



# The Girls' Advocate

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Girls Speak Out for Themselves!

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## *Girls Voices are Heard at the State Capitol* by Laura Eccles

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For more information about *The Girls' Advocate* or to become a member of the **Coalition of Advocates for Equal Access for Girls**, contact Pam Patton at 503.233.4356

*Help us be a voice for girls and girls' needs in Oregon!*

Editing, design and layout by:  
Laura Eccles



*Girls rally together on Capitol Steps and talk with Sen. Kate Brown and Rep. Diane Rosenbaum.*

On March 23rd, over 100 girls and their adult supporters convened at the Oregon State Capitol for *Girls' Day at the State Legislature*. This event was coordinated by the Girls' Initiative Network and co-sponsored with the Coalition. Girls came from various locations in the Portland metro area as well as from Eugene, Salem and Albany. All of the girls went on a guided tour of the Capitol and observed the Senate and House in floor session. They all participated in an advocacy workshop led by Jeannie LaFrance of Act for Action, where they learned about how a bill becomes a law and most significantly how girls can use their personal experiences to advocate for issues that are important to them. The girls also got the chance to meet with Erinn Kelley-Siel, the Governor's Policy Advisor on Health and Human Services in the Governor's ceremonial office, who spoke with them about how essential it is for young women to get involved in leadership roles to impact our state and country for the better. A really exciting thing happened with the first tour group, they got the opportunity to meet the Governor (who was supposed to be in a helicopter checking out the drought areas but was grounded by weather) and ask him questions about his role and duties as Governor. Girls left the meeting feeling inspired and energized that the Governor and Erinn Kelley-Siel were so eager to answer their questions and encouraging to them as future leaders.

The day concluded with small groups meeting with

**"The Legislators listened to us!"**

**"I learned that our governor isn't that different from us, he was in foster care too."**

their specific legislators to bring girl's issues to the table. One group of young women from a Coalition member program met with Senator Gordly's chief of staff, Sean and talked to him about the importance of comprehensive services for girls involved in the juvenile justice system. Another group of young women from a member program were able to give real examples to a legislator and his staff about their experiences in the foster care system and specific suggestions for improving services.

All in all it was a great day for the girls and an amazing opportunity for them to not only use their voices, but to be heard. Powerful girls using their voices to make real changes!



*Girls meet with Governor Kulongoski and Erinn Kelley-Siel, Health and Human Services Policy Advisor.*

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# Coalition's Annual Meeting Honors Gary Weeks and DHS

by Pam Patton, President

On January 26th, at the 2005 Eighth Annual Meeting of the Coalition as (and our 13<sup>th</sup> year as an organization) a vital group of our members gathered together in Salem to review the successes and challenges of 2004 and to set our goals for 2005. Our Keynote speakers this year were Craig Campbell, the Governor's Policy Advisor on Public Safety and Bob Jester, Director of OYA. They set the stage for the focus of our work for 2005 - *young women in juvenile justice*. We also took this opportunity to recognize a special guest, **Gary Weeks, Director of the Department of Human Services**. Gary has a history with the Coalition, in that while in his first run as DHS Director he was instrumental in the establishment of the "DHS Gender Appropriate Services for Youth Committee". And now, after six years and a couple of Directors later, Gary is back at the helm and gets to complete this circle he started by signing into policy and implementing the department-wide **DHS Policy on Gender-Specific Services for Children and Youth**. It must be noted that Oregon is the only state in the nation whose Department of Human Services has a gender-specific services policy, again Oregon providing leadership for the nation. It was the Coalition's honor to recognize Gary Weeks with a framed certificate designed and donated by Jean Lasater, Coalition Board member. The certificate stated: *"The surest way to advocate is to see through another's eyes and change your behavior forever, in response."*



*We are sad to say that on April 5th Gary Weeks announced that he has accepted the director position at the Washington State Department of Labor and Industries in Olympia, Washington. Even with Gary's departure in June, his signing of gender-specific services for children and youth into DHS Policy has set the foundation for it's implementation.*

## 2005 Regional Meeting Focuses on Latina Girls in Marion County

On February 28, 2005 forty committed and passionate advocates from the Salem and Woodburn school districts (with Oregon's largest number of Hispanic students) came to the Coalition and the Marion County Department of Children and Families co-sponsored Regional Meeting. Participants gathered together in Woodburn at the Tukwila Center Conference Room (a generous contribution of Silverton Hospital) for a community dialogue to examine the gaps in service and how to reduce them for Latina girls and their families. Issues related to health and well-being, education, culture and community were discussed. The meeting was completely full with 16 people on a waiting list and as a result we have set up a second meeting. Many of the issues reported by the dedicated service and school providers reflected the issues reported in The State of Hispanic Girls published by COSSMHO Press in 1999. The report, as discussed in our July 2004 issue, demonstrates that young Latina women are at a higher risk of teenage pregnancy, suicide, substance abuse and gang violence. While many girls in this country are exceeding boys in education, Latina girls face significant challenges to education. The Regional meeting was a venue for these challenges to be discussed by the service providers who shed light on the realities many young Latina women and girls in Marion County face.

### How to help Young Latinas and their families:

Participants identified several ways to improve services to Latinas and their families: increasing bi-cultural and bilingual staff, increased discussions about the effects of racism, teaching effective ways to help young women and girls develop strong and healthy identities that reflect the many layers of their lives. Improved communication with family members, especially through verbal communication, to

effectively transmitting the information about the existing resources to the people who need them.

**Latina girls have higher rates in pregnancy, suicide attempts, drug and alcohol use, and gun possession.**

-National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Org.

### Strengths of Young Latinas:

While the meeting could have easily exceeded the two hours allotted, the participants were able to reflect on the strengths of the young women and their families as well as the collective strength of the group of service providers in the schools and community. The participants articulated strengths of the community as strong cultural, familial and spiritual ties. Many participants thought that a subsequent meeting about these issues should include young Latinas in a similar discussion to bring further light to their experiences as well as gaining greater insight in developing more comprehensive and creative ways to provide services. This meeting is being planned to take place at McKay High School, for Latina young women to have a voice.

### Some of the identified Gaps in Services/Issues Faced by Latina Young Women

- Girls are often expected to help support the family.
- Some young women and their families are NOT GIVEN the information and resources available to them for education and health services.
- Abuse: domestic violence, child abuse, past abuse. Need more prevention and treatment services for these issues.
- Non-documented girls are being pushed aside by the system.
- Early pregnancy and multiple pregnancies.
- Language and delivery of services are not always culturally specific and appropriate.

# President's Notes

Pam Patton  
President of the  
Coalition of Advocates  
for Equal Access for Girls



As you know, our focus for 2005 is “*young women in juvenile justice*”. I would like to update you on our work to improve access for young women to gender-specific services in juvenile justice. Since October, at the request of Bob Jester, Oregon Youth Authority Director, I have been chairing the OYA Young Women’s Work Group. This request was made because of the significant decrease in the number of young women in or entering OYA close custody, as a result of the legislative cuts which significantly reduced OYA facility beds and field/community programs. Before the process of closure of the facilities, there were approximately 143 young women in Hillcrest and the Corvallis House Transition Program for Young Women; today, their numbers range from 53 to 63 young women in these facilities. The Work Group met for six months and presented in early April our Report and Recommendations (*listed below*) to the Ways and Means Public Safety Subcommittee chaired by Senator Avel Gordly.

The Work Group Report recognized that both male and female youth offenders are affected by the decrease in the number of close custody beds (reduced cap) and community programs. However, this situation **has created some unique issues for female offenders in facilities:**

- ◆ Prior to the downsizing, there were 4 units for approximately 100 young women at Hillcrest Youth Correctional Facility; today there are 2 units for a total of approximately 45-50 young women. Young women are released from facilities more quickly, inappropriately and prematurely based on the shrinking number of beds for them.
- ◆ Hillcrest has become equivalent to a “gatekeeper” for young women to be “received” and “released” without completing programs or being prepared for OYA’s Transition Program or community services. Early transitions and “capping” results in many of these young women running from the Corvallis House or community programs.
- ◆ The decrease in the number of females at Hillcrest creates two other issues: difficulty in providing gender-specific programming for the young women in Hillcrest and difficulty in maintaining a stable, “planful” transition period.
- ◆ The disproportionate number of young women to young men results in sexual harassment and re-traumatization of the young women by the young men residing within close proximity.
- ◆ Drug and alcohol use/abuse, particularly with methamphetamine, is a serious risk area for young women, because of the decrease in beds, there is not adequate time to stabilize and begin treatment before they are released.
- ◆ Once transitioned to the community, young women run from programs and are repeatedly placed on waiting lists or just waiting for a minimal number of residential program beds. In addition, the elimination of all shelter beds results in a loss of a service that previously provided for temporary stabilization in the continuum.

Because of the issues described above the following **Recommendations** were made:

**1. System-Wide:** OYA should provide a **continuum of services and programs for young women** that are gender-specific and based on evidence and best practice. These services and programs must allow young women to fully complete their programs based on the case plan that had been developed for them.

**2. Close Custody:**

- A) Provide a full range of close custody programming in a **single facility** that is “**single-gender**” so that young women have access to the full range of programs specific to their risk/need and individual issues.
- B) Ensure that all programs are based on **gender-specific** and evidence/best practice for young women.

**3. Community:**

- C) **Re-instate** shelter care services for young women.
- D) **Add** 45-90 day secure drug/alcohol and mental health stabilization program, located either in an OYA facility or in a secure community-based program.
- E) **Provide adequate** foster care and/or proctor and residential treatment for young women in the community.
- F) **Work with** Oregon Juvenile Department Directors Association to address appropriate services for young women in communities short of OYA commitment.

**4. Implementation:**

- G) Establish an **interim work group** that would, at specified times, report to the Oregon Legislature on its recommendations and the agency’s implementation of recommendations. This group should include participation and input by the Coalition.

When Bob Jester asked me to chair the Work Group and when Senator Avel Gordly asked for his comments on the Report his response both times was “*that OYA continues to be committed to funding the programs and services necessary to meet the needs of young women in their custody.*”

# CALENDAR

## Coalition Meetings for 2005:

*(Meetings take place on the fourth Wednesday of every other month and the third Wed. in November.)*

May 25th \* July 27th \*  
September 28th \* November 16th

All meetings will be held from **12:00-2:00 pm** at Rosemont School  
9911 SE Mt. Scott Blvd., Portland.

All members are welcome to attend! For directions, call (503) 777-8090

Call about meeting dates for the *Advocacy and Legislative* and  
*Partnership and Networking Committees*

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**Thursday, April 28, 2005**

### Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day!

*Through the 2005 theme, "Sharing Power and Possibility," girls and boys will explore sharing power in the workplace, at home, and in their communities and learn about the possibilities this dynamic cand create in their present and future lives.*

Contact Laura at the Coalition for more information on any of these calendar items, or to advertise an event.

Phone: 503.233.4356, Email: [mc.admin@morrisonkids.org](mailto:mc.admin@morrisonkids.org)



## Update on Coalition's "Girls' Advocacy Toolkit"

by Laura Eccles

After a long year of steady work by the Partnership and Networking Committee, the *Girls' Advocacy Toolkit* is in its final stage of completion. The *Toolkit* is designed to provide girls with the skills necessary to recognize and use their voices. It is a comprehensive curriculum including a Facilitator's Guide and a Girl's Workbook. The *Toolkit* was piloted in several area schools, treatment centers, and girls' groups. The feedback we received was widely positive but also included worthwhile and excellent suggestions from the participating girls and facilitators. Many girls enjoyed the interactive games, art projects and personal stories throughout the *Toolkit*. We are excited to announce that the Coalition was also awarded an \$1,800 grant from the Equity Foundation in March, which will enable us to print 325 copies of the *Toolkit* to distribute throughout the State. We will send out a notice to all members when the *Toolkit* is ready for distribution and how, if you are interested in receiving a free copy, you can get one.

If you have questions contact Pam or Laura at 503.233.4356.



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