

2018 REPORT

STATUS OF GIRLS AND YOUNG WOMEN

IN BROWARD COUNTY

FUNDED BY:

Children's Services Council of Broward County
Pace Center for Girls, Inc.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was funded by the Children’s Services Council of Broward County, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and Pace Center for Girls. The authors are grateful to the members of the Girls Coordinating Council of Broward, the staff of Children’s Services Council and Pace Center for Girls for all their support with the development and production of the report.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2016-GJ-FX-K002 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view expressed in this document are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of OJJDP or the U.S. Department of Justice.

2018 GIRLS FEATURED:

Alajah M.
Alexis H.
Antunette B.
Bella F.
Caroline S.
Gabriella C.
Hermeshia T.
Jessica I.
Kamyia R.
Liz Amanda B.
Mads
Molayo S.
Yavasia W.

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THE BROWARD CHILDREN'S STRATEGIC PLAN (CSP) connects the Broward community by bringing together government, non-profits, the private sector & community members to improve the lives of Broward's children and families. The CSP works to achieve the 5 desired **results of the plan**.

Five Results of the Broward Children's Strategic Plan

- » Children Live in Stable and Nurturing Families
- » Children are Physically and Mentally Healthy
- » Children Are Ready to Succeed in School
- » Young People Successfully Transition to Adulthood
- » Children Live in Safe and Supportive Communities



Partners collectively work in over 45 committees on a common agenda to share data and strategies, maximize resources and build mutually accountable relationships. Reports and recommendations are shared with the Leadership Coalition, Broward's policy advisory entities to make meaningful improvements towards achieving shared results for children and families in Broward. The work of the committees also informs opportunities to improve community conditions such as housing, transportation, the justice system, youth/civic engagement, economic prosperity, sustainability and healthy living.

THE GIRLS COORDINATING COUNCIL OF BROWARD COUNTY (GCC), A NEW CHILDREN'S STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITTEE promotes holistic, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, and strength-based approaches for supporting girls and encourages collaboration within the community and system of care to align initiatives, endorse best practices for working with girls and provide opportunities for girls to succeed.



GCC began in 2017 as a collaborative comprised of organizations and advocates to support girls' healthy development. GCC is focused on reforming and strengthening the system of care for girls and increasing the availability of gender-responsive, trauma-informed and strength-based services offered for girls in the community.

The Status of Girls and Young Women in Broward County report was developed by GCC committee members to showcase the experiences of girls from our community with examples of how the system of care is currently supporting girls' healthy development. A central theme throughout the report is the impact of positive, healthy and supportive relationships on girls' development and success. Data indicates what's working in our community and recommendations for strengthening the system of care.



LETTER FROM PRESIDENT/CEO OF THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES COUNCIL OF BROWARD COUNTY

» Cindy Arenberg Seltzer

As a woman and first-generation American whose grandmother escaped the Holocaust, I am proud to have inherited her strength and determination through my own mother. As a mother of a young girl, I endeavor to transmit the same strength and determination to my daughter. As a community leader, it is also important for me to encourage other young women to discover their strength and strive to achieve their own goals and not be hindered by limitations current society often places on women.

This is why I am proud to support the work showcased in this report and am thrilled to see how it celebrates the unique gifts that lie in each personal experience. Through stories covering education, juvenile justice, LGBTQ identity, safety, health and other areas of concern and opportunity, this report opens a window on the many ways individuals and communities come together to provide girls and young women the tools and support they need to fulfill their potential and make a positive impact for everyone.

As we strive together toward solutions and innovative ways to ensure gender equality and support girls to become responsible, productive adults, I hope that the information in this report will encourage all stakeholders to consider gender-responsive programming informed by the experiences of the 13 young women featured here.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cindy Arenberg Seltzer".

Cindy Arenberg Seltzer
President/CEO
Children's Services Council of Broward County



■ GIRLS IN BROWARD COUNTY

Broward County, FL is the second most populous county in Florida and home to 1,935,878 people, (2017 population estimates). Average household income is \$52,954 and 14.4% of the population lives below the poverty level (Florida Charts). The number of families living below poverty has almost doubled since 1990. The unemployment rate has declined since 2013, and as of 2016, the rate (4.6%) is slightly lower than the state rate (4.9%).



There are 411,519 children under 18 years-old living in Broward and 18% of them are food insecure. Girls ages 5-17 are 49% of the population. The population of girls in Broward County is more racially and ethnically diverse than in the rest of the United States. More than one-third of the girls in Broward are Black and 32% are Hispanic or Latina. Unfortunately, racism is associated with social and economic disparities that affect girls' healthy development.

Half of the families living in Broward have children under 18-years-old and one-third of these households lives in poverty. This means that a significant number of girls lives in households that are considered poor. Children who live in poverty underperform academically compared to their counterparts¹. Children who live in poverty and unsafe neighborhoods are at increased risk for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

ACEs are stressful or traumatic events that are related to the development and prevalence of lifelong health related problems. Examples of these include physical, sexual and emotional abuse; physical and emotional neglect; intimate partner violence; mother or caretaker treated violently; substance misuse within household; household mental illness; parental separation or divorce and Incarcerated household member(s).

The report looks at the community conditions that support or hurt girls in Broward. Girls are supported by having caring adult relationships, role models, access to affordable housing and access to safe environments and healthy food. Community conditions that negatively impact the lives of girls include racism, homelessness, inadequate health insurance, trauma, abuse, living in poverty and gender biases. **The report highlights seven areas specific to girls' development: Healthy Relationships, Social-Emotional Wellbeing, Juvenile Justice Involvement, Physical Health, Sexual Health, Educational / Vocational and Spiritual Well-Being.**

¹ https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/integration-and-diversity/patterns-of-resegregation-in-floridas-schools/LCI-Tough-Choices-Patterns-of-Resegregation_FINAL.pdf



■ HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

Establishing and maintaining healthy, supportive and meaningful relationships is central to girls' development. Through trusting relationships, girls overcome stressors, navigate and resist social pressures and learn to manage conflict constructively. Conversely, exposure to abuse, neglect or trauma, threats to safety, breaks in early attachment and other ACEs can have negative short and longer-term effects on girls' development. Often, such exposure is caused by someone with whom a girl has a relationship, such as a biological parent, caregiver, relative or intimate partner. Through the relational domain of girls' development, we see that natural supports, healthy relationships with peers and strong positive connections with adults serve as powerful protective factors for overcoming adversity and building resiliency. Research on implicit bias indicates that adults perceive Black girls as more adult-like, independent and needing less support and nurturing (Epstein et al., 2017). Considerations should be given to how we, as a community, hold and perpetuate this bias and the impact this has on the relational supports offered and provided to girls of color.

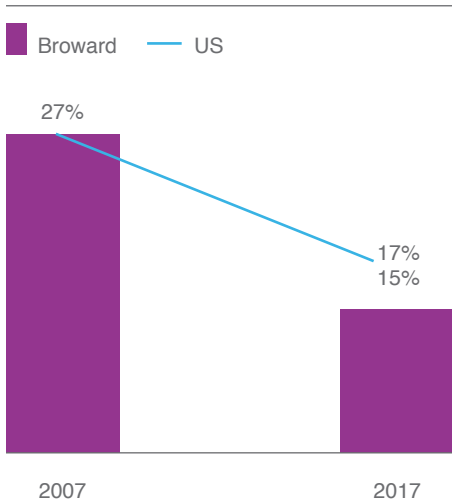
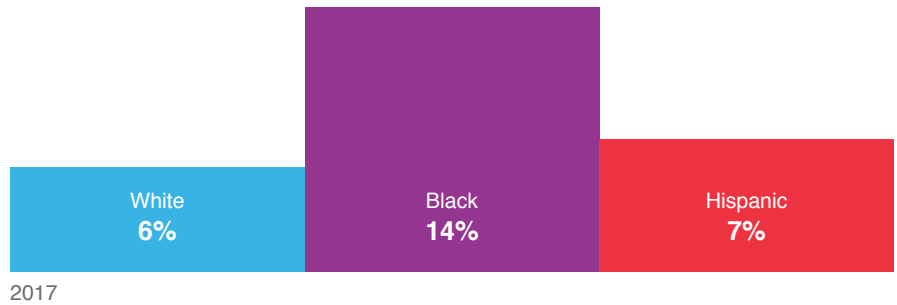
In the U.S., girls are at a higher risk of experiencing violence from someone with whom they have an emotional relationship. Helping girls develop healthy relationships when younger will support healthy development.

Girls ages 16-19 are four times more likely than any other person to be victims of rape, attempted rape or sexual assault, in many cases by someone they know². In Broward

County, 1 out of 7 girls will experience sexual violence and 1 in 9 girls will experience physical dating violence or will be harmed by an intimate partner (Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data).

Girls ages 16 - 19 report experiencing intimate partner sexual violence at a higher rate in Broward than in Florida and the United States. Black teenage girls are twice as likely to report experiencing physical dating violence when compared to white and Latina girls.

Black Teenage Girls 16-19 are TWICE as likely to report experiencing Physical Dating Violence when compared to White and Hispanic Girls.



Relationships with peers help girls define their identities and roles in groups. Thus, positive relationships at schools provide girls with opportunities to practice healthy communication and effectively resolve conflict. It is encouraging to know that the number of girls who reported involvement in a physical fight has decreased considerably in Broward County, from 27% in 2007 to 15% in 2017.

A similar trend can be seen in the U.S. Although trends of reported physical altercations have decreased, the percentage of Black girls engaging in physical fights was 5% higher when compared to their white and Latina counterparts.

² RAINN.org



SUCCESS STORY



“The first ten years of my life were not what most would consider ‘normal’. My mother had an unstable lifestyle. I did not attend school for approximately three years, and I grew up in a house where drugs and alcohol were considered a routine part of life. In 2012, I was placed with my father and moved to Broward County. It was tough to start school again. Not only was I older than everyone else in my class, but I also had to learn how to read, write, and do math. It was very challenging then, and it is still a struggle to this day.

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County became my second home in 2014. It is truly a wonderful place. Over the years, many staff made a difference in my life, such as Ms. Morgan, Coach Kelvin, Coach Derek, Ms. Michelle, Ms. Carmen, and Officer Caffarelli, to name a few. They helped me feel comfortable and safe at the Club and it turned my life around, in and out of school. They helped me develop as a strong leader and taught me that college is an attainable dream. Now, I have reachable goals, I strive for a better future, and I never give up. My dream is to attend Florida State University and major in Psychology to help children in situations like mine. The best part is knowing that I always have someone to talk to when I am going through tough times or celebrating the good times! I look forward to what my next four years in high school will bring me. **I know I can make my dreams and goals a reality.** Special thanks to my dad, stepmom and all the people that were crucial in my upbringing. I know they will always be there.”

— Alexis H



■ SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Girls' self-concepts are reciprocal and significantly affected by how they believe others perceive them. Experiences and messaging received from external sources such as relationships, peers, adults, the media, music industry, entertainment industry, and social media can largely impact girls' self-esteem, self-worth and self-advocacy. The impact this has on girls social-emotional development may be seen in behavior, mood, appearance, decision making, relationships, values and interests. Additionally, experiences with trauma, abuse, neglect and ACEs may negatively impact girls' social-emotional development. **In supporting girls, it is important to establish a trusting relationship to learn about their life experiences, to better understand thought processes, emotions, decisions and behaviors.**

Societal impact on girls' emotional development and resiliency is profound and we must take an honest look at gender bias, gender roles, exploitation of girls, inequitable opportunities for girls, body image ideals and social pressures placed on girls that limit girls in reaching their full potential. For girls experiencing ACEs this impact is likely greater. As a community, we must acknowledge system barriers, biases and messaging, that contribute to girls social-emotional development and provide positive supports to buffer negative impacts and promote girls' healthy development. We must strengthen and enhance opportunities for girls to engage in activities that honor the female experience and connect girls with their communities, support girls in finding and using their voice, foster the development of healthy natural supports and increase positive messaging about girls as strong, important and capable of achieving success.

The number of High School Girls Who reported attempting suicide has doubled in Broward County since 2007



In 2017, the overall prevalence of depression was significantly higher for girls than for boys. In the U.S., 41% of girls reported feeling sad or lonely compared to 21% of boys. Since 2011, there has been a 6% increase in the percentage of girls who reported feeling sad or lonely. There has been a 10% increase in the percentage of girls in Broward County who report that they have attempted suicide, double the numbers since 2007 and significantly above the U.S. (9%) and Florida (9%) rates.



SUCCESS STORY



“Throughout my early teen years I felt alone and unappreciated. When I was 14 years-old, my grandparents passed away. There was nothing in this world that could’ve made me feel emptier inside. I started cutting myself. I felt powerless. Growing up I didn’t have much: being a member of the lower class made these feelings even more powerful. I was bitter knowing that the middle, and upper economic classes had everything and everyone’s approval. My motivation and ambition for learning in school diminished over time due to bullying and people talking about me negatively. I tried to fill the emptiness I felt in the wrong ways. I didn’t trust anyone. When I felt as if everyone was turning on me, including my family, I gave up but not completely though: I just wanted out from everything. Overwhelming experiences led me to the decision of running away. I constantly stole things I couldn’t afford until I got caught. I ended up getting probation for my actions, but that did not stop me from doing whatever I wanted. In my mind, I knew that my options in the future were either death or jail. Pace Center for Girls came into my life to save me and my future. It’s beyond stressful being alone in this world and dealing with anxiety and depression.

My journey with the **Pace Reach Program** made me realize things I hadn’t before because I never took the time to look at the brighter side of everything. I never gave myself the time to step back and ask myself, “How do I fix this?” During my experience with the program I obtained my diploma within 8 months through support from Pace’s Enrichment Lab and even obtained a lot of useful information that is still helpful to this day. That’s when my life changed. The goal I achieved gave me so much confidence in myself, more than I had at the beginning. Anything I need help on, I know I can call my Pace Reach Life Coach or any Pace employee and I will most definitely get the help I need. The program really went out of their way to make sure I am safe, well taken care of, have everything I need and that I am on the right track to success. I was the first and youngest graduate of the 2017-2018 class at 16 years of age. After graduating, I gained full-time employment in customer service jobs. I plan on entering JobCorps³ and then going to work at a corrections facility or completing a security trade. I hope I will work my way to being part of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department. My goal is to protect, give back and, last but not least, honor my community.”

— **Antunette B**

³ JobCorps: <https://www.jobcorps.gov/>



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT
**PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS,
REACH COUNSELING PROGRAM**



Pace Center for Girls provides girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, training, counseling and advocacy. Pace is a nationally recognized and research-based gender-responsive model for girls and young women of middle and high school ages. There are 20 Pace Centers statewide, serving over 3,000 girls throughout Florida annually. Pace has served over 40,000 girls since its inception in 1985. Pace Center for Girls Day Program provides year-round academic and social service supports for middle and high school girls residing in Broward, including service learning opportunities and life skills building.

Pace Center for Girls **Reach Program** was first established in Broward County in 2009 to provide community based counseling support services to girls. Pace Reach provides individual Therapy Services, Life Skills and Psychoeducational Groups, Family Intervention, Case Management, Diversion/ Civil Citation programming, Life Coach Services, Enrichment Opportunities, Service Learning Projects, Girls Court programming and academic support services through an Enrichment Lab. Pace Reach utilizes a relational model to support girls through community based gender-responsive, trauma informed and strength-based programming. The holistic, strength-based, and asset building Pace program model addresses the needs of girls and has garnered recognition nationally as one of the most effective programs in the country for keeping girls from entering the juvenile justice system. Pace values all girls and young women, believing each one deserves an opportunity to find her voice, achieve her potential and celebrate a life defined by responsibility, dignity, serenity and grace.

Funded by: Pace Center for Girls Broward receives federal, state and local funding to support its program services including: The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, Broward County School Board, and the Children's Services Council of Broward County.



SUCCESS STORY



Kamya was referred to Healing Arts Institute, due to suffering a sexual assault from an older male family member entrusted to watch over her. This assault lead to Kamya having to overcome negative behaviors, feelings and thoughts. Some of the barriers she overcame included a developed porn addiction, a strained relationship with her mother and other family members.

Kamya received six months of sex trauma therapy and family therapy with her mother at Healing Arts Institute, in Tamarac, Broward County. Her strengths are her positive attitude, beauty, genuine concern for others and a newfound positive relationship with her mother. Kamya's achieved goals include the development of a safety plan and healthy, age-appropriate understanding of sex and sexuality. She has formed healthier communication skills, and a positive and healthy self-esteem. Kamya's present and future goals are for her perpetrator to get help, as to not harm others and for her mother to continue to receive therapy to assist her with the incident and rebuild family relationships.

Kamya has successfully completed all her therapeutic goals within her six-month time frame, while achieving academic success despite the incident and while receiving services at Healing Arts Institute. An ongoing challenge for her is that the perpetrator is a family member and the incident has created strains within the family. Kamya is proof that with trauma therapy an individual can thrive and take back their power, and become an advocate for others. Her success encourages other young women to speak out and receive help from community agencies and organizations to overcome trauma. Kamya is truly a young lady who has defied the odds.

— **Kamya R.**



SUCCESS STORY



“I grew up and went to school in Broward County. Currently, I play professional soccer in Cali, Colombia. That is one of the biggest accomplishments of my life and every time I mention it it’s like, ‘pinch me, am I really a pro?’ To this day, I am humbled by my experiences. Living in a third world country now, I see that there is still a lot of work and a lot of growth to be done. I can also share information that few people experience in their life and that I hope may help the world improve in some. Maybe, someone will hear my voice and it will have an impact. How do you think the most absurd messages are heard? Because someone is listening, and it is shared, and it is

spread. That is my belief. Likewise, when it comes to finding a solution to a specific problem or attain a certain goal, there really is no end. There is another idea and another challenge, an opportunity to continue to improve. Still, sometimes it’s hard to recognize your own accomplishments, how far you’ve come and what it means to be human; we get lost in that train of thought that we still aren’t where we want to be. I tell you that from my own personal experience, and I am grateful to my mom who snaps at me and says, “LIZ! Don’t you know that not even 1% of soccer players go pro? You do such amazing things and you don’t even realize it!”

Mistakes will always be made, there is no perfect human. But to recognize and to learn from those mistakes and to guide your own soul in the right direction is what helps with the process of having more confidence in yourself and faith that everything will work out. I am fortunate to have the ability to play professionally a sport that I love and that I also have the ability to bring awareness to people, and by my ‘little effort’, hope to help improve the future for other young women and inspire them to something better.”

— **Liz Amanda B.**

JUVENILE JUSTICE INVOLVEMENT

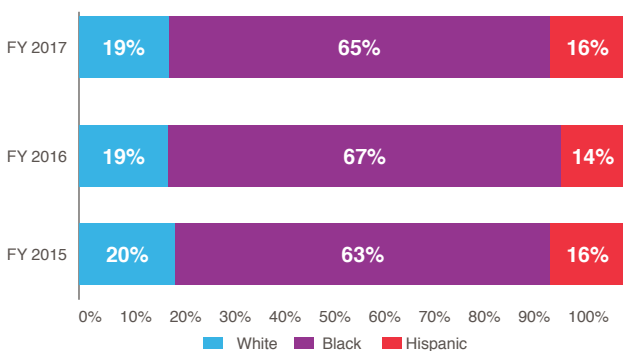
Girls are at a higher risk than boys for sexual abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence. Girls who have experienced trauma, abuse, maltreatment, victimization and ACEs have an increased likelihood of involvement with the juvenile justice system. Girls in the juvenile justice system report higher rates of childhood sexual abuse in comparison to peers who have not offended; childhood sexual abuse is also a significant predictor of recidivism for young females.

Even though rates have decreased overall, there were 15,140 girls referred to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice from July 1, 2016 through June 30, 2017, representing 23% of all youth arrested. Of those, half of the girls were involved with the juvenile justice system because of misdemeanor offenses like assault and disorderly conduct. The Broward County Community has seen a decrease in the overall youth arrest between 1998 and 2016. Despite this decrease, 851 girls were arrested in Broward County during the last fiscal year and 42% were involved with the system because of misdemeanor offenses.

Discrepancies in law enforcement and juvenile court practices affect girls of color disproportionately. The perception of Black girls as less innocent and more adult-like may contribute to more punitive exercise of discretion by those in positions of authority, increased use of force, and stricter penalties. This perception may also contribute to girls receiving harsher punishments for infractions in the educational system by educators and school resource officers (Epstein et al., 2017). Girls involved with the juvenile justice system, particularly those who have been detained, are at increased risk of re-traumatization, re-victimization, exploitation and have increased rates of recidivism.

The link between girls' experiences with trauma, abuse and girls' delinquency is significant. It is imperative that the system of care in our community understands the rates of trauma amongst girls in the delinquency system and uses this to inform their practices and approaches to best support and meet the needs of girls. Placing girls deeper into the system of care will not always provide the correct level of intervention and get to the underlying needs and may in fact further traumatize and victimize girls. Prevention, early intervention and alternative strategies and approaches should aim at understanding girls' risk factors, matching support services appropriately, and working with girls' strengths and system of care to bolster protective factors.

Black Girls in Broward are Arrested at Higher rates than Hispanic and white girls.



There were 617 girls arrested in Broward County during the 2016-2017 school year. Black girls were arrested at a significantly higher rate (65%) in comparison to their white counterparts (19%). There were 86 girls arrested in Broward County Schools, grades 6-12, for the 2016 - 2017 school year. Black girls were arrested at a significantly higher rate (77%) in comparison to their white counterparts (12%). (Delinquency in Florida Schools Report, FL DJJ)

Although girls are the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population, they account for a very small share of juvenile arrests for violent crimes. In Florida, as well as Broward County, girls are more likely to be arrested for assault or battery. In Broward, Black girls are disproportionately arrested for assault, battery, and disorderly conduct. Girls, particularly girls of color, are arrested and detained for intra-family in-home assaults (domestic violence) at disproportionately higher rates compared to their overall share of the juvenile justice system.

According to the Detention Utilization Study for Broward County (June 2015), 40% of the youth were admitted to secured detention because of court orders and technical violations. A report obtained by FL DJJ Office of Research indicates that 30% (n=6,088) of the girls statewide and 41% (n=393) in Broward County are detained for failure to appear in court or absconding. As a direct result of this finding, there is a group of youth and adults in Broward County involved in a collaborative, community-based effort to understand and share the lived experiences of youth, raise awareness, create resources and make recommendations for expanding utilization of Broward County's Failure to Appear Program to supports efforts in decreasing the number of total youth detained for missing court.

Are our girls being pushed into a court system due to their victimization? Are women later being incarcerated in jail because we, as a system, never effectively addressed their trauma? This is why Girls Court was established. Together, with our Girls Court partner, the Pace Center for Girls, and other community providers, we try to address and underlying trauma which may contribute to maladaptive behaviors.

— Judge Stacy Ross



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: **GIRLS COURT** **BROWARD COUNTY COURT - 17TH JUDICIAL** **CIRCUIT COURT**

Girls Court is open to all girls in Broward County's juvenile justice system. The purpose of this specialized court is to offer gender-responsive and strength-based services while ensuring due process. The goal is to decrease the girls' deeper involvement with the juvenile and adult court systems while addressing the trauma and victimization that typically lead them into the system. Female juveniles already assigned to Judge Stacy Ross are automatically set on the Girls Court docket. Girls in the other juvenile courtrooms may participate upon stipulation of the parties. Other relevant factors addressed are education, chronic runaway status, domestic minor sex trafficking, pregnancy, drug use, and poverty. Girls Court is made possible through partnerships between the 17th Judicial Circuit Court, the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), the State Attorney's Office, the Public Defender's Office, voluntary service providers, the School Board, and others in the Broward community.



SUCCESS STORY



“Being young and immature can be challenging. Not having anyone to support you, not having a solid foundation can be an emotional burden. Living in the projects has taught me a million different things. I started to roam the streets at 15 and eventually learned that what and who you surround yourself with impacts you a lot. In middle school, I felt vulnerable, I felt that there was no control or structure. I would have to fight almost every week just to defend myself, and over the years things got worse. I learned inappropriate sexual behaviors too early. Sometimes I think to myself, if I grew up rich and in a different environment, would my life have been different? Maybe I wouldn’t

even know what sex is at the age of 18. When I started the Diversion program (New DAY) at Pace, I didn’t really enjoy it because I was so angry, but I did not have a choice at 16.

I was interested in doing counseling, it made me feel open about what I wanted to do in life, about where I see myself 10 years from now. New DAY taught me peace and to stay away from drama and violent situations, I really understand what the court system means, I was happy to be a part of the program because it gave me another chance to turn my life around. New DAY also helped me so much that I’ve had two charges expunged. I found that through counseling sometimes you don’t want to talk to your homegirl and homeboy because information travels from one ear to another and then next thing you know your business is out, so talking to a counselor can be cool. Since it’s confidential, they won’t share the information with others.

At 16, I started to see things more clearly. I got enrolled into the Pace-Healthy Youth Transitions (HYT) program. Counselors were able to get the resources me and my family needed. I do not think a lot of girls know about the resources they can find at Pace, but all you have to do is talk to your mentor about your problems and they’ll be on the job for sure. I would attend field trips, I would also attend family night gatherings, cookouts and enrichment night, which is my favorite. These strong women helped a young woman to become powerful woman. When you have a vision, you must put effort and hard work to create something solid that no one can ever break. It’s my goal to be an entrepreneur, starting a YouTube channel to network my talent and owning property by the age of 30. When making your vision a reality, you will experience many downs, but the best part is celebrating wins.”

— **Jessica I.**



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: **NEW DAY DIVERSION PROGRAM**

Funded By: **Children's Services Council of Broward County**

New DAY programs incorporate family support services, counseling, youth development activities, community service and restitution to divert low-risk juvenile offenders from the delinquency system and reduce recidivism. Programs provide highly-structured civil citation and diversion alternatives to protect public safety and decrease the likelihood of re-offending. Youth must be referred through the Juvenile Division of the State Attorney's Office Circuit 17. Civil citation referrals must be referred through the Office of Justice Services Juvenile Civil Citation. Additionally, PROMISE⁴ eligible youth may be referred for Restorative Justice Conferencing and follow-up support services.



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: **HEALTHY YOUTH TRANSITION (HYT)**

Funded By: **Children's Services Council of Broward County**

HYT's county-wide programs provide holistic life coaching and counseling services, using the Transition to Independence Process⁵ to promote the development of life skills, academic and employability skills to help youth transition successfully into healthy, young adults. In collaboration with The Jim Moran Foundation, these CSC-funded programs work with dependent youth aging out of formal or informal foster care, youth with delinquency involvement and/or lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning (LGBTQ) youth. The HYT programs offer hands-on activities that address the social, emotional and behavioral needs of youth and help them to connect to appropriate resources in the community.

Before Girls Court, I had given up. I was alone in life. Meeting my judge sort of gave me a fresh start She didn't know all the mistakes I made. My judge believed in me when no one else did, including my dad. When someone is in your corner, you feel stronger. Judge Ross taught me that I have value, a voice and a future.

– Leah T., Girls Court Participant

⁴ PROMISE Program:

⁵ Transition to Independence Process (TIP) Model: <http://www.tipstars.org/>

PHYSICAL HEALTH



The physical health of girls in Broward includes physical safety, access to preventative health care and ACEs. ACEs within the physical domain, such as abuse, trauma and neglect, can negatively impact health in adulthood and may contribute to shorter life expectancies. Physical safety includes the girls' experiences with living in transition (homelessness), unaddressed health-related concerns, unmet basic needs, threats to physical safety (e.g. girls residing in unsafe neighborhoods), substance use, physical abuse, neglect and trauma, all of which can negatively impact daily functioning, academic performance and social-emotional development, and reduce long-term achievement, success and overall wellbeing.

Victims of child abuse or neglect are much more likely to suffer from a myriad of problems such as impaired brain development, poor physical health, poor mental and emotional health, cognitive difficulties, juvenile delinquency and adult criminality, substance abuse, and repeating the cycle of abusive parenting (Richmond-Crum et al 2013; USDHHS, 2012). In the last two years, Broward and the state of Florida have seen overall a decrease in the number of children ages 5 - 11 experiencing child abuse (Florida Charts). While we were unable to disaggregate the report by gender, we do know that girls who have experienced ACEs and threats to physical safety, are more likely to have co-occurring disorders, particularly depression, and experience other negative psychological and physical outcomes, including self-harm, participation in risky sexual behaviors and substance use. Trauma may also result from girls' experiences with living in transition (homelessness), as it impacts physical safety and well-being. There is an increased likelihood of resorting to unhealthy strategies for resolving conflicts (physical and relational aggression) and regulating emotions (drug and alcohol use), all of which may increase the risk of girls' involvement in the juvenile justice system. Girls with traumatic experiences may subsequently display symptomatic behaviors that are associated with legal involvement based on their aggression, truancy and substance use.

In Broward County, residents spend the majority of their income on housing. Broward has the 2nd highest housing costs in Florida (National Low-Income Housing Coalition NLIHC), requiring wages of \$25.13 per hour an annual income of \$52,280 annual income to meet adequate housing needs. The median hourly wage in Broward is \$16.93 per hour or \$35,219 per year.

More than 80% of the total population of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Broward County are Black or Hispanic.

Many of our youth have a history of living in transition (currently experiencing or having experienced homelessness). According to the 2018 Point in Time (PIT)⁶ count for Broward County, there were approximately 303 children under the age of 18 identified as being either sheltered (living sheltered in an emergency, transitional, safe haven housing) or unsheltered. For the 2017 - 2018 school year, there were approximately 4,931 students identified in Broward County Public Schools who were living in transition. These students represent 1.8% of the total BCPS student population, 53% percent of which are Black. A little over half (2,468) are girls.



Racial inequity within the physical domain of girls' development can be seen in access rates to health care services, obesity and other health-related concerns as girls of color often demonstrate higher rates of risk in comparison to white counterparts. As a system of care in Broward County, these disparities must inform practice and program development to address unmet needs and close gaps to ensure equitable opportunities for our girls to thrive. The percentage of children aged 0 - 17 in Broward without health insurance has been on the decline since 2013 when 13% were without. As of 2016, 9.8% of children aged 0 - 17 were without health insurance.

⁶ A **Point-in-Time (PIT)** count is a statistically reliable count of people experiencing homelessness during a 24-hour period within the last 10 days of January. The count includes both sheltered homeless (those living in emergency shelters or transitional housing) and unsheltered homeless (those living in places deemed not suitable for human habitation).

Website: <http://www.browardpointintime.org/publications>

Overall, fewer children are engaging in regular physical activity which may be the result of increased time spent on electronic devices, parents' work schedules, families living in unsafe neighborhoods and household financial stressors. Decreased physical activity has potential physical and emotional health related consequences. In 2017, one-third of all high school girls in Broward County reported not being physically active for at least 60 minutes on at least one day a week. The percentage of girls reporting they are not physically active is above the U.S. (20%) and Florida (28%) rates. This trend has been consistent across the past three years. In 2017, physical inactivity was reported at higher rates for Black girls (34%) than their white (25%) and Latina (24%) counterparts. Overall, the prevalence of obesity for girls is lower in Florida and Broward County when compared with the U.S. in 2017, Broward County, prevalence rates for obesity among Black girls (10%) and white girls (9%) were higher than the rate for Hispanic girls (4%).



Rates of alcohol and marijuana use from 2007 to 2017 demonstrate that girls in high school report decreased use of alcohol and increased rates of marijuana use. This data is reflective of trends observed at the state and national levels. Nationally, the U.S. has experienced a trend in the decline of alcohol consumption among teenagers. In 2007, 76% of the high school girls in the U.S. reported ever drinking alcohol compared with 65% in 2017. In Broward County and Florida, high school girls have consistently reduced their binge drinking behavior during the last seven years. In 2017, the prevalence for binge drinking among girls in Florida and Broward County (13%) was slightly lower than the U.S. (14%).

Nationally, there has been an increase in the rates of high school girls reporting marijuana use. Ten years ago, 17% of high school girls reported ever using marijuana compared with 36% in 2017. In Broward County, this trend is reflected with a 9% increase in high school girls reporting trying marijuana from 2007 to 2017. In 2017, Latino girls in grades 9th - 12th reported using marijuana at a higher rate than white or Black girls of the same age group (CDC-Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data).



SUCCESS STORY



'When identity thieves stole the remnants of her family's savings, Gabriella was hurt to see how distraught her parents were. They tried their hardest to conceal their worries, but she saw past their facades. Struggling to survive at the hands of selfish money lenders, her family struggled to keep afloat while on the brink of eviction from their unfurnished one-bedroom apartment. Facing such adversity when she moved to the U.S. at 13 to escape a society plagued by gang violence and frequent murders, Gabriella's home situation only added to the bullying she endured because of her unique accent and lack of clothing and school supplies. Nonetheless, Gabriella's resilience prevailed.

With the help of **United Way's Broward Youth Coalition (BYC)**, she was able to find solace among like-minded youth with a passion for helping other students in similar situations as hers, and raising awareness for the various resources available for the youth to aid with mental health and curtail substance abuse. Since joining BYC, Gabriella has blossomed into a strong community advocate whose vehemence for empowering the youth is evident. She used her family's sad experience with money lenders to fuel her interest in the business/accounting realm, which culminated in her assuming the Fundraising President and Treasurer role in BYC and her school's Mentoring Tomorrow's Leaders Program, as well as founding the **HOPE Club** to help end mental health/suicide stigmatization.

Gabriella is a vivacious, strong-willed, team player who hopes to utilize her education at Princeton University to better the world's social climate through Business or Law. She hopes to launch her own non-profit to continue empowering local youth, particularly minorities, through educational assistance and mentorship to ensure that every student knows that they can achieve ANYTHING they put their mind to.'

— **Gabriella C**



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: SCHOOL HEALTH

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS), Children's Services Council of Broward (CSC), and the Florida Department of Health in Broward County partner to fund a tri-party initiative, Differentiated Staffing model for School-based Health Services, available for students attending Broward County Public Schools. CSC funds Health Service Technicians supervised by Registered Nurses (RNs) at schools with students with moderate levels of medical need. BCPS provides RNs at highest need schools and the Health Department provides on-call RNs accessibility for lower-need schools. The Health Service Technicians are able to guide and help the students with their medical conditions, teach them to make good choices in accordance to their dietary needs, and aid them in becoming more independent in caring for themselves and their diagnosis. For the fiscal year 2016 - 2017, 45 schools provided 132,060 visits to students (duplicated) and served 6,684 students in total.



SUCCESS STORY



"I was in desperate financial need most of my life due to not having stable housing. My dad was often unemployed or barely earning enough for us to have our own home. This led to us often renting rooms with strangers to make ends meet. This reality affected my performance in school, my sleep, my ability to focus and so on. Growing up, going home was the last thing I looked forward to.

One Halloween night in the 7th grade, after I came home from trick or treating, I found the cops telling us we had to leave then and there with our belongings because my dad received an eviction after he couldn't pay the rent. My dad was desperate, but we managed to find somewhere we could crash with a neighbor, who let us stay for 3 more months. At school, in my senior year of high school, I learned about the H.E.A.R.T. program that offers resources and assistance to students like me. Senior year was one of the toughest years for me, since I was living away from my dad, had to deal with college applications, tests etc. I couldn't have done it without the help and resources from the H.E.A.R.T. program, my mentors, teachers, school counselor, advisers and many other wonderful people.

These people pushed me when things were especially difficult and give me the resources I needed to succeed. H.E.A.R.T was there even after I graduated to help me gain resources to be financially stable. Thanks to them, I was able to get in the H.O.M.E.S. Inc. transitional living program, that offers subsidized housing, life coaches and other resources to help other youth to be self-sufficient."

— **Caroline S.**



SUCCESS STORY

Molayo has a history of homelessness. She has lived in her car with her family for months, then moved to a shelter and back to living in a car and then living with church members then a hotel and then to transitional housing. Despite these obstacles and despite the father abandoning the family Molayo has received A's in school and in August 2018 will be attending Nova Southeastern University. Molayo was also employed at a department store during this time.

— **Molayo S.**



PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: **HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM (H.E.A.R.T.) BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**



The Homeless Education Program (H.E.A.R.T.)⁷ housed at Broward County Public Schools provides services for students who are enrolled in either charter or public schools who have a history of living in transition (experiencing homelessness). Students eligible for HEART services under the McKinney-Vento Law are categorically eligible for free school meals. For the 2017 - 2018 school year there were approximately 4,931 students identified. A number that was almost 80% higher than previous years. Over 50% of those students identified were students in elementary schools and an alarming 2,621 were Black. When it came to gender, males and females were evenly split. The **Homeless Education Program** provides eligible families and youth with school supplies and uniforms, helps with the coordination of transportation to school (certain rules apply), provides referrals to school and community services (e.g. school social worker, family counseling, medical, dental and mental health referrals etc.). Eligible youth and families also can receive after school care services (K-8th) and participate in summer camp opportunities. When students get ready to graduate from high school, the H.E.A.R.T. program can also assist students with cap and gown rental at no cost and verification letters needed to apply for college and the FAFSA (Free Application for Student Aid).

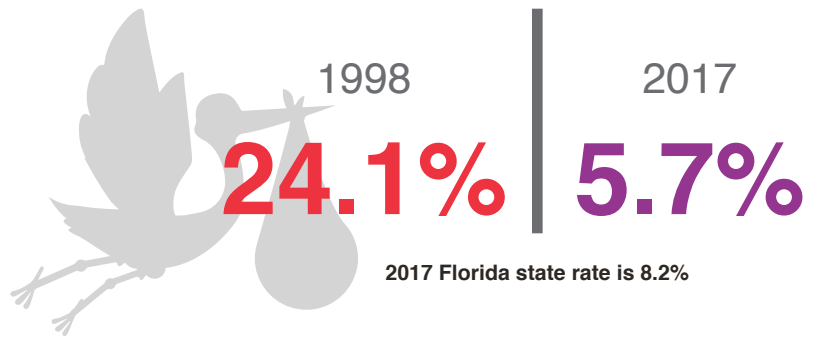
⁷ Website: <http://browardstudentservices.com/homeless-education/help-starts-here-homeless-education/>

SEXUAL HEALTH

The sexual health status of girls includes their sexual development and the building of healthy relationships. Girls' sexual development is not only affected by brain development but largely impacted by social and psychological processes. These processes are often influenced by external factors, including family, peers, cultural and religious institutions, gender bias, the entertainment industry and social media. Additionally, girls' sexual development is impacted from experiences with trauma, abuse, neglect and other ACEs.

In supporting girls' sexual development, it is important to provide safe opportunities for them to learn and have honest and informative conversations that support understanding the biological aspects of female development and sexual health; learning healthy relationship skills and boundaries; understanding safety; consent and freedom from unwanted sexual activity; developing self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-love; developing values and understanding the distinction between sex and love.

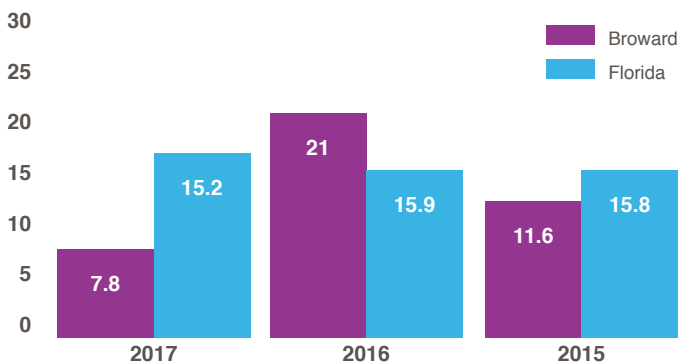
Teen Pregnancy Rate in Broward is Down



Supportive relationships with trusted adults, a sense of physical safety, access to accurate information on female sexual development, preventative healthcare services, sexual health programming, and participation in youth serving agencies, serve as protective factors within the sexual domain of girls' healthy development. As a community, we must recognize gender bias, stereotypical messaging and systemic factors that impact the healthy sexual development of girls and identify gaps in service and programming to improve how we holistically serve and support girls' development.

Related to girls reporting sexual activity at the national level we see an 8% decrease; in the U.S., in 2007 46% of girls reported being sexually active compared with 38% in 2017. This trend is reflected in Broward County, where the number of sexually active girls decreased from 44% in 2007 to 32% in 2017. The percentage of teenage girls giving birth in Florida and Broward is lower than that of the U.S. For every 1,000 teenage girls, 18 give birth in Broward and 27 give birth in the U.S. When examining rates of teenage repeat births, data shows that in mothers ages 15 - 19 it has decreased significantly since 2016 but the birth to new mothers ages 15 - 19 per 1,000 population has remained constant in Broward at approximately 13% over the last two years. Black teenage girls ages 13 to 19 are twice as likely to be a teen mom compared to white girls. The rate of teen pregnancy is 6.2% for Latinas, which is still significantly lower than the state rate and that of white teen girls in Broward which is 4% (Florida Charts).

Lower Repeat Birth to Mothers Age 15-19 (%) in Broward County



EDUCATIONAL / VOCATIONAL



Providing equitable opportunities for girls to thrive academically requires a more in-depth look into what it takes for girls to achieve success in their education, that will positively impact communities local and beyond. Girls must feel safe in learning environments that are trauma-informed, strength-based and supportive in completing all levels of education. They must be supported in building social-emotional and relational skills and invaluable life skills in anticipation of navigating adulthood. Experiences within the educational domain of girls development that foster creativity, support them in finding their voice and promote relationship building with positive role models and peers will support girls academic success and provide opportunities for girls to feel good about their strengths. These factors increase the likelihood of success in determining their own futures and contributing to the communities in which they reside and in the world at large. Girls who are better educated will have higher income levels, better overall health, marry later in life, have more effective family planning and can secure quality health care services and education for their own children.

Broward County Public Schools (BCPS)⁸ is the sixth largest school district in the nation and the second largest district in Florida. There are 324 schools in BCPS--including 93 charter schools and 17 adult centers--currently serving 271, 517 students. Students in BCPS hail from over 200 different countries and speak 191 different languages. Over 40% of the student population is Black with the largest population being white. The number of Latino students enrolled in BCPS has increased in the last few years, with over 30% of students indicating that they are ethnically Latino. Approximately 63% of the students are on free or reduced lunch. English Language Learners make up 12% of the students who attend BCPS and approximately 12% are ESE students. Girls in BCPS makeup 49% of the student population.

⁸ Broward County Public Schools Data (Demographics & School Enrollment Department) Retrieved from: <https://www.browardschools.com/Page/37551>

In 2017, Girls in high school and middle school in Broward County and Florida reported feeling safer and reported lower percentages of bullying in school as compared with overall national numbers. There were 10% more white girls who reported feeling unsafe in school as compared to Latina or Black girls. Independent of ethnicity, girls are bullied less than boys at school in Broward County. White girls are also more likely to report being bullied in school than Latina or Black girls. In 2017, 20% of white girls reported having been bullied in school. Girls in Broward County report electronic bullying less often than in other parts of the U.S., however percentages for electronic bullying are higher than those of the state. Overall, girls are electronically bullied more often than boys (7%) and when considering ethnicity, white girls report electronic bullying at higher rates than Black or Latina girls. Nationally there has been a decrease in the high school dropout rate of girls, from 8% in 2007 to 5% in 2016. With a 2% dropout rate in Broward County, girls are staying in school and graduating from high school in increased numbers. In addition, the proportion of girls graduating from high school was 10% higher in Broward County than nationwide and equivalent to that of the rest of the state. Jobs in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) are among the fastest growing and highest paying. Women, however, make up only about 30% of STEAM fields. Investing in our girls by understanding what they can bring to STEAM fields will support a diversified workforce, expand leadership, increase innovation and promote organizational effectiveness and financial health. Educational initiatives that engage girls in STEAM studies and soft skills will create a movement for development and innovation.



In 2017, 20% of white girls reported having been bullied in school. Girls in Broward County report electronic bullying less often than in other parts of the U.S., but higher than in the state. Girls are electronically bullied more than boys (7%) while white girls report electronic bullying at higher rates than Black or Latina girls.

White girls report electronic bullying at higher rates than Black or Hispanic girls.



Nationally there has been a decrease in the high school dropout rate of girls, from 8% in 2007 to 5% in 2016. With a 2% dropout rate in Broward County, girls are staying in school and graduating from high school in increased numbers. In addition, the proportion of girls graduating from high school was 10% higher in Broward County than nationwide and equivalent to that of the rest of the state.



SUCCESS STORY



“Girls are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing. Sometimes they have more imagination than men.” *Katherine Johnson* Every girl has a story, but Jayda W.’s success has been no easy journey. As a member of Black Girls Code Miami, SECME, Word Camp Miami, Manatee Bay Elementary’s Robotics Team, and a featured chess player with the Broward County Mayors Chess Challenge, she has not allowed her medical or personal challenges to define her. Jayda is determined to become the face of STEM for young girls representing her Caribbean-American heritage.

Despite being born prematurely, a diagnosis with severe asthma at age 1, auditory challenges, a major surgery at age 5, and severe food allergies, Jayda has maintained a positive and determined mindset to become one of the youngest speakers at Word Camp Miami, featured in 5 South Florida publications including Legacy Magazine South Florida. These achievements and more would not have been possible without the support of **Broward County Public Schools**, Memorial Health and Broward Healthcare professionals who regularly treat her and provide continued strategies to enable her to perform and meet her academic goals. As a community servant, Jayda has given over 200 volunteer hours to her church and the community since kindergarten including Dare to Care (an outreach of The Faith Center Ministries), HandsOn Broward, Breast Cancer and Relay for Life events just to name a few. Jayda’s future goals include attending a university to become a software engineer and a pastor.

— **Jayda W.**



SUCCESS STORY



Yavasia moved to Broward County when she was 3 years old. She lived with her mother and two sisters. Yavasia was very smart, kind, and a great all-around kid. Her older sister was beginning to engage in risky behaviors when her mother heard about **Pace Center** for Girls. Yavasia and her sister attended Pace in 2004-2005. Yavasia started at the elementary school program at Pace. Some staff members took a greater interest in her and got to know a little about her home life. Like most girls, when Yavasia started maturing and getting to her preteen years, her moods and attitude began changing.

Even though her mother didn't notice, her Pace counselor Karyn Diyeso noticed that Yavasia had dealt with something that scared her. Something that she thought would make her be all alone and different. Ms. Karyn helped her get her strength back. Even though Yavasia didn't seem to be interested in her education, Ms. Karyn challenged her to press on. At 16, she earned her General Education Degree (GED). She also received her certification as Home Health Aide (HHA) and is currently studying to become a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA). She also has a beautiful 2-year-old child and a loving fiancé. She says she is most grateful for Pace Center for Girls: "If it wasn't for that school, I don't know where I would be right now."

— **Yavasia W.**



SUCCESS STORY



"In my junior and senior years in high school, I was the President of my school's Gay Straight Alliance (GSA). At the end of 2017, my school's GSA was selected to host the Broward County LGBT summit. As the president, I had a lot of input in the creation of the agenda. On my request, we designed a forum-type panel with myself and other LGBTQ people of color to talk about our experiences with the intersectionality of racism on homophobia and transphobia. It was a lot of fun, and unlike previous experiences I had had with past Broward LGBT summits, when I felt like there was no outlet to talk about how homophobia affects me specifically as a Chinese person. The diversity panel was very well received, and upwards of twenty other students

approached me later to thank me for starting the conversation of racism in LGBT spaces. During the open panel discussion, several people talked about how much they loved the summit and how safe it felt. Running the summit definitely was not a one-person effort: the whole GSA did a lot of work in preparation, especially our teacher and the person in charge of the summit, Kezia. It was an amazing opportunity to reach out to others and create a safe space for other LGBT teens.

— **Mads**

■ SPIRITUAL WELL-BEING

Supporting girls' holistic development includes understanding the impact of spirituality as a protective factor for girls. Spiritual development, whether through religious, humanistic, nature-based or cosmic experiences and connection, supports connectedness and belongingness. When girls are provided opportunities to learn, create partnerships, engage in prosocial behavior and give back to their communities, they build their self-esteem, self-confidence and network of natural supports. When supporting girls, their spiritual development is often not as explored as other developmental domains. As a community, we must look within our system of care and identify areas of opportunity for our girls to experience a sense of connectedness and belongingness. It is important we support girls with approaches and opportunities that foster development of their spiritual domain.



SUCCESS STORY



Alajah is an extraordinary youth with an amazing talent and personality. Despite experiencing trauma at an early age at the hands of her mom's boyfriend, Alajah pushed on and continued to inspire others to do their best. She used prayer to overcome the domestic abuse that was a constant daily struggle in her life. Even with Alajah's past challenges, she used singing, playing the violin, and modeling as an outlet to continue to be a successful middle school student. Alajah has become strong by modeling because modeling showed her that no matter what's going on or what happens she will always make it through her ups and downs.

Alajah has a big future ahead of herself. She wants to become an Entrepreneur. Alajah wants to start "Girls with Dreams," a modeling agency for youth who also experienced trauma growing up, and help them get a better start on pursuing their dreams. With the support of her dad and family members Alajah believes she can accomplish anything she sets her mind to. She plans to save her money and put in a lot of hard work to make her business successful. Alajah says her business will be successful because she will always show compassion and make sure she has an awesome team.

— Alajah M.



SUCCESS STORY



“Freida Pinto once said, ‘All people - African, European, and American - worry about being different’. But I’ve learned that the traits we would rush to get rid of are the very ones that others desire. People always covet what they don’t have. That’s why I believe we should look at ourselves every now and then and say, ‘I’m proud of myself, and I like the way I’m made.’ Truly, that sense of pride can start with me because being the captain of my cheer squad and co-business owner of a dance team allows me to make a difference. I am an ideal role model and leader to my teammates and students. I tap into my social and solution skills, whether it’s guiding a teammate to fulfill their full potential

or expressing sisterhood. My story begins in primary school, where I was always bullied because of my dark complexion and ‘crazy’ fashion. My mother discovered a change in my attitude. When I came home, I wouldn’t talk and I started to get into trouble at school. I started to cut my wrists and cry myself to sleep every night. The cuts got so bad that I was rushed to the emergency room from losing too much blood. I found my refuge in Aviation, God, and hobbies. Because of my talents in cheerleading and dance, I have traveled the world. My bubbly personality and fashion sense, caused peers to believe that “I am too girly” to know how to make a drone or become an Aeronautical Engineer. Still, I have chosen to attend the University of Hawaii to study Aviation.”

— **Hermeshia T.**



SUCCESS STORY



Bella was born in Jupiter, Florida on a small farm. She is very smart and loves animals. She is always coming up with new ideas and aims for great achievements. Bella is very respectful and loves helping other club members. She has an eye for art and a great personality. She demonstrates her leadership skills by taking the leadership role during youth projects. Bella is the **Boys & Girls Club of Broward’s Torch Club** president and takes pride in helping her community. She won the Torch Club President Award at the 2018 Leadership Conference. She also takes pride in keeping her school safe as a School Safety Patrol. Bella’s very determined to make the community a safe and eco-friendly environment. She has organized youth fundraisers and community clean-up days.

At The Boys and Girls Club Torch Club meetings, she’s always on task and very helpful. Bella works hard to be a positive role model, has a positive outlook on life, and knows when it’s time to just be a leader. In the future, Bella wants to expand her talents and become a Culinary Pastry Chef.

— **Bella F.**

BROWARD COUNTY INITIATIVES TO SUPPORT GIRLS



CO-CREATING RACIAL EQUITY IN BROWARD

Broward County Human Services Department, Broward County Public Schools, Children's Services Council of Broward and the Florida Department of Health in Broward have a commitment to co-creating racial equity in life outcomes for Broward's children and families. Due to local historical and ongoing structural inequities in access, opportunities and treatment along with high rates of racial residential segregation, children of color in our community without the proper and necessary supports are not achieving and developing their fullest potential. The commitment of the above four anchor institutions to educate staff and community members about how racism is created and maintained is generating rich solutions and innovations to ensure all of our children develop their gifts and contributions to improving our communities including improved graduation, health and safely outcomes for girls of color.

GIRLS CIRCLES AT BROWARD COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

Pace Center for Girls began implementing Girls Circles in the Broward County Juvenile Detention Center to provide a structured group that is gender-responsive, trauma-informed, and strength-based in supporting the needs of girls and young women in detainment. The groups are relational focused, build resiliency and offer skills training. Girls are given opportunities to use their voice and share with other girls their lived experiences as well as engage in self-reflection and discuss future goals. Upon release from the detention center, girls are provided with resources and linkages to community providers and wraparound care. Pace Center for Girls continues to build partnerships and bring awareness to the unique developmental needs of girls through the weekly facilitation of Girls Circles in the detention center.

■ STOP TRAFFICKING AND RESCUE SURVIVORS (STARS)

STARS is solely focused on the juvenile aspects of human trafficking. The STARS committee has actively been working to identify gaps in service provision and work to ensure that there are points of contacts that will work together to enhance service provision to juvenile victims. The STARS Committee is being recognized as a leader in the development of policy and positive adaptive change for juveniles. The efforts undertaken are to address the systems for those youth who are identified as either domestically or internationally trafficked. This Committee works diligently to collaborate and coordinate responses within agencies in Broward County to issues such as Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking.



■ COMMUNITY ACTION PROJECTS

To help agencies understand the lived experiences of youth from the Broward Child Welfare, Behavioral Health, and Juvenile Justice Systems, the Children's Services Council of Broward provided backbone support to inquiry projects led by youth and service providers. Three of those inquiry projects are described below:

Second Chance Project

Collaborative, community-based effort to share the lived experiences of youth, raise awareness, create resources and make recommendations for expanding utilization of Broward County's Failure to Appear Program aimed at reducing detainment rates for youth who miss court by providing a Second Chance.

Child Welfare - Group Homes Project

This project's purpose was to better understand the experiences of foster care youth who had lived in group homes throughout Broward. The project helped bring light to the youth experiences and brought forth recommendations to the community on how to improve group homes throughout Broward.

Destigmatizing Behavioral Health Project

The purpose of this adult-youth partnership was to identify what behavioral health services young adults and their families knew were available in Broward. From this project, recommendations were made to educate the community of health/substance abuse and the behavioral health services that were valuable to youth and their families.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE COMMUNITY

The Girls Coordinating Council of Broward County has created a platform for the community to come together and share information, data, training and research-based best practices for gender-responsive approaches to help sustain a system of care and community that allows girls birth - 22 years to thrive. As we move forward as a community we hope that the community will continue to:

- ✔ Increase use of gender-responsive, trauma informed, trauma focused, strength-based and holistic programming tailored to meet the unique developmental needs of girls.
- ✔ Create funding opportunities with a gender focus that drives program development and service delivery.
- ✔ Enhance the system of care to provide opportunities for community connectedness and experiences that foster the positive and holistic development of girls.

Considerations for Broward County:

- Consistent use of trauma-informed and strength-based care and approaches.
- Understand the prevalence of trauma and adverse childhood experiences and the impact this has on girls' development across all domains.
- Foster and support girls' healthy relationship development – mentoring, advocacy, collaboration, and consistency within systems of support; strengthen natural supports (both formal and informal), provide opportunities for girls to engage in prosocial behavior and connect with their community.
- Work with the Broward County Comprehensive School Health Advisory Committee to create innovative ways to promote healthy food choices in public schools that specifically targets girls; provide opportunities that promote exercise/physical activity.
- Create economic equity by providing girls with college, vocational and career readiness by increasing girls' access to apprenticeships, employability skills building, and training.
- Understand racial inequity and disparities when examining the intersectionality of data pertaining to girls across all systems of care and use this to better inform program development and best practice models for supporting girls' development
- Create linkages with gender-responsive programs and support services upon release from detention, during pre-disposition and upon initial contact with the Juvenile Justice System.
- Use Restorative Justice practices to reconnect girls, families, communities, and stakeholders by fostering vital connections and understanding that meets the needs of girls.
- Support the creation and expansion of programs that use gender-responsive and evidence-based curricula like Girls Circle curriculum and Mother-Daughter curriculum.
- Strengthening the existing Girls Court model and consider creating a Domestic Violence Court to address the unique needs of girls who are arrested and charged for intra-family violence.
- Disaggregate data for community conditions e.g. abuse, living in transition (homelessness).



Dear Friends,

As a mother of two daughters and leader of Pace Center for Girls Broward for the past 26 years, I have had the privilege and honor to meet many strong, resilient, intelligent and loving girls and young women. Regardless of their uniqueness and circumstances, the same holds true - their spirits are filled with hope and their voices deserve to be heard.

The time has come to have an honest conversation regarding what is happening to our girls, to understand what has been done and what needs to be done to help them thrive and achieve success in the 21st Century. Issues on health, emotional wellness, education, workforce opportunities and gender-responsive approaches are essential in creating an equitable platform, so girls may aspire to reach their fullest potential and aspirations.

Realizing that trauma, gender bias, exploitation, violence, and lack of equitable opportunities can stifle the progress of our girls, we need to continue joining together to uncover and analyze the challenges facing our girls. The stories in the report are real and hopefully solicit a conversation for positive, forward moving action.

This inaugural report is intended to create awareness and a movement for girls. We hope that this is not just a short conversation but the start for us to come together to hold honest conversations regarding the status, challenges and opportunities for our girls.

Many thanks to the members of the Girls Coordinating Council of Broward County, for their hard work and dedication in helping to promote and improve the status of girls and young women. Your contribution and relevant conversations on the significance for gender-responsive programming and equitability for all will not only have a positive impact for today's girls but for generations to come.

Sincerely,

Aggie Pappas

Aggie Pappas, MSW
Regional Executive Director /South Florida Region
Pace Center for Girls, Inc.



AGENCIES

Boys and Girls Club of Broward County
Broward County Court – 17th Judicial Circuit Court
Broward County Public Schools
Children's Services Council of Broward County
Faith Center Ministries
Healing Arts Institute of SFL International, Inc.
Memorial Healthcare Systems
Pace Center for Girls
United Way of Broward County

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