



radius

A Newsletter Serving Individuals Working with Female Juvenile Offenders

From
Corrections to
Connections:
**Working
-With-
Girls**

Spring 2010

Issue 8

Amicus Training Update:

Amicus held its first “Opposite Gender Training: Men Working with Girls, Women working with Boys- Critical Issues” training on March 30 in Duluth. Approximately 20 professionals from around the state of Minnesota participated. Participants spent the day learning about what is needed to develop strong opposite gender staff-client relationships. The training received rave ratings and reviews from participants:

“The information I received will be very useful in the job I work- I hope to bring it back to my facility.”

“[The facilitators] have collectively a tremendous amount of wisdom and experience and present the material with great integrity and humility.”

“Opposite gender staffing seems to be an important topic that we need to get ahead of sooner or later.”

“[The most useful topic in the training was] openly recognizing that gender matters and understanding how to utilize differences positively.”

“The training included many great group discussions on the ‘elephants in the room’ of opposite gender staffing. This training tackled these difficult issues head-on.”

This training, also coming to St. Paul on June 15 (open registration), is currently being adapted for additional organizations in Minnesota. Trainings are fine-tuned to match the needs of participants or programs. Those interested in bringing an Amicus Academy training to their organization or area, and those who wish to register for the June 15 training may contact Marissa Steen at marissa@amicususa.org or 612-348-8570.

Highlights in this issue:

Page 1: Staff/Program Updates and Trainings

Page 2: Relationships’ Role by Bridget Sanders

Page 3: Book Review, Resource Corner, and Girls’ Study

Program Updates:

Ramsey County Photovoice Group

For the past couple of months, a small group of Radius graduates in Ramsey County has been working on a Photovoice project on behalf of the Tri-County Amicus Girls Academy Initiative. Led by MSW intern Priya Saihgal with creative input and support from MSW intern Laura Chapeau, the project provides an opportunity for girls to express their perspectives through images they capture of their lives. Participants chose the topic “identity”, and have already taken hundreds of pictures that illustrate the experiences of a diverse group of teenage girls growing up in St Paul, MN whose lives have been affected by the juvenile justice system. Next steps involve selecting favorite images and preparing to share this work with friends, family and community stakeholders.

The Saint Paul Gang Conflict Resolution

by Russel Balenger, Director of Community Engagement

To help support a peaceful summer in St. Paul, Amelia Goodyear, Bridget Sanders and Joal Reeves have worked closely with me to launch weekly circles bringing together families of gang-involved youth in the area to create a conversation within the community aimed toward minimizing conflict between rival gangs.

The group is a product of discussions about the ongoing problems related to gang violence and possible resolutions. We were able to find parents, grandparents, cousins and an aunt who are related to gang members on opposing sides inviting them to sit in circle and discuss the situation. We believe that a gang member may be less likely to go to war with a family that their family is in relationship with. Over time, we hope to reach many more family members of these gangs as well as gang members themselves, community members, police, community corrections, and other Amicus stakeholders. Essentially, our goal is to bring all voices that have stake in this conflict into conversation and operate from a restorative model.

Relationships' Role in Female Juvenile Delinquency

by *Bridget Sanders*

Relationships represent a source of both joy and pain for adolescent females. Healthy relationships can boost their self-esteem and self-confidence, whereas negative relationships can foster a form of aggression in which adolescent females strike out against others in response to their own pain. Because of the importance of relationships in the lives of girls, workers have to have a relationship with a girl in order to be able to process the hurt and pain she has experienced in her life.

Female juvenile offenders represent a misunderstood population within the juvenile justice system. Historically based around the anti-social behavior of adolescent males, the juvenile justice system has been challenged with addressing the decade-long rise in the number of adolescent females in the juvenile justice system, females whose needs and experiences are markedly different from those of boys.

According to George Calhoun, adolescent females in the Juvenile justice system report a 70 percent rate of victimization, including physical, emotional and sexual abuse, a higher rate than that reported by boys. These types of trauma provoke a set of expectations about interpersonal relationships. Girls may struggle with issues such as trust, respect and fear of abandonment, which in turn can lead to behaviors like lashing out, fighting, etc. that can lead to involvement with the juvenile justice system.

When focusing on the differences in the offending behaviors of boys and girls, the role of relationships is the most important thing in understanding the behaviors of girls. We should therefore explore critical questions regarding adolescent females' current relationships and relationship histories. How does she view relationships, particularly negative relationships? What are her attitudes and perceptions about others? What meaning does she place on her relationship experiences? This information will not only help us understand girls' perceptions and experiences and how they create relationships with other key people in her life, but will also help us create positive relationships with the girls we work with.



Farewell to our Lovely Interns

We will soon be saying goodbye to our social work interns, Laura Chapeau and Priya Saihgal. We will miss them and would like to thank them for their hard work. Good luck to you both! They each wrote a paragraph about their experiences below.

Laura Chapeau -- I have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to be a part of the Radius Team over the past nine months. I have had the opportunity to provide individual therapy for several girls, co-facilitate several girls groups, and take part in several Restorative Justice circles at schools, and Stillwater and Shakopee prisons. The opportunities that my time at Radius has provided are priceless, and I look forward to continuing my growth as a MSW practitioner. I am unsure what direction my career will take me, but have greatly enjoyed the opportunity to continue my growth in working with girls and families. Thank you very much to the Radius Team for the work that you do with girls, and the patience and willingness to teach me throughout this year!

Priya Saihgal -- It has been great getting to know some of the Radius staff here during my internship experience. I have learned many things which I will take with me after graduation. Getting to see the strengths, resilience, and beauty of each girl I have worked with have been among the highlights of my experience here. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to collaborate with girls whose lives have touched the juvenile justice system, and to those who have supported me throughout my internship experience.

Book Review/Summary

By Joal Reeves

Peacemaking Circles & Urban Youth: Bringing Justice Home by Carolyn Boyes-Watson, Ph. D.

The transformational power of working with youth is explored in this analysis of Roca, a Massachusetts-based youth organization that utilizes restorative circles to help transform the lives of youth.

Roca works with youth of diverse backgrounds, some of whom have encountered the juvenile justice system. Their efforts embody the transformational power of the circle process and challenge commonly held definitions of justice.

By combining peacemaking circles with several forms of outreach and community engagement, Roca approaches juvenile justice both holistically and restoratively. The program is an example of helping youth build themselves as individuals and working to build up the communities they call home.

Roca's programming shows, most importantly, that young people can thrive in spaces dedicated to their success. Held together by values of accountability and the value of everyone's voice and opinion, youth can speak and be heard and entire communities can be transformed.

RESOURCE CORNER

Free Web-based Course for Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy: <http://tfcbt.musc.edu/>

Online, comprehensive, sexuality curriculum: <http://teachingsexualhealth.ca/>

Study Shines Light on Needs of Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

*"There is a reason behind everything people do...always."
"People don't want to hear us because they think we're all troublemakers."*

*"I think it's good to give girls a chance to do the right thing."
- Girls interviewed in the Amicus Girls Study*

The Amicus Girls Study is being released in June, 2010 after more than two years of research. It includes participation from over 220 individuals, including corrections and social work professionals, caregivers, women incarcerated at Minnesota Correctional Facility – Shakopee and an often-overlooked resource within the juvenile justice system, the girls themselves. Many girls in the justice system feel they don't have a voice: that people are viewing them more as the embodiment of their destructive behavior rather than as individuals with insights and opinions that should be heard.

"The Amicus Girls Study originated from a simple idea," Amicus President Louise Wolfram said. "Ask those involved with girls in our juvenile justice system how the system is doing." It was developed by Amicus, a local nonprofit agency working with offenders, ex-offenders and juveniles in the criminal justice system. The study was jointly funded through a grant by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety's Office of Justice Programs, and through Amicus itself. The report provides policymakers and frontline practitioners with an overview of Minnesota's work with girls in the justice system. It features an extensive review of best practices and comments gathered from 32 focus groups and additional interviews at 15 sites across Minnesota. It also provides suggested criteria by which to judge the effectiveness of individual programs.

The study recommends sharing existing knowledge about the specific needs of justice system-involved girls, focusing more resources on prevention, helping girls repair the harm they've done and restore positive relationships within their community, and keeping track of the girls to understand how they have moved through the system and what treatments have the best results for each individual.

Wolfram said the study identifies areas for concern but also recognizes the dedication of so many professionals, the enduring patience of caregivers and the determination of many girls to restore themselves within their communities.

The Amicus Girls Study will be available for download at www.amicususa.org or by calling Amicus at 612-348-8570.

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