



June 2, 2026

Ramsey County Girls Reports Update



Agenda

Section	Presenter
Opening and introduction	Ling Becker, Ramsey County Manager
Background and development of the Girls Reports	Kristi Cobbs, Planning Manager, County Manager's Office
Overview and key findings: Quantitative Report	Dr. Shakira Washington, Ph.D. Vice President, Collaborative Research & Innovative Thought at Justice + Joy National Collaborative
Overview and key findings: Qualitative Report	Falon Huynh, Planning Specialist, Health and Wellness
The report in action - next steps Alignment with Youth Justice Transformation	Elijah Norris-Holliday, Planning Manager, Youth Justice Transformation
Justice + Joy planning grant initiative	Dr. Shakira Washington, Ph.D.

Why and How This Work Began

Origin:

- Initiated in 2020 by Public Health, Social Services and Community Corrections.
- Leadership to recognized gaps for girls* impacted by county systems.

Purpose:

- **Question: "What do girls actually need, and how do we redesign systems to meet those needs?"**
- Goals: Galvanize leadership, families, and community partners to work on
 - cross-system redesign to better support system-impacted girls
 - up-stream prevention through a continuum of supports

*The term "girls" is used in the most inclusive way possible and includes all cis and trans girls, as well as gender-nonconforming youth.

What This Work Produced

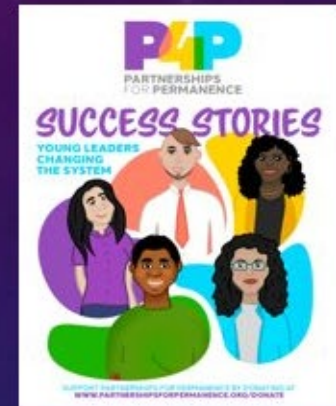
- Five-year partnership between
 - Justice + Joy National Collaborative (J+J),
 - Partnerships for Permanence (P4P)
 - Ramsey County
- Two groundbreaking Girls Reports:
 - Quantitative Report: *An Exploration: Girls in Ramsey County Social Services and Community Corrections*
 - Qualitative Report: *Girls and Gender-Expansive Young People and Parents Speak on the Impact of Child Welfare and Legal System Involvement*

Ramsey County is the first jurisdiction in the nation to examine girls' system involvement with this level of upstream depth and clarity.



About P4P

- Partnerships for Permanence (P4P) is a nonprofit organization that bridges opportunity gaps for young people entering adulthood from the child welfare system.
- We are a community of professionals and youth with lived experience in foster care and adoption creating systems change; through support services, advocacy, and personal development training.
- P4P's vision is focused on filling opportunity gaps that exist for former foster youth/adults and adoptees and developing the next generation of young leaders who will transform the child welfare system.



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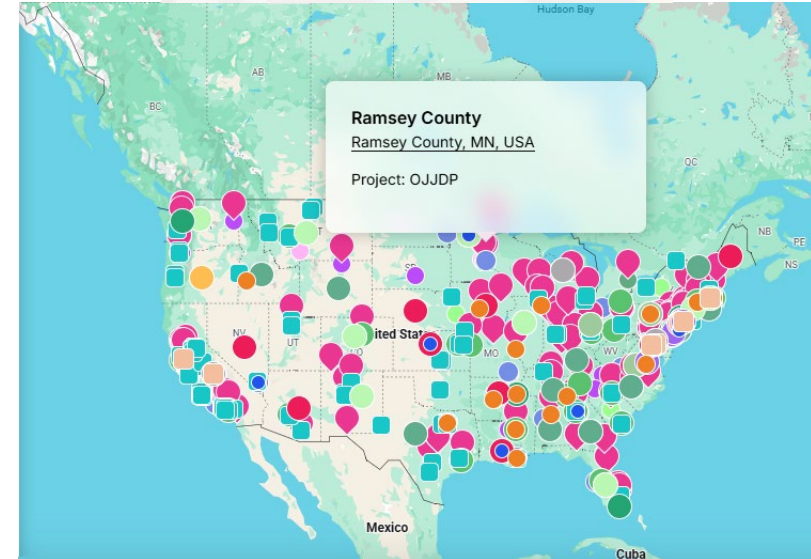
Who We Are - An intergenerational gender and racial justice organization engaged in advocacy, organizing, and research with and for all girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color.

Our Mission - To advance social, economic, and political justice with and for girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color.

Our Vision - All girls, young women, and gender-expansive young people of color can achieve their potential enjoying abundant unapologetic joyful lives without fear of violence or injustice.

Justice + Joy's Community

Get to Know Our Partners →



An Exploration: Girls in Ramsey County Social Services and Community Corrections Departments



Authors

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Ramsey County Staff Contributions (current and past)

Robyn Bata, Planning Specialist Community Corrections
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This level of collaboration and persistence truly reflects the best of Ramsey County and the community.

Data Extraction

- Open cases between the dates of January 1, 2018 and December 31, 2021
- Two primary databases:
 - Minnesota Social Service Information System (SSIS), n = 4,391 girls
 - County Court Services Tracking System (CSTS), n = 340 girls

Study Aims:

Identify characteristics and system factors associated with five outcomes:

Disproportionate contact

Being absent without permission (AWP)

Dual system involvement

Detention and incarceration

Recidivism

Key Finding 1: Racial Disparities and Disproportionate Contact

- People of color account for approximately 40.8% of Ramsey County’s general population.*
- Girls of color were disproportionately involved in Ramsey County systems. Accounted for:
 - 76.6% of girls in social services
 - 84.1% of girls in community corrections.
- Black/African American girls were not only disproportionately represented but accounted for the largest share of girls in both systems.
- The only two groups of girls in social services and community corrects that were not disproportionately represented in the two systems were girls who identified as white or Asian.

Race/Ethnicity	General Pop. (%)*	SSIS Girls (n=4,391)	CC Girls (n=340)
Am. Indian/Alaska Native	.4%	436 (9.9%)	38 (11.2%)
Asian	14.9%	660 (15.0%)	7 (2.1%)
Black/African Am.	11.8%	1,410 (32.1%)	185 (54.5%)
Hispanic	7.7%	534 (12.1%)	27 (7.9%)
Multiracial	5.2%	326 (7.4%)	29 (8.5%)
White	59.6%	952 (21.7%)	48 (14.1%)
Missing	.4%	73 (1.7%)	6 (1.8%)

**Due to measurement variations, the “general population” estimates in this study are for youth and adults from 2018 to 2022 and provide a general understanding of the proportional representation of young people by race and ethnicity compared to their overall representation in Ramsey County. <https://www.mncompass.org/profiles/county/ramsey>.*

Girls of color are overly represented in social services and community corrections.

Key Finding 2: Child Maltreatment and System Involvement

Significant Maltreatment Findings

Comparisons of Experiences for by Sex:

- Girls accounted for a larger share of young people with 1 or more maltreatment cases
- Girls accounted for a higher percentage of young people with:
 - Sexual abuse reports/determinations
 - Physical abuse reports/determinations
 - Neglect reports/determinations
 - For example, 855 girls (15.9%) versus 350 boys (6.5%) had a sexual abuse report.
- Boys accounted for a larger share of neglect cases compared to girls.

A larger number of girls experience different forms of maltreatment compared to boys, especially sexual abuse.

Key Finding #3: Out-of-Home Placement (OHP)

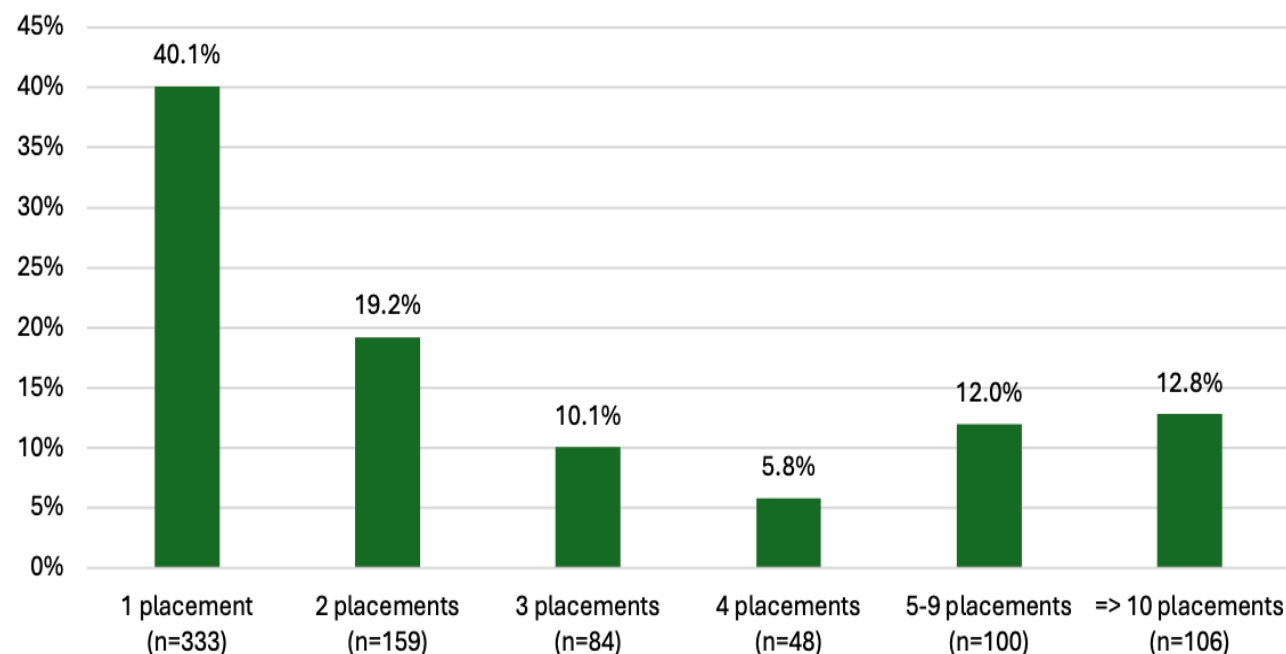
Nationally

- 14%-20% of children investigated for maltreatment experience at least 1 OHP.

Ramsey County

- 830 (18.9%) girls experienced OHP.
- The majority experienced 1 or 2 placements (59.3%).
- 31% experienced 4 or more placements during the study years.
- Study also determined that 35% of girls spent 12 months or more cumulatively in OHP while system involved.

Figure 3: Number of Out of Home Placement Episodes (n=830)



- **Approximately, 20% of girls experienced out-of-home placement.**
- **Most experienced 1-2 placements.**
- **A small, high need, group of girls experienced 4 or more placements.**

Key Finding #3: Out-of-Home Placement cont.

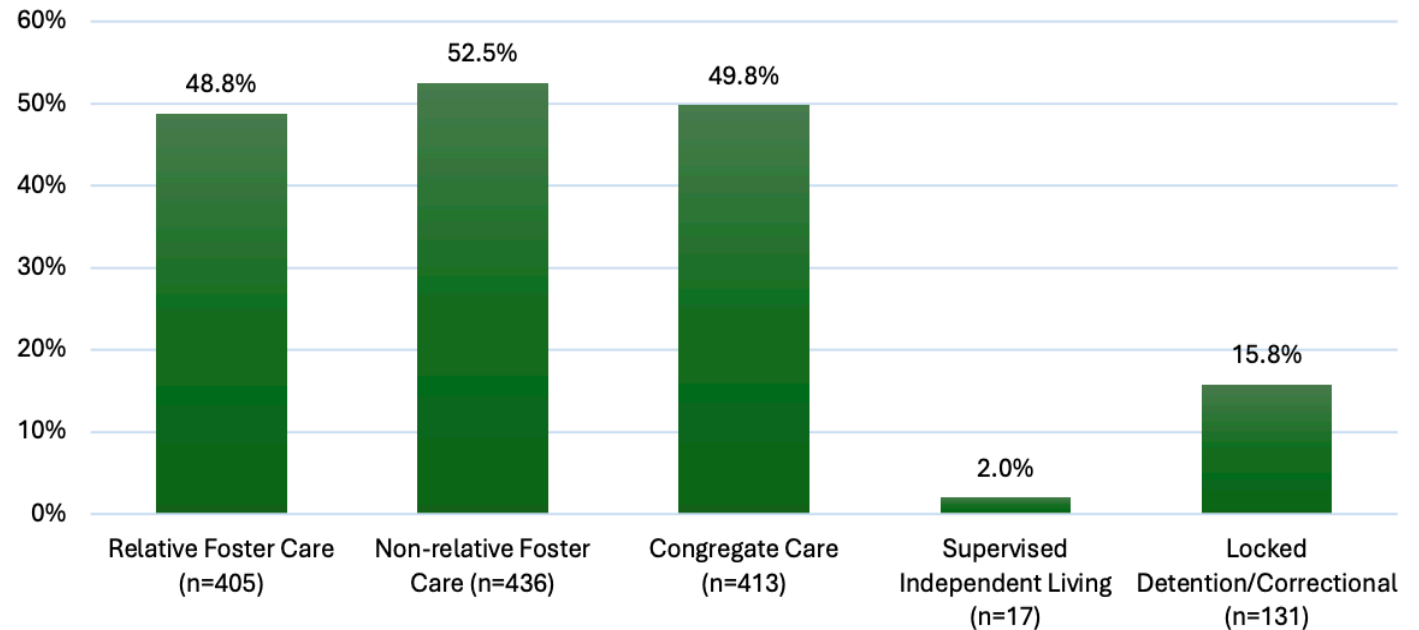
Nationally, youth investigated for maltreatment

- 34% experience foster care
- 20% experience group home or institutional placement.

Ramsey County

- About 50% of girls in OHP experienced some form of foster care or congregate care.
- Nearly, 16% of girls were either detained or incarcerated at some point during their system involvement.

Figure 2: Distribution of Placement Settings for Girls In Out-of-Home Placement (n=830)



Congregate care is used at a similar rate as relative and non-relative foster care.

Key Finding #3: Out-of-Home Placement cont.

Girls who were Absent Without Permission

- 73% had a history of OHP
- 61% had a history of OHP in congregate care

Dual System Involvement

- 56.8% had a history of OHP
- 44.8% had a history of OHP in congregate care

Race/Ethnicity

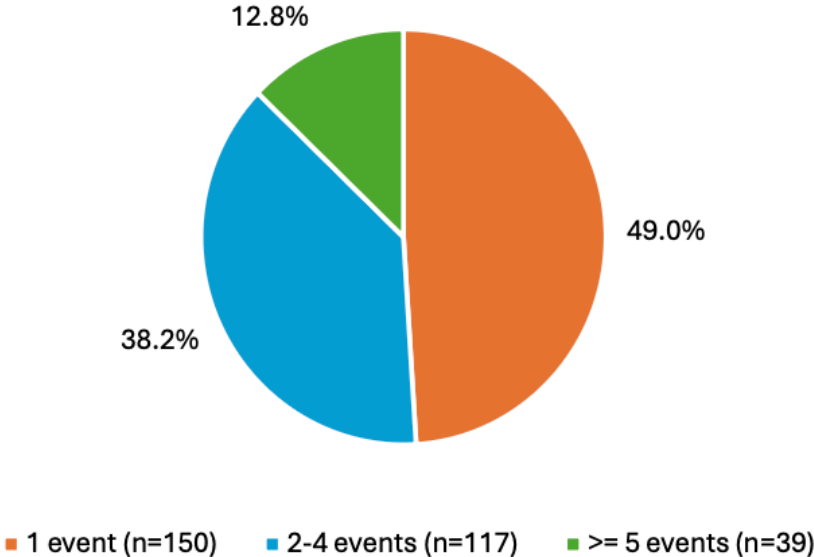
- American Indian/Alaska Native, Black/African American, and Multiracial girls were more likely to be placed into OHP when compared to the white counterparts
- Reentry in OHP after Family Reunification
 - American Indian/Alaska Native were 2.7 times more likely than white girls
 - Black/African American girls were 2.44 times more likely than white girls
 - Hispanic girls were 1.3 times more likely than white girls
 - Multiracial girls were 1.48 times more likely than white girls

- **OHP is strongly associated with a range of negative outcomes.**
- **Girls of color or more likely to return to OHP after family reunification.**

Key Finding #4: Being Absent Without Permission (AWP)

- Girls were significantly more likely to have a history of being AWP compared to boys.
- Girls and AWP
 - Most girls had 1 AWP event
 - A smaller percentage girls had 5 or more AWP events
 - Nearly, 40% of girls who were AWP had a history of congregate care placement
- Race/Ethnicity and AWP
 - American Indian/Alaska Native girls were 3.11 times more likely have a history of being AWP compared to white peers
 - Black/African American girls were 2.81 times more likely to be AWP compared to white girls

Figure 9: Frequency of Absent Without Permission Events Among Girls (n=306)



A small number of girls go Absent Without Permission, with American Indian/Alaska Native girls and Black/African American girls being more likely to run or go AWP.



Key Finding #4: Being Absent Without Permission (AWP) cont.

- Prior to the first AWP, rates of maltreatment except for neglect were significantly higher for girls who became AWP compared to girls who did not become AWP.
- Comparisons of Pre-AWP rates of maltreatment to those across the lifetime indicate significant increases in rates between the first AWP event until the end of the study timeline.
- Prior to the first AWP 24.5% of girls had at least 1 sexual abuse report. By the end of their time in SSIS or the study timeframe, sexual abuse report rates increased to 36.3%

Table 15: Maltreatment Among SSIS Girls by Absent Without Permission Status[§]

	No AWP (n = 4,085)		Yes AWP (n=306)			
			Pre-AWP		Lifetime AWP	
	N (mean) [median]	% (SD)	N (mean) [median]	% (SD)	N (mean) [median]	% (SD)
Maltreatment						
Maltreatment report	2,713	66.4%	206*	70.5%	247*	80.7%
Average maltreatment reports per girl	(2.09)	(1.68)	(2.10)**	(2.25)	(3.64)*	(2.72)
Sexual abuse report	744	18.2%	75*	24.5%	111*	36.3%
Sexual abuse determined	374	9.2%	36*	11.8%	50*	16.3%
Physical abuse report	943	23.1%	105*	34.3%	131*	42.8%
Physical Abuse determined	817	20.0%	86*	28.1%	111*	36.3%
Neglect	1,565	38.3%	119	38.9%	183*	59.8%

* P < .001, ** P ≤ .05, *** P ≤ .01

[§]Note, significance tests compared girls who were never AWP to the lifetime outcomes of girls with a history of being AWP.

There is a strong association between indicators of child maltreatment and girls being Absent Without Permission.



Key Finding #5: Community Corrections Involvement

- Girls in community corrections were more likely to be dually involved when compared to boys.
- Girls were more likely to be charged with lower-level offenses like disorder offenses and misdemeanor offense compared to boys.
- Around 45% of girls involved in community corrections were detained and/or incarcerated 1 or more times. On average, girls had about 4 episodes of being detained and/or incarcerated.
- Just over a quarter (26%) recidivated.

Girls are more likely to be involved for lower-level offense, be dually involved, have a history of OHP and maltreatment, and are more likely to be Black/African American.

Other System Involvement

- Many girls in community corrections were dually involved
- Many dually involved girls had a history of maltreatment (77%) and congregate care placement (45%).

Race/Ethnicity

- Black/African American girls accounted for more than half of girls in community corrections (54%)



Key Finding – Small Concentration of High Need Girls

Table 33: Latent Class Analysis Outcome for SSIS Girls Cohort (n=4,391)

Variable	Class 1 (n=3561, 81.1%)	Class 2 (n=676, 15.4%)	Class 3 (n=154, 3.5%)
Average number of OHPs of any kind	0.00	2.49	16.29
Age at first OHP	----	9.71	9.88
Cumulative length of time in OHP (days)	0.00	269	794
Number of re-entries into foster care	0	0.13	1.13
Number of maltreatment reports	1.15	2.68	4.20
Number of different placement settings	0	1.32	2.96
Number of times in congregate care settings	0	0.72	5.72
Number of incarceration or detention days	0	30	70
Dual System	2.4%	8.2%	34.5%
Absent without permission (runaway)	2.3%	19.9%	58.4%
Termination of parental rights	0.1%	12.2%	29.2%
Determined sexual abuse	8.0%	14.9%	24.1%
Determined physical abuse	0.3%	4.7%	29.0%
Placement in relative placement setting	0%	44.3%	68.3%
Placement in congregate care setting	0%	39.1%	96.1%
Placement in foster family care setting	0%	44.6%	87.0%
Placement in locked corrections setting	0%	9.5%	43.0%
Placement in supervised independent living	0%	0.9%	7.1%
Removal: Parent/caregiver SUD	0%	15.4%	14.8%
Removal: Parent absence	0%	3.9%	2.6%
Removal: Child-related	0%	15.6%	45.0%
Mental health involvement	5.6%	16.1%	22.6%

Latent Class Analysis of SSIS Girls Outcome

Derived 3 Classes of Girls - low, medium, and high needs

Class 1: Low needs

- The majority of girls (81.1%)
- Limited touches to the systems

Classes 2 & 3: Medium and High Need

- Accounted for 18.9% of girls
- Girls have the most intense touches with the system and are considered to have the greatest number of overlapping needs.
- These girls account for the majority of system resources.

Summary of Quantitative Key Findings

- Continued racial disparities and disproportionate contact across systems.
- Sexual violence and other abuses impacts girls at higher rates than boys.
- Girls are significantly more likely to be “absent without permission” resulting in significantly poorer outcomes.
- Congregate care is used at similar rates as other out-of-home placements and is significantly associated with several negative outcomes.
- Girls are significantly more likely to enter the corrections system for low level offences and are significantly more likely to be dual system involved.

Good News – the majority of girls (80%) who enter the child welfare system are there for a limited amount of time and require few services.



Girls and Gender-Expansive Young People and Parents Speak on the Impact of Child Welfare and Legal System Involvement



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Stakeholder Working Group

Robyn Bata, Kristi Cobbs, David Giddings, Alix Herzing, Falon Huynh, Melissa R. Simpson, Angela Moore Smith, Rebecca Underhill, and Natalie Uzong

P4P Youth Facilitators and Researchers

Mackenzie C., Brittany P., Gabrielle P., Crystal V., Lisa V., and Youa X.

Qualitative Report Overview:

- Highlights qualitative findings from discussions with girls and parents with lived experience in Ramsey County child welfare and community corrections systems.
- Designed to elevate lived experiences of girls and increase awareness of system impacts on girls and families.
- Explores how girls and families define and experience safety.
- Identifies what is working well and where improvements are needed.

Ramsey County Social Service Department Internal Review Board reviewed and approved the study design and materials.



Engagement Strategies



Offered \$25-\$50 gift card stipends to survey, focus group, and individual interview participants.



Provided mental health professional live support, made referrals to Ramsey County crisis line, & developed a handout of community resources.



Trained and hired 6 P4P YPAR researchers to assist with collecting data, analysis and summarizing data findings.



Created opportunities to share back research results and inform policy.



Created opportunities for research participants to stay connected afterwards with Ramsey County and P4P through (support groups, social networking events, advisory groups).

P4P Strategic Plans for Girls Project



Community Engagement and Recruitment Efforts

- Community engagement recruitment presentations (Weekly)
- RCSS Project Staff/Leadership and Stakeholder Workgroup project update presentations (Monthly)
- Documented community feedback and follow-up questions to share with leadership
- Followed up with survey respondents and eligible participants (Daily)
- Scheduled Parent interviews and Youth focus groups (Monthly)



Resources and Support for Research Facilitators and Participants

- Trauma-informed response training for YPAR facilitators
- Hired a mental health professional (P4P Consultant)
- Developed a TIR training curriculum
- Made referral to RCSS crisis line support
- Compiled a list of culturally-specific mental health resources
- Hired translators for immigrant or refugee participants

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8

ENGAGEMENT OF INTERNAL RAMSEY COUNTY DEPARTMENTS



Overview of Study Participants

Type of Systems

- ✓ Child protection
- ✓ Adoption
- ✓ Sexually Exploited
- ✓ Truancy
- ✓ Juvenile Justice
- ✓ Mental Health

Parent Engagement

Survey respondents = 20

Individual Interviews = 9

- Birth Parents
- Foster and Adoptive Parents



Youth Engagement

Survey respondents = 34

14-17 - 1 focus group

18-21 - 1 focus groups including LGBTQ+ youth

22-25 - 3 interviews

26 and older - 3 interviews

Focus Group and Interview Questions

Girls and Gender-Expansive Young People and Parents Speak on the Impact of Child Welfare and Legal System Involvement



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- Questions were similar for girls and parents
- Four Areas of Focus:
 - System Impact- impact on family, peer and community relationships, economic stability and school engagement
 - Safety- personal definition and system impact on sense of safety
 - System Engagement and Relational Approach of the System-how systems could better support individuals, problem solve, build trust, address cultural needs etc.
 - System Services and Programs- what was helpful, missing services, transitional planning.

Section I: System Impact

Family relationships were often strained and complicated by system impact.

Limited trust led to isolation and lack of connections with **peers and community**.

Girls Findings

- Relationships with biological parents were often described as strained, unsafe, or disconnected.
- System decisions felt forced or rushed, creating additional harm.
- Sibling relationships were sometimes complicated by differing desires to maintain biological family connections.
- For some girls, system involvement created greater safety, stability, and stronger family communication.
- Many girls described difficulty trusting others which impacted their ability to form deep friendships or community connections.
- Circles of support were very limited and many girls felt isolated or disconnected from community supports.

Section II: Safety

Girls described safety as being heard, supported, stable and cared for—not simply protected.

Girls Findings

- Emotional safety is as important as physical safety.
- Forced removals without explanation created fear and instability.
- Girls involved in the court cases express the need for clarity and involvement in their own lives.
- Some girls described feeling disrespected or unheard by adults.
- Lack of communication increased anxiety and distrust.
- Feeling unsafe often leads to emotional withdrawal or attempts to run away.

Section III: Engagement | Relational Approach

Girls Findings

- Girls felt workers focused more on paperwork than emotional well-being.
 - Girls wanted workers to explain *how* services would help.
 - Some girls felt invisible unless there was a visible crisis
 - Girls emphasized wanting guidance, resources, and understanding — not only control or punishment.
 - Frequent caseworker turnover created frustration and emotional exhaustion.
 - Repeating traumatic experiences to new workers felt harmful.
-
- Girls feel that system workers do not understand their culture, beliefs and way of life.
 - Girls reported that cultural needs were often overlooked in placement and services.
 - LGBTQ youth emphasized the importance of emotional safety and acceptance.
 - Girls repeatedly emphasized wanting to be understood not just as “cases,” but as whole people with identities, cultures, and lived experiences.

Intersecting identities shaped system experiences

Themes from Parents

Parent Findings

Communication: Parents repeatedly emphasized wanting systems that supported families through crisis rather than deepening trauma and isolation.

- Parents described confusion navigating complex systems during crises.
- Many felt systems acted *to* families rather than *with* families
- Lack of consistent communication is a critical issue affecting numerous families.
- Families often felt urgency differently than systems did.
- Shame and fear of judgment created social isolation.
- Peer support from families with similar experiences was especially meaningful.

Earlier, more supportive **crisis response**

- Parents wanted systems to respond with support, not immediate punishment.
- Many felt crises were met with investigation rather than assistance.
- Families described needing basic stabilization resources during hardship.
- Early intervention and compassionate engagement were viewed as critical.
- Parents described feeling misunderstood because of cultural differences.
- Families requested more advocacy and personalized approaches from workers.

P4P and RCSSD Action Steps

- ✓ Developed P4P and RCSSD Youth Engagement Advisory Group (YEAG) to address and develop better strategies for youth and parent engagement.
- ✓ Trained and hired YPAR Researchers as P4P Youth Advocates to assist with community engagement and staff/parent trainings.
- ✓ Planned and developed a P4P and RCSSD Youth and Parent Resource Fair.
- ✓ Partnered with 25 internal departments and 7 contracted agencies to provide basic needs, mental health, career and education training programs at the resource fair.
- ✓ P4P Team developed staff and parent training curricula and facilitated sessions and panel discussions with youth and parents with lived experience.
- ✓ Developed a Ramsey County Youth Bill of Rights Booklet.
- ✓ Trained over 150 Ramsey County Staff and foster parents co-facilitated by Ramsey County young leaders.

**Next steps -
The reports in action**

Building More Responsive Systems for Girls

- Reports highlight not only challenges, but significant opportunities for transformation across systems, policies, and practices.
- Meaningful change requires rethinking how systems support and serve girls and gender-expansive youth.
- The findings identify several key opportunities for more intentional, coordinated and healing-centered approaches.
- Transformational work requires moving away from one-size-fits-all responses and toward approaches that are intentional, coordinated, and healing-centered.

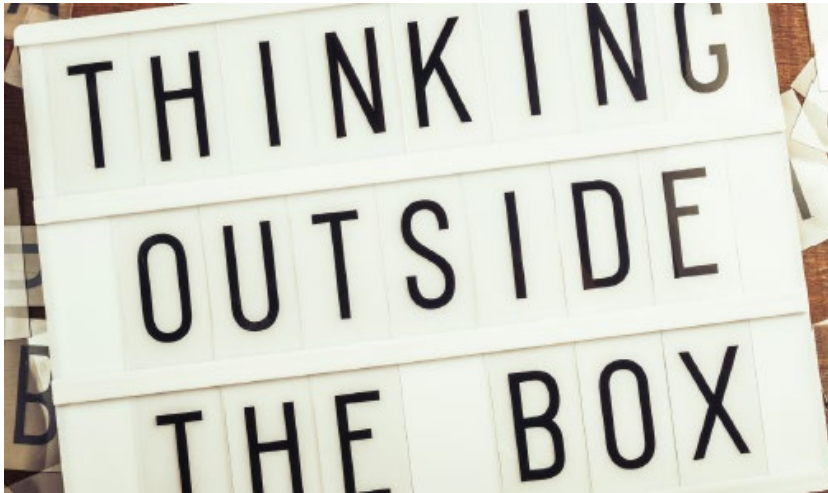
Next Steps: Youth Justice Transformation Alignment

General Strategies	Specific Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data disaggregation by gender and race• Intentional focus on gender-specific experiences in policy, planning, and resource allocation• Using gender-inclusive language in RFPs/contracts and program planning.• Increasing awareness of how girls experience systems differently.• Using tailored, trauma-informed, gender and culturally responsive approaches.• Encouraging staff and partners to ask different questions and identify unmet needs earlier.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use data to inform MNAAFPCWDA through prevention and family-centered supports for girls and families.• Use report findings to inform Youth Justice Transformation efforts, including development of Youth Treatment Homes, Raise the Age implementation, and other youth support and prevention initiatives focused on girls and gender-expansive young people.• Planned September 2026 media and YJT community engagement event with partners to elevate and share the findings of the Girls Reports.• Participation in planning grant initiative led by Justice + Joy

Goal: ensuring that girls are visible in the data, reflected in planning, and intentionally included in future transformation efforts.

Girls Planning Grant Initiative

DCYF Planning Grant



- J+J applied (with strong support from Ramsey County) to lead support the development of a community-based mental health continuum of care to support for system-impacted girls.
- Metro Counties rely on the same placement facilities and many of the same service providers for girls, making individual county solutions insufficient.
- A shared Continuum of Care—grounded in shared data, shared training, and shared commitments—offers the strongest path to providing consistent, culturally and gender-responsive, trauma-recovery-focused supports across the metro region.

No single county can meet the full scope of girls' needs.



DCYF Planning Activities

Activities are being co-designed and agreed upon by participating workgroup members.

Shared Understanding- Girls Reports

- Trauma, racial disparities, adolescent female development
- Identify priority populations and key risk pathways

System Mapping & Gap Analysis

- Inventory female-responsive, culturally specific providers
- Assess culturally grounded healing resources

Cross-County Workforce Development

- 9 metro-area staff trained in Think Trauma and Question Persuade Respond (QPR), a suicide prevention curriculum including JDC staff
- Long-term create shared training calendar across counties on gender and culturally responsive trauma informed approaches



Continuing the Conversation



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Questions

Appendix

Key Finding 2: Child Maltreatment and System Involvement

Table 5: SSIS Maltreatment Reports and Types by Sex [§]				
All Screened-in Maltreatment	All Screened-in Maltreatment Group (n = 5,372)			
Screened-in Maltreatment by Sex	Girls (n=2,960)*		Boys (n=2,412)	
Maltreatment	N (mean) [median]	% (SD)	N (mean) [median]	% (SD)
Average number of maltreatment reports per child	(2.22) [1]	(1.83)	(2.17) [1]	(1.89)
Sexual abuse report	855		350	
% within all maltreatment youth*		15.9%		6.5%
% within maltreatment by sex*		28.9%		14.5%
Sexual abuse determined	424		135	
% within all maltreatment youth**		7.9%		2.5%
% within maltreatment by sex**		14.3%		5.6%
Physical abuse report	1074		861	
% within all maltreatment youth**		20.0%		16.0%
% within maltreatment by sex		36.3%		35.7%
Physical abuse determined	929		747	
% within all maltreatment youth**		17.3%		13.9%
% within maltreatment by sex		31.4%		31.0%
Neglect report	1,748		1,541	
% within all maltreatment youth**		32.5%		28.7%
% within maltreatment by sex**		59.1%		63.9%

§ Across their lifetimes, girls can have multiple maltreatment reports, and each report can have a different system response, so the number of reports is larger than the number of girls with reports.

* P < .001, ** P ≤ .05, *** P ≤ .01

++ P = .058, approaching significance



