

# Overview of California's Girls' Courts and CSEC Courts

*Beyond the Bench 2019*

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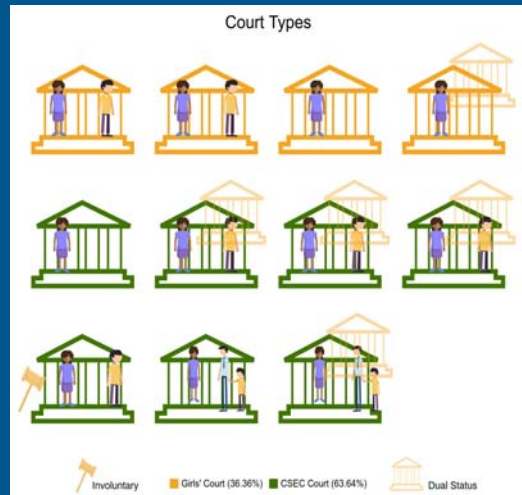
## Overview of Girls' Court

- Response to high number of trafficking victims
- Arrest v. Services (SB 1322)
- Girls' Court v. CSEC Court
- Goal: Gender-responsive, trauma-informed alternative



## Quick Facts

- "Girls' Court:" 4
  - 2 girls only
  - 2 any gender
- CSEC-Specific Court: 7
  - 1 girls only
  - 6 any gender
  - 1 Dependency only
  - 1 Dependency & dual
- Involuntary: 1
- Median Participants: 45



*"It's important for us to have a courtroom dedicated to this population"*

## Evaluation Objectives

- Describe various processes
- Examine beneficial aspects
- Identify model practices
- Gain insight into personal experiences



## Methodology

- Focus groups in 10 of 11 courts' MDTs
- Focus group with former participants
- Types of focus group questions
- Collateral materials collected



## Topics

- How court started
- Court structure
- Eligibility & referrals
- Incentives & sanctions
- Supervision
- Measuring success
- Challenges



## How Courts Started

- Support & buy-in:  
Collaboration & transparency



*"I think one of the biggest challenges, especially in the beginning, was figuring out expectations and roles: What's expected of me, what's expected of [others], how does that overlap, where does the responsibility lie?"*

*"We're all a team. The car doesn't move without four wheels rotating in*

## How Courts Started

- Implementation:  
Tour, think, & train



*"Traditionally, probation has always been that authoritarian person who comes in and says, 'You have to comply.' So, it's really been a learning curve for all of us."*

*" Everyone needs to know their role, but they need to stay in their lane."*

## How Courts Started

- Funding: Grants & general



*"We will buy things for our kids. Some things we'll submit to have reimbursed, and some things we can't or won't."*

*"the court doesn't receive extra funding because they're doing the same"*

## How Courts Started

- Flexibility: *Just do it*



*"What can we do, and what can we implement as fast as we can to get this started? Because if we're gonna wait until we get the perfect alignment of the stars, it's never going to happen."*

*"We just kept saying we were building the plane as we were flying it"*

## Court Structure

- What's in a name?



*"We can recognize that this is a court for people with all types of experiences that trickle down to the girls and doesn't provide a label that then [requires] extra engagement work to get them to participate in services."*

*"[The kids] don't want to be labeled anything. They are just them. And*

## Court Structure

- MDT: Composition, consistency, & "multiple hats"



*"We get the benefit of having the same eyes on the case and tracking the case from the inception until the end, and it's helpful to know their history, the strides that they made, [and] their past challenges so that we can take all of that into consideration as we move forward."*

*"The thing about this court is that everybody works together. And you*

## Court Structure

- Importance of the judge



*"More than any of the courts that I have ever worked in . . . , I've never heard or seen such a youth voice presence. And the judge always gives the youth the last voice, the last chance to speak before we close out the hearing, and I think that that's critical, and I think that contributes to them feeling safe in the courtroom also."*

*"Our kids feel very comfortable talking to the judge. They have the*

## Court Structure

- Court process: Hearing cases



*"The social part of it is something for them. They like that, and . . . An important part for CSEC girls is to develop social relationships with other girls their age because that population of girls is taught to fear, compete, [and] hate.*

*"They're talked to like a person and not necessarily someone that's*

## Court Structure

- Court focus: Working as a team for girls' best interest & trauma-informed services



*"In a regular court room, there is more focus on whether the youth is going to admit or deny the charges, whether there's gonna be a disposition in the case, or whether it's gonna proceed to a trial. Here, it's more of, 'What can we do to help the girls?'"*

*"They know that we're all just here for them"*

## Court Structure

- Termination/Graduation



*"None of the girls really complete something until they complete this program, and it feels great. They got their high school diploma, they got a job, and just everything that comes at the end of it, which is hard for them to see. . . 'cause they don't know that they can actually accomplish anything until the very end."*

*"They can opt to just be like, 'I don't want to do this anymore.'"*



## Eligibility & Referrals

- Eligibility criteria



*"[Participation isn't [only] because they have an established history of sexual exploitation; we're looking broadly at the types of factors that could contribute to that."*

*"We do make some exceptions depending on the individual case."*

## Eligibility & Referrals

- Referral processes



*"I think there is opportunity to add [to the program], especially because we do know that there [are] these unaccounted for girls and young women who could be served differently."*

*"There's probably hundreds that could use the resources, and they just*

## Incentives & Sanctions

- Incentives



*"I like the reward system that has been implemented because these kids are so excited about it, and they bring their stuff, and I like to see that enthusiasm, and they want to be here to get their reward, or whatever they've earned."*

*"It's hard to be supporting our kids and then helping them try to*

## Incentives & Sanctions

- Sanctions



*"I'm not asking you to go to wherever because I'm trying to be mean or I think that you need to be punished, but I think that where you are in your life, this is an opportunity for you to get better services."*

*"There's a consequence, but nobody's giving up on you."*

## Supervision

- Contact with youth



*"We practically see them every day, and we're involved in just about every aspect of their life: Their schooling, counseling, home life. And we work very closely with each girl and their families and the counselors of the schools."*

*"Sometimes it's like a year down the line and we're not working with the client anymore. But they call us back: Hey, I finally graduated!"*

## Supervision

- Case management:  
Expectations, patience,  
transparency, &  
empowerment



*"We try to empower the girls a lot, because by the time we meet them, they've been through a lot. One of the things we try to do with the girls too is try to have fun with them, make them laugh, do activities that they like, and support some of the hobbies they are interested in."*

*"The patience is what they're craving. They're craving people to be tolerant of ups and downs."*

## Supervision

- Training/Culture shift



*"The more people you have trained, the more you have folks [knowing that] they really are victims, and they create a dialogue for other community members that may have not gone to the training. So I think that it helps."*

*"There was a lot of training about the changing of the way that we think about these kids."*

## Measuring Success

- Determining goals

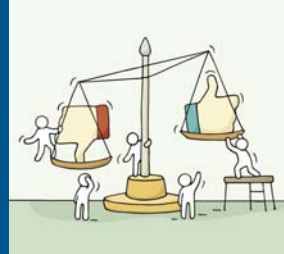


*"Not everything has to be about them being CSEC or being trafficked. I think we really try to show them and it's come from the court—from the hearing officer down —'You're still a kid.'"*

*"We're literally saving their lives and keeping them safe, which was the*

## Measuring Success

- Measuring success in this population



*"We measure [success] as the individual child and where they are in that moment, and we just meet the needs where they're at, try to roll with them, and uplift them with their goals. And even if they do AWOL and come back, . . . we don't pass judgment."*

*"We define success every day or we wouldn't achieve any."*

## Challenges

- Culture change
- Housing
- Specialized services
- Recruiting
- Commitment
- Burnout



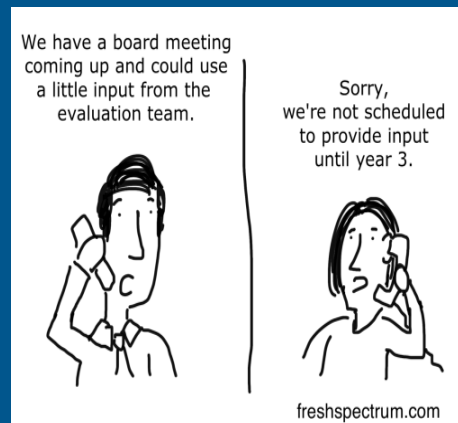
*"We still don't have placements that are really designed for this"*

## Challenges Exemplified

*"It's like when you're treading water. If you're in the pool in the deep end, you can tread water, you're just swimming. You can probably do it for an hour if you needed to. But if you were holding someone over your head while you're treading water, it's a lot harder. And so we are just collectively—all of our arms up together trying to hold each of these kids up, and it's exhausting. Mentally and emotionally."*

## Model Practices

- Collaboration/ Communication
- Consistency
- Realistic expectations
- Comprehensive training



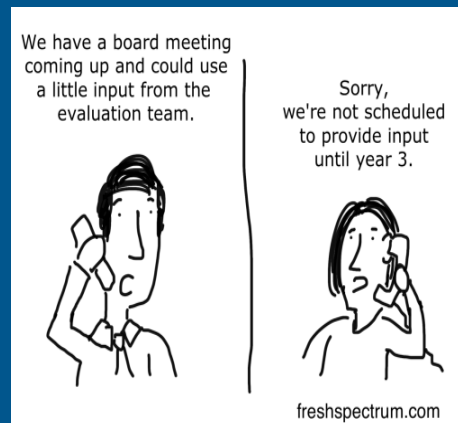
*"I've seen in this last year more positive results with this court than I*

## Model Practices

*"Collaboratives take time, and they take trust. You can't simply duplicate or replicate [this court model] if partners don't have an honest, open, candid working relationship . . . where you're able to trust the sharing of information, you're able to have different people seated at the table, and there's an underlying premise that we are all focused on the well-being of this youth. . . . We're headed in the same direction."*

## Model Practices

- Collaboration/ Communication
- Consistency
- Realistic expectations
- Comprehensive training



*"I've seen in this last year more positive results with this court than I*

## Model Practices

- Building trust/rapport
- Trauma-informed & gender-specific services
- Continuous Improvement
- Screening/Assessment



*"If every child could have the same experience, I feel like we would*

**We see you.**



# Questions/Discussion

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