

## Justice Department Study Dispels Myths About Girls' Delinquency

On October 30, 2008, the [Office of Justice Programs](#) (OJP) issued the following press release:

Washington - The Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs' (OJP) Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) today released a research bulletin, "Charting the Way to Delinquency Prevention for Girls," which reports that despite the rise in female juvenile crime, violence among female youth has not increased.

Following a sharp increase in arrests among female juveniles in the 1990s, OJJDP convened the Girls Study Group (GSG) to gain a better understanding of girls' delinquency and guide policy toward female juvenile offenders. While the majority of delinquent offenders are boys, little research exists on female juvenile delinquency. This first bulletin, part of a forthcoming series, summarizes findings from a comprehensive research project into girls' delinquent behavior.

"The Office of Justice Programs created the Girls' Study Group to fully understand why an increasing number of girls are entering the juvenile justice system and to better understand how to prevent and intervene in girls' delinquency," said Jeffrey L. Sedgwick, Assistant Attorney General for OJP.

Key findings of the OJJDP-sponsored Girls Study Group include the following:

- Girls are not more violent now than in previous years. One of the factors discussed in the bulletin is the unintended impact of relatively new mandatory or pro-arrest policies put in place to protect victims of domestic violence.
- Girls and boys experience many of the same delinquency factors and that, while some risk factors are more gender-sensitive, focusing on general risk and protective factors for all youth is effective.
- Developing and using appropriate risk assessment tools for youth of both genders is crucial to ensuring the best response.
- A concerted effort is needed to address the lack of evidence-based programs for the juvenile justice field overall, as well as the lack of programming for girls specifically.

"By convening the Girls' Study Group, we made understanding girls involvement in delinquency a priority," said J. Robert Flores, Administrator of OJJDP. "We will use the data collected from this study to assist government and community leaders in responding to the needs of girls."

Over the next several months, a series of bulletins will be released highlighting the Girls Study Group findings, each one focusing on specific questions from the study group's research. The questions answered by the bulletins will include:

- Which girls become delinquent?
- What factors protect girls from delinquency?
- What factors put girls at risk for delinquency?
- What pathways lead to girls' delinquency?
- How should the juvenile justice system respond to girls' delinquency?

For more information on OJJDP's programs for delinquent girls, please visit:

[ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/girlsdelinquency.html](http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/programs/girlsdelinquency.html)