



Girls Aftercare Services Program

Recent nationwide statistics indicate that young females are increasingly partaking in criminal activities and, as a result, are becoming more involved in the juvenile justice system. Upon release from juvenile justice and residential contract care placements, these young female offenders are sent back into their communities with minimal female-specific comprehensive aftercare services available. The lack of sufficient community-based services increases the likelihood of these girls recidivating and continued involvement in the juvenile justice system. In response to the need for gender-specific aftercare services, Southwest Key Programs was granted funding through the State of Texas/Office of the Governor to create the Girls Aftercare Services Program in Bexar County, Texas. The program specifically targets young females between the ages of 10 to 17 who are returning to Bexar County from out-of-home placement

Program Components

Southwest Key's approach in working with at-risk girls is strength-based, innovative, and based on the most current research and best practices regarding female specific programming for girls involved in the juvenile justice system. Southwest Key has experienced tremendous success in the female-oriented programs we have provided in San Antonio, where results show a significant decrease in incidents of delinquent behavior. Demonstrating success, girls participating in our gender-specific programs have demonstrated a 45% decrease in truancy incidents, a 47% decrease in reported minor assaults, a 38% decrease in school-based delinquent activity, and a 67% decrease in vandalism activity.

Upon entering this 16-week program, girls are assigned to an Outreach Worker who provides youth with intensive case management 24 hours a day every day of the week. The girls meet with their assigned Outreach Worker at least twice a week for approximately six to ten hours per week through a combination of individual, group, and family counseling or case management services. Most services will be provided after school and after work hours to encourage youth and parent involvement.

Primary components of the Girls' Aftercare Services Program include the following:

Case Management: After receiving a referral, our staff conducts a meeting in the family's home or other appropriate place. During these first meetings Southwest Key staff work with the family to assess the crisis, complete a family information form and assessment, and determine the appropriate intervention.

Vocational And Job Readiness Training: Includes career exploration activities, employment and internship opportunities, job shadowing, and career-based mentoring.

"As Americans stand on the threshold of the 21st century, the increasing criminalization of women and girls and the reality that they are now pouring into prisons, jails, and detention centers faster than their male counterparts must spark a major public response."

~ Females in the Criminal Justice System





Program Components (continued)

Mental Health & Substance Abuse Counseling:

A Southwest Key Clinician and Outreach Worker will provide in-home individual and family counseling. Psycho-educational groups will be provided for girls and their parents that address relevant topics such as parenting skills, conflict resolution, adolescent age appropriate behavior, and other topics of interest. Girls will be referred to more intensive substance abuse and mental health counseling, as needed.

Mentoring: Female participants will be paired with positive women and role models in their communities who can provide support and with whom the girls can build positive relationships.

Citizenship And Character Development:

Girls will be involved in a variety of community service activities and projects lead by the girls and facilitated by the Outreach Workers. The experiences will allow the girls opportunities to develop their leadership skills and experience personal power in their community as well as meet their required community service hours for probation.



Social Skills/Youth Leadership Development:

Social skills training will be provided addressing a variety of topics and skills development including decision-making, public speaking and advocacy skills, self-defense, and dating. Local organizations will provide informative presentations to address social issues facing young girls including teen sexuality, safe sex, abstinence, and pregnancy prevention.

Education And Truancy Prevention Support:

Outreach Workers will assist in the transition from placement into school and will serve as advocates for the girls and their families in the educational system. The Outreach Worker will maintain contact with school staff to coordinate services and deter any possible crisis in school, as well as closely monitor attendance by investigating any unexcused attendance incidents or truancy issues.

Summary

The Girls' Aftercare Services Program is designed to facilitate successful reentry of girls back into their communities upon discharge from juvenile justice out-of-home placements. By participating in this unique mix of support services, activities, and opportunities program participants will demonstrate a decrease in delinquent behaviors and an increase in pro-social behaviors, ultimately preventing further involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

To learn more about the Girls Aftercare Services Program and any other Southwest Key Programs please contact us at www.swkey.org or e-mail info@swkey.org or write:

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