endeavor to successfully implement gender-responsive theory. This paper will define the underlying philosophy of the program, outline the program model, give examples of how the model has played out in girls’ lives, and describe what we have learned. Our hope is to assist other corrections professionals in implementing effective programming for girls.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For a list of recommended reading on women and girls in the criminal justice system, see Appendix B.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota has a largely county-based juvenile system. For girls who meet certain criteria (more serious or chronic offenders), counties have the option to commit juveniles to the Commissioner of Corrections.

<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed description of the development of this program, and of its partners, see Appendix A.

<sup>4</sup> A new pilot program to replicate the Girls Restorative Program model was started up a year ago by AMICUS at the request of Ramsey County (St. Paul, MN). While the same philosophy underlies this pilot program, it serves a different population of girls (community-based and less involved in the system), and its program model has been evolving in a somewhat different direction.

## Philosophical roots:

The Girls Restorative Program has its philosophical roots in two main areas: gender-responsive principles and the philosophy of restorative justice.

Gender-responsive philosophy, or "good programming for girls," centers on the idea that females are entwined in a complex web of relationships and lifestyle issues whose impact on them as individuals cannot be underestimated. Bloom and Covington define being gender-responsive as "creating an environment...that reflects an understanding of the realities of women's lives and addresses the issues of the participants. Gender-responsive ...interventions address issues such as abuse, violence, family relationships, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. They provide a strength-based approach..."<sup>5</sup> This philosophy guides our beliefs about what girls need and how they can best be served.

Restorative justice centers on the belief in our collective human ability to use pain, crime, harm, and conflict as building blocks for positive change, empowerment, and connection to one another. Using face-to-face dialogue as its primary process, restorative justice has demonstrated that people can be powerful and effective agents of their own healing and the restoration of those around them, even those with whom there have been deep rifts, terrible harm, and broken relationships. According to the Balanced and Restorative Justice for Juveniles Project (BARJ), a federally funded effort to guide our juvenile justice system, restorative justice "views victim, offender, and community as equal customers of juvenile justice services and as important, active co-participants in responding to juvenile crime."<sup>6</sup> Restorative justice practitioners bring together all those involved in crime and harm, or all those who have a stake in the issue at hand, to openly and honestly speak from their hearts, listen to others do the same, and come to agreements about restoration and future expectations. Inclusiveness, a belief in the human spirit, and the acknowledgement of disconnect as the source of our pain underlie every restorative process.

The Girls Restorative Program philosophy was developed, then, by those familiar with both restorative justice and gender-responsive theory. It is important to note that at the time of the program's inception, no definitive research about serving girls in placement in this way was available. We had no role models. We did, however, have a burning conviction that girls could be more effectively served than they were currently, and we were aware that this was a golden opportunity. The combination of restorative practices and gender-responsive programming felt natural. Restorative justice practices bring about connections and heal relationships after harm has occurred, and if there is one thing that gender-responsive programming demands, it is attention to relationships and the harm that has been done in girls' lives, both by them and to them. As a "ground-up" initiative, we merged our commitment to restorative and gender-specific philosophies and designed a program model that seemed to have the most promise for girls.

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<sup>5</sup> Bloom, B., and Covington, S. (2000, November.) *Gendered justice: Programming for women in correctional settings*. Paper presented to the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> "Balanced and Restorative Justice for Juveniles: A Framework for Juvenile Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Florida Atlantic University and the University of Minnesota: 1997, p. ii.

# PROGRAM MODEL

*“It may be tempting to conclude that... nothing can be done until everything can be done.” --M. Kay Harris*

So, how did we put these ideas into practice? What do we, in fact, do? This is a trickier question than it seems. One of the great strengths of the program model has been its fluidity and responsiveness to each girl. The Girls Restorative Program uses two principal tools:

- **Restorative Justice Circles.** Using the principles and practices of restorative justice, “Circles” of significant people in a girl’s life (immediate and extended family, past providers, teachers, probation officers, social workers, elders, friends, and sometimes victims) gather to speak from the heart about the girl, her issues, her past, and her future. Circles are held in the girl’s home community both before and after her release from her residential placement. A “talking piece” is passed from hand to hand, allowing each person to speak freely and without interruption.
- **Trauma counseling.** Girls participate in a weekly Girls Group with a trained trauma counselor to address their past victimization and abuse and other topics relating to relationships, self-esteem, personal safety, and coping skills. Intensive individual trauma counseling is also provided to each girl.

This section describes the program model in greater detail, including whom we serve, the details of what goes on in Circles and trauma counseling, and the “hows” of planning, financing, staffing, and running the Girls Restorative Program. Interspersed with these descriptions, we also share the story of “Sarah,” (not her real name) to help give a realistic view of how this program looked for one girl. Thanks to Sarah and her family for sharing their story.

## FOUR STAKEHOLDERS GROUPS

The Girls Restorative Program serves four different types of people. The girls are the direct clients. Additional stakeholders include their families; their communities and victims; and state and county professionals.

### 1. THE GIRLS

Girls served by the program come from all over the state, from both urban and rural areas. All of the girls who enter the Girls Restorative Program:

- Are "serious and chronic" juvenile female offenders committed to the state Corrections Commissioner
- Are between 14 and 21 years old
- Have committed at least one offense that is equivalent to a felony.

Many of the girls served by the program:

- Are victims of physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse
- Are substance abusers

- Have mental health issues
- Are on multiple prescribed medications
- Are years behind in school
- Have not lived at home in recent years
- Have been in the correctional system for at least a few years
- Have been involved in the social service system for much of their childhood.

Almost without exception, these girls have had very little genuine or reliable support from their families, which are themselves struggling, or from their communities, with whom they have burnt many bridges. Their difficulties are usually not new and patterns of behavior can easily be seen for generations before them. In the end, they are the girls that everyone has given up on. The depth and complexity of their problems take the breath away. Their behaviors, their internal feelings about themselves, and their relationships universally seem dire. They are in desperate need of people who will take a different perspective on their lives and who will offer them a path of healing, re-connection, and hope.

*For example, consider Sarah. She entered the program after carrying a weapon into school. She was an obese 18-year-old. She had traveled from “psych wards,” as she called them, to foster homes to detention centers for several years prior to her current placement at a correctional facility as a state commit girl. Most recently she was removed from a juvenile detention center because of the physical and mental stress placed on the staff there for her repeated and difficult physical restraints. She was on “a full page” of medications for her numerous mental health diagnoses (including bipolar disorder and oppositional-defiant disorder). Sarah was desperate to go home so she could take care of her younger sister and brother, but she kept getting into trouble, either flying into a rage and being restrained by staff, or banging her head against the wall or cutting on herself – more grounds for staff restraint. Each incident put her into a deep depression, as she watched her release date slip farther and farther away.*

## **2. THEIR FAMILIES**

The families of girls in the program, the secondary clients, have widely varying characteristics. Most families are outwardly struggling with issues familiar to juvenile justice practitioners – single parenting, absent parents, chemical and substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual abuse, poverty, and poor communication skills. Even when families appear to be functioning smoothly on the surface (which is rare), honest discussion with family members reveals deep, destructive aspects of their family, cloaked in shame and secrecy.

*In Sarah's case, her mother also struggled with mental health issues, discussed in hushed tones by the family's social worker. Sarah's mother was also fighting malignant cancer. Sarah's younger sister and brother were living at home with their mom. Multiple boyfriends had come and gone throughout their childhood. Recently, her mother had married. Sarah really liked her stepdad. There were no other relatives close by or interested in being involved.*

### 3. THEIR COMMUNITIES

The communities of the girls, including the victims of their offenses, also vary widely. Many girls who lack a strong family support system or who have lived outside the home for substantial lengths of time have many connections with "system" people – their social workers, probation officers, teachers, counselors, and foster parents. Whether they realize it or not, the girls seem to have a knack (a survival skill) for seeking out adults that really care about and have compassion for their troubled spirits. Often they can “dig deep” to find a first grade teacher, a neighbor who was kind—anyone who can be a support.

Aside from these special adults in their lives, however, most girls are estranged from their communities. Schools see them as troublemakers. Parents of their friends view them as bad news. Victims have had no opportunity to see them out of court and are either afraid of them or angry at them. Once a girl burns a bridge in her community, without an avenue to making amends, she can feel isolated. For girls who make a lot of mistakes and burn a lot of bridges, there aren't a whole lot of safe positive places for them to be welcomed, nor are they initially inclined to seek re-connection with those they have negatively affected over the years.

*Sarah had very little connection to her home community. She had lived there so rarely in the past few years, and her home life was so chaotic that everyone was focused on survival. However, she spoke fondly of a former foster mom who, when contacted, found childcare for her children and drove over an hour to attend Sarah's Circles. Sarah had no friends she could speak of; she hung out solely with her sister. She had mixed feelings about the school where she had brought the weapon and been expelled. She never expected to see or talk to anyone from the school again. She had no plans or ideas about her life after placement, but was driven by a desperate desire to be home.*

### 4. STATE AND COUNTY PROFESSIONALS

The girls in the program are encouraged to include their probation officers, county caseworkers, social service providers, etc. as participants and support people in their circles. Their support is important to the implementation of plans and the girls' investment in the Circle process. Some of these professionals welcome the opportunity to play a different role in the girl's life (support person, Circle participant) rather than the authority, the hammer, the one with all the power. Others prefer to take a back seat and see what happens. Often they are frustrated with the failure of their previous interventions and are looking for new ways to help the girl.

*Sarah's strongest ally was her social worker – a sweet and tactful woman who had been with the family for years. Her probation officer also spoke warmly of her, even as he acknowledged that her violent behavior was troublesome. Unfortunately, he was switching jobs and his biggest concern in leaving Sarah was her difficulty with transitions.*

## **THE TWO COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM MODEL**

The Girls Restorative Program offers two main services: trauma counseling and restorative justice Circles. It should be noted that all the girls are also in a residential setting and receive additional services (education and other programs—ideally, also gender-responsive in nature) offered by the residential provider.

### **1. GRIEF AND TRAUMA GROUPS**

We understood early on that if we wanted to look at the "whole girl," we could not ignore the violence and trauma that she, almost without exception, had been subjected to or witnessed in the past. Many of the girls had unspoken stories of trauma that directly led to their destructive behavior. Many could not accept responsibility for the harm they had caused until it was acknowledged that they, too, had been harmed. Many had been enslaved by patterns of submissive behavior to powerful abusers.

The program centers around a weekly group time called "Girls Group." This group meets weekly to address and discuss, in a safe place, the many issues surrounding grief and trauma and other topics relating to relationships, self-esteem, personal safety, and coping skills. The trauma counselor also meets with the girls 1:1 as needed, or as much as time allows. The girls have the opportunity not only to learn and listen from others, but also to tell their own stories and begin the steps of healing in the presence of compassionate counselors. These groups are crucial in getting the girls to trust the program and to begin to reflect on and discuss their "issues" in a safe place – a prerequisite for discussing it in Circle with others.

#### **Characteristics of "Girls Group":**

- Weekly
- Educational and therapeutic
- Open enrollment and ongoing participation
- Supplemental 1:1 counseling
- Includes girls in the residential facility who are not committed to the commissioner
- Flexible and changing
- Residential staff are invited if they stay and participate.

#### **Topics include:**

- Grief and trauma
- Abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)
- Abandonment and neglect
- Self-injurious behavior
- Running away
- Volcano theory (PTSD)
- Self-esteem
- Victim empathy
- Characteristics of healthy relationships
- Appropriate communication/conflict resolution
- Planning for safety
- Sexuality, HIV, teenage motherhood.

### **A typical Girls Group follows this format:**

- Girls and staff sit in a Circle on the floor
- Snacks (sometimes)
- Self-esteem cards (each girl writes a positive characteristic about each other girl on a card)
- Journal exercise (includes a question pertinent to the day's topic and a list of gratitudes)
- Guidelines re-defined if there is a new girl
- Check-ins with the talking piece (see page 11 for definition of talking piece)
- Group topic initiated, discussed with talking piece<sup>7</sup>
- Video or project (role play, art)
- Closing.

### **After the Group meets, the trauma counselor provides the following follow-up:**

- Reads the journal entries and paperwork
- Touches base with any girls that need her attention or ear
- Meets regularly 1:1 with state-committed girls.

Originally Girls Group included only the state-commit girls, but it was soon clear that ALL the girls living together needed and wanted to be included. We then opened it up to all girls in the residential program. Participation for “county-commit” girls is voluntary but no girl has declined participation yet. In the counselor's words, "girls LOVE the opportunity to use the talking piece, to speak to someone who cares, to hear others' stories, to say ‘I am having a lousy day’ with no recriminations." She also says that the group is necessarily subject to change according to the mood of the group or issues that the girls are facing. This flexibility enables the counselor to tailor the group to the girls' lives so that it is immediately relevant.

*Sarah had a lengthy history of abuse on the part of her mom's many boyfriends. That her childhood was chaotic and abusive was no secret. She turned this pain inward, with self-injurious behavior like banging her head and scratching her wrists. She had also attempted to hurt her sister. Discussing such topics in Girls Group was understandably stressful for her (though she loved the group) and she often requested to leave the room and take some space. The counselor spent many hours with her after each group. Sarah openly resisted this at first. She would ask the counselor, “What makes you believe you have something new?” and distract herself any way she could. Over time though, they built a trusting relationship. Eventually she was able to express herself safely and discuss healthy means of coping with her stress. Around Girls Group time Sarah's behaviors tended to escalate, but the counselor communicated with other staff in the facility about what was really going on for her and urged staff and peers to engage and connect with Sarah when she was stressed out rather than ignoring, teasing or closing in on her, which led to an inevitable restraint. Because Sarah's abusive history so overwhelmingly affected her present emotional state and consequent actions, her relationship with the trauma counselor provided her some desperately needed space to begin to process and heal, and also to address the issues in her Circles. Without this group and the knowledge, compassion, and staff-liaison efforts of her counselor, Sarah very likely would have followed the same pattern of violence and repeated restraints she had followed in other placements.*

<sup>7</sup> Occasionally a girl will present a topic that she is familiar with and about which she has something valuable to share. For instance, a girl whose mother had died in a drunk-driving accident, and who was herself locked up for drinking and driving, gave a presentation on drinking and driving.

## 2. CIRCLES

The other process is simply stated: we do restorative justice "Circles." Plainly put, we bring the girls together with the important people in their lives<sup>8</sup> into a safe space, or a "Circle," to speak from their hearts about what has happened in the past, their feelings and thoughts about what is happening now, and their hopes for the future. A trained Circle Keeper or facilitator (in our case, the AMICUS Circle coordinator) works with the girl to prepare for the Circle, invite the members, and create a safe—even sacred—environment for speaking and listening. A “talking piece” (an object of significance to the girl, such as stone, feather or even a teddy bear) serves as a visual representation of this safe space and is passed from hand to hand.<sup>9</sup> Only the person with the talking piece talks.

### **Two Major Categories of Circles:**

Each girl has a series of Circles both before and after her release from placement. If a Circle is called for a specific purpose, it may have a specific name. Often the first Circle is called the "Establishing Circle," dedicated to establishing the Circle group, the guidelines, and the talking piece. Later Circles might be called "Transition Circles" and focus on an upcoming transition. Circles have also been called "Emergency Circles," to deal with an immediate crisis. Many Circles have the purpose simply of providing ongoing support for the girl and are called Circles of Support. In restorative justice terms, all the above mentioned types of Circles fall under the category of Circles of Support.

We also attempt to conduct a Victim-Offender Circle with each girl, where a girl sits in a Circle with her victim(s) and support people to speak about the offense and work to repair the harm. These are slightly different in purpose and format than the Circles of Support. Details are given below.

### **Characteristics of Circles of Support:**

- Designed to support the girl and her transition back to community, to develop a network for her, to make specific plans, to discuss current issues and concerns
- As needed for transition, no set time line
- Participants chosen by the girl
- Emotional and practical issues discussed
- Agreements/commitments made by girl and other participants
- Takes place in home community or future home community.

### **Characteristics of Victim-Offender Circles**

- Designed to discuss incident/offense and its effects, take responsibility, and make amends to the person harmed
- One-time occurrence

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<sup>8</sup> Circle participants have included immediate and extended family members, teachers, counselors, guardian ad litem, social workers, foster parents, adoptive parents, probation agents, judges, neighbors, family friends, school principals, CD assessors, former residential staff, current staff, peers, and others.

<sup>9</sup> The Talking Piece originated in Native American Peacemaking Circles and has been adapted to use in non-native circles.

- Includes offender (usually the girl) and her supporters<sup>10</sup>
- Includes victim and his/her supporters
- Includes others: staff, community members, support people
- Participation is voluntary, especially for victim
- Agreements can be written up
- Takes place in community where incident occurred.

### **What usually happens in a Circle?**

- Circle participants sign in and are welcomed by Circle Keeper
- Participants sit in chairs set up in a Circle (no table)
- When the time comes to start, Circle Keeper welcomes everyone and goes over logistics (bathroom, breaks, food and drink)
- Introductions: each person says who they are and why they came
- Guidelines: each person contributes a value important to them to be honored by the Circle
- Talking Piece is introduced. Only the person with the talking piece talks
- The purpose of the Circle is introduced and the talking piece begins to go around the Circle so that people can say what they feel they want to say
- Throughout the Circle, the Circle Keeper affirms participants, reiterates perspectives, guides discussion, and keeps the atmosphere safe so that the path is cleared for healing and communication
- If an agreement is coming out of the Circle, the Circle Keeper writes up the agreement and ensures it is agreed upon by all
- The Circle is formally closed (e.g. with a reading)
- Circle Keeper and the girl thank everyone for coming
- After the Circle people are welcome to chat, eat, drink, relax.

### **Circle Follow-up:**

- Circle Keeper writes up an agreement and sends to all participants
- Circle Keeper follows up on commitments, if necessary
- Circle Keeper sends out surveys<sup>11</sup> to participants and writes up Circle Report
- Participants communicate need for another Circle to Circle Keeper, if appropriate.

### **Circles of Support**

It is important to understand that Circles are, and must be, an organic process. All but the Victim-Offender Circles focus on the girl herself. These Circles are powerful tools for transition precisely because they bypass the superiority of “we know what’s best for you” in favor of a genuinely community-based approach that hones in on the girl’s needs and problems as perceived by herself and those who know her best and have a personal investment in and connection to her future. The Circle itself determines what needs to be discussed and done in order for victims to heal, and in order for each individual girl to be able to function successfully in the community. The primary function of the AMICUS Circle Keeper is to “clear the path.”

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<sup>10</sup> Occasionally we have called a Victim-Offender Circle for a girl where she has been the victim and seeks to have a Circle with the person who offended against her.

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix E for example of survey form.

Girls have used Circles to address family problems, to handle grief, to say goodbye to negative friends, to confront abuse and neglect, to mend broken relationships, to look squarely at the harm they have caused to others, to apologize to and show respect for their victims, and simply to come to the life-changing realization that people do care about them. These are vital tasks for girls.

Other common subjects discussed in a Transition Circle include:

- Deciding the healthiest environment for the girl to live in (with a parent, with another relative, in a supported housing environment, etc.)
- Assessing job readiness and developing a plan for employment
- Assessing educational status and planning for educational advancement
- Planning for positive use of her time (job, education, volunteering, positive leisure)
- Identifying needed services and local providers (CD aftercare, trauma counseling, medical care, mental health care, etc.)
- Identifying positive support people and peers
- Prioritizing and setting realistic goals
- Developing a “safety plan” in case things go awry in the community.

From a restorative perspective, the Circle addresses the need for community safety by drawing the community into the re-integration process and making sure community concerns are addressed.<sup>12</sup> As important, the Circle is a direct and effective way to build competency in the girl. Both of these are crucial components of any restorative program.<sup>13</sup>

We begin the process of planning a Circle as soon as the girl enters the residential placement facility. We hold one to three Circles of Support in the girl’s home community while she is in residence at the facility. At least one Circle is then held while the girl is on "furlough" (still under the supervision of the facility but living in her community). AMICUS continues to provide Circles and other services to girls as long as support is needed.

*Before her first Circle in her hometown, Sarah was nervous. She didn't know what she would say, and she didn't know who, if anyone, would show up. She was giggly and giddy. But everyone showed up who had promised to. Participants included her mother, brother and sister, her former foster mom, her social worker, a former teacher, her probation officer, and staff from the residential facility.*

*After establishing guidelines, people were invited to share whatever they wanted to. There was a warm outpouring of support for Sarah. Her former foster mom told her, “When we talk to your heart, we see Sarah; your heart is worth getting past the behaviors.” Her probation officer told her how much faith he had that she could make the necessary changes in her life. Her sister and brother asked her to count to ten before blowing up, to*

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<sup>12</sup> BARJ states: “The ultimate measure of success for any approach that claims to advance restorative and community justice should be its ability to strengthen the capacity of communities to respond effectively to offense.” 1999, p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> BARJ states: “In the Balanced and Restorative Justice model, a competency development approach should require that offenders, families and other community members, and victims play active roles in the reintegrative process and that each of these groups also become targets of service and intervention.” p. 35.

*open up to them, to remember the good memories, to be kind, and to tell the truth. Her sister also said “I just have one thing to say: I love you.”*

*Her mother spoke with difficulty but straight from the heart. With liquid eyes and a raspy voice (she struggles with cancer) she told Sarah that she was sorry that so much had gone wrong in their home, that she (mom) didn’t know what to do at the time. She hoped that Sarah could move on with her own life. While her mom talked, Sarah hid her face in a Kleenex for several minutes and couldn’t speak. All participants sat silently, warmly supporting mother and daughter in this moment. Then the discussion turned to Sarah’s need for therapeutic support, particularly the need to deal with the “wall of shame” that blocks her ability to manage her emotions. She was encouraged to learn to forgive herself and others.*

*Sarah was very open about her difficulties, her inability to forgive herself and her constant feeling that people hate her. Much was said about the whole family’s propensity towards depression and being easily overwhelmed, and Sarah was encouraged to take things one step at a time. Her probation officer suggested that Sarah make amends to those she has harmed, both in and out of facilities. She and the residential staff agreed to make a list of people to whom she needed to make amends. She agreed to do individual work with the grief and trauma counselor.*

*More practical discussion centered around Sarah’s education; she told everyone that her 10<sup>th</sup> grade credits had never been sent to the facility where she was attending school, and she wasn’t getting any credit for what she was doing now. Her teacher and social worker together promised to follow up and send the records ASAP.*

*All agreed (Sarah VERY reluctantly) that while she should be in close contact with her family, living at home at this time probably wouldn’t work. Various independent living options close to home were brought up. Sarah also brought up her medications, and her desire to get off them and be “normal”; the social worker gently and kindly expressed her opinion that due to Sarah’s persistent mental health diagnosis, meds would be necessary indefinitely. She reminded Sarah that the times when she has crashed and burned coincided with her going off the medications. Sarah appeared to accept this, with difficulty, to the relief of the residential staff who had been dealing with this issue daily with Sarah.*

*Sarah’s mom also asked Sarah to not be continually calling her for rescue; she said it was hard for her to be rescuing Sarah and trying to manage her own life as well. When the social worker got the talking piece she reminded mom that “rescue” is not support. She agreed that mom needs to NOT rescue Sarah when she is out of control. Mom, later, agreed and seemed refocused on her own issues.*

*Sarah was acknowledged several times for her courage and her strength in being authentic in Circle (she never once erupted into giggles, which is her normal method of dealing with stress or embarrassment). She thanked everyone for coming and we took a group picture and then a family picture. Her family hung out for half an hour after the Circle.*

## Victim-Offender Circles

A basic tenet of restorative justice philosophy outlines the importance of direct accountability to victims of crime and harm.<sup>14</sup> An important piece of this is helping offenders acquire and express empathy for those whom they have harmed. From the time they enter the program, girls are encouraged and taught to think about those they have harmed, what the effects feel like, what is the extent of the harm, and what can be done to make things right. They spend weeks writing sincere and thoughtful apology letters and readying themselves to meet victims face-to-face.

If possible, each girl participates in at least one Victim-Offender Circle; a Circle designed to bring her face-to-face with at least one victim that she has affected through criminal behavior. The first purpose of this Circle is to offer victims and community an opportunity to heal and give them a chance to ask questions or receive amends from the girl. The second purpose is to ensure that the girl is directly accountable to those she has harmed, rather than to a system that has taken over her life. The Circle enables her to approach a difficult relationship (that with her victim) and offer an honest apology. Although it is often a long and arduous process to get participants ready for such a Circle, the results make it worthwhile.<sup>15</sup>

*In Sarah's case, her most serious criminal act occurred on the day she went to the principal's office, where she spoke to him about the troubles she was having and what she wanted to do to the people who were harassing her. He asked her if she had a weapon and she said yes, a knife, which she then showed him. She then walked out of the office and out of the school. The principal contacted the police, who quickly moved to arrest Sarah. She resisted the arrest and threatened the police with the knife. This incident put Sarah into juvenile detention and then into the long-term residential program.*

*When Sarah first heard about the possibility of having a Circle with the principal, she wanted nothing to do with it. She had written many letters of apology in her life and felt safer with that. However the principal was willing to meet with her and her school liaison (who had been active in her Circles of Support) helped bring together several teachers who had made good connections with Sarah. By the end of her second Circle of Support, Sarah was ready for a Victim-Offender Circle with the principal and others at the school.*

*From the time she arrived for the Victim-Offender Circle, Sarah enjoyed being back at the school. She found her sister, who was permitted to attend the Circle with her. She then ran into an old social studies teacher and joked around with him. By the time we reached the meeting room she was quite comfortable in her good memories. The time was limited, since the teachers had only half an hour between meetings.*

*First, Sarah related how she had been feeling picked on and overwhelmed, and that she had carried a knife to school in her pocket. She recalled that she had talked to the principal, then left and was arrested. She said that she wasn't thinking at the time.*

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<sup>14</sup> BARJ states, "From a restorative perspective, true rehabilitation cannot be achieved until the offender acknowledges the harm caused to victims and communities and makes amends. Likewise, achieving safe and secure communities will require attention to victims' needs and ultimately the adoption of effective community dispute resolution and mediation processes," p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> For more specifics, see "Changes for Victims" section of this report p. 35.

*The principal then spoke. He said that first of all he was so glad that she had come straight to him and not caused a bigger stir in the population. He said that at the time he could feel how angry she was and how this worried him. He said that the safety of Sarah and everyone else was foremost on his mind, which is why he immediately called the cops. He said that he hoped that she can learn from this, that there are other ways to get your needs met. He said he hadn't been certain if the Circle would be a positive experience, but now he was glad he had participated. He said he was ready to let the incident be put to rest.*

*A teacher then spoke. She said that she felt badly about what happened because she felt Sarah didn't have enough support in the school. (This was the first time Sarah had ever been in a regular high school.) The teacher said that when she had heard that Sarah had brought a knife to school, she was shocked and scared. She said that she now believes that Sarah was feeling overwhelmed and looking for someone to take charge, which is why she went to the principal. She said that she really believed Sarah was doing well now and she was proud of her.*

*Both of Sarah's teachers spoke of how much they enjoyed having Sarah in the classroom, how concerned they had been that she wasn't doing well, and how surprised they were to hear that she was gone. One teacher remembered that she and Sarah talked about mental health issues that they both experience.*

*Sarah's sister then spoke of how much she loves and misses her sister, and how sad she was when this all happened.*

*Sarah then responded. She said she was very sorry. She said that she never thought about what a serious offense bringing a knife to school was, and that she would never do it again. She said that she really wants to be home again, but agreed that she was getting what she needed right now. She also agreed that when she is on her meds, her life goes much better.*

*The Circle Keeper then asked the group if there were any ideas of what Sarah could do to repair the harm. There was a silence, and then one teacher said that the apology was all she needed. The principal agreed and said that he felt that it was over. Another teacher asked if Sarah would keep her informed of her doings. "The best thing you could do," she said, "would be to promise us you will stay on your meds. And, when you are out and about, let us know how you're doing! Send me a card." Sarah promised to do those things. Then the adults wanted to know her plans, so she told them. They applauded her ideas. She then thanked everyone for coming and we ended the conference, 32 minutes later.*

In Sarah's case, we held five Circles of Support and one Victim-Offender Circle. It is important to note that the emphasis is on the process rather than the product (the plan). We are more committed to doing Circles until there is no more need, than we are to conducting a certain number of Circles or to accomplishing standard goals for each girl. As long as the girl or her support people feel the need to continue the Circle, our responsibility is to continue to "clear the path" for the process to continue.

## **FOUR OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

Rather than describing a method that is too rigid to be realistic, we advocate instead for four principles that have guided us in everything we do in association with the Circle process and the Girls Groups. Each of these principles is briefly discussed below.

### **1. WE "CLEAR THE PATH" – WE DO NOT "SOLVE THE PROBLEM"**

It is very tempting to imagine that we know what is best in each situation. It is sometimes hard to accept that difficult and seemingly irresolvable situations exist, without attempting to do something ourselves to better them – even against the wishes of those whose lives are at stake. The Circle process, because it is a consensual process where everyone has a voice, takes the responsibility away from the "system" and puts it back into the hands of the girl, her family, and her community.

This often means that plans that result from the Circle are fluid and changing. What is important, again, is not the product but the participation of the people involved. Are people sharing and listening to each other? Are they taking responsibility for their part in what has happened, and what will happen? Are they invested in the process? Are they willing to stick with it through setbacks? If we can answer "yes" to these questions, then we can be confident that we are indeed "clearing the path" for what will ultimately be positive results to occur.

When participants are not invested in the process, it is usually because they feel they have no voice, or they do not feel comfortable in the Circle, or they don't believe anything is changing or will change. Something is blocking their path; it needs to be cleared.

*Sarah's story was full of irresolvable situations. The main one was her very understandable desire to go home and take care of her siblings and mother (who was dying), juxtaposed with her history of "not making it" at home due to the stress of those same circumstances. This issue was the unfinished topic of many of Sarah's Circles. She wanted to be home, she believed she SHOULD be home, yet no one believed she could make it at home. Internally, she wanted a real childhood—but would never find it at home anyway. As one Circle participant told her, "Your childhood is gone. You will never get it back. This is not a time to wish; it is a time to grieve the loss." A workable plan was reached (and thus far has been successful), but it never solved the sadness of a girl who still wants to live at home with her family.*

### **2. MESSINESS IS OKAY**

Behaviorist theory would like us to believe that answers are simple. If kids go to a program where they eat three good meals a day, follow rules, attend school, and receive consequences for their negative behaviors, this will somehow carry over into compliant and legal behavior at home. We believe that the answer is not that simple and that it is necessary to delve into the "messiness" of the real life situation. By "messiness," we mean the complications, complexities, and contradictions inherent in dealing with the full range of personal, interpersonal, and systemic issues facing each girl.

The Girls' Restorative Program acknowledges this state of affairs from the time the girl begins her work in the program, and actively seeks to acknowledge and allow for the messiness of each girl's life. Messiness is not avoided or ignored. It is an accurate reflection of each girl's circumstances, and our program efforts – Circles or other direct interventions – take this into account.

Messiness includes many of the factors that are often avoided because of the difficulty of finding solutions once they are acknowledged. The end result is that interventions are disconnected from the girl's reality and rarely achieve the desired outcomes. Examples of "messiness" might be: How to approach family members who don't talk to one another? How to get those parents/that family to take responsibility? How to engage participants with mental illness? How to regard a boyfriend, or a friend rumored to be a drinking buddy? How to deal with a victim who is also an abuser? How to overcome legal stumbling blocks that keep people separate?

What makes the Girls Restorative Program unique is that rather than "throwing up our hands," we engage the messiness by drawing on the strengths of the people in a girl's Circle – whoever they may be. Even people who might traditionally be shut out as "negative influences" are included in Circles. The girl's chosen Circle IS her community and her future is largely in their, and her own, hands. The girl is entwined with her family, regardless of their deficits. She also has many contacts – adults and peers, boyfriends and neighbors – whom she chooses and will fiercely defend the right to choose, as anyone would. While we are always free to honestly talk with her about the often unpleasant realities of these relationships, we assume that we both want the same thing – a healthy girl in healthy relationships – and we will put our energy into teaching/helping her to navigate these relationships in a way that directs her own life more positively.

In practice, that means that she chooses the people in her support Circle. Before, during and after Circles, we are right there with her interacting with these people, being open and honest in our discussion. Simply giving her the power to choose her own Circle is often a crucial step in building trust and convincing the girl that this really is about her life and no one else's. We take on a unique role in her life: we are professional adults, but we exert no power over her; we can act as a link between the girl and others (filling a critical gap in care); we gain insight into her "real life" and can use this perspective to her advantage.

We see messiness as a sign that "now we're really getting somewhere" rather than as proof that the task is too overwhelming, that the process needs to stop in its tracks, or that the girl is not capable of helping herself or taking accountability for her own actions. We do not want to gloss over the very real and sometimes insurmountable difficulties that frequently arise. No program can work miracles in every girl's life. The difference is that we are not aiming to keep a girl "together" for the duration of a placement, but for life. That is why we must, and do, embrace messiness and seek strengths in the reality of her life *as it is*.

*Some of the messy factors in Sarah's case included:*

*It was hard to figure out who Sarah was underneath all the medications. Sarah was often giggly, angry, distracted, or silent (though not in Circle.)*

*Sarah's behavior often prevented our access to her and the facility's behavioral outlook delayed a Circle more than once, throwing Sarah into despair.*

*Sarah's mother, who was dying of cancer, always gave the impression that she was on the mend. This would affect the timing of our Circles and the honesty of our discussions. Her mother's health and ability to care for the family remained an unspoken topic in all the discussions about Sarah's time at home.*

*All of Sarah's victims, including the school principal and her sister whom she'd tried to harm, felt intuitively that she had acted while mentally unstable. Their views of events bore little relation to her legal troubles.*

### 3. HOPE IS ESSENTIAL

Being in charge of the process rather than the product allows us to continue to hope for change even – especially – in the most hopeless situations. Sometimes hope is all we have left! We carry hope like a banner in this program because hope is contagious. One of the most consistent responses we have gotten from Circle participants is an increase in hope. One girl expressed, "The only time I think I can do this is in my Circle."

Hope is born not in an analysis of the facts but comes from an internal belief in the ability of the human spirit to rise from ashes, and to overcome seemingly insurmountable odds. Anyone attempting to work in a restorative process needs to examine his/her own ability to believe and to carry the spark, particularly when no one else can.

This does not mean that our staff members never feel discouraged. They do. But what makes the Girls Restorative Program unusual is the fact that all of the services are open-ended. ***We maintain contact indefinitely.*** There is no time after which we are "done". In practice, this means there is no permanent "failure" situation. Staff are always allowed—in fact, encouraged—to persist. As can be imagined, this policy has affected our caseload but we feel it is mandated both by restorative justice principles and gender-responsive principles that relationships and support are not arbitrarily "cut off" when a girl reaches a certain date or stage.

*Very few people, least of all Sarah, had any hope at all that she could survive outside of a highly secure environment. Her entrance into the facility was heavily guarded because she was so "violent." Her list of medications daunted even practiced mental health professionals.*

*It took time for the Girls Group, her work with the trauma counselor, and then the Circle process to change the overriding belief (even among those who knew and liked Sarah) that her long-term situation was hopeless. Our actions belied this belief; we assumed that there WAS hope and continued to act on this assumption. Every Circle we walked away from, Sarah was a little more confident, a little more hopeful. Still, her release from the facility was not without a lot of misgivings on the part of facility staff, who had not been part of the Circle process or the Girls Group.*

#### 4. EVERY PERSON HAS A STORY

The task of calling and talking to every potential Circle participant can seem overwhelming, particularly when every person has a unique opinion on the situation, strong feelings about it, and a different story to tell. But the time is well worth the effort. People need to feel heard and understood by us before they can imagine speaking their truth respectfully and honestly in a Circle. It is tempting to not take the time to elicit the opinions and feelings of certain people. For instance, we may be skeptical of parents we consider deadbeats or P.O.s who seem uncomfortable working with girls or people whose lives are “messier” than the girl’s. The important thing to remember is that they each have a story that affects the girl.

By honoring each person’s story, the safer they will feel in the Circle, the deeper they will go inside themselves and the better contributions they will make—often, in the process finding healing for themselves.

*In the Circle process, many people had their own story to tell about Sarah, her family, her offense and her violent history.*

*Sarah’s brother and sister had felt the impact of her out-of-control behavior, but they believed intuitively that her behavior was a result of her mental health issues.*

*Sarah’s mom was having a difficult time with her own health issues and wanted Sarah to understand that she could not continue to come to her rescue every time she got in trouble.*

*Sarah’s former foster mom saw her as one of the kindest kids she had ever fostered.*

*Sarah’s teachers saw her as a lonely, struggling teen who was lost in a big high school, unable to effectively advocate for herself. That she had resorted to bringing a knife to school was only proof that they had “let her down.”*

*Sarah’s probation officer was most concerned about his changing jobs and Sarah’s transition to another probation officer. He felt her history was not an accurate depiction of her character and was wary of handing her off to someone who would have to start over with her. (Because of his concern, we held a special Circle simply to manage the transition to a different probation officer).*

*Sarah’s social worker had worked with the family for years and had definite opinions about the various medications that they were all on. Her voice was important when it came to any discussion around family history and medications.*

*All these voices were critical in leading to a full understanding of Sarah and her situation, which is a prerequisite to making a plan. Most importantly, everyone was invested in making her plan work—especially Sarah and her family—which was the key to its long-term success.*

## **PRACTICAL POINTERS**

There will never be a blueprint for exactly how to run a restorative Circle and trauma program for girls. We are certain that any replications of this project will have to develop somewhat organically and differently; indeed, even our own replication in Ramsey County, run by the same organization (AMICUS), has developed somewhat differently. Below are pointers that will help you get started: how to prepare for a Circle, how to know what qualifies as a Circle situation, how to work within the correctional system, and how to manage a close partnership with a residential facility.

### **1. PREPARING FOR A CIRCLE**

The primary job of the Circle Keeper is to create a safe (or even sacred) space for people to speak from their hearts and listen to others do the same. It is crucial that thorough preparation precede a Circle and it is absolutely necessary for a Circle Keeper to get in-depth training in Restorative Justice before taking this on.<sup>16</sup> The preparation for a Circle may take from two weeks to several months.

#### **Circle Preparation Steps**

- Circle Keeper and girl meet and develop a trusting relationship
- They discuss:
  - the Circle process
  - what is needed for things to be better
  - what changes she hopes to make
  - what the purpose of the Circle will be
  - who should come to the Circle
  - all the concerns that arise in the process
  - how to be open and honest in a Circle
- Circle Keeper (sometimes with the girl) makes the initial phone contacts with all possible participants, hears their stories, informs them of an upcoming Circle and informs them of basic Circle expectations<sup>17</sup>
- Circle Keeper communicates Circle plan with collaborative partners (county agents, residential staff, trauma counselor) and receives input from them
- Circle Keeper follows up with Circle participants and girl to insure that everyone is ready to be at the Circle
- Circle Keeper arranges date, time, and neutral, safe place (libraries, churches, schools) and informs all participants
- If girl is in residential placement, Circle Keeper coordinates transportation to the Circle with the residential staff, trauma counselor, others who are coming
- Right before a Circle, Circle Keeper checks in with all participants to minimize unexpected surprises
- On the day of the Circle, Circle Keeper arrives early to troubleshoot, lay out paperwork, set up refreshments, arrange chairs in a circle

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<sup>16</sup> Information about trainings in Restorative Justice and Peacemaking Circles in Minnesota can be accessed through the Minnesota Restorative Services Coalition website at [www.mnmrsc.org](http://www.mnmrsc.org).

<sup>17</sup> To speak from the heart, to be open, honest and respectful and ready for others to do the same.

In a Victim-Offender Circle, these steps are added:

- Circle Keeper discusses the offense with the girl, assesses her readiness and informs her of the expectation of her participation in a Victim-Offender Circle
- Circle Keeper makes contact (phone and visit) with victim(s), explains the Circle process, invites victim's participation in the Circle (together with his or her support people)
- Circle Keeper keeps in close touch with victims as the Circle nears, making sure they have questions answered and are being served in the Circle process.

Careful and thorough preparation is absolutely essential to having a successful Circle. The Circle Keeper should expect to spend a great deal of his/her time at this task.

## **2. DETERMINING CIRCLE READINESS**

How do you know what situations are "Circle-appropriate?" When are the girl and her community ready, and when is a Circle likely to be helpful? Of course there is no set answer to these questions. However we list here a series of conditions that, taken together, generally indicate readiness for a Circle:

- The purpose of the Circle is clear
- The girl wants to have a Circle<sup>18</sup> and is generally willing or eager for it to happen
- All possible participants for the Circle have been informed of the purpose of the Circle, the way it will "look," and basic expectations
- All people who are crucial to the purpose of the Circle are able to be there
- If there are security or other concerns, the Circle Keeper has attained the support of administration and other professionals involved before going ahead
- Date, time, and place is set and understood by all
- There are no overriding security concerns.

Making sure the items in this checklist are in place has helped the program operate safely and effectively, even though the girls we serve often have a history of violence, mental instability, and "runs."

## **3. WORKING IN THE SYSTEM**

In some ways, doing any program "restoratively" appears to be at odds with the criminal justice system. The way we define the problem dictates the way we define the solution. Do girls need corrections or connections? If they are essentially girls with behaviors, the solution lies in correcting the behavior. If they are essentially girls who are disconnected, the solution lies in re-connection. Most girls struggle in both areas and a dual approach is most effective. The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) makes it very clear what "works" to help women and girls in the criminal justice system. The NIC promotes these guiding principles for women's corrections programs:

- To create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity
- To develop policies, practices, and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community

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<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that she does not have mixed feelings, that there are not days when she wants to cancel the circle, that she does not demonstrate stress-related behaviors near circle time!

- To address substance abuse, trauma, and mental health issues through comprehensive, integrated, and culturally relevant services...<sup>19</sup>

It is with these ends in mind that the program was founded. Sometimes, we find these attitudes already present and smoothly navigate within the system. Other times it is not so easy. For instance, it is common for the criminal justice system (with a restraining order, or with a phone policy in a facility) to restrict a girl's contact with others. It is attempting to minimize a case of ongoing harm. Our approach tends to focus instead on the girl and her contacts' positive qualities and capabilities to improve the situation. For instance, we might ask a judge for a restraining order to be lifted temporarily in order for the girl to have a Circle with someone who has had a huge impact on her life. We would be careful to insure that the power differential dynamics are not perpetuated in the Circle. Sometimes, in fact, the Circle becomes a crucial way of busting open that power differential and empowering the abused.<sup>20</sup>

Systems and corrections officials may put up road blocks to this very “nontraditional” program – especially in the beginning. So it is very important to work patiently, listen carefully, communicate fully and include them as active participants, whenever possible. The more they learn and observe the process in practice, the more they will support the program.

#### **4. CHOOSING AND MAINTAINING A PARTNERSHIP**

The Girls Restorative Program was, from the beginning, a three-way partnership.<sup>21</sup> AMICUS ran the Circles and the trauma services, the Department of Corrections provided the original vision and contracted for the services, and a juvenile residential provider housed the girls and provided additional programming.<sup>22</sup>

A close partnership between staff doing Circles, staff running groups, residential staff, and community staff (probation agents etc.) is essential to the success of this program. The following list, derived mostly from lessons learned from working with the Department of Corrections and two different residential providers, outlines key characteristics of a successful partnership:

- Partners show patience for the time it takes to develop a high level of trust between partners
- Partner managers are committed to meeting periodically (more frequently in the beginning) to resolve issues and create guidelines
- Time is taken for partners to learn about each other’s organization and program values, mission and procedures
- Residential program model is already compatible with Girls Restorative Program and able to flex/adjust as necessary
- There is real (not token) commitment to a restorative philosophy, and willingness to “see where it goes”

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<sup>19</sup> "Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders," Washington D.C: U.S. Dept. of Justice National Institute of Corrections, July 2003, p. 76.

<sup>20</sup> For more information on Restorative Justice and domestic abuse/gender issues, see “Keep an Open Mind” and “Young Women Offenders and the Challenge for Restorative Justice” in the bibliography.

<sup>21</sup> For more information on the history of this project’s development, see Appendix A.

<sup>22</sup> Other services received by the girls have included education, peer group counseling and other services. Two different residential providers have participated in the project so the nature of these additional services has varied somewhat.

- Residential administrators view Girls Restorative Program as value added to their program and are eager to take it on
- All partner staff have experience with and passion for working with girls
- Essential staff time and transportation resources are available.<sup>23</sup>

With our first attempt at partnership, the Girls Restorative Program model was new and untried and had many kinks to work out. Many of the key characteristics of a successful partnership, listed above, were not in place. We had no models to follow. And this will always be an unusually close and demanding partnership. As the AMICUS president put it, "This is not a loose collaboration; we are bedfellows."

It is very important therefore, in developing a partnership, to take a hard look at the prerequisites to success. If you want to add a program such as ours to an existing program, is that program already a good program for girls? Does it reflect key gender-responsive elements? Do you have support from the top? Are your staff committed and excited about doing something different? Are they willing to build a tight team with each other? Are they not easily discouraged by failure or messiness? Do they have confidence in what they're doing? Positive answers to these questions indicate readiness.

## 5. STAFFING AND TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

AMICUS employs two staff: a Circle coordinator (full-time), and a grief and trauma counselor (part-time). These two work in close partnership with the residential facility staff, the girls' county agents, and the girls' communities. They are officed in the residential facility, near the girls' living unit. They work alongside the residential staff and management and have daily contact with the girls. It is recommended that staff hired to do the Circles and groups for this program have these qualities:

- Committed to the time and effort it takes to build a team
- Ability and desire to build relationships
- Willing to be flawed and vulnerable to girls and others
- Open-minded
- Flexible, able to serve on an "as-needed" basis
- Unafraid of being in the presence of difficult emotions and direct conflict
- Good sense of humor
- Experience working with girls in a gender-responsive way
- *Wants* to work with girls. Period.
- Instinctive belief in restorative values.

Direct program costs include staff salaries and benefits (for a full-time Circle coordinator and a half-time professional trauma counselor), transportation costs (which are significant as we are transporting girls to communities all over the state), and materials costs (Circle refreshments, Girls Group curriculum materials, etc.) The program is also supported by the AMICUS administrative structure, including significant management time in program development, staff debriefing, partnership formation and maintenance, and troubleshooting. The program operates

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, because of the distance required to transport everyone to a girl's hometown, a circle usually takes a vehicle, the AMICUS staff, and 1-3 facility staff out of commission for an entire day.

on an annual budget of about \$100,000 (not including residential placement and AMICUS management support costs). The Department of Public Safety provided 90 % of the funding for the first 4 years, through a “Community Justice” grant. The remainder of the cash support was provided through a required match from the Department of Corrections; with in-kind matches from AMICUS for management support. The residential service provider also provided in-kind contributions of transportation, office space and utilities as well as staff support.

The following chart illustrates the responsibilities of all the residential and AMICUS staff, county professionals, and community volunteers, who are active players in the program:<sup>24</sup>

<b>PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<b>Circle Coordinator</b>	<p>Meets with girls one on one.</p> <p>Facilitates Circles in the girl’s home community during her residential stay, extended furlough, and throughout probation and parole periods.</p> <p>Records all Circles and provides accountability for all commitments made in Circle.</p> <p>Coordinates with girl’s residential program case manager to bring Circle advice to her treatment team which consists of all staff involved with her care at the facility plus the AMICUS staff.</p> <p>Attends treatment team meetings and follows up on commitments made by members of treatment team.</p> <p>Maintains regular contact and offers transition/aftercare support to the girl throughout placement, furlough, and for up to one year of parole and beyond, if desired by the girl.</p> <p>Attends the weekly Girls Group, whenever possible.</p> <p>Attends periodic partner management meetings.</p>
<b>Trauma Counselor</b>	<p>Facilitates weekly Girls Group during placement.</p> <p>Conducts one-on-one counseling sessions with girls as needed.</p> <p>Attends Circles.</p> <p>Supports girls if interested in confronting the offender in their victimization.</p> <p>Continues one-on-one transition and aftercare support of girl during furlough and parole for up to one year and beyond, if desired by the girl.</p>
<b>Residential Case Manager</b>	<p>Participates in the Circle process.</p> <p>Performs intake paperwork, maintains files, sends out daily population report, schedules Hearings &amp; Release Unit hearings, helps formalize furlough plan with Restorative Justice Coordinator.</p> <p>During furlough, maintains weekly contact with clients, writes monthly progress reports, schedules pre-parole hearings, and writes and submits the Uniform Case Report recommending parole or continuation of parole status.</p> <p>Liaison to DOC for state-commit girls.</p> <p>Attends periodic partner management meetings.</p>

<sup>24</sup> Chart information simplified from “Building a Framework for Success: Woodland Hills/State Commit Adolescent Female Program Annual Report August 2001-August 2002.”

PARTICIPANTS	RESPONSIBILITIES
<b>Residential Program Coordinator</b>	<p>Responsible for all programming for state commit girls at residential facility.</p> <p>Supervises Case Manager, and is a member of the Treatment Team for each State Commit girl.</p> <p>Notifies the state if warrant or Apprehension and Detention order (A&amp;D) is needed due to absconding or escaping, and cancels when girl is arrested or detained.</p> <p>Attends periodic partner management meetings.</p>
<b>AMICUS Manager</b>	<p>Supervises Circle coordinator and trauma counselor.</p> <p>Helps maintain partnership among residential program, AMICUS, and DOC.</p> <p>Attends periodic partner management meetings.</p>
<b>Department of Corrections Staff</b>	<p>Handles commitment process.</p> <p>Oversees the hearing and release process.</p> <p>Oversees budget process.</p> <p>Oversees contract and partnership.</p> <p>Attends periodic partner management meetings.</p>
<b>Supervising county or state agent</b>	<p>Integral part of the Circle and transition planning and implementation process. Monitors girl during furlough and parole to ensure conditions are met.</p>
<b>Circle member (volunteer)</b>	<p>Attends Circles.</p> <p>Prepares the girl for release by offering support, repairing relationships, and developing a plan.</p> <p>Commits to hands-on action to help the girl build skills, form positive connections, access resources, and implement the plan during residential treatment, furlough, and parole.</p> <p>Addresses crises and troubleshoots problems.</p>

Again, a close partnership between staff doing Circles, staff running groups, residential staff, and community staff (probation agents etc.) is essential to the success of this program. Maintaining the partnership takes considerable time, effort, and close listening. Ideally, all the parts of the team function smoothly to create the best possible experience for the girls.

## WHAT THIS PROGRAM DELIVERS

*“The past isn’t dead. It isn’t even past.” --William Faulkner*

Looking at outcomes is key to the ongoing health and excellence of any program. Just as we have developed our philosophy and program model within a restorative framework, so we have looked at the outcomes in a non-traditional way, individual to each girl. Over time, we have begun to see patterns in results that are achievable through the Circle and Girls Group processes. Positive changes have been noted for the girls themselves and also for the other stakeholders in the process – the girls’ families, their communities, their victims, and the professionals who work with the girls. We’ve outlined these results a little further on, with examples from many girls’ experiences (names have been changed) to help illustrate the changes.

In the beginning, we didn’t even know what outcomes we might expect to see. As one staff put it, “We are working with people who have so little. Expecting progress in predictable ways just isn’t realistic.” Deciding whether a girl has a “good outcome” means agreeing on what her problems are. What we found was that we were not only looking for different ways to solve a girl’s problems, but also completely redefining what her problems were. Her history on paper was put in new perspective as we got to know her. The girl who was most at risk had committed the least serious offense. The girl who was the most traumatized by family violence had the least violent family history. The most social girl in the program was also the most suicidal.

One point is clear: the results are specific to each girl. This is intrinsic to the nature of the program. If you are running a truancy program, it is easy to gauge success: are the clients going to school? Our program attempts to address the whole girl, in the context of her entire family and her particular community.<sup>25</sup> Outcomes are not easy to define or measure.

The success of these girls typically comes in cycles. Relapses and setbacks due to personal and family circumstances can be expected. That is one reason we do not cut off services, but continue indefinitely. Many of our girls will have setbacks on the road to independent, positive lives in the community, but our hope—and our goal—is that we build competency in the girl and her community to recover and end up a little further along the road each time.

Adding to the complexity is the fact that the outcomes that the criminal justice system highlights – recidivism, education completion, adult independence, etc. – either do not reflect the cyclical nature of the girls’ lives or do not give her credit for her growth and the strengths she has developed. A girl who lives in many different places but lets a trusted adult know where she is

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<sup>25</sup> In “Moving into the New Millenium: Toward a Feminist Vision of Justice,” reprinted from “Future of Corrections,” M. Kay Harris comments, “...the task is not to discover how to eradicate crime, but to discover how to behave as befits our values and desire for harmony.” (originally from The Prison Journal Fall-Winter 1987).

As BARJ puts it, “...many restorative community justice initiatives have objectives that are far more holistic than traditional crime control responses which have typically utilized recidivism rates as a primary outcome measure.” (Conferences, Circles, Boards and Mediations: Restorative Justice and Citizen Involvement in the Response to Youth Crime OJJDP, Sept. 1999.)

<sup>27</sup> See Appendices C & D for a more detailed discussion of the evaluation and findings for this program.

would be one example of a situation that the system might see as a failure. We would see her willingness to stay in touch and seek help as a positive. On the other hand, a girl who is living with an abusive boyfriend may be completely “free” of the system, but we would continue to be concerned about her and try to stay engaged in her progress.

Some results have been what we hoped for. Others have disappointed us. Sometimes we see results that we would never have expected but are glad to see. We have found that the effects of the program ripple out beyond the girl herself to effect change in the members of her Circle as well. Not all of these outcomes occur specifically in Circle or Girls Group because the process of preparing for and participating in the program naturally leads to confrontations, mediated sessions, and other important conversations.

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Below is a list of the results that we have observed over time (with allowance for relapses.) These results concern changes in five groups: the girls, their families, their communities, their victims, and the professionals who work with them. They represent the kinds of outcomes that can be expected from a program such as ours—results we have seen repeated for many girls and the important people in their lives.

NOTE: For a more formal discussion and presentation of the program evaluation, major themes and conclusions, and moving forward, see Appendices C and D.

## **CHANGES IN THE GIRL**

There are five main results that we have come to expect to see in the girls who have participated in the Girls Restorative Program:

### **1. VIEWS HERSELF IN A MORE POSITIVE AND HOPEFUL WAY**

When a girl comes to our program, she sees herself the way she’s been defined—as the sum total of her behaviors, plus the footnote of her dysfunctional family. It is not surprising to see the deep holes that she has dug, given the list of liabilities she carries with her every day. The first and most important step in the process of change is to view the girl differently, and to convince her to start viewing herself differently. Sometimes, in the relatively short time we have, this is our most outstanding result. The pattern we see is that girls become more self-confident and mature, have more sense of control of their lives, feel more optimistic and motivated, and feel more compassionate towards others, including their victim(s). Girls develop new coping skills and seem “more comfortable in their own skin.”

#### **Indicators of change:**

- Sets goals
- Asks for help
- Discusses future
- More honest about her own problems and behaviors
- Expresses hope that her life can change
- Expresses compassion towards others.

*Jane arrived in the program with 26 days to prove to the court that she should stay in her home state. Her judge told her he was all ready to send her to an out-of-state residential program if something didn't change. She was extremely hopeless and saw no reason to try. But her grief and trauma counselor told her "We are your cheerleaders. Make a plan. Convince the judge. We are behind you." After several Girls Groups, Jane began to trust that she really was supported in a process that she trusted, one in which others were not just talking but "walking the talk." She decided to take charge of her life. She started to be honest with others for the first time. She made a plan. And she stuck to it. At this writing she is about to graduate from our program and go home.*

## **2. CHOOSES MORE POSITIVE BEHAVIORS**

Girls in the program typically display a wide range of negative behavior towards themselves and others. We see girls becoming better able to identify their behavior problems, showing a decrease in harmful behavior to self or others, and showing an increase in caring behaviors towards others.

### **Indicators of change:**

- Asks for help
- Increased ability to access services for herself
- Increased ability to take positive steps outside of residential life
- Re-offends less
- Less behavior that hurts others
- Keeps in contact with program staff, as needed.

*Rachel's story both before and after her AMICUS experience was riddled with chaos—changing boyfriends, miscarriages, physical abuse, theft, harboring felons, even adult prison. However, one thing has changed. She has stayed in constant touch with the AMICUS trauma counselor and even called her once in crisis when her boyfriend was physically abusing her. Her trauma counselor immediately contacted the sheriff who arrested the boyfriend. This happened several times until the girl learned to call the sheriff herself. She continues to call her trauma counselor when she needs help or a plan.*

*Nikiah has been chemically dependent since she was 12. Since she left the program, she has relapsed twice; however, she later turned herself into in-patient treatment centers, completing them successfully both times.*

### 3. IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH FAMILY MEMBERS

Without exception, the girls in our program come from families with many conflicts, challenges, and issues. Often girls carry deep resentments against a parent or other relative because of past abuse or neglect. Likewise, families are often angry at and/or wary of the girl. Yet strong family bonds often persist. As a result of the program, we have seen a clear pattern of girls improving relationships with their families, and foster families as well.

#### **Indicators of change:**

- "Walls coming down" between family members
- Things being said in Circle that have never been said
- Cathartic experiences in Circle, including forgiveness and letting go of the past
- Girls assertively addressing issues within their families
- Better communication outside of Circles, particularly with the safety and support of staff
- Closer bonds to family members
- More open-hearted communication.

*At their request, Alisha, her grandma, and her mom held a Circle alone, with just the Circle Keeper, to work on some complicated family issues. After a smudging ceremony, they dived into the subject of Alisha's post-release living situation. She had been hoping to live with her grandma. However, Alisha dislikes her grandpa (who is currently incarcerated) and was afraid to address this for fear of losing her grandma's support and her future home. Her feelings were not a secret but had never been directly expressed before.*

*With encouragement and with great emotion, Alisha told her grandma about a time that her grandpa had smacked her and threatened her. She said this was very scary. The talking piece was passed to grandma, who held it in silence for about 10 minutes. She then asked for a break. During the break, she went outside and smoked and told the Circle Keeper many of her feelings regarding the situation: her belief that Alisha wasn't taking responsibility for her part (she regularly stole from her grandpa), combined with her understanding in the importance of believing and responding to Alisha's courage in speaking about the abuse.*

*Back in Circle, grandma spoke to Alisha about her own anger against her husband, and her unequivocal bottom line in the future against any kind of abuse (though her husband won't be coming home for at least 8 years). She said that she was sorry that the abuse had occurred, and that it had happened to her too. She also said she and her husband had been through a lot together and she believed that he was rehabilitated, which is why she visits him. She spoke of how busy she is with her job and her visits, and that she is afraid she won't be able to give Alisha the amount of quality time together that Alisha seems to need. She reiterated also that she is and always will "be there" for Alisha.*

*Later, with gentle prompting from her grandma, Alisha said that she had another fear—and this one she directed towards her mom. She told her she was afraid that her mom (recently released from prison) would start using again and destroy all her hopes of a future together. Her mom took the piece and told her "You don't have to worry about that. I'm DONE with that. That's over." Weeping, Alisha then asked her mom why she had abandoned her when she was one year old, as she had heard, yet her mom kept her brother. Alisha's mom said that happened because no one would take her brother while her grandma would take her.*

*She said she never meant to abandon Alisha.*

#### **4. IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH PROBATION AGENTS AND JUDGES**

Our girls are not easy cases for probation officers or judges. They have multiple issues and complicated histories. In addition, many have been in the system so long that they have a very distrustful and negative attitude toward its representatives: judges and P.O.s. Because of their long and often negative experiences, “working the system” by lying or withholding information comes as second nature to many of the girls. We have seen girls change their attitudes and behaviors toward “system people” as a result of this program.

##### **Indicators of change:**

- Begin to see probation officers and judges as support rather than "the enemy"
- More honest with their probation officers about their problems
- Begin to work with, instead of against, probation officer / judge.

*Valerie's judge asked if he could attend her Circle. Valerie was shocked but consented. In the Circle, the judge said, "I came because I wanted to hear some positives about you. I want to know if I'm doing anything right. I'm a dad; I'm human too. I don't get to say this on the bench."*

*After the Circle Valerie gave him a hug and thanked him for coming. She was very moved by his presence. "I can't believe I hugged my judge," was her comment.*

#### **5. IMPROVED RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS**

Girls often have some issues with peer relationships. The web of relationships, even within the Girls Group or the residential facility, can be intense—sometimes in a positive way, and sometimes full of manipulative and negative behaviors. Peers in the community are another area of concern. Girls may have engaged in chemical use or committed their offenses with peers. In addition, many girls struggle with developing healthy peer relationships, being either too passive and easily manipulated by others, or being manipulative themselves. We have seen improvement in the ability of girls to form positive relationships with peers, both in and out of the facility.

##### **Indicators of change:**

- Able to confront peers in facility in a positive way and receive input from them
- Able to distance themselves from negative influences
- Able to positively support peers in facility
- Able to see the qualities they don't want in their friends.

*Ann planned a Circle with 10 friends for the specific purpose of telling them her plans to stop using. Four came. They all agreed that using was not going to help Ann, and promised to never use around her or urge her to use. After the Circle, Ann confided that she was really glad to know, from who showed up, who was going to be supportive of her on*

*the outside. She stopped staying in touch with the others.*

## **CHANGES FOR THE FAMILY**

Changing a girl's family is not the primary goal of our program. We are not in the business of family therapy. Nevertheless, we do see many positive outcomes for families. The experience of using the talking piece seems to empower families to explore issues they have never been able to discuss openly before. In fact, one girl's family still uses their own talking piece to this day, grabbing it whenever they have something important to discuss. The four major changes that we have observed for families are:

### **1. INCREASED TRUST IN THE "SYSTEM"**

Families report feeling a part of the process and are more willing to work with providers. Instead of being shut out of the process or perceived as "part of the problem," they are brought in. This leads to more trust, understanding, and openness to what "the system" may be able to do to help.

#### **Indicators of change:**

- Express gratitude that there are others who care about their daughter
- Contact staff and probation officers by phone and email for help and advice
- Seek out more Circles
- Initiate contact with staff even after the girl has left the program
- Show an interest in staff and probation officers as people.

*Relations between Jessica's family and the people in the system who worked with Jessica were perpetually strained. Jessica had learned that telling "stretched" tales about her treatment elicited angry parental phone calls directed at staff, who responded with both frustration and annoyance. For whatever reason, Jessica's family had no faith in "the system's" ability to treat her daughter fairly. They approached the Circle process with suspicion – and a little humor. When Jessica's father heard about the smudging ceremony that would open the Circle (at his daughter's request), he queried, "Do we rub it all over our bodies?"*

*Once in Circle, the topic of a threatening tone in the family came up. Almost immediately the probation officer asked a question that the father found offensive. He rose up in his chair, protested, and pointed a finger at him accusingly. Everyone was uncomfortable and the Circle Keeper called a break.*

*During the break, the father left and began to cry privately. A counselor, who knew him from many conversations about his daughter, followed him outside to comfort him, suggest that the probation officer hadn't meant what he thought, and to encourage him to continue the process. Meanwhile the Circle Keeper stayed with the mother, who was also upset.*

*When things calmed down, the Circle reconvened. The space felt safe again and they shared and planned productively. When the Circle was over, the father pulled the Circle Keeper aside and confided, "I don't know what it is about this," (pointing at the center of the Circle), "but it works." After that, he began to initiate contact with the AMICUS staff and*

*use them as a liaison between himself and other "system" people.*

## **2. INCREASED OPTIMISM ABOUT THE FUTURE**

Many families have been worn down by their daughter's numerous placements and difficulties. It is often hard for them to understand why she has behaved as she has and what she needs to address before she can move on. This program seems to restore hope that their daughter may make progress.

### **Indicators of change:**

- See the girl in a different light
- Speak more hopefully about the future both in and out of Circles
- Willing to address the past so that they can look to the future.

*Ann planned a Circle with her family to discuss the sexual abuse her brother had committed on her, including incest, for years. She and her brother, who had gone through sex offender treatment, had not seen each other for years. She sobbed in the Circle as she told him all the effects his abuse had wreaked on her life, but said that she still loved him as he was her brother, and she knew that he was abused too. He took responsibility for the abuse and apologized.*

*The entire family (the father, who had also been abusive, had passed away) discussed their difficulties with chemical dependency and abusive relationships. They discussed their own efforts to live day to day and brought up the accomplishments they were proud of. Though they laughed and cried hard about how dysfunctional they were, they also saw themselves being loyal, truthful, and caring towards each other. They dared to express their hopes: a safe home, a fun place to bring their friends.*

*After the Circle, the mother commented, "We have had seven years of family therapy, and we have never had a conversation like this."*

## **3. INCREASED CLARITY**

Families often have a host of issues that need to be untangled and can get in a "frozen" state, where no one can think clearly. They may look to the "system" to solve their problems, but we don't know the answer either (though we may think we do). Through the Circle, families find for themselves the words that need to be said to get to the bottom of things and find solutions.

### **Indicators of change:**

- Speak truthfully and openly of difficult realities
- Show compassion for other family members.

*Raella's parents were known for their yelling and screaming, their mental health challenges, and their lack of permanent housing or jobs. Raella had spent most of her childhood either moving from place to place with her parents, or staying with aunts, uncles, and grandparents.*

*Her first Circle hosted 23 people, most of whom were relatives who at one point or another had given up on Raella's parents and distanced themselves from their children. As one aunt put it, "I would be happy to be part of the children's lives but I just can't handle the garbage [their parents] that they come with!" This aunt had written a 3 page letter which she read at the Circle, expressing her guilt and grief over abandoning her niece and nephew to save her own sanity, and her anger at Raella's parents, particularly her own brother, for the squalor and neglect of his children.*

*The Circle was thick with nervousness and the parents let a few zingers fly, but we called breaks and managed the safety of the Circle so that communication would not stop. Everyone knew that they were there for Raella and that motivated them to bear with it. At one point, to everyone's shock, the father admitted, "I do let it fly sometimes." He surprised everyone again by apologizing for this.*

*Eventually someone got brave enough to say, "I don't think Raella should live with her parents until they are getting some help." Raella, fiercely loyal to her parents, listened silently, basking in her extended family's love but unable to initiate a break from her parents. Others adamantly but compassionately agreed and to everyone's shock, there were no objections from the parents.*

*Over the course of the next few Circles a compromise plan was created: Raella would live with her dad but would go to her aunt's on weekends, where she was more likely to stay out of trouble. If her aunt had a rule she did not like, she would not run home to her dad's before the visit was over. She also had a list of relatives who she would call before running away to a non-family member.*

#### **4. INCREASED RESPONSIBILITIES IN REGARDS TO THE GIRL**

Often the girl, her family and her support people struggle to understand their own responsibility in the life of the girl. The Circle helps generate new commitments that reflect what the Circle finds that the girl most needs.

##### **Indicators of change:**

- Make realistic plans
- Make commitments and follow through on them.

*Tanya's father and mother were divorced and rarely communicated with each other despite their common difficulties raising their two children. For Tanya's sake they came to her Circle. With both parents in the room, Tanya began to see and acknowledge that she manipulates her parents to get what she wants. She committed to staying with her father, even when she didn't like his rules, and visiting her mother only at scheduled times. Her grandmother, however, confronted her son (Tanya's father) on his drinking habits. She questioned whether his job (a bartender) and lifestyle were good for Tanya. Reluctantly, he agreed that his job kept him away from home in the evenings and led him to drink too much. He agreed to look for a different job.*

*Two Circles later he announced shyly and a bit proudly that he had found a different job. He would not be working nights any longer and he would not be hanging out afterwards to drink*

*with his buddies anymore either. This shocked his family, as they had been harping on him for years to make this move.*

## **CHANGES FOR VICTIMS**

Restoring the victim is an important part of any restorative process. Although meeting with victims and making amends is seldom a girl's favorite part of the process, we have persisted in preparing her for this to happen and inviting victims' participation in Circle.

### **1. EMOTIONAL HEALING**

Circles give victims a chance to tell their story and to share the myriad of emotions that they have been feeling: fear, anger, anxiety, hopelessness, etc. Often, the experience in Circle of "getting this off my chest", hearing the girl's side, and receiving an apology will bring a real sense of connection and healing to a victim.

#### **Indicators of change:**

- Through evaluations, letters, emails and phone calls with staff, victims report forgiveness towards the girl
- Victims report that they feel less anxious/fearful

### **2. CLOSURE**

Another key outcome we have seen for victims and their families is a sense of closure. Victims express a sense of relief and/or closure, good will towards the offender (often becoming aware of circumstances which weren't apparent on a rap sheet), and an increased sense of safety.

#### **Indicators of change:**

- Victims and their families report this sense of closure
- Victims report a greater sense of safety and that they are able to move on

*Amy and an adult male had attacked her foster parents and left them for dead. Both foster parents suffered permanent disabilities as a result; yet, they both expressed kindness towards Amy. This incident and the foster parents' forgiving response to it had wreaked havoc in their extended family. Most of the family and the community were adamant that Amy never return to the community, and Amy agreed. She had no desire to face all of this. Three Circles took place in the community without Amy, to bring the community together and work towards healing. At first, the feelings against Amy were so strong that she wasn't considered safe in the town.*

*At the first Circle that Amy attended, there were 23 participants, including her entire (extended) foster family and her 1<sup>st</sup> grade teacher. Amy's foster brother, an adult, and his wife cried openly. He had written down many things he wanted to say, including "I hate you. I don't believe a word you say. You broke up our family." When it was his turn he put the paper on the floor and spoke directly to Amy instead. "I never thought I'd be able to forgive you," he said. "But now I think I can."*

*Another result of the Circles was that the foster parents felt somewhat more community acceptance of their stance that they will always love Amy and still consider her part of the family. They have legally adopted her. With a deferred 20-year adult sentence hanging over her head,*

*Amy has progressed to living on her own and attending community college. However, she doesn't live with her adoptive parents as the community is still not considered a safe place for her.*

## **CHANGES FOR PROFESSIONALS**

Circles have provided a unique opportunity for professionals in a girl's life (e.g. probation officers, residential and AMICUS staff, social workers, etc.) to get to know each other and the girl's family. The insight gained has been invaluable in working with the girl. Professionals feel supported that others are also trying to help the girl and appreciate that efforts can be coordinated. Though some remain cautious, many are re-invigorated in their efforts to help. They see the girl in new and usually more positive ways. They also are empowered to step out of their roles and just "be human."

### **1. ACQUIRE NEW PERSPECTIVES**

Being in the Circle gives professionals a chance to see a girl in a new light. Sometimes this is sorely needed. A staff person remembers one probation officer who could not think of one positive characteristic to attribute to a girl that he was recommending to our program. ("It was tempting to ask if he just thought we should put her on a deserted island for the rest of her life.") One of the most important and difficult challenges we face is convincing important people in a girl's life to see her strengths as well as her liabilities. Usually this new perspective leads to new hope for the girl and her future.

#### **Indicators of change:**

- Skepticism changes to hope
- Speak of the family as people, not as a "case"
- See the girl and her family in a new light
- Treat the girl and the family with more understanding
- Willing to let go of total control
- Share more of themselves as humans.

*Tess arrived in our program having been involved in an incident that had nearly killed another girl. As the Circle got to know her, we realized that she was a shy teenager who felt so terrible about what she had done that she could hardly talk about it.*

*She was also terrified of being locked up because a relative had been killed in an adult prison. She admitted that her friends "walk all over me." Her parents were divorcing and she felt abandoned by her mother. As well as the need to "make her aware of the impact of her behaviors", the professionals in the Circle saw that she needed safety, courage, support, assertiveness.*

*A probation officer (P.O.) in a Circle thanked Marj for "being there for me" when her father had died a few weeks before. The P.O. noted that she had had little time for Marj, but that Marj had understood and been patient.*

*Marj was clearly surprised at this compliment but sat up a little straighter and couldn't*

*keep a smile off her face.*

## 2. GAIN SUPPORT

Professionals also network in the Circle and develop more resources to draw on in their dealings with the girl.

### **Indicators of change:**

- Utilize AMICUS staff as bridge between lock-up and their community
- More likely to agree with a Circle-driven plan
- Integrate the Circle plan into their own plans with the girl.

*A school counselor called the Circle Keeper and asked her who would be a good support person for her in the school. She wanted to make sure that the girl had friends and supporters when she returned but she didn't know the girl at all. Because the Circle Keeper had met many of the girl's support people through the Circle, she was able to help the school counselor find a resource to help the girl at school.*

## CHANGES FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Many of the results noted for other stakeholders (e.g. increased trust in the “system”, optimism about the future, taking responsibility and acquiring new perspectives) are true for community members as well. The chief change for community members, however, is increased involvement. Circles reintroduce participation in the decision-making process for community members who have been encouraged to believe that the professionals don't need citizen involvement.

### 1. DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN A GIRL'S TRANSITION

New people are brought on board, and others in the girl's life take on increased responsibility for her success in the community—sharing the work so no one feels that they have to “save” her, but each one can bring something to the table.

### **Indicators of change:**

- Make commitments in Circle and follow-through
- Increased sense of “making a difference.”

*Billie confessed in her Circle that the reason she never followed through with her teen AA group was because it was in her home town and was full of her old friends who were court ordered to be there. There was no anonymity whatsoever.*

*Billie's chemical dependency (CD) assessor (and friend) invited Billie to come to AA with her at a nearby town, where she lived. "It's all adults," she said, "but it's definitely real." Billie's P.O. agreed to change her probation plan to include this group and nix the local one. The only problem was, Billie had no transportation. So her CD assessor agreed to*

*drive her to the group and then drop her off at her relatives. Then Billie's favorite teacher, who was also at the Circle and who lived in the same nearby town, agreed to pick her up in the morning and drive her back to school in her own hometown, where he worked.*

## LONG-TERM OUTLOOK

There are many indications that the benefits of program participation stay with some girls beyond their program completion. Many of the girls stay in touch with their program staff/counselors. Some reshape their circles of friends. Others work hard to maintain open communications with family members. And there are signs that many girls have broken the cycle of destruction and offense that brought them to the program in the first place.

One point is universally agreed upon by those who do this work: each girl gets something unique out of the program. We have also noted that the positive changes we see tend to grow over time. The first year after a girl is out of residential living is a crucial, usually difficult time. The Circle plans, written neatly up in theoretical terms, often need serious tweaking or a complete re-vamp.

The girls sometimes get sent back for a “tune-up,” or go to treatment at least one more time, or move to a different town, or switch jobs, or change their educational goals, or drop or pick up a boyfriend. This highlights the importance of the furlough or parole period, when there is extensive supervision and also extensive support. The girls really need people who will stick with them while they are “figuring it out,” and making mistakes. After that first year or two, things seem to smooth out and the number of contacts tends to drop off.

*One girl who nearly died of drug use a year after leaving the program finally put herself into treatment, committed to leaving the gang, and made a complete break.*

*Months later, she drove her “old beater” car three hours one way to meet the trauma counselor to show her that she was okay, and that she was going to be fine.*

Outcomes for our program are not easy to achieve or measure. But over time we are finding that our outcomes are not only meaningful and lasting, but also usually fall in line with what corrections and social service systems want as well. The Minnesota Department of Corrections considers that our girls (most of whom are now women) are “doing well” if they fit these criteria:

- Live in a non-correctional, non-treatment setting
- Have achieved or are working on a high school diploma or GED
- Work at least part time
- No chemical abuse.

Of the 23 girls that have completed the state-commit girls program, we have been able to track 16 of them. Of these 16 girls and women, 11 of them – or 69% – fit these criteria.<sup>27</sup>

In the end, we all want the same thing: women who have healthy relationships and who contribute positively to society, who are capable of taking responsibility for themselves and their actions, and who have acquired the coping skills needed to live safe and hopeful lives. The relationships and personal “assets” nurtured by the Girls Restorative Program help girls along the path to reaching these final outcomes—even when the difficulties and challenges of their lives

remain unchanged.

*How did Sarah's story turn out?*

*She ended up having five Circles. Her stay at the facility was long and drawn out because she had great difficulty managing her emotions and her behaviors. Her determination to be close to her family motivated Circle participants to find her an independent living program near her hometown, with transportation available. Convinced that this was as good as she was going to get, and privately scared of going home and failing again, Sarah finally agreed on independent living. A Circle participant took her to visit there.*

*For a month after she was released, Circle participants kept in close touch with her. She had a Circle at her new living situation, with the same people who had seen her through.*

*It has been two years since then. Against all predictions that she was destined for a life in a psychiatric ward or behind bars, she has remained with the independent living program. She has not had a single assaultive incident since she left the residential facility. She has been successfully reducing her medications and hopes to be med-free someday. She has her high school diploma and works for the independent living program. Other jobs have been sporadic.*

*Her mother died of cancer and her relationship with her family has its ups and downs, though she has remained close to her sister. She continues to call the AMICUS trauma counselor when she is stressed out and needs to make a plan. People now say she is "sweet and gentle" and "good with children."*

Needless to say, our understanding of the application of the restorative philosophy and gender-specific philosophy is in its infancy, and continues to change as we learn daily how to more effectively elicit the outcomes we search for. Four years is not a long time to transform a system's response. But we have learned a great deal, and our hope is to encourage like-minded people who work with girls to develop effective programming to meet their needs.

# OTHER QUESTIONS

## 1. HOW GENDER-RESPONSIVE IS THIS PROGRAM?

One point is nearly unanimous among people who do this work: girls do respond to this type of programming.<sup>28</sup> Girls know instantly if we think we know their problem and how to solve it, and they will either resent this condescension on our part, or willingly hand over their lives for us to solve, or both. And then we have already lost. Doing this program feels more like we are "going with the flow," and less like we are pushing against a relentless current.

*One summer, when the girls in the state-commit program were immersed in negative dynamics, gossip, and threatening behavior, the response (rather than creating new or stricter rules) was to increase the Girls Group to twice a week. This was at the girls' request. "We needed to build these relationships. We needed to build a cohesive group," remarked the counselor. Everyone agreed afterwards that this had a positive effect on the summer and helped ease the group into a more productive peer culture.*

There is no question that this is a very different—and often more time-consuming—approach compared to the typical male-oriented, rule-based approach. Relationships take time to build. No wonder staff who try to work with girls in standard programs shudder and say, "I'll take 10 boys rather than 2 girls." We have been beating our heads against the wall trying to make girls fit into programs for boys (and the girls have too.)

There are many reasons that girls are difficult to "treat" in the standard way, including: they can't stand to be told what to do by people who don't know them, they are very articulate, they are relationship-oriented, and they have a load of emotional history that they bring to every situation. The Circle process uses these attributes as strengths rather than bemoaning them as liabilities. It is certainly not an easy or simple process, but the payoff is worthwhile and—we believe—lasting.

## 2. HOW CULTURALLY COMPETENT IS THIS PROGRAM?

The more we learn about the depth of our differences, the more overwhelming becomes the task of being equally effective in our service to girls and their families who, even in our Midwestern state, come from a multitude of ethnically complex backgrounds. This has been as true in our program as any other, and we have faced the typical frustrations, including the understandable suspicion with which many communities of color regard the mostly-white, Judeo-Christian "system."

Cultural competence in our program can largely be defined by our ability to serve girls of color and their communities within the values and rituals of their own culture. We work to find staff who mirror the ethnicity of our clients, or partner with culturally specific organizations to

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<sup>28</sup> These and other conclusions are based on the results of interviews of fourteen staff and administrators, past and present.

provide culturally specific Circles. If neither of these are possibilities, we ask as many questions as we can and acquire knowledge of their cultures that will be helpful. Often it is the girl's initiative that brings a culture more overtly into the Circle.

However, the philosophy and structure of the program naturally lend themselves to a more culturally sensitive approach, and in this way we are taking some key steps towards cultural competence. Here's how:

- The Circle is, by definition, non-hierarchical. The traditional roles of authority have no place in a Circle, roles that are generally defined by the majority (white) culture in Minnesota. Professionals are urged to leave their professional "hats" at the door and participate as fellow humans. Decisions are reached by consensus, with emphasis on input from all. In practice, this emphasizes the role of the community and de-emphasizes the role of the individual—which, generally speaking, are attributes of many (but not all) of the minority communities in our state.
- The family, including extended family, plays a key role in the girl's Circle. Many of our girls' cultures have strong family-centered values, and the Circle acknowledges and honors this value.
- Because a girl chooses her own Circle, the members of a Circle tend to consist of people she is comfortable with. As culture plays a role in every girl's identity, the people in her Circle tend to reflect her cultural identity. If a girl of color's life is being dictated by "the system," most if not all of the people making decisions about her life are probably not in her culture. If Circle participants are the ones making decisions, then typically at least half of those people come from the girl's own culture. It stands to reason that these people are able to make decisions that are more culturally responsive.
- Because the purpose of the Circle is to help participants be actively "present," we encourage specific cultural or religious rituals to open and close the Circle. Smudging ceremonies or prayers are examples. There is no separation of culture from "business," in the world of Circles.
- A word must be said about Native American girls and their Circles. Native American girls comprise approximately 40% of our clients. Support Circles have many origins, but one of the most influential is the Circle which has been a cornerstone of Native American culture since time immemorial. Although we can hardly claim to have fully "adopted" their process, Native girls—whose reticence in standard correctional programs is often extreme—take naturally to the Circle process, as do their families and communities. Native Circles frequently take on a spiritual tone that is rare in majority-culture Circles. The impact of the Circle is enhanced by the many levels on which it reaches the girl and her community.
- AMICUS employees act as a link between the system and the community. We are connected to both, but joined to neither. Because we are not "the system," but work with "the system" just as the families are, we have fewer barriers to overcome to gain the trust of families who are not inclined to believe that "the system" is going to be fair or listen to their concerns. With the trust that develops between AMICUS staff and the family, we are in a much better position to set up Circles wherein "real" issues are discussed and realistic solutions are found.

### **3. WHAT IS THE COST PER GIRL?**

As noted earlier, AMICUS employs two staff: a Circle coordinator (full-time), and a grief and trauma counselor (part-time). At this staff level, the program can effectively serve between 10 – 15 full participants per year (plus “other” residential girls who attend the weekly girls group and the girls who have completed the program or are off probation but are still periodically seeking help.)<sup>29</sup> With a budget of approximately \$100,000 per year, the cost per full-program participant averages out to be less than \$10,000 for services that usually span at least a year (from at least the time the girl enters the residential facility until she has completed probation—and beyond.)

The cost per girl often strikes people as very high but, in reality, there are no “cheap” options. Most of our girls are what one county commissioner has termed “million-dollar kids”—kids who have spent much of their lives in placements, and who still are in crisis. All our girls are deeply involved in the juvenile justice system and at high risk to progress to adult prison. The Department of Corrections recognizes that the Girls Restorative Program may be the last opportunity to prevent these girls from ending up incarcerated. For every girl who does not end up in an adult prison, the Minnesota Department of Corrections saves approximately \$30,000/year (to say nothing of other social services costs, etc. associated with a girl or woman in crisis).

Again, it should be noted that there are many others served by this program that have not been included in the above calculation. These individuals include not only the non-state commit girls at the residential facility attending Girls Group (usually between 20 – 30 girls per year) but also the families, friends and community members who attend the Circles. Mobilizing these people can provide incalculable contributions of time and effort in helping a girl to transition successfully back into her community.

There is no question that our program is incredibly time-intensive. The Circle process is time-intensive for the same reason that it is gender-responsive: relationships take time to build.

### **4. HOW RESTORATIVE IS THIS PROGRAM?**

The Balanced and Restorative Justice Project defines a restorative approach as one that gives equal attention and effort to offender competency, victim accountability, and public safety.<sup>30</sup> An honest assessment shows us that we score very high with offender competency. Girls exhibit many positive and lasting changes as a result of this program. We also do reasonably well with public safety—families and communities are empowered, and professionals become better able to do their jobs. We are confident that our program shows a real commitment to restorative practices and has successfully implemented them.

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<sup>29</sup> The AMICUS program has averaged less than 10 girls per year because of the time it took to develop the program model, the change in residential facilities and a drop in the number of girls committed to the state commissioner of corrections.

<sup>30</sup> "Balanced and Restorative Justice for Juveniles: A Framework for Juvenile Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Florida Atlantic University and the University of Minnesota: 1997, pp. 11, 49.

Accountability to the victim is often more difficult to address. Historically, corrections has focused on sanctions and rehabilitation for the offender. Society contributes as well: people want to know about offenders. Very few people ask how the victims have been affected. Assuming that victims (who are barely mentioned if they are mentioned at all in case files) are as important as our clients is a dramatic mental shift for people working in a correctional field.

Although this program recognizes the importance and need for restorative services for victims, we report on far fewer victims than we do offenders. Why is this? The primary reason is that the most common victim in a girl's criminal history is someone in her family, and the incident generally gets discussed in the Circles of Support with the family (victim/s) present. Or, the girl has hurt herself. Forgiving herself or receiving forgiveness from her family is an important piece of healing but it usually doesn't show up in the victim accountability statistics.

Another reason that fewer victims are served is that our current system can make it difficult to involve victims. Program staff have cited numerous barriers:

- Restraining orders may make it illegal to pursue face-to-face dialogue without a judge's order
- There is often a lack of trust between victims' advocates and correctional agencies
- Victims' advocate agencies may discourage victims from meeting with their offender(s)
- Schools (where the offenses often occur) often prefer a zero-tolerance policy, expelling students permanently.

Lastly, it often happens that victims prefer not to participate in a Victim-Offender Circle or to have any contact with the offender. In that case, we offer our support in whatever process of healing they would like, including visiting them in person, offering all the phone contact time they want or referring them to a victim advocacy resource.

Our traditional approach through the courts puts the victim in such a peripheral place that victims (and their advocates) are legitimately wary of any process that focuses yet again on offenders. However, with increased understanding of the restorative model, and as the number of victims, offenders, and community members who appreciate the process grows, and as different facets of our society learn to work together better, our approach will become more balanced.

There is one important addition to a discussion regarding victims and that is that the girls are frequently victims themselves—of abuse if not crime. Although it is difficult to do their histories justice, this program does at least acknowledge and begin to address their own victimization issues.

## **5. WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS AND PITFALLS?**

No program will work miracles or even make a lasting difference for every participant. We have seen our share of failures and hope that explaining these will help others avoid similar pitfalls. We have had a Circle where the family gradually stopped participating. We have had girls who go through the entire program and still end up on the streets. We have had Circles that are disappointing to the girl. We have had important people not show up to Circles. We have had security problems while out in the community.

Our response to such disappointments has been threefold. First, we remember the operating principles outlined earlier (we are there to “clear the path”; messiness is okay; hope is essential.) We have realized that people don't always come out of a Circle or walk out of Girls Group feeling healed. In addition to the most common positive feelings described after Circles - relief and hope – participants also frequently report feeling discouraged, skeptical or ‘let’s wait-and-see’. We believe this is fine. Some of our most ground-breaking, cathartic Circles and groups have been much more about those feelings that are hard to express appropriately—anger, rage, fear, hopelessness—than any "nice" feelings. One girl and her mom agreed that the greatest benefit of the Circle was that it provided a forum to talk about pain. Remembering that our role is to create a safe space for these feelings helps us not to get discouraged by messiness or slow progress.

Second, we have learned to pay a great deal of attention to the issue of readiness. Often if a Circle does not go well, or if a participant does not show up, or if a girl "loses it" after a group, we can note that, in hindsight, someone wasn't ready. One Victim-Offender Circle took place in a town five hours away from the facility. The girl was ready to meet with her victim but was impulsive and struggling with behaviors daily. The Circle had been planned for months but the residential facility was short-staffed on that day; the Circle Keeper was the only staff available to facilitate the Circle and transport the girl. The Circle itself went well but on the drive home the girl threatened to run away and acted dangerously in the car. In retrospect, the girl was not ready for such a low level of supervision and needed more support that day. Another girl "ran" after her Circle—a Circle that several participants including the Circle Keeper felt was "weird" and uncomfortable. Unfortunately, no one cut the Circle short and brought the girl home. That girl, clearly, was not ready to be in her home town. Experiences like this renew our commitment to proper preparation and patience.

It is possible to be too cautious, however. Our third response to unexpected outcomes such as these is to remember that sometimes it is necessary to take risks. Bringing high risk girls back to their home towns has often been seen as highly risky by people concerned with security issues. Yet the number of security problems we have faced pales in comparison to what was predicted. Out of more than 100 Circles that have taken place over 4 years, we have had only one girl “run.” Deciding to wait until everyone is completely ready always needs to be balanced with a commitment to making a Circle happen, because there will always be reasons to delay. If we wait for every piece to fall perfectly into place, the Circle will never happen. Doing nothing, as the girls' histories tell us, can carry the greatest risk of all.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

It is obviously not possible to anticipate or answer every possible question related to this program. For additional information, please call or write to:

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# APPENDIX A

## HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

### *History*

From 1981 until 2003, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) had a Planning for Female Offenders (PFO) Unit, staffed by nationally known advocates of girls and women in our correctional system. The PFO unit was created in response to a 1981 legislative mandate (the first in the nation) to meet the specific needs of women offenders. The unit was to oversee, train, and critique those working with adjudicated and at-risk females in the state of Minnesota. The goal was the implementation of model programming for women and girls—practices that take into account the specific needs of females. An Advisory Task Force was created to assist.<sup>31</sup>

In 1990, the Advisory Task Force and the PFO unit created the Interagency Adolescent Female Sub-Committee. In 1994, this group wrote a report, Needs Assessment and Recommendations for Adolescent Females in Minnesota, which outlined the importance of gender-responsive programming for girls and made recommendations for a gender and culturally responsive program that would truly serve girls who were handed over to the care of the state.

Serious and chronic girl offenders in Minnesota (the state-commit girls) were housed together at the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Sauk Center until 1999, when the facility closed down. This sudden void in programming for girls became the opportunity to “start fresh,” and the PFO unit went on a search for partners and funding.

AMICUS was selected to provide restorative justice programming. AMICUS is a Minnesota non-profit organization with over 37 years of experience in partnering with inmates, ex-offenders, juvenile offenders and communities to build successful lives and stronger neighborhoods. This long history with offenders and interest in restorative justice made AMICUS a good choice to provide restorative, gender-based services for this project. The funding for these services came from a federal grant through the Minnesota Department of Public Safety’s Office of Justice Programs.<sup>32</sup>

A residential facility was brought into the partnership in early 2000. The program admitted the first state commit girls in April 2000. Unfortunately, certain difficulties and issues led to the program moving to another facility in August 2001, where it still resides.

### *Development*

An entire book could be written on all that went on in these years. It took a great deal of time for the residential partnership to take hold. Partnering with an existing institution—with all its own systems—was and is a challenge that cannot be underestimated. Relationships need to develop. Roles need to be defined. Expectations need to be explicitly defined regarding methods of communication, roles and responsibilities, and accountability. Difficult issues need to be brought to the table. The “right staff,” staff capable of a high degree of interpersonal skills and initiative, need to be hired, trained adequately, and then retained in a potentially high-burnout job.

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<sup>31</sup> For their most recent publication, the “Minnesota Action Plan for Female Offenders,” published in February 2002, contact the Minnesota Dept. of Corrections at 651-642-0200.

<sup>32</sup> At the program’s inception, this was called the “Office of Drug Policy and Violence Prevention”

In addition, Minnesota was not immune to factors that drain the energy of projects that seek to maneuver “outside the box”: political realities and resistance to change. The inherent difficulties of a three-way partnership were also evident, as each group had its own philosophy and its own agenda. A tremendous amount of give and take, compromise and accommodation, was essential. Add to the mix the fact that there were no successful examples to follow. One administrator commented, “We knew what we didn’t want. But most of us didn’t know what we did want. If we did know what we wanted, we didn’t know what it would look like.”

What is amazing is that despite every setback, a program did emerge. As one administrator put it, “the only way to get through was to swallow, shut up, and move forward.” Others describe the process as one of continually respecting and appreciating everyone else’s interests and foregoing the question of “who gets the credit.” They do not pretend that it is a perfect program, or all that they had hoped for. It has adapted in many ways and reflects political and cultural reality. But it is a promise of what is possible in the future.

We also believe this program has promise as a guideline for Best Practices in Minnesota because: it takes a holistic look at the girl and her situation; it takes into consideration race, culture, and economic status; it is strength-based; it includes key transition elements; and it involves restorative justice. All these elements were recommended by the Task Force whose report got the project moving almost 10 years ago. It is not yet considered a research-based program because, as has already been mentioned, there is no definitive research on this type of program and one of the lessons we’ve learned is that it’s very difficult to measure uniform outcomes.

Those who have been involved in this fascinating experiment point to several key ingredients that have kept it alive. The courage to envision and create a totally new program for girls was founded on a deeply trusting relationship between AMICUS, the DOC, and the grant provider, based on prior experiences working together. This trust allowed the program to develop and change as it needed to, without the rigid expectations common with grant funding and politically spotlighted programs. Everyone knew that it was going to take time to emerge, and that the goal was “not a quick fix but the foundation for permanent change,” as one administrator put it. This understanding allowed them to overcome discouragement and to continue to move forward every time the process threatened to deteriorate. Everyone also knew that it was a time- and energy-intensive program—for management as well as direct-care staff. Everyone, without exception, put in whatever time was necessary to accomplish the purpose.

One final note is that AMICUS, the DOC, and the residential staff have reflected that the process of developing this program has profoundly affected their institutions as well. “When you let go of control, you cannot go unchanged yourself,” was how one administrator put it. For example, programs for males at the facility have taken a relationship-based turn. Staff have been humbled and enlightened. Language has changed; compassion and awareness have grown. These unplanned but welcome results are surely part of the “bigger picture” that the program seeks to address in our society.

# APPENDIX B

## Recommended Readings

### 1. Gender-Responsive Programming for Females

The following list of resources is not intended to be exhaustive. There is surprisingly little researched information on gender-responsive programming for juvenile female offenders. (There are many additional studies on juvenile offenders that deal only with male offenders or else fail to take gender into account. Those studies are not included.)

Alder, Christine. *Young Women Offenders and the Challenge for Restorative Justice*, in Restorative Justice: Philosophy to Practice. Ashgate Publishing, 2000.

American Bar Association and the National Bar Association (2001). *Justice by Gender; The Lack of Appropriate Prevention, Diversion and Treatment Alternatives for Girls in the Justice System*.

Belknap, Joanne, Erica Winter and Bonnie Cady (2001). *Assessing the Needs of Committed Delinquent and Pre-Adjudicated Girls in Colorado: A Focus Group Study*. A Report to the Colorado Division of Youth Corrections.

Bloom, B., and Covington, S.(2000, November.) *Gendered justice: Programming for women in correctional settings*. Paper presented to the American Society of Criminology, San Francisco, CA.

Bloom, Barbara, PhD., Owen, Barbara, PhD., and Covington, Stephanie, PhD. (July 2003). *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice. National Institute of Corrections. [www.nicic.org](http://www.nicic.org).

Boland, Bobbie and Wychreschuk, Elaine. *Keeping an Open Mind: a Look at Gender Inclusive Analysis, Restorative Justice, and Alternative Dispute Resolution* (June 1999). Newfoundland, Canada: Provincial Dept. of Justice. 709-739-6759.

Harris, M. Kay (Fall/winter1987). *Moving into the New Millenium; Toward a Feminist Vision of Justice*, reprinted from *Future of Corrections* in The Prison Journal.

Lindgren, Sandi (1996). *Gender-Specific Programming for Female Adolescents*. Master's Thesis, Augsburg College, Minnesota.

Louis Harris and Associates (1997). *The Commonwealth Fund Survey of the Health of Adolescent Girls*. New York, NY: The Commonwealth Fund.

Louis Harris and Associates (1999). *Health Concerns Across a Woman's Lifespan: The Commonwealth Fund 1998 Survey of Women's Health*. New York, NY: The Commonwealth Fund.

*Minnesota Action Plan for Female Offenders* (February 2002). Developed by the Planning for Female Offenders Unit, the Advisory Task Force on Female Offenders, and the Interagency Adolescent Female Subcommittee. St. Paul, MN: Minnesota Department of Corrections. [www.doc.state.mn.us](http://www.doc.state.mn.us).

Minnesota Adolescent Female Sub-Committee, Advisory Task Force on the Female Offender in Corrections (1994). *Needs Assessment and Recommendations for Adolescent Females in Minnesota*.

Patton, Pam and Marsha Morgan for the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission Juvenile Prevention Program and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families (2001). *Oregon's Guidelines for Effective Gender-Responsive Programming for Girls*.

Sundin, Rosalie and Turk, Mickie. *Wayward Girls: a Story of Survival*. Wayward Girls Films, LLC. 2003. [www.wgfilc.com](http://www.wgfilc.com).

U.S. Department of Justice (1999). *Investing in Girls: A 21st Century Strategy*. Journal of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. VI (1), 5.

Women, Girls & Criminal Justice (Civic Research Institute Inc.)

## **2. Restorative Justice for Juveniles**

The following list of resources unfortunately focuses exclusively on “juveniles,” which is to say it is either based only on boys, or on boys and girls without distinguishing between them.

*Balanced and Restorative Justice for Juveniles: A Framework of Juvenile Justice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (August 1997)*. From the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). Developed jointly by the University of Minnesota: Center for Restorative Justice and Mediation and Florida Atlantic University: Community Justice Institute. 954-760-5668 or 612-624-4923.

*Conferences, Circles, Boards, and Mediations: Restorative Justice and Citizen Involvement in the Response to Youth Crime. (Sept. 1999)*. Prepared by Gordon Bazemore, PhD., and Mark Umbreit, PhD. BARJ: Florida Atlantic University and the University of Minnesota. <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/ctr4rjm>.

*Restorative Juvenile Justice, Policy Development, and Implementation Assessment: A National Survey of States (Sept. 1999)*. Draft. Prepared for BARJ, funded by the OJJDP. [www.fau.edu/divdept/caupa/cji](http://www.fau.edu/divdept/caupa/cji) or <http://ssw.che.umn.edu/rjp>.

# APPENDIX C

## PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY

### **PROGRAM EVALUATION DEFINED**

Program evaluation is: "... the systematic collection of information about the activities, characteristics, and outcomes of programs to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming."

### **PURPOSES OF CONDUCTING PROGRAM EVALUATION**

The broad purposes of conducting program evaluation include answering at least two questions: (1) "How well has our program worked?" and (2) "How can we improve our program and make it as effective and successful as possible?"

Answering the first question both: (1) measures the accomplishment of stated program goals and intended outcomes, and identifies how well the program has met those goals and delivered those outcomes; and (2) provides accountability and helps identify the payback/value of resources invested in the program. This type of program evaluation is typically called summative evaluation.

Answering the second question: (1) secures data, perspective, insight, and practical suggestions regarding how to improve the program on an ongoing basis; and (2) provides direction regarding how to improve the program, with the result of increasing the effectiveness, success, and positive impact of the program. This type of program evaluation is typically called formative evaluation.

Both summative and formative processes were used in the evaluation of AMICUS' Restorative Justice Program for Girls. The balance between these two forms of evaluation is demonstrated in the Evaluation Tools and Processes section below.

### **EVALUATION TOOLS AND PROCESSES**

The following data collection tools and processes were used in this program evaluation work.

- **Self Assessments**: Surveys completed by the girls shortly after admission to Woodland Hills and again at the beginning of her furlough. These assessments cover a wide range of topics dealing with each girl's sense of support she receives from adults, sense of belonging to a community, ability to make healthy behavioral choices, involvement in unhealthy behavior, feelings of traumatic stress, and current mood.
- **Team Assessments**: Surveys regarding each girl completed by members of the Treatment Team (Woodland Hills and AMICUS) similar to the self-assessment surveys described above.
- **Exit/Transition Interviews**: Telephone or face to face interviews conducted with each girl prior to furlough and, in some cases, conducted again prior to discharge from furlough to probation.
- **Journal Entries**: Personal journals kept by each girl.

- Circle Reports: Written reports documenting the logistics of each Circle (e.g., names of participants, date, location), and summarizing key points from the Circle (topics discussed and commitments made).
- Circle Evaluations: Surveys sent to each Circle participant asking for feedback on and evaluation of the Circle.
- Case Notes: Notes recorded after each one-on-one session or other significant occurrence with each girl.
- Staff Observations: Ongoing observations made by professional staff members.
- Treatment Team Discussions: Information gathered about the girls through discussions with treatment team members.
- Census Reports: A report detailing the program population (e.g., name, date of birth, intake date, intake type), and distributed at each meeting of the Contract Management Team (Woodland Hills and AMICUS management and program staff members).

## **PROGRAM GOALS**

Listed below are the three specific goal statements that form the foundation of the Girls Restorative Program. The sub-goals that make up each primary goal statement are also presented.

### **Goal Statement 1**

#### **Restore Justice for Offenders, Victims, and the Community**

##### Sub-Goal 1A

Hold girls accountable for their actions. Ensure that they realize the impact of their actions, take responsibility for their own behavior, and make amends for their actions.

##### Sub-Goal 1B

Provide Restorative Justice to victims of female offenders.

### **Goal Statement 2**

#### **Provide a Successful Transition into the Community**

##### Sub-Goal 2A

Ensure a successful transition for girls back into their communities.

##### Sub-Goal 2B

Aid girls in their healing and reintegration into the community.

### **Goal Statement 3**

#### **Increase Operational Effectiveness in Participating Organizations**

##### Sub-Goal 3A

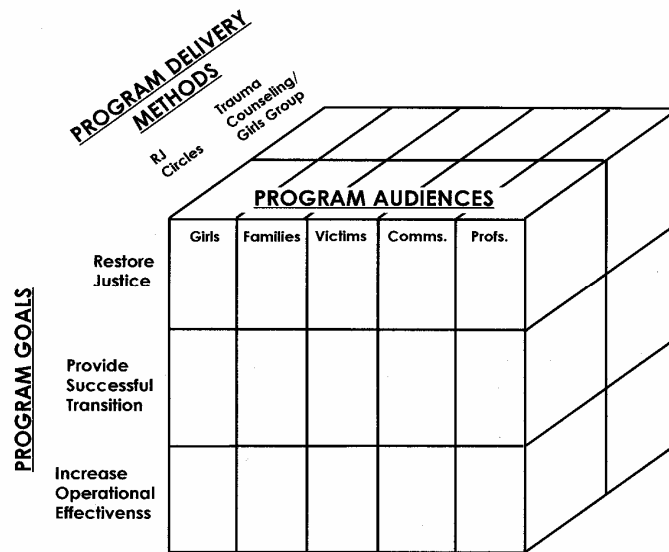
Integrate Restorative Justice values into correctional and treatment programs.

##### Sub-Goal 3B

Ensure successful program implementation.

**PROGRAM MATRIX**

**Girls Program Model Matrix**



**KEY FINDINGS**

The following tables present the key findings from a variety of program evaluation data collection efforts organized around groups that have been impacted by the Restorative Justice program (i.e. the girls, family members, victims, community members and professionals.)

<b>Table 1</b>				
<b>Summary of Outcomes by Program Group: Outcome Categories</b>				
<b>Girls</b>	<b>Family Members</b>	<b>Victims</b>	<b>Community Members</b>	<b>Professionals</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitude Toward Self and Others</li> <li>▪ Family Relationships</li> <li>▪ Relationships with the Justice System</li> <li>▪ Relationships with Others (Overall)</li> <li>▪ Peer Relationships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attitude Toward Self and Others</li> <li>▪ Family Relationships</li> <li>▪ Relationships with the Justice System</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Gaining Closure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Perspectives</li> <li>▪ Active Participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New Perspectives</li> <li>▪ Knowledge Acquisition and Utilization</li> </ul>

<b>Table 2</b>		
<b>Specific Outcomes by Outcome Category: Girls and Family Members</b>		
<u>Outcome Category</u>	<i>Program Group</i>	
	Girls	Family Members
Attitude Toward Self and Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased self-awareness</li> <li>▪ Increased self-advocacy</li> <li>▪ Increased optimism</li> <li>▪ Increased self confidence</li> <li>▪ Increased sense of control over one's own life</li> <li>▪ Increased maturity</li> <li>▪ Increased motivation</li> <li>▪ Increased ability to take responsibility for one's own actions</li> <li>▪ Increased understanding of the impact of actions on others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased optimism</li> <li>▪ Increased hope</li> <li>▪ Increased ability to take responsibility in terms of their daughter</li> </ul>
Family Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved relationships with and feelings toward family members (immediate and foster families)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved relationships with family members</li> </ul>
Relationships with the Justice System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved relationships with probation officers</li> <li>▪ Improved relationships with county agents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased trust in and of the overall system</li> </ul>
Relationships with Others (Overall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased compassion and caring behavior toward others</li> <li>▪ Increased remorse felt and demonstrated toward victims</li> <li>▪ Decreased destructive behavior toward others</li> </ul>	
Peer Relationships	Improved relationships with peers	

**Table 3**

**Specific Outcomes by Outcome Category: Victims, Community Members, and Professionals**

<u>Outcome Category</u>	<u>Program Group</u>		
	Victims	Community Members	Professionals
Gaining Closure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased closure regarding the crime that was committed</li> <li>▪ Increased closure regarding the relationship with the girl who committed the crime</li> </ul>		
Active Participation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ More direct involvement in the girl's transition</li> </ul>	
New Perspectives		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Greater belief in the effectiveness of the Circle process and the positive impact of that process on the girls</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Change in perspective regarding how to deal with the girl</li> <li>▪ Increased belief in and support for Restorative Justice principles and practices</li> <li>▪ Change in perspective regarding how the professional sees herself/himself</li> <li>▪ Movement from skepticism to hope regarding the girls' future</li> </ul>
Knowledge Acquisition and Utilization			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased knowledge of Restorative Justice principles and practices</li> <li>▪ Increased utilization of Restorative Justice principles and practices</li> <li>▪ Increased awareness and appreciation of available resources</li> </ul>

## MAJOR THEMES AND CONCLUSIONS

The major themes and conclusions derived from the key findings are summarized in the box below. Each theme/conclusion is then discussed in more detail following that summary.

**Table 4**

### **Summary of Major Themes and Conclusions**

- There are two cornerstones to the program: (1) the development of a girl's self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, and (2) the development of relationships between each girl and others who are important in and to her life.
- These two program cornerstones – self-awareness/self-advocacy and relationship building – are seen as the foundation for long-term, sustainable change in the girls.
- When program activities are in full alignment with program goals, an integrated set of outcomes are delivered, impacting a number of inter-connected individuals in a number of inter-related ways.
- Circles are an effective means of providing healing and support for the girls and others who participate in the process.
- Restorative Justice principles and practices are effective with this population.

***There are two cornerstones to the program: (1) the development of a girl's self-awareness and self-advocacy skills, and (2) the development of relationships between each girl and others who are important in and to her life.***

#### *Self-Awareness and Self-Advocacy*

In many ways, this is the foundational outcome of the entire program, where self-awareness and self-advocacy serve as the starting points for girls. Ultimately, both must be in place in order for the girl to make progress. Not surprisingly, there is a progression that is observed.

First, girls become more aware of what factors contributed to their being locked up, more aware of how they feel about their past, present, and future, and more aware of what's necessary to move forward. Second, they build relationships with others through a process of increased trust, increased willingness to share their feelings, and increased ability to articulate what attitudes and skills are necessary. Third, girls become more able to act in a healthier and more positive manner as they transition into the next stage of their lives, including making amends for actions they have taken and harm they have caused, and acting in their own best self-interest.

## Relationships

A central tenet of this program – a tenet embedded in the core principles of restorative justice – is the importance of developing, nurturing, and maintaining relationships between the girls and others who play a significant role in their lives, most importantly, family and community members. Healing the breach with their victim(s) is also emphasized.

These relationships are built in ongoing group work with staff, one-on-one work with counselors, and in the Circle work that is such an important part of the program. In these settings, girls come to better understand themselves, their experiences, their actions, and the impact of those actions on others. In addition, girls come to feel accountable to the people they have affected.

Connections with others are made, and girls begin to see that a community exists in which they can function as a positive member. Girls also come to see those communities, be they family units, peers, or social systems, as resources to help them in their transitional activities.

The Girls Restorative Program fosters increased and improved communication, and provides environments and support that enable feelings to be shared, plans to be made, and relationships to be rebuilt.

This rebuilding process occurs with many different groups. Girls feel better about their relationships with their families, and their families are better able to deal with them. Victims gain some amount of closure regarding the offense that was committed, with some expressing forgiveness, some expressing relief, and some expressing an increased sense of safety. And community members become more actively involved, identifying ways to marshal resources to help the girl.

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### ***These two program cornerstones – self-awareness / self-advocacy and relationship building – are the foundation for long-term, sustainable change in the girls.***

The process of healing is a long one. And the two outcomes mentioned above – increased self-awareness and self-advocacy, and deepened relationships with key people – will serve as the foundation for that ongoing healing process and the restoration that needs to occur. This conclusion is supported both by the experiences of this particular program and recent research dealing with restorative justice approaches.

There are indications that some of this longer-term change has happened, at least with some of the girls who participated in this program. Some of the stories included in the “Key Findings” section highlight this dimension – for example, the girl who calls her counselor to check in and ask for advice, and the girl who stopped being in touch with peers she considered to be a negative influence.

And while there are such indications, it is still too early to know if the changes are or will be long lasting. This presents a critical program evaluation challenge – the importance of tracking a girl’s progress for an extended period of time after she completes the program, and actively moves into and through her transition plan. This issue is addressed in greater detail in the following “Moving Forward” section below.

***When program activities are in full alignment with program goals, an integrated set of outcomes are delivered, impacting a number of inter-connected individuals in a number of inter-related ways.***

The foundation for sustainable change (as discussed above) is made up of a series of inter-related program outcomes. Some have to do with how the girl feels about herself and her circumstances – an increased sense of optimism, hope, trust, self-confidence, and resiliency. Certainly these need to be in place for the girl to move forward.

Other outcomes are related to skills the girl builds – improved coping skills, communication skills, life management skills. Some are related to how a girl feels about and relates to other people in her life, including family members.

And still other outcomes are observed in other people within the girl's broader system of healing and support – increased hope on the part of family members, increased forgiveness on the part of victims, increased involvement on the part of community members, increased knowledge and understanding on the part of professional staff members (e.g., residential staff, parole officers, caseworkers).

To understand the full impact of this program, it is important to view these as an integrated set of outcomes. The program is designed to impact multiple people in multiple ways, not just one person or dimension in isolation of other people or other dimensions. In so doing, there is greater hope that short-term improvements can turn into long-lasting change.

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***Circles are an effective means of providing healing and support for the girls and others who participate in the process.***

Many program findings and observations support this conclusion. First, Circles and the weekly Girls Group are structured in a way that requires individuals to engage in a meaningful dialogue around a variety of very important, very intense issues, and ensures that the environment in which such dialogue takes place is safe and supportive.

Second, Circle reports, prepared and distributed by Circle Keepers after each Circle, document what went on in each group, including issues addressed, agreements reached, and commitments made. Such documentation provides all Circle participants with concrete direction for future action.

Finally, formal evaluation results of these Circles also demonstrate their positive impact (see also Appendix D). During the four years of the program, all Circle participants – girls, family members, community members, probation officers, and victims – were asked to fill out a survey (see Appendix E for sample survey forms). And while the specific survey questions changed between 2000 and 2003, the overall evaluation results are very consistent.

Overall, Circle participants have positive feelings toward the Circle process and the impact of the Circles. Girls themselves typically give the highest ratings, while parole/probation officers tend to give the lowest ratings.

Specific areas that have been positively impacted by Circle participation include: understanding of the impact of one's behavior on others; communication among family members; taking more responsibility for one's actions; and agreements reached in the Circle.

Presented below are verbatim comments taken from the Circle evaluations, highlighting many of the points previously made in the language of the participants themselves.

- *“The keeper of the Circle was well prepared. Issues were brought up and each issue had a resolution. Everyone felt safe, and was able to show their hopes, thoughts and feelings.”* (Therapist)
- *“All in all, I feel that this process is a very powerful means of healing families. As a service provider, I am very interested in learning more about this method of serving families.”* (Community Service Provider)
- *“I know she can do it, get her life in order. But it seems her friends can sometimes lead her astray. She says some of the people she was with before she won't be with now. I'm hoping that is true. I'm also glad that we have done these Circles. Maybe if she feels she is slipping, she will call you.”* (Grandparent)
- *“I support my daughter in every positive way, and hope she draws from this positive force and makes serious adjustments.”* (Parent)
- *“I thought it was a very valuable process that re-energized my commitment to working with girls.”* (Former Attorney)
- *“I used to work with juveniles ten years ago. I recently returned to it, and am really excited about some of the changes I've seen. I think the Circle process is great. It really helps the juvenile get ready to get back into the community, and sets up support systems before she is back.”* (Parole Officer)

In sum, Circles seem to engender trust in most, if not all, participants; foster open, honest communication among participants; encourage people to deal with difficult issues; and aid in the development of relationships among people who are important in the girl's life.

They also yield discussion and concrete planning around how the girl will proceed with the next steps of her life, including transitions back into her family, her circle of friends, and/or the community in which she will live.

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### ***Restorative Justice principles and practices are effective with this population.***

Restorative Justice Online/PFI Centre for Justice and Reconciliation ([www.restorativejustice.org](http://www.restorativejustice.org)) defines restorative justice in the following way:

“... a systematic response to wrongdoing that emphasizes healing the wounds of victims, offenders and communities caused or revealed by the criminal behavior.”

This same website further states that restorative programs are characterized by the following key values:

- **“Encounter:** Create opportunities for victims, offenders and community members who want to do so to meet to discuss the crime and its aftermath.
- **Amends:** Expect offenders to take steps to repair the harm they have caused.
- **Reintegration:** Seek to restore victims and offenders as whole, contributing members of society.
- **Inclusion:** Provide opportunities for parties with a stake in a specific crime to participate in its resolution.”

Given the positive responses of all groups who participated in the Circles (certainly a key “encounter” of this program), as well as the girls’ positive response to program staff, it seems reasonable to conclude that restorative justice is an effective approach to dealing with girls, their victims, and their broader communities.

In fact, all four values listed above – encounter, amends, reintegration, and inclusion – are embedded into the delivery of the program. And that delivery has made an impact – in some cases, a very significant impact – on the program participants. Witness the girl who said things in a Circle that she had wanted to say, but had not been able to say, for ten years prior to participating in the program.

Two related notes. First, 11 of the 14 residential staff members who participated in the formal evaluation of the program state that even if the partnership between Woodland Hills and AMICUS were to end, they would still incorporate restorative justice principles and practices into their work. The remaining three respondents responded “don’t know” to this question. (See Appendix D).

Second, it’s clear that these same professionals have more knowledge about restorative justice practices and its value for the girls, are more comfortable using those practices in their work, and are more hopeful about positive results actually occurring. These two program outcomes – the development of new perspectives, and increased knowledge and use of that knowledge on the part of professional staff members – are also part of the foundation for long-term change.

## MOVING FORWARD

Listed below is a series of actions that will be considered in order to use the program evaluation findings and learnings to keep moving forward with this important work.

### Program Development

- Identify “promising practices” from the Circles and from all other aspects of the program. Incorporate these practices into future work. Document the learnings in a manner that they can be shared with and, if appropriate, replicated by other programs dealing with similar populations and challenges.
- Continue to work with residential providers to develop a “total-girl, gender-responsive” program. Implement training programs with team members to aid in skill development, and to ensure the programs maintain a gender-responsive focus.
- Document the needs of all individuals, groups, and organizations being served by the program: offenders, victims, families, communities, the criminal justice system, related organizations. Develop a comprehensive program sustainability plan based on the nature and scope of these needs. Ensure that such a plan details requirements and suggested actions in the areas of services offered, how services will be delivered, staffing, program evaluation, and overall program management.
- Develop specific actions to take to better utilize restorative justice programs in staff development/resolution of staff conflict.

### Program Evaluation

- Complete follow-up interviews with girls who have been discharged from probation.
- Update evaluation plan to ensure that it addresses the following elements: (1) desired program outcomes for each audience the program intends to reach/impact based on current or revised program goals; (2) key indicators of each outcome; (3) methods by which information will be collected, including suggested data collection tools and processes; (4) processes by which data will be reviewed, analyzed, reported, and used; (5) methods by which internal program evaluation capacity can be built, including an identification of individuals who will be responsible for program evaluation and any training that will be necessary for those individuals; and (6) resources necessary to successfully implement the plan.
- Ensure that the final program evaluation plan includes methods by which to measure long-term impact of the program.
- Ensure that the final program evaluation plan includes an identification (or development) of effective instruments to measure the extent of trauma experienced by program participants, and the full range of impact that occurs (e.g., healing, harm reduction, outlook on life) as a result of program interventions.

### *Transfer of Learning*

- Identify audiences (individuals and organizations) that would like to hear about and could benefit from knowing more about this work. Develop a communications plan that will identify the needs of each audience, and the means (vehicles and materials) by which each audience will be reached. Possible methods include: published articles (e.g., in *Women, Girls & Criminal Justice*), training materials, printed reports, electronic reports, workshop materials, consulting services, and websites (either a dedicated website or as part of the AMICUS website).
- Present this report to and/or discuss this report with the full range professional partners, including all individuals and organizations that actively participated in and have a stake in the future of this program. This list includes: AMICUS team members, Woodland Hills Contract Management Team members, Commissioner of Corrections and other officials from the Department of Corrections and the Department of Public Safety, the AMICUS board, the Commissioner's advisory committee on female offenders and its adolescent female task force, the Uniting Networks for Youth (UNY) advisory board in Ramsey County, the directors of interested county community corrections departments, local and national female offender experts, potential private and government funding sources for girls' programs.
- Make sure to discuss this program and related findings/learnings at all appropriate opportunities, ranging from professional conferences and workshops (e.g., the Minnesota Conference on Adolescent Females and the American Corrections Association meeting in August 2004) to ongoing work with participating organizations.
- Develop a training program to be offered to individuals and groups interested in knowing how to adapt the Girls Restorative Program to their own settings, situations, and populations.

## APPENDIX D

### 2003 EVALUATION RESULTS

#### Evaluation of the Circles of Healing and Support

This section examines the responses girls, probation officers, and communities have had when participating in Circles of support in 2003 (Note: because evaluation tools changed in 2002, the following study was performed on a limited number of Circles held in 2003 only). The information for the Circles is presented separately for probation officers, community members and the girls themselves. After each Circle, participants were asked to fill out a survey and give their agreement to a variety of statements about the Circle. Participants were then asked to return the survey to AMICUS.

#### 2003 Girls (N = 5)\*

	# of Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/
I understood the purpose of this circle	5	5				
I felt involved in the circle process	5	5				
I believe my contributions were heard and respected	5	4	1			
I am satisfied with the agreement reached	5	5				
This circle has helped to improve my feelings toward my family.	5	5				
This circle has helped me to communicate better with my family	5	5				
Because of this circle, I have a better understanding of the impact of my behavior	5	5				
Because of this circle, I take more responsibility for my behavior	5	5				
Because of the circle, I have more empathy for the victim(s) of my crime	5	5				
Because of the circle, I have more understanding of how my actions affect the community	5	5				
The circle keeper made me feel comfortable	5	4	1			
I feel more positive about the justice system	5	4	1			
Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this circle	5	5				

*\*Please note that because of the small number of girls included in this analysis, the data in the above figure are reported as numbers, not percentages*

- Overwhelmingly, girls have very positive feelings toward the Circle process. All girls *strongly agree* or *agree* with all statements about Circles. In fact, with the exception of three statements, all girls strongly agreed with everything.
- In addition, all girls would definitely recommend the Circle process to others. Girls indicated that they would recommend the process because, “Circles are a real help and it’s a time to say stuff that I was scared to say,” and “a Circle give the person a chance at a fresh start.” In addition, one girl indicated that “it helps to realize how much support you have and how your action affected the victim.”
- All of the girls also felt better after the Circles. Some of the reasons they felt better include:
  - “I got a lot of feelings out and so did the people there.”
  - “I learned about my family issues and I accomplished a lot out of it.”
  - “I got a lot of feelings out. I was given a lot of good advice. I was heard and respected.”
  - “Because I felt less stressed out.”
- Many girls said they liked the support they received from the Circle the best:
  - “All the support and understanding from everyone.”
  - “The people who came to the Circle.”
  - “Everyone came that I asked to come. All the people said that they would be there for me.”
  - “My sister, who I’ve hurt so much, was one of my biggest supporters. I loved seeing everyone and feeling welcome.”
- Three of the five girls also indicated that they are looking forward to Circles in the future.

### Family & Community Members

(N = 32)

	# of Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
I understood the purpose of this circle	32	56%	44%			
I felt involved in the circle process	32	50%	50%			
I believe my contributions were heard and respected	31	44%	56%			
I am satisfied with the agreement reached	31	29%	61%	7%		3%
This circle has helped to improve my feelings toward the girl	31	42%	39%	10%		9%
This circle has helped me to communicate better with the girl	31	36%	35%	13%		16%

	# of Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has a better understanding of the impact of her behavior	31	48%	29%	7%	3%	13%
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has taken more responsibility for her behavior	31	45%	32%	10%	3%	10%
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime	30	30%	40%	10%	3%	17%
The circle keeper made me feel comfortable	32	53%	47%			
I feel more positive about the justice system	32	13%	56%	22%	3%	6%
Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this circle	32	47%	47%	3%		3%

- Despite their positive feelings overall, family and community members were less positive than the girls or the probation officers about the Circle process. One-quarter of family or community members *disagrees* or *strongly disagree* that they feel more positive about the justice system. In addition at least one in ten *disagree* or *strongly disagree* with the following:
  - Because of this Circle, I believe the girl had taken more responsibility for her behavior (13% *disagree/strongly disagree*)
  - Because of this Circle, I believe the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime (13%)
  - Because of this Circle, I believe the girl has a better understanding of the impact of her behavior (10%)
- Despite some negative feelings, all family and community members *strongly agree* or *agree* with the following:
  - I understood the purpose of this Circle (100% *strongly agree/agree*)
  - I felt involved in the Circle process (100%)
  - I believe my contributions were heard and respected (100%)
- More than eight in ten family and community members *strongly agree* or *agree* that they are satisfied with the agreement reached (90%) and that this Circle has helped to improve their feelings toward the girl (81%). In addition, more than nine in ten (94%) family or community members are satisfied overall with the process of the Circle.
- Twenty-six of the 32 family and community members would *definitely* or *probably* recommend the Circle process to others. Their reasons for recommending the process include:
  - “Because I felt very supported.”
  - “Because I think it really helps everyone process their feelings.”
  - “Brought to light perceptions/feelings and allows an opportunity for solutions and support.”

- Twenty-three family and community members felt better after the Circle and six felt the same after the Circle as they did before. No family or community members felt *worse*. When asked why they felt the way they did, family and community members said:
  - “We had a chance to listen to feelings of others.”
  - “I had a chance to see if there was any remorse at all from the girl.”
  - “Because I am glad the girl talked about her crime and got some feelings out.”
  - “I had more understanding of the crimes and behaviors that took place.”
  
- Family and community members gave many responses when asked what they found most useful or important in the Circle process. Some of the responses include:
  - “I’ve seen some resentments soften.”
  - “Instant accountability and communication.”
  - “The honest confrontation from family and the support she received.”
  - “It educated and informed family members and probation officers on the circle process.”
  - “It helps a person to know there are others who love and care about them.”

### 2003 Probation Officers

(N = 7)\*

	# of Respondents	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/
I understood the purpose of this circle	7	4	3			
I felt involved in the circle process	7	5	2			
I believe my contributions were heard and respected	7	3	4			
I am satisfied with the agreement reached	7	4				3
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has a better understanding of the impact of her behavior	7		2	2	2	1
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has taken more responsibility for her behavior	7		1	3	2	1
Because of this circle, I believe the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime	7		2	3	1	1
The circle keeper made me feel comfortable	7	4	2	1		
I believe circles improve the criminal justice system	7		6	1		
I believe this circle had a positive impact on the victim	7		1	1		5
I believe this circle had a positive impact on the girl	7	1	6			
I believe this circle had a positive impact on her family	7	3	3	1		
I believe this circle had a positive impact on the community	7	1	1			5
Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this circle	7	2	5			

*\*Please note that because of the small number of probation officers, the above figure reports numbers, not percentages.*

- Overall, probation officers perceptions of the Circles they have attended are very positive. All of the probation officers *strongly agree* or *agree* with the following statements:
    - I understood the purpose of the Circle
    - I felt involved in the Circle process
    - I believe my contributions were heard and respected
    - I believe this Circle had a positive impact on the girl
    - Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this Circle.
  
  - Six of the seven probation officers in 2003 *strongly agree* or *agree* that the Circle keeper made him/her feel comfortable and that the Circle had a positive impact on the girl's family.
  
  - At least four probation officers *disagree* or *strongly disagree* that because of the Circle, the girls has taken more responsibility for her behavior (N = 5 *disagree/strongly disagree*), the girl has a better understanding of the impact of her behavior (N = 4 *disagree/strongly disagree*), or that the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime (N = 4 *disagree/strongly disagree*).
  
  - When asked if they would recommend the Circle process to others, six of the seven probation officers indicated they *definitely* or *probably* would do so. Only one probation officer would *maybe* recommend the process and no probation offers said they would *probably* or *definitely not* recommend the Circle process.
  
  - Six of the seven probation officers indicated they *felt better* after the Circle than they did before the Circle. Some of the reasons they felt better include:
    - "Everyone was holding youth accountable."
    - "A chance for the young lady to pen up and listen to those who support her."
    - "Better understanding of the dad and the impact on the girl."
    - "Meeting support persons, establishing a way to transition back into the community."
  
  - Probation officers found many aspects of the Circle process important. These include:
    - "The structure, everyone has the opportunity to verbalize responses. All are directly asked to respond."
    - "The victim voicing their thoughts and feelings toward the offender for the crime committed against them."
    - "Family and community involvement."
    - "To see the dynamics that happened with the family when an important issue was raised in the circle."
-

## **Girls' Transition Interviews**

This section of the report contains information from the exit interviews conducted with each girl as she transitioned to furlough. The purpose of the interviews was to learn more about which aspects of the program are important to the girls, what they learned in their participation, what will be most useful to them once on furlough, and to see if AMICUS can be of more assistance to them while they are in the community. In analyzing the data, it became clear that the success of the state commit girls program is due largely to the relationships the girls have developed with the Trauma Counselor and the Restorative Justice (RJ) Coordinators.

When asked what they learned in the trauma groups that will be most helpful to them in the community, two of the three girls mentioned that they learned to open up and to better understand their own feelings and behaviors around the sexual abuse they have experienced. One girl reported that she has learned how to talk to her parents about feelings and that she personally feels like a stronger person. Another girl learned that harassment and abuse are not acceptable behaviors and how to identify signs of abuse in others. When asked what they liked least about the groups, all three girls indicated there was nothing they didn't like with the exception of how some of the girls interrupted during the groups. Another girl said that her least favorite thing about the trauma groups was that they weren't long enough and she wished group occurred more frequently.

The girls were also asked a series of questions about the Circles in which they participated. All stated that the Circles were incredibly supportive and helpful. One girl reported that her victim-offender Circle "helped me see what I'd done, who I had hurt. When you have to face the person you hurt, it helps you to look at what you have done more seriously. I would think twice about doing it again." Two of the girls indicated that the most helpful part of the Circle was the Restorative Justice Coordinator's support. Only one girl mentioned anything negative about the Circles, which was that Circles were least helpful when her family members did not attend because of family problems.

All of the girls indicated that their relationships with people in their communities have improved because of the Circles and restorative programming. One girl mentioned that her relationships have improved with not just family members but also her probation officer and guardian ad litem. Another girl indicated that she has a better relationship with her foster mother; that they understand each other better now and that she feels she can ask for her foster mother's support in the future.

Over and over again, the girls mentioned their positive relationships with the Trauma Counselor and the RJ Coordinator. While each girl has a different plan for staying in touch with the Trauma Counselor while on furlough, all look forward to talking and meeting with her. The girls feel they will also continue their relationship with the RJ Coordinator while on furlough. One girl would like to call just to say "hi" while another will continue to do Circles with RJ Coordinator and call for support. Two of the girls said that AMICUS can continue to help them while they are on furlough by just seeing them and having staff visit them.

In conclusion, these exit interviews are an affirmation that the key to success with girls is developing a supportive and positive relationship with them and holding them accountable to their behaviors. In talking with them, it is clear that the groups, counseling and the Circle process work together to help the girls understand themselves and their experiences and to see that a community exists in which they can function as a positive member.

## **Woodland Hills Staff Survey**

This section provides information from the Woodland Hills staff who work directly with the girls (N = 14). Staff completed a paper survey about their experiences with AMICUS, their knowledge and use of restorative justice and success and challenges associated with the partnership with AMICUS.

- Staff who work directly with the girls were asked how their personal knowledge of restorative justice principles and practices has changed since the partnership with AMICUS. Most (10 out of 14) respondents indicated that their knowledge has *increased*, while only three indicated that there has been *no change* in their restorative justice knowledge. (One marked “don’t know”.)

Staff was also asked to rate their agreement with a series of questions about the partnership between Woodland Hills and AMICUS and the impact this partnership has had.

- All 14 respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that they wish to learn more about restorative justice practices and principles.
- Twelve of the 14 respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that restorative justice initiatives are effective interventions when working with youth. (Two marked “don’t know”.)
- Almost all (12 out of 14) staff *strongly agree* or *agree* that the girls at Woodland Hills have benefited from the partnership with AMICUS. (Two marked “don’t know”.)
- Ten of the 14 respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that since the partnership, Woodland Hills staff has increased the use of restorative justice in its day-to-day interactions with girls. (Four marked “don’t know”.)
- Eleven of the 14 respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that even if the partnership were to end, they would still incorporate restorative justice practices into their work. (Three marked “don’t know”.)
- Eight of the 14 respondents *strongly agree* or *agree* that their professional skills have improved because of the partnership with AMICUS. (Five marked “don’t know” and one *disagreed*.)
- No staff *strongly agreed* that Woodland Hill’s management and staff have increased the use of restorative justice practices and principles to resolve staff conflict and 3 staff members actually *disagree* with this statement. An additional 3 “don’t know” if there has been an increase in restorative justice practices when it comes to resolving staff conflict.

Staff was also asked a series of open-ended questions about the partnership with AMICUS. When asked what they feel is the biggest success of the Woodland Hills/AMICUS partnership, staff by far, indicated the many benefits the girls receive. These benefits include the relationship building that occurs in the Circles for the girls, victims, families, and communities. Staff also mentioned how beneficial it is to use Circles to help the girls transition back into their communities and for them to face their victims. Some staff indicated the biggest success is the services provided to girls, but that they wish these services could be extended to boys. One staff member indicated that she/he felt the biggest success in the partnership has been the restorative justice Circle training with managers.

Staff gave a variety of responses when asked to indicate the biggest challenges in forming and maintaining this partnership. However, many staff mentioned that communication and building trust between two completely different organizations has been a challenge but is working. One staff member mentioned it was sometimes a challenge to form consensus when it came to treatment for the girls. Other challenges include financial management and money, and having time set aside for the girls to work one-on-one without it interrupting school, treatment, or work projects. Staff also mentioned that involving family has been a challenge.

Staff also had many different responses when given the opportunity to say additional comments about the Woodland Hills/AMICUS partnership. Many staff indicated that it seemed like a positive partnership but they didn't really thoroughly understand the program. Other staff took the opportunity to ask that the programming be extended to the boys, while another staff member simply stated that the partnership is a "great, useful part of treatment."

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## **Management Team Interviews**

This section is based on interviews completed with the Woodland Hills/AMICUS management team. A total of 9 interviews were completed.

Each member of the management team was asked five open-ended questions about their knowledge of restorative justice, how restorative justice practices and principles are utilized at Woodland Hills, successes and challenges in forming a partnership between AMICUS and Woodland Hills, and what (s)he might do differently if they could begin the partnership over again.

Overall, members of the team had very positive things to say about the partnership between AMICUS and Woodland Hills.

*Q1. Overall, how would you describe your knowledge of restorative justice principles and practices? Has this knowledge increased or stayed the same since the partnership between Woodland Hills and AMICUS began in 2001?*

Almost all team members indicated that while they had some knowledge of restorative justice prior to the partnership with AMICUS, this knowledge has increased since the partnership began in 2001. One team member indicated that since the partnership her knowledge has increased 100 percent and that she feels, "pretty confident" in her understanding. In addition, this team member stated that she has learned that it important to embrace restorative justice beyond work and to live restoratively. Another theme that arose when members were asked this question is that while Woodland Hills may have theoretically understood restorative justice, the partnership with AMICUS has helped them to put their theory into practice. This was enhanced for many team members by the DOC's restorative justice training, the training done by Matt Johnson and Tim Hansen, and the support Angela Mettin has provided.

Q2. How have you seen restorative justice principles and practices put into action at Woodland Hills with you? How about within the Woodland Hills organization?

Members of the management team indicated that while they may not have called what they do restorative, restorative justices principles and practices are, at some level, a part of everything they do with youth. Specifically, team members mentioned that they are focused on accountability with the youth, AMICUS staff support of the DOC girls, and Circles conducted with the girls. Several staff also mentioned that they would like to expand restorative justice practices, in particular the Circle process, to the boys.

One team member mentioned: “During the time of release the girls are allowed to have a release staffing or a release Circle. Most of the girls so far have chosen to have release Circle. I also hear girls talk about how their actions have affected their victims and that when they get to the point when they are ready and the victim is willing, they want to meet with that person or person and do a mediation.”

While there seems to be a strong commitment to restorative justice at the top levels, it isn’t always practiced by line staff. Team members believe this is due to the difficulty in keeping staff trained. While one management team member said that values of restorative justice and Woodland Hills are very compatible, it is sometimes difficult for line staff, who are trained in a different model, to embrace restorative justice. This difference seems to be more in terms of approach than in philosophy and is a theme that arose again when members were asked what the biggest challenge in partnering has been.

There seems to also be room for growth when it comes to embracing restorative justice with staff and in the organization. However, one team member said she sees restorative justice, “at the table at management meetings” and another indicated that restorative justice was successfully used during a difficult period at Woodland Hills when staff were being cut due to budget concerns. In addition, one team member stated that both the management and treatment teams are good examples of restorative justice principles practiced at an organizational level.

Q3. What has been the most successful aspect of the partnership between Woodland Hills and AMICUS?

Overwhelmingly, members mentioned the management team as a wonderful success. They indicated the team has a “commitment and respect for the collaboration process which is quite genuine.” Some team members indicated that this is one of the most successful partnerships they have developed.

This partnership, which extends to the treatment team, ultimately results in the girls getting some of the best treatment they have ever received. One team member indicated that, “joining two philosophies has strengthened their work overall” while another said, “the girls are getting the best intervention they have ever gotten. This is a very quality program and the partnership enhances what we do. It’s a wonderful model and I wish we could do it with all kids.”

Team members also indicated that the partnership has resulted in the girls getting trauma counseling in addition to other services. One team member summed it up by saying that “not only are the girls getting treatment, they are also getting support with their trauma and abuse issues on a one-to-one basis. Girls thrive on relationships and this partnership offers that to them.”

Q4. What has been the biggest challenge in forming and maintaining this partnership?

While the partnership itself is seen as one of the biggest successes, getting to the point of having a genuine, working partnership has been the biggest challenge. Again and again, team members said that it was very difficult to blend differing philosophies and very passionate people.

Building trust and consensus were also mentioned as challenges, especially in an environment where people are used to doing their jobs a certain way, and established roles must change to accommodate new people.

A few team members mentioned that issues around staffing have been a challenge, including managing staff from a distance, and having “someone in our house who we don’t supervise.” Two team members also mentioned that changes in the AMICUS staff posed a challenge as it was hard to accept a new person right away and instead of taking a step back, paying attention to the change and working toward building new trust, everyone kept moving forward as if it were a minor change.

Not surprisingly, communication was also mentioned as a challenge, with some “difficult conversations” that had to have taken place. Despite these difficulties, almost all team members believe these challenges made the partnership and the program what it is today.

Not only was it a challenge to bring staff together, it was a challenge to implement a strong restorative justice program in a non-restorative setting. Team members mentioned that both sides had to compromise; Woodland Hills had to learn that restorative justice is not necessarily a “soft approach” and AMICUS had to “step back” as well and learn to operate in Woodland Hills’s environment without compromising the integrity of the restorative justice principles.

Q5. If you could begin this partnership again, what one change would you make to improve the programming provided to girls or improve the way Woodland Hills and AMICUS work together?

Almost all team members indicated that they would really not do anything differently if they could go back and start this process all over again; most said that the challenges and struggles they went through were necessary to build the partnership they have today and that each challenge resulted in a positive outcome.

Specific changes team members would make if they could start again include more team building right from the beginning; including Woodland Hills more in staffing issues; taking more time in the beginning to understand each other’s work, and establishing clearer role expectations up front.

Finally, each team member was asked if there was anything else (s)he wished to comment on regarding AMICUS or Woodland Hills. The following quotes are in response to this question and are insightful examples of how team members ultimately feel about this partnership:

- “Hard work to get where we are, but I am glad we are there. We came together and formed something new and you get better when you have to go through the tough stuff.”
- “I am very happy with the partnership and would like to expand it.”
- “I don’t want this partnership to end. This is the best these girls have been treated and these are some of the best services they have ever been given.”
- “This turned out to be very positive and innovative.”

## Summary by Goal

### **Goal 1: Restore Justice for Offenders, Victims and Community**

#### Outcome: Increased accountability and responsibility for harm caused

- All five of the girls who participated in Circles of support *strongly agree* that the process increased their understanding of the impacts of their behavior and helped them take more responsibility for their behavior. In addition, all five girls said that participating in the Circles of support increased their empathy for their victim(s). This increased feeling of responsibility extended to the community as a whole, as all five girls also *strongly agree* that they have a better understanding of how their actions affect the community. One girl stated that the Circles, “helped me show what I’d done and who I had hurt. When you have to face the person you hurt, it helps you to look at what you have done more seriously. I would think twice about doing it again.”
- Seventy percent of the family/community members who participated in at least one Circle of support with a girl stated that they *strongly agree* or *agree* that because of the Circles, they believe the girl has empathy for the victims of her crime, while more than three-quarters (77%) *strongly agree* or *agree* that because of the Circle process, the girls has taken more responsibility for her crime.
- While family and community members feel the Circle process has increased the girls’ accountability and responsibility toward harm caused, probation officers are not as convinced. Of the seven probation officers who participated in Circles of support, only one *agrees* that the because of the Circles (s)he believes the girls has taken more responsibility for her behavior and only two *agree* that the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime because of the Circle process.

#### Outcome: Increased victim healing

- The girls, members of the community and probation officers were asked a series of questions about the Circle process and whether they found the Circles restorative. Almost seven in ten (69%) community members *strongly agree* or *agree* that because of the Circles, they feel more positively about the justice system. All of the girls (N = 5) also *strongly agree* or *agree* with this statement.
- Only one probation officers feels that the Circles had a positive impact on the victim, but five of the seven did not know how to answer this question.

#### Outcome: Increased relationships between victim, offender & community

- Another purpose of the Circles is to help restore the relationships between the girl and her community. Forty-two percent of the community members who participated in Circles stated they *strongly agree* that the Circles help to improve his/her feelings with the girl and all of the girls (N = 5) *strongly agree* that the Circles helped improve their feelings toward their family. One girl also stated that because of the Circles, her relationships with key people, including her probation officer and county ad litem have improved. Another girl stated that because of the Circles she will be able to ask her foster mother for support in the future.

## **Goal 2: Successful Transition to Community**

- Of the 23 girls that have completed the state-commit girls program, we have been able to track 16 of them. Of these 16 participants, 11 of them at the time of this report (or 69%) have made and maintained successful transitions back into the community. Although 4 participants did end up in the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF) at Shakopee, 2 had been parole violators and in the program for less than 3 months and one girl has been released from MCF-Shakopee and is now back on track and doing well.

## **Goal 3: Operational Effectiveness**

Outcome: Woodland Hills has increased understanding & support of restorative justice principles, practices and values

- Woodland Hills has clearly learned more about and become more committed to restorative justice because of its partnership with AMICUS; almost all members of the management team indicated that their personal knowledge of restorative justice has increased because of the partnership. In addition, 10 of the 14 staff who work directly with the girls stated that their knowledge of restorative justice has also increased. In addition, 10 staff stated that use of restorative justice in everyday interactions with girls has also increased.
- Staff support for restorative justice is also exhibited in all of the 14 staff working with girls indicating that they wish to learn more about restorative justice, and 11 of the 14 stating that they believe restorative justice interventions are effective. An additional 11 staff members also strongly agree or agree that even if the partnership with AMICUS were to end, they would still incorporate restorative justice practices into their daily work.

Outcome: Woodland Hills increases its use of restorative justice principles and practices in programs with the girls

- There is no doubt that AMICUS has been influential in increasing the use of restorative justice within Woodland Hills when intervening with girls. Most girls, when given the choice of a release staffing or a release Circle, request a Circle. In addition, the presence of the AMICUS restorative justice program coordinator ensures that the girls have the opportunity to participate in Circles of support. Woodland Hills has also found the restorative justice provided by AMICUS to be so beneficial that they have asked that it be expanded to include all girls at the facility, not just the DOC girls. Some staff also mentioned they would like to see restorative justice practiced with the boys.

Outcome: Woodland Hills increases its use of restorative justice principles and practices in staff procedures.

- While Woodland Hills has used restorative justice principles in practices as an organization, this is one area in which AMICUS could work to make a bigger impact. Woodland Hills has used the Circle process to facilitate staff cuts, and both the management and treatment teams are examples of employing restorative justice practices at an organizational level. However, three staff members who work directly with the girls indicated that they do not believe Woodland Hills management and staff have increased the use of restorative justice principles and practices to resolve staff conflict.

# APPENDIX E

## EVALUATION SURVEY FORMS

*Completed by the girl:*

Date of Circle: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Circles you have attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about this Circle. Please circle only one response.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Applicable</u>
a) I understood the purpose of this Circle	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
b) I felt involved in the Circle process	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
c) I feel what I had to say was heard and respected	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
d) I am satisfied with the agreement that was reached	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
e) This Circle has helped to improve my feelings toward my family	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
f) This Circle has helped me to communicate better with my family	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
g) Because of this Circle, I have a better understanding of the impact of my behavior	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
h) Because of this Circle, I take more responsibility for my behavior	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
i) Because of this Circle, I have more empathy for the victim(s) of my crime	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
j) Because of this Circle, I have more understanding of how my actions affect the community	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
k) The Circle Keeper made me feel comfortable	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
l) I feel more positive about the justice system	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
m) Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this Circle	SA	A	D	SD	N/A

Would you recommend participation in a Circle to other juvenile offenders who have committed similar offenses? Would you:

- a.  Definitely recommend the Circle process
  - b.  Probably recommend the Circle process
  - c.  Maybe recommend the Circle process
  - d.  Probably not recommend the Circle process
  - e.  Definitely not recommend the Circle process
  - f.  Don't know
- Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel after the Circle was over? Did you feel:

- a.  Better than before the Circle
  - b.  The same as before the Circle
  - c.  Worse than before the Circle
  - d.  Don't know
- Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What did you like best about this Circle?

What did you like least about this Circle?

Any other comments?

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.  
Your responses are important and will remain confidential!**

Please return this survey in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope.  
AMICUS, Inc. 100 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 529B Minneapolis, MN 55403

*Completed by family, friends, community members:*

Name of Girl: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Circle: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Circles you have attended: \_\_\_\_\_

Please rate your agreement with the following statements about this Circle. Please circle only one response.

	<u>Strongly Agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Strongly Disagree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Don't Know/ Not Applicable</u>
a) I understood the purpose of this Circle	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
b) I felt involved in the Circle process	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
c) I believe my contributions were heard and respected	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
d) I am satisfied with the agreement that was reached	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
e) This Circle has helped to improve my feelings toward the girl	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
f) This Circle has helped me to communicate better with the girl	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
g) Because of this Circle, I believe the girl has a better understanding of the impact of her behavior	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
h) Because of this Circle, I believe the girl has taken more responsibility for her behavior	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
i) Because of this Circle, I believe the girl has more empathy for the victim(s) of her crime	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
j) The Circle Keeper made me feel comfortable	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
k) I feel more positive about the justice system	SA	A	D	SD	N/A
l) Overall, I am satisfied with the process of this Circle	SA	A	D	SD	N/A

Would you recommend participation in a Circle to other families who have a relative who has committed similar offenses? Would you:

- a.  Definitely recommend the Circle process
  - b.  Probably recommend the Circle process
  - c.  Maybe recommend the Circle process
  - d.  Probably not recommend the Circle process
  - e.  Definitely not recommend the Circle process
  - f.  Don't know
- Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How did you feel after the Circle was over? Did you feel:

- a.  Better than before the Circle
  - b.  The same as before the Circle
  - c.  Worse than before the Circle
  - d.  Don't know
- Why do you feel this way? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What do you think was the most useful or important part of this process?

How could this process be improved to make the Circles more useful or important?

Other Comments:

**Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.**  
**Your responses are important and will remain confidential!**

Please return this survey in the enclosed, self-addressed envelope.  
AMICUS, Inc. 100 North 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 529B Minneapolis, MN 55403