

Girls' Restorative Justice Program



*A Program Helping
Serious and Chronic
Female Juvenile Offenders
Build New Lives*

FACT SHEET

If you have been a victim of a crime, or had a female juvenile offender as part of your family, community, or professional life, you know first-hand how widespread the damage of juvenile offenses can be. Often, however, the response of "the system" is unsatisfactory to everyone. Typically the girl is sent to residential placement. This gets her out of the community and offers programs to help her change, but ignores many aspects of the problem:

- Victims have no chance to communicate how they have been affected, seek resolution, or to ask for justice.
- Underlying problems creating the behavior are left unaddressed.
- The offender is not brought face-to-face with the harm she has caused.
- Family, professionals, and support people trying to help the girl feel isolated and don't communicate or work together.

Given these "missing pieces," it is no wonder that many female juvenile offenders keep right on committing offenses and returning to residential placements in a kind of vicious cycle. Many will ultimately "graduate" to adult crimes—and prison. Meanwhile, their victims, families, and communities can feel helpless, with little sense of justice or hope.

How can the cycle be stopped? AMICUS believes there is a better way.

The Girls' Restorative Justice Program is a joint project with the Minnesota Department of Corrections and residential service providers. Working only with serious or chronic female juvenile offenders, it adds in the "missing pieces" through three main strategies that promote accountability,

The Better Way: Outcomes of Past Restorative Justice Circles

Problems that had never been openly discussed were positively and peacefully addressed.

Girls said for the first time that they felt regret about what they had done.

Parents acknowledged for the first time that they had problems in their home that needed to be fixed if the girl were to change.

Girls said they "saw a positive side" to their probation officers and other support people.

Relatives and community members committed to more support of girls in changing.

Plans were made for a positive and safe return to the community.

*--From evaluations by past
Circle participants*

