Risk Assessment Tool for Female Juvenile Offenders

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The fastest growing segment of the United States juvenile justice population is young girls under the age of eighteen. Their delinquency rates have increased by 83% between 1988 and 1997. Over 72% of first time female juvenile offenders (FJOs) experience recidivism, defined as their likelihood of returning to confinement after release. Moreover, the design of a female-specific risk assessment tool will aid in better placement and a better measurement of FJOs likelihood of re-offending.

In the history of juvenile justice systems, there has been failure to develop risk assessment tools designed for the risk females engage in. In the past risk assessment tools have been designed for boys, thus ignoring the unique factors that place females at risk for recidivism.

Data will be collected from participants recruited from secure facilities and community placements in Utah. We will conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews with approximately 20 girls. These interviews will be one-hour in length, and will examine the risk and protective factors related to recidivism. In appreciation for the girls' participation in our study, they will receive a "girl power" t-shirt.

Interviews are currently being conducted and findings will be summarized. Program implications include developing a risk assessment tool that will more adequately aid in program placement. Policy implications include developing a tool that will better predict recidivism among FJOs.

References