

What is GAP and how long has it operated and briefly what is its success?

The Girls Advocacy Project (GAP) was initiated in 1999 to serve girls detained in the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center. **It is the only comprehensive prevention/intervention/education project in the State of Florida specifically serving girls while they are detained in a juvenile detention center.** GAP staff consists of a qualified professional staff experienced in working with girls and their unique gender-specific issues. The GAP Facilitators meet with the girls frequently to conduct group and individual sessions. They are knowledgeable in the area of delinquency and trained on issues pertinent to girls in the detention center. Girls are voluntarily admitted to the program. GAP uses a group facilitation model that combines the Motivational Interviewing approach with Solution Focused practices. This model uses a technique that gets girls to change themselves by increasing their own desire to change. It helps them see the benefits of moving in a new direction by leading her through a comparison between her goals and her current behavior. The goal is to create tension in her, and to place her in charge of the process of resolving the tension in pro-social ways. The focus is on getting her to rely on inner motivation rather than external control.

The girls have shown an improvement in awareness and understanding of the topics presented, which have given them the foundation to make better choices and stay crime-free after their release from detention. In May 2006, ABC News *Nightline* profiled GAP for its unique intervention work.

Incorporation and 501(c)(3) Status

GAP was incorporated in Florida on June 12, 2006 and received its 501(c)(3) exemption on August 16, 2007 with an effective exemption date of June 12, 2006.

Where did it expand and what money was used?

Since 1999, the legislature has funded GAP Miami, which received \$150,000 in non-recurring funds in the amount of \$150,000 until 2006-2007 when it received recurring funds in the same amount. That same year, GAP expanded to Southwest Florida, Orange and Palm Beach Regional Juvenile Detention Centers in Fort Myers, Orlando and West Palm Beach, respectively. The expansion received \$775,000 in non-recurring funds from the legislature. The program did not receive start-up funds from DJJ until December 2006, when it hired three GAP Facilitators. They trained the month of January and began serving girls on February 1, 2007. In 2007-2008, GAP received \$500,000 in non-recurring funds from the legislature to continue the program in the expansion sites. GAP Miami continued to receive its \$150,000 from recurring funds.

Recurring funds are used for programs the state is expected or required to continue from year to year while non-recurring funds are used for programs that are only expected to be funded in the current year. GAP faces a difficult challenge because one-third of its funds are recurring while the remaining is non-recurring. The organization cannot sustain its administrative expenses without the total \$500,000 and therefore, would have to terminate its services even if awarded the recurring funds of \$150,000 because there would not be sufficient funds to pay for administrative and operational expenses required.

How much is currently in budget?

GAP is part of the Department of Juvenile Justice's base budget and receives \$150,000 in recurring funds. The Department has allocated an additional \$300,000 in non-recurring funds. This represents a total current GAP funding of \$450,000 for the three sites. Due to a budget reduction of \$200,000 in 2008-2009, GAP was forced to close its operations in Fort Myers in May 2008. As a result, GAP reduced its total operations by 25%.

What will happen to GAP if funds are not earmarked in 2009-2010?

GAP requires \$500,000 in recurring funds to continue its operations in Miami, Palm Beach and Orlando. If GAP is not successful in securing this level of funding, GAP will be forced to close its doors as of June 30, 2009.

What type of child will go without services and why is this so critical?

Girls come into the juvenile justice system with unique differences. National statistics state that close to 80% have histories of physical abuse. Approximately, 70% are victims of sexual abuse or assault (compared to approximately 20% for teenage families in the general population). As a result of the abuse, girls may run away to escape, endangering their lives and derailing them from healthy growth into adulthood. Living in the streets

occasionally leads to prostitution and quite frequently to criminal activity, thus involving them in the juvenile justice system. In addition, running away is considered a crime and therefore, further exasperates her situation. Depending on the criminal charge, they are at risk of entering the adult system at young ages.

According to the Department of Juvenile Justice, girls represent a growing proportion of Florida's juvenile justice population. In 1992, girls represented 24% of all youths referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice, and 10% of all youths incarcerated. But since 2003, girls have represented 30% of all youth referred. And by 2004, girls represented more than 18% of all youths incarcerated, though the rate dropped to 15% in 2007. The number of girls referred for delinquency in FY 2006-07 was 27,303.

While these overall trends are mirrored across the United States, the rates of arrest and incarceration for girls in Florida – that is the number of arrests and incarcerations as a percentage of the total population of girls – are considerably higher than elsewhere. The arrest rate for females in Florida is almost twice that for the nation as a whole. Nationwide, 716 girls per 100,000 population are arrested while in Florida 1,259 girls per 100,000 population are arrested.

What groups across the state have supported GAP?

GAP receives support from American Airlines, American Association of University Women, Dade Community Foundation, The Women's Fund of Miami-Dade County, Miami-Dade County Juvenile Services, Florida Association for Women Lawyers-Dade Chapter, National Council of Jewish Women Greater Miami Section, Museum of Contemporary Art, ArtSpring, Inc, Junior Leagues of Florida State Public Affairs Committee, Junior League of Fort Myers, Junior League of Greater Orlando, Junior League of the Palm Beaches, Miami-Dade County Commission for Women, Miami-Dade Juvenile Assessment Center, Voices for Children Foundation, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Administrative Offices of the Court-Eleventh Judicial Circuit Court, Planned Parenthood of Orange County, The Comprehensive AIDS Program and Healthy Mothers of Palm Beach and Healthy Babies Coalition of Palm Beach.