



National Girls Health and Justice Institute
536 Garcia Street
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87505
505 986-2024

**For more information contact:
Leslie Acoca, Executive Director NGHJI / 505 986-2024**

Highlights: Health Care Needs of Girls in the Juvenile Justice System

- Nearly 1.2 million (1,166,141) juvenile boys and girls are admitted to juvenile detention facilities where they may be held for a few hours and released back to their home communities or confined in locked facilities for several days, weeks or even months. ¹
- The number of girls in detention is increasing more rapidly than the numbers of boys proportionately. (49% compared to a 7% increase for boys between 1995-2005) ²
- Today, approximately 1 in 5 juveniles being held in detention nationally are girls. Girls in detention tend to be younger than their male counterparts and more likely to be held for running away (often from abusive situations). ¹
- Girls often enter detention with unique and sometimes more serious health and mental health needs and are less likely to receive adequate medical screening, assessment, treatment and follow-up. ¹
- Only 53 of 3,500 juvenile justice residential facilities in the United States have received accreditation for the medical care they provide. ³
- Only 18% of these juvenile justice facilities routinely provide pregnancy tests for girls. ³
- No standardized gender-specific medical screens are available for use with girls in the juvenile justice system nationally. ⁴

Key Findings: Girls Health Screen National Validation Study 2009 National Girls Health and Justice Institute ⁵

- 41% of girls entering detention had serious allergies to foods, prescription and/or over-the-counter medications. None had EPI pens with them on intake.
- 11% were exposed to TB in the past year; 8% tested positive for TB and only 4 reported chest x-rays.
- 22% reported a history of forced sexual contact, and several reported assaults within the past 7 days.
- 41% and 24% respectively had abnormal vaginal or rectal examinations possibly due to sexual assault.
- 60% had been tested for HIV and 1 girl was currently taking HIV medications.
- 23% had a history of sexually transmitted infections (STI) and 18% had a positive test for more than one STI.
- 20% had been pregnant at least once. 12% of these reported medical care during their first pregnancy.
- 15% had head injuries with loss of consciousness (LOC) in past year; 13% had injuries within last week.
- 23% had a history of self-harming behavior and 11% had a history of attempted suicide.
- 33% reported having blackouts from alcohol or other drug use.
- 18% had used methamphetamine in the last 3 months.
- 34% had been sick or overdosed from alcohol or drugs.
- 9% were intravenous drug users.
- 11% reported sex with intravenous drug users.
- 40% needed glasses and only 5 had glasses with them.
- 36% reported being homeless within the past year.

¹ Snyder, Howard N., and Sickman, Melissa. 2006. *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

² C. Puzanchara and W. Kang, *Juvenile Court Statistics Data Book* (2008), <http://ojjdp.ncjrs.gov/ojstatbb/jcsdb>. Most current data available.

³ Douds A, Gallagher CA & Dobrin A. Gender equivalence in the provision of health services in juvenile justice residential facilities. *Corrections Today* 2006; 68(4) 51-53.

⁴ Acoca, L, and Lexcen, Frances. 2004. Medical Case File Review of Girls being held in detention nationally, Spring Journal, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2004.

⁵ Acoca, Leslie, and Lexcen, Frances. 2009. Technical Report: National Girls Health Screen Validation Study in Three Sites.