

**CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA
NATIONAL GIRLS INITIATIVE/
FLORENCE CRITTENTON ROUNDTABLE**

***GROWING GIRLS FOR GREATNESS 2005*
CONFERENCE HIGHLIGHTS**

Overview

For their generous support of the National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable, CWLA thanks and acknowledges the National Florence Crittenton Mission, Arizona Public Service, the Arizona Women's Foundation, National Girls Collaborative Project, Office of Arizona Governor Janet Napolitano, the U.S. DHHS Office of Women's Health, and the Arizona Republic. CWLA also extends heartfelt thanks to the conference co-chair, Child and Family Resources, Inc., and to Linda Volhein, Executive Director of Florence Crittenton Services of Arizona, for their dedication and commitment to making this event successful.

The Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) envisions an America where all girls and young women are safe, healthy, thriving, and ready to realize their fullest potential. In fall 2003, CWLA unveiled its *National Girls Initiative*, a comprehensive action strategy prioritizing the positive development of girls and young women. To galvanize support around this important body of work, CWLA, in partnership with the National Florence Crittenton Mission and the Florence Crittenton agencies, hosted the first-ever National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable January 5-7, 2005 in Scottsdale, Arizona.

Conference Highlights

Program Overview

The National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable offered conference attendees an array of learning opportunities and networking activities. Nationally recognized speakers engaged and motivated attendees during the *Opening Session*, *Generations of Greatness Luncheon*, and the *Call to Action Breakfast*. Participants attended traditional-style workshops, multi-session, intensive learning institutes, and a special showing of the film *Homeless to Harvard*, followed by a discussion led by several young women. Conference participants learned how to help girls and young women grow to greatness in their communities and across the United States, and renewed their commitment, vision, and energy.

Attendees totaled 372, representing federal, state, and local government agencies, private and nonprofit youth-serving organizations, and young women from across the country.

Opening Session, January 5, 2005

A dynamic *Opening Session*, featuring an invocation performed by New-York-based poet Pamela Sneed kicked off the Roundtable. CWLA President and CEO Shay Bilchik provided opening remarks. Keynote speakers included: Dr. Linda Babcock, author of *Women Don't Ask* and James Mellon Walton Professor of Economics, H. John Heinz III School of Public Policy and Management, Carnegie Mellon University; Dr. Terry Tafoya, a traditional Native American storyteller; Rochelle Delaine, a talented high school student and poet; and Marisa Rivera-Albert, President of National Hispana Leadership Institute, who concluded the *Opening Session* with a discussion about creating opportunities for girls and young women.

Networking Reception, January 5, 2005

Conferees assembled for an evening of networking and southwestern fare in a tent outside the hotel. Dr. Gary Baker, Vice President of the National Florence Crittenton Mission, provided welcoming remarks. Attendees also enjoyed an amazing performance by Viva Mariachi, a local youth mariachi troupe.

Generations of Greatness Luncheon, January 6, 2005

The luncheon, themed *Living the Dream: An Intergenerational Exploration of Aspiration and Opportunity*, took place on the second day of the conference. This interactive panel discussion highlighted the experiences, strengths, and insights of several women across generations. Martha Rothman, CEO of Child and Family Resources and CWLA conference co-chair, provided welcoming remarks. Additionally, Kathy Cloninger, CEO of Girls Scouts of the USA, addressed attendees about the importance of providing girls and young women with a wide range of supports and opportunities to promote their healthy development.

Cheryl Gully, CWLA Western Region Director, moderated the panel discussion. Panelists included Erika Solomon, a bilingual Harvard University student, who shared her experiences as a young woman and how she positioned herself to achieve her goals. Terry Harrak, CWLA Youth Leadership Coordinator, talked about being an alumni of foster care and shared her experiences with homelessness to illustrate the challenges facing this vulnerable population. Dr. Yvonne DeCory, a child and adolescent psychiatrist and also the first Laguna Pueblo woman to earn a medical degree, talked about being a teen mother and the obstacles she faced while pursuing a medical degree. Pamela Sneed, writer and poet, talked about the supports she needed to make her dream of becoming a poet a reality. (*Note: Invited panelist actress Ming-na was unable to attend the Roundtable.*)

Movie Night, January 6, 2005

For movie night, the young women who served on the Roundtable planning committee selected the film *Homeless to Harvard: The Liz Murray Story*, a true and inspiring story about a young woman who

overcame overwhelming obstacles and homelessness. The young women facilitated a discussion following the film about the challenges and opportunities faced by the woman in the film.

Call to Action Breakfast, January 7, 2005

Speakers during the *Call to Action Breakfast* highlighted the inherent strengths and challenges facing girls and young women in our society. Jim Phelps, Treasurer of the National Florence Crittenton Mission, moderated the closing session. Panelists included Lisa Glow, Director of the Office for Children, Youth and Families for Arizona Governor Napolitano and Senior Policy Advisor to the Governor; Kelly Mack, CWLA Program Coordinator; Anne Munch, an attorney dedicated to working on behalf of victims of violent crime; and Regina Louise, best-selling author of *Somebody's Someone*. These dynamic and powerful panelists spoke about many issues impacting young women, including disabilities, alcoholism, and foster care.

Special Features

Intensive Learning Institutes

Some attendees participated in Intensive Learning Institutes (ILI) during the conference as an alternative to traditional workshops. ILI participants spent eight hours of concentrated learning focusing on a specific area. ILI attendees had two options—the first provided in-depth training for frontline workers on *Gender Responsive Programs, Practices, and Guidelines for Professionals Working with Girls and Young Women*. This session was co-facilitated by Denise Bray, Founding Director of the PACE Institute, and Pam Patton, Director of Government Relations at Morrison Child & Family Services and President of the Oregon Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls.

The second ILI, *Extending Their Voices: Advocating to Improve the Lives of Girls and Young Women*, was designed to support administrators and managers in the development of advocacy and messaging campaigns. The session was facilitated by a skilled team of presenters, including: Rhian Evans, Senior Advancement Officer, Arizona Community Foundation; Rebecca Fox, State Policy Coordinator, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States; Liz Ryan, Advocacy Director, Youth Law Center; and William (Bill) Smith, Director, Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States.

Workshops

For those attendees who preferred traditional workshops, 24 workshop sessions were given on an array of topics related to girls and young women. The workshops touched on promising programs, practices, and research across multiple fields. Workshop titles included:

- Advocating for Pregnant and Parenting Teens in Family Court and Probate Court
- Arizona's Child and Family Teams—Helping to Grow Girls to Greatness
- ATHENA (Athletes Targeting Healthy Exercise & Nutrition Alternatives): A Program for Female Athletes)
- Casey Life Skills Tools: An Integrated Approach to Life Skills Preparation
- Children's Books that Foster Greatness in Girls
- Closing the Gender Gap: Tools to Empower Girls, Strategies to Empower Self
- Do GIRLS COUNT in Your Community? Making the Case for a Legal Policy Agenda
- Educating the "Not So Eager" Student
- Empowering Adolescent Girls: The Go Grrrls Program
- Empowerment Through Safety for Incarcerated Teen Mothers: Building Healthy Bonds and Breaking the Cycle of Violent Victimization
- Exceeding All Expectations: Taking Young Teen Girls Beyond the Survival Strategies Learned in Troubled Families
- Feeling Safe: What Girls Say

- FLY Girls: Empowerment, Leadership, and Decisionmaking for At-Risk Girls
- Gender Responsive Approaches for Girls and Young Women in the Juvenile Justice System
- Girl Scouts Beyond Bars
- Girls and Bullying
- Girls Leadership and Development (GLAD): A Model for Success With Girls
- Preventing Victimization: Confronting Cultural Attitudes in Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Cases
- Strong Daughter/Strong Mothers
- Tell Us What an "Ophelia Project" Can Do in Your Community!
- The Whole Circle: A Look at Providing Spiritual Opportunities in Female-Responsive Programs
- Turning the Tide: Working for Comprehensive Sexuality Education
- Women Don't As: Lessons From Childhood

Learning Cafés

To promote networking and active dialogue, two Learning Cafes gave participants the opportunity to discuss and exchange ideas with peers in a specific field or from a specific region.

Learning Café One was divided into five field specific sessions: behavioral health, child welfare, education, general health, and juvenile justice. Learning Café Two was divided by regions: Arizona, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-West, Mountain Plains and Western, New England, and Southern. Attendees—ranging from 5 to 40 in each session—completed a worksheet and flipchart notes captured discussion. In most cases, an adult, in partnership with a young woman, facilitated Learning Café discussions. Special thanks to all who facilitated and took notes during these sessions.

Learning Café One

The following section provides highlights from the questions posed to the field specific groups in Learning Café One. The timeframe for the first Learning Café was 90 minutes.

What is the most positive aspect of your work with girls?

The *Child Welfare* breakout session identified the opportunity to create a stable, comfortable, and safe environment for young girls and women as a gratifying part of the work. The intensity of such work, the ability to forge positive relationships, and the chance to break negative family cycles were identified as important pieces to this group.

The *Education* breakout session indicated that seeing girls and young women determined to succeed and set goals towards higher education is a rewarding part of the work. This group also reported enjoying the opportunity to provide a comfortable, open environment where girls and young women can ask questions. They also identified the ability to teach girls to make solid, well-informed decisions as a rewarding experience.

The *Juvenile Justice* breakout session determined that listening and advocating for girls and young women is an important and significant aspect to the work. This group enjoys generating innovative changes in the system and observing girls and young women determined to change and break negative cycles in their families.

The *Behavioral Health* group identified the partnerships and collaboration among agencies and the opportunity to work towards family reunification as gratifying elements of their work.

The *Health* group indicated that giving girls and young women access to critical health-related information and resources that lead to positive outcomes is a pertinent and positive aspect of their work.

What is new and exciting in your field of study?

The *Child Welfare* group identified gender-specific programs and services available to young women ages 18 to 21 as new methods in their field. Workers are more actively engaging girls and young women to create their case plans, and better focusing on life skills, financial planning, and violence prevention. More partnerships are also being developed with other agencies that serve girls and young women.

The *Education* group indicated that partnerships with local colleges, educators becoming more informed about teaching methods to meet the needs of students, and collaborations with other systems have had a positive impact on the work with girls and young women. Additionally, more programs are focusing on eating disorders and drug use prevention among these youth.

The *Juvenile Justice* group was excited to report new, on-going regional meetings, service projects, and gender responsive programs. Participants indicated the juvenile justice system is now recognizing abuse issues within the system. Attendees reported a recent increased focus on the importance of engaging families as a part of the treatment plan to more positively impact young women.

The *Behavioral Health* group indicated that role modeling and mentoring programs have been essential in their work with girls and young women.

The *Health* group identified the redefinition of healthy lifestyles, outreach, and education at a younger age as pertinent to the health of young women. Attention to specific cultures and new food pyramids are necessary to reach diverse groups of young women. New coalitions that include young women have enabled participants to take steps closer toward raising a healthy generation of girls. Greater awareness of violence and young women issues has impacted the work around these youth.

What are the significant challenges in your work?

The *Child Welfare* group identified the following challenges confronting the child welfare field in their work with girls and young women:

- A lack of funding to provide comprehensive and appropriate services.
- A high turnover rate of frontline workers.
- Multiple placements negatively impacting the motivation and trust level of girls and young women.
- Educational and emotional barriers contributing to a lack of compliance with services that are offered.

The *Education* group identified the following challenges:

- Administrators' lack of knowledge about the significant impact of body image, substance abuse, and eating disorders.
- Administrative policies that do not meet the needs of all girls and young women (for example, transitioning girls in group homes to public schools).
- A shortage of school resources to support girls (for example, bullying prevention programs).
- The absence of family involvement in girls and young women's education.
- A lack of cultural sensitivity to family beliefs and values.

The *Juvenile Justice* participants identified several challenges:

- Difficulty convincing administrators to make girls' and young women's needs a priority.
- Insufficient funding and resources for programs that work.
- A lack of cohesiveness among agencies (for example, among juvenile justice, child welfare, mental health, and education agencies).
- A shortage of culturally competent and gender responsive services.

The *Behavioral Health* group faces the following significant challenges:

- Managed care restrictions that make it difficult to address underlying issues.
- A lack of agency collaboration making it difficult to meet the needs of girls and young women.
- Not all girls and young women have access to community support and resources.

The *Health* field faces the following challenges in working with girls and young women:

- Negative media impact on female body image.
- Limited access for girls and young women to information about health issues.
- Low self-esteem negatively impacting health decisions made by girls and young women.

Please identify strategies & solutions.

Each field specific group identified the following strategies and solutions. Accompanying recommendations are based on essential action steps identified as needed to bring about change.

CHILD WELFARE

- Provide cultural competence training for all front line and administrative staff.
- Develop programs and peer groups addressing the critical issues confronting girls and young women.
- Provide gender responsive trainings for foster parents and child welfare workers.
- Create a support system for workers.
- Establish a mentoring program for girls and young women in the foster care system.

EDUCATION

- Identify evidence-based promising practices that serve girls and young women.
- Foster relationships with other child- and youth-serving systems and organizations.
- Involve girls, young women, and families in program planning.
- Develop and implement culturally competent and gender responsive programs.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

- Develop more gender responsive mentoring programs.
- Engage girls and young women in program developments.
- Collaborate and coordinate with other agencies and systems.
- Advocate for a comprehensive continuum of services.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

- Promote a strength- and competency-based approach.
- Collaborate with other professionals and agencies.
- Use movies to begin discussions about important issues to girls and young women (for example, *Thirteen* and *Homeless to Harvard*).
- Provide on-going training for staff to promote professional development.

HEALTH

- Engage large corporations and foundations to raise funds to develop more gender-specific services.
- Develop partnerships with hospitals to provide education on health-related issues.

Participants identified the following resources in the field specific Learning Cafés:

- Art for a Child Safe America (www.artsafe.org)
- Athena/Steroid Prevention Program (www.atlasprogram.com)
- Casey Life Skills Assessment (www.caseylifeskills.org)
- Daniel Kids (www.danielkids.org)
- The Department of Health for information on health related issues (www.os.dhhs.gov)
- The Department of Agriculture for outreach information on nutrition and obesity (www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navtype=SU&navid=EDUCATION_OUTREACH)
- Girls Circle (www.girlscircle.org)
- Girls Inc. (www.girlsinc.org)
- Girl Scouts (www.girlscouts.org)
- 4 Girls Health (www.4girls.gov)
- March of Dimes (www.marchofdimes.com)
- Ms. Foundation for Women (www.ms.foundation.org)

- National Healthy Start Association (www.healthystartassoc.org)
- Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (www.nwrel.org)
- Newborns in Need (www.newbornsinneed.org)
- Red Cross (www.redcross.org)
- Robert Lewis—Adolescents and Families for Life: A Toolkit for Supervisors (www.highpopples.com/AFFL%20Description.htm)
- TAP (Teenage Parent Programs) (www.santacruz.k12.ca.us/alt_ed/schools/tap/index.html)
- Teen Voices Online (www.teenvoices.com/tvhome.html)
- The Stone Center (www.wcwoonline.org/w-main.html)
- Young Women’s Lives (www.hamfish.org/programs/361.html)

Learning Café Two

The following are highlights from the questions posed to the regional caucuses during the one-hour Learning Café Two. Several groups merged with other regional gatherings due to low attendance. This was the final activity of the conference and the timing clearly impacted participation.

Each group was asked to identify:

- the greatest challenges/barriers facing girls in their state/region;
- specific resources in their state/region;
- plans for using new information and resources obtained during the conference to support girls and young women;
- priorities for moving forward with a girl-centered agenda;
- specific programmatic, research, advocacy, or legislative priorities; and a
- a strategy for staying connected with others in their state or region.

Southern Region

Like many of the field specific groups, the Southern Region participants reported an overall lack of funding, however, they also specified that funding and resources in rural areas is more limited, making it more difficult to serve girls and young women in their communities. Poor policy decisions and lack of collaboration and coordination among agencies also makes it challenging to effectively serve young women. Issues of poverty, hopelessness, parenting styles, cultural differences, and chronic family dysfunction were also identified as challenges and barriers facing girls in the Southern Region.

Southern Region participants plan to use the information and resources obtained during this conference to develop more training and resources for girls and young women, as well as for staff. They also plan to create a forum for girls and young women to come together to share perspectives. To boost community awareness and participation, attendees also plan to create media opportunities (for example, newsletters and websites) to share information and resources not only with partners, but also with the general community.

To move forward with a girl-centered agenda, Southern Region participants are determined to

- make girls and young women a legislative priority;
- involve young women in advocacy efforts; and
- access more gender-specific curricula to implement throughout programs.

Southern Region session attendees plan to stay connected through email, regional meetings, conferences, and CWLA events.

Mid-West Region

Participants in the Mid-West Region caucus are also facing the challenge to obtain funding for gender specific programs. Attendees reported struggling to find quality foster homes for pregnant and parenting teens. High staff turnover and a lack of staff training also present challenges for girls and young women in their region and states. Participants shared several resources, including information about: scholarship opportunities for former foster youth; a Girls Task Force and the LINK coalition in Cook County; the

administrative office of the Illinois Courts' initiative to effect statewide change for girls and women in the juvenile justice system; and the Illinois Probation and Court Services Association's standing committee for gender responsiveness so that spring and fall yearly conferences address the issue of girls and young women.

To move forward, participants plan to use the information from the conference to implement changes in programs, establish new gender specific policies, develop staff trainings, engage young people, and build partnerships and coalitions.

The following are the Mid-West breakout session's priorities for moving forward with a girl-focused agenda:

- prioritize services for young pregnant and parenting teens;
- implement evidence-based girls programs; and
- execute policies that incorporate gender specific issues.

Mid-West region attendees plan to maintain contact through e-mail, partnerships, and conferences.

New England and Mid-Atlantic Regions

New England and Mid-Atlantic session participants face difficulty providing appropriate services for girls and young women needing more therapeutic treatment. These youth are often difficult to place in foster homes. Attendees also reported a lack of appropriate services for girls in detention centers. Some states report few female placements, which result in young girls staying in shelters while waiting for an appropriate placement. Unfortunately, appropriate placements are often a significant distance from the families, making it difficult for families to participate in visitation and treatment plans. Some were concerned that family involvement is not mandated. Maryland representatives reported that when parents do not commit the offense, the court cannot order any action. According to participants, there seems to be a need for long-term programs that solely focus on life skills. Unfortunately, sending young people to their homes too soon leads to their eventual return to the system. A recurring theme in this session was the high staff turnover rates and the lack of gender responsive staff training, making it difficult for girls and young women to build solid relationships with staff.

Attendees indicated that prior to this conference, many did not know much about gender specific services. To support their work with girls and young women, they indicated they will make it a priority to begin discussions around the differences between boys and girls.

To ensure that girls and young women are a priority, the New England and Mid-Atlantic participants indicated they will

- keep girls' and young women's issues on the radar screen through education and advocacy, and
- begin having discussions around gender responsive services for boys.

Arizona

(Please note that given the location of the conference, a special state specific Learning Café provided Arizonans with a special networking opportunity.)

Arizona's girls are faced with many of the same issues that face young women in other states/regions. Unfortunately, many of these girls and young women are also faced with a long family history of dysfunction, poverty, and crisis, making it difficult to break the cycle. Arizona representatives reported a lack of training and programs that meet the real needs of these young women. There is a lack of resources for homeless, parenting, and pregnant teens. Additionally, there is a lack of parental and male involvement in the lives of these young women. And like many other states and regions, there is also a lack of state policy supporting services for girls and young women.

Arizona attendees plan to use the information and resources gathered at the conference to promote the concept of gender relevant programming and its importance to the community to strengthen programs for pregnant and parenting teens.

Participants reported the following priorities for moving forward with a girl-centered agenda:

- Empowering girls through advocacy and involvement in program planning.

- Communicating needs to the community.
- Assessing protocols, tools, instruments, processes and materials for gender relevance.
- Researching additional training opportunities for staff on gender-related programs.

Attendees intend to remain connected through the Arizona Clearinghouse.

Western and Mountain Plains Regions

Like many others, the Western and Mountain Plains session participants reported the challenge of getting others to recognize the unique needs of girls and young women. Many are also confronting an increase of girls in the juvenile justice system, along with increased rates of poverty, drug abuse, violence, and racism. It was also reported that many Native American girls and young women are facing high rates of unemployment, depression, and substance abuse. Girls and young women in rural areas are facing high rates of homelessness. A lack of male role models and positive interaction with men in the lives of these young women persists. Lastly, like many other states and regions, a lack of gender responsive and culturally competent services and supports continues.

Western and Mountain Plains region participants intend to use the information obtained during this conference to expand partnerships and professional connections to those doing the same work within their state or regions. Attendees also plan to take back information gathered from workshops and institutes to expand and improve existing programs serving girls and young women.

To make girls and young women a priority, the Western and Mountain Plains will focus on:

- Engaging girls and young women in program planning and advocacy.
- Working with other partners and coalitions to inform gender responsive work.

Summary and Acknowledgments

The Roundtable presented professionals, advocates, and young women with a unique opportunity to share information, and to network and galvanize support around issues that impact girls and young women in our country. Many attendees cited the “great diversity” of the sessions and speakers, as well as the connections made with other girls-serving professionals, as the most useful aspects of the conference. Presently, plans are being considered for another Roundtable that focuses on the unique strengths and needs of girls.

In closing, CWLA again acknowledges the significant support of the National Florence Crittenton Mission and the contributions made by Crittenton agency executives in the planning and coordination of this national event. Special thanks also to Child and Family Resources, Inc. for their willingness to serve as the conference co-chair and their commitment to making the event successful. We also want to acknowledge the dedicated members of the Roundtable Planning and Advisory Committees who provided great ideas and a lot of time to help make the conference a success. These people include:

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For more information about the **National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable 2005: Growing Girls for Greatness**, please contact Amanda Hirsh by phone, 202/639-4911, or via e-mail at ahirsh@cwla.org.

The following poem, *Growing Girls For Greatness*, was written and presented by Rochelle DeLaine, age 17, at the National Girls Initiative/Florence Crittenton Roundtable 2005: Growing Girls for Greatness Conference:

Growing girls for greatness so that the world can know the talents and ideas that young girls can show.

With all the violence and the problems that go on in this world, we need to make a way for our growing young girls.

Some may grow up in poverty and may feel there's no other way, but we can promote hope to them Starting today.

We can teach positive attitudes and help them reach their goal.

We can give them encouragement and be a positive role.

Peer pressure may encourage girls to do wrong, but they don't have to do that When we can help to be strong.

Some girls are depressed, neglected, and let down.

Some suffer from poverty and their parents aren't around.

Injustice! Abuse! It's not a time to ignore

Let's open doors so that young girls can explore.

Opportunities, jobs, and experiences that can last throughout the years

We need to promote more joy and success and lessen the amount of tears.

Abandoned, neglected children need a chance

To join in to celebrate and have a victory dance

How can girls know about diseases if they have not been taught ways to prevent some diseases so they would not have to be caught.

They need to know about the success and consequences that can come from what they do.

We need to make sure they get the information and let them know dreams can come true.

We need to help promote respect and concern for treating each other

So that one girl won't be bullying the other

We need to promote stress management and ways in which girls can handle tough situations

So that in the community there won't be so much deprivation.

Girls need more support so they can stay off the streets and get educated so they won't get in trouble and get incarcerated

So much stuff is going on in their minds,

We need to figure out ways to get them help before we run out of time.

Family issues, problems and things that they may go through can have a big impact on their behavior and general health too.

Learning new, effective ways to help girls is a big contribution because it can start up a great resolution.

Girls need to know that on themselves they can depend

So it can bring about strength from within

The world nowadays can be so cruel

It is time to stop procrastinating and start a renewal

Just like young eagle soar from their nest

We need to promote young girls to be their very best.