

No Limits for Girls

Final Report

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Table of Contents

Introduction	1.
Girl's Groups Evaluation	2.
Survey Results	2.
Focus Group Results	5.
Group Leader Interviews	10.
Conclusion	17.
Appendix Items: Evaluation Instruments, Consent Forms	19.
Acknowledgements	34.

Introduction

The No Limits for Girls Project was conceived after research about Maine's female juvenile offenders conducted by the Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI)¹ pointed to the need for collaboration with school system personnel to help meet the needs of girls at risk and/or already involved with the justice system.² In 2002, No Limits for Girls received funding from the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group to:

- a) Increase the knowledge of school-based staff about the needs of girls at risk of offending or who have had contact with the juvenile justice system, and
- b) Inspire school personnel to create safe spaces during and after school for girls at risk in order to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors for the girls in the project and beyond.

No Limits for Girls originally envisioned a five-day summer institute, followed by six girls' groups to be held at middle and high schools in the Portland school system. Due to budget and time constraints, not enough Portland school staff could commit to a five-day institute. The project was adapted and expanded to include communities near Portland, including Westbrook, Gorham, Scarborough, Old Orchard Beach, Biddeford, Saco, Windham, Freeport, Yarmouth, Cumberland, and Falmouth. No Limits for Girls trainers designed a two-day institute, based on Hearing Their Voices³, which incorporated recommendations from members of the project's Girls Collaborative Education Committee.

Project staff and trainers presented the two-day institute in January, 2003. School staff then chose girls from the Westbrook, Biddeford, Freeport, Brunswick, Bath, and Topsham school systems, to meet in four groups over the next ten weeks.

This final report is an evaluation of the No Limits for Girls Project. Written by IPSI Evaluation Coordinator Amy Detgen, the evaluation consists of data from surveys and focus groups with the girls, interviews with the group leaders (school staff), and a summary of the evaluation findings.

¹ The prior research was also conducted by the Institute for Public Sector Innovation (IPSI). IPSI is one of three research institutes located at the Muskie School of Public Service, University of Southern Maine.

² In 1997, IPSI first became involved with the issue of girls in the Maine juvenile justice system by providing logistical, administrative, and research support to the Justice for Girls Task Force. Between 1997 and 2000, IPSI implemented several projects, including:

- Programs that Work: A Review of Promising Practices in Female Juvenile Justice (1997)
- Programming Serving Girls in Maine (1998)
- Gender-Based Juvenile Justice Data Project: Analysis of Prevention Efforts for At-Risk Girls in Maine (2000).

³ Hearing Their Voices Training Project: Best Practices and Programming for Girls, Institute for Public Sector Innovation, 1999.

No Limits for Girls Girl's Groups Evaluation

In the spring of 2002, four girls' groups were established. The table below outlines the groups, group leaders, and the participating girls.

Town	Group Leader	Location	Number of Girls	Age Group	Girls' Risk Level
Westbrook	Guidance counselor	Public school	4	8 th grade	At-risk
Biddeford	Guidance counselor	Public school	4	7 th /8 th grade	At-risk
Freeport	One Teen Program Director and one Therapist	YMCA Teen Center	4	9 th grade	At-risk
Brunswick/Bath/Topsham (Sweetser)	Case Manager	Residential Child Welfare Agency	8	Age 13+	Probation/high-risk

Each group met for approximately 10 weeks. The Westbrook, Biddeford, and Freeport group meetings finished with the academic school year. The Sweetser group will continue until the beginning of September 2002.

The evaluation design involved three components: a survey of the girls, focus groups with girls and interviews with the group leaders. The survey allowed a broad look at what the groups covered and girls' general perceptions. The focus group examined more closely girls' opinions and feelings on participating in the group. The group leader interview covered both factual details on the makeup of group meetings and group leader perceptions of their group's success as well as ideas for future changes.

Fifteen girls completed surveys. Three focus groups were conducted: two with three girls, and one with two. Leader interviews were conducted with women from all four groups: one each from Westbrook, Biddeford, and Sweetser, and two women from Freeport.

Survey of Girls: Results

Fifteen out of the 20 group members responded (75%). The ages of respondents ranged from 13 to 16, with the majority (47%) age 14. Four girls were from Biddeford, three from Westbrook, four from Freeport, and four from Sweetser (Bath/Brunswick).

All 15 girls agreed that they **liked being part of the group**; 80% strongly agreed.

The charts on the following two pages display the girls' answers to general questions concerning their part in the group, and questions concerning how much they learned in the group.

Girls' were asked how much they agreed with a number of statements. Overall, reactions to statements concerning the groups were very positive. The statements girls felt most strongly about were:

- I felt emotionally safe at meetings
- I liked being part of the group
- I felt physically safe at meetings
- I trust the leaders of my group
- The group had a positive impact on me

The one statement on which less than half of the girls agreed was:

- I wouldn't have said the same things if boys were there.

Girls were asked about the amount they learned on different topics. Girls reported learning the most on:

- How to change unhealthy relationships
- The importance of healthy relationships
- Self-esteem
- Ways to improve self-image
- Sex and STDs
- Societal messages to girls

Girls from all groups reported discussing abuse, substance abuse, and emotional health “a little bit” or “a lot.” Sixty-six percent reported discussing spirituality.

Girls were asked the **most important thing they learned**. Five of the 15 did not answer. The ten who responded said:

Number of Girls	Response
2	How I can change my part in unhealthy relationships (say “no” to people I love)
2	About pregnancy and parenting skills
1	About self-esteem
1	About the importance of healthy relationships in my life
1	Ways to change how I feel about myself
1	About sexism
2	All were important

Girls were asked to complete the following sentences based on **how they feel now after taking part in the group**. About half of the girls felt more positively; and about half felt the same. No girl reported feeling less positive. The biggest increase was seen in confidence levels.

	More	The Same	Less
I Like Myself...	7	7	0
I Like My Body...	6	8	0
I Trust Others...	7	7	0
I Am Confident...	9	5	0

*One girl did not answer.

The majority of girls felt that the **number of weeks the group met** was just right (64%). Twenty-nine percent felt it was too short, while one girl felt the time was too long.

The number of meetings missed by the girls ranged from zero to five. The majority of girls (43%) missed one meeting.

The girls showed a **definite interest in being part of the group if it continued**. Thirteen of the 14 girls who answered the question replied that they would continue taking part in the group. One girl did not know. Twelve of the 14 girls also said they would join a group if it lasted all year long.

When asked what was the **most important discussion** groups had, the girls answered as follows:

Number of Girls	Subject	Comments
2	Relationships	“because it talks about how you can control a relationship and how to treat others” “I learned not to let guys control me.”
2	What it means to be a girl	“because some girls were confused about what it means to be a girl/woman. We got answers out.” “because it was interesting.”
1	Communication	“because you can communicate in many different ways and I didn’t know that”
1	Family	“because we learned about problems in our families and how to fix them.”
1	Independence	“This was most important to me because I always felt like the only way I could be liked by others was if I did what they want me to. Now I know that I can be myself and if people don’t accept me for who I am then they aren’t worth my time.”
1	Insight	“because I found out what it meant and it helped me out”
1	Sex; Family	“because those are the most important things to be.”
2	Who Am I and Where Am I Going?	“It made me think about my life and the road I’m on and what to do to change it.” “Now I know who I am and what I am going to do with my life.”
2	Beauty and Body Image	“the most fun.”
1	Self-esteem; Relationships; Gender roles; Sexuality	“because those situations are really common in this school”
1	No response	

When asked **how the girls group would have been better**, six girls responded that they *wished the group met for longer* than it did. Two of the five mentioned meeting more than once a week. One suggested it last all year.

Three girls wished that there had been *more group members*.

Other responses were:

- “[girl’s name] hadn’t been it.”
- “I don’t know.”
- “Nothing. We did enough to teach a lot.”
- “There were more girls.”
- “We had an even number of girls and it was small and easy.”
- “I had been able to attend all the meetings.”

Two girls did not respond.

When asked the **best part about the group**, the majority of girls mentioned *getting to know each other better* and *being able to talk to friends*. Another common response was *field trips*. Comments were:

- “Being able to talk to other girls about issues.”
- “Being together and talking with friends.”
- “That you got to really know about each other and you always got advice either from the teachers or from each other.”
- “The trusting each other more.”
- “We had a few girls since the group was small we got to know one another easier and better.”
- “Learning a lot from all the different co-facilitators.”
- “When we talked about what we didn’t like about the other person.”
- “Not being in class and getting to talk about things to everyone and the field trip to Horsefeathers was wicked fun.”
- “The field trip.”
- “When we went to Boston to walk the Freedom Trail.”
- “Snacks, discussions about sex. The pubie tubie.”
- “It was all good.”
- “Me.”

Focus Group Results

Three focus groups were held with a total of eight girls—one in Biddeford with three girls, one in Westbrook with two girls, and one in Freeport with three girls. All were asked the same set of questions. Following is a summary of the discussions.

Girls were asked **what impact the group had**. Girls from all of the groups felt that their group had a *positive impact*. Reasons were:

- Learned a lot
- Notice more about sexism

- Felt a lot more self-confidence
- Getting to talk

Comments were:

“Positive because they taught us when people have problems, how they solved them.”
 “I just feel better about myself. I feel more comfortable.”

When asked if the **groups help girls**, the girls said yes, explaining that the group helped them learn about themselves and understand themselves better. Other comments were:

“It helps them be more honest and open”
 “It helps them be more like towards the good side towards themselves instead of looking at themselves the bad way all the time.”
 “It kind of makes us more aware of what is going on in the world too.”
 “Yes, it shows them a better looking life. They think more highly of themselves when they used to look down on themselves.”
 “It’s awesome. It’s important for all teens.”

The majority of girls felt that the **groups would have been different had boys taken part**. Most mentioned that it would have been uncomfortable to discuss personal issues with boys present.

“We couldn’t talk about the feminine issues—our periods and stuff. It would have been uncomfortable.”
 “It would have been uncomfortable with them. When we talk about really personal stuff. When we talk about guys and stuff and when we talk about sexual abuse.”

The focus group participants do have some **“girls-only” space** in their lives. Instances described included hanging out with friends, shopping with mom, talking on the phone or on the Internet. When asked if this “girls-only” time is important, most agreed it is.

“When you are older, you know they [girls] need their space. They are becoming women.”
 “It is really important.”
 “It is very important. I don’t want my brother going through my underwear drawer.”

The girls were asked if **group members trust each other**. Two girls said no. Some described not trusting some members who since had left the group. The majority of members of the groups trusted each other. Many girls had known each other for years and cited this history as a reason for trust. However, girls became closer through the open discussions, which led to trust.

“Yes, it takes a while but we began to trust each other after a while.”
 “I always thought negative about all the girls and then getting to know them made it easier.”
 “I trusted everybody in the group because we are all pretty close. We hang out every single day.”
 “We know almost everything single thing about us, almost.”

When asked if they **trust people more as a result of the group**, girls provided a range of answers. Some said no, or that their trust level hadn’t changed. A few said that they did trust people more. All agreed that the group provided them with a group of girls they can depend on.

“When you are in a group, you can spend the time to get to know the people.”

Girls **described the group leaders** as “dependable,” “organized,” and “really cool.” One group leader was described as “over-protective” in a positive way. “She doesn’t want us to do anything wrong. She talks like she is our mother, our second mother. It was funny. Not annoying.”

All liked the group leaders and all agreed that they *trusted the leaders*.

“You could depend on them. They wouldn’t say anything, like if you swore or something. They kept things confidential.”

“Definitely.”

The girls were asked if they **see the group leaders as role models**. Most said yes. Comments included:

“Yes, I want to be just like [group leader].”

“Well, not her job, but I want to help other people.”

“She’s someone I could look up to.”

Two girls in two different groups said no:

“I never even thought of it. I do my own thing.”

“Not me, I want to be myself.”

When asked if **boys and girls are treated differently**, most felt that they are, but did not describe any direct experience in their lives. Talk focused on stereotyping.

“Men have muscles. They get better pay. Women do the same job and get paid less.”

“Boys are expected to be good in math, girls in English. Guys are supposed to be athletic football guys and girls are supposed to be cheerleaders.”

“They [guys] think we can’t do things just because we’re girls but they’re so full of it.”

“Boys think we can’t take a shit. Think we shit flowers. Then if they find out you do take a shit, they think it’s gross. They think all girls smell like flowers.”

“We’re the cleaning thing and the baby thing.”

The girls were asked **how a girls’ group could change sexism**. Thoughts were:

“Have more girls who want to take this seriously. Have more opinions, more input.”

“With help in the community.”

“Talk about sex.”

“I don’t think it could.”

Girls felt strongly that the **groups valued the differences of group members**.

“We have been exposed to a lot of things. It is not like being around a homosexual is weird or being around a black person is weird. It isn’t like we’re against it.”

“Yes, definitely. Very aware of that. We don’t like racism.”

“Yes. No one said a racist remark. If they did, they would have gotten hagged for it.”

“I don’t have a problem with anybody. I always look at who they are not what they look like.”

“We weren’t different.”

“It all comes down to the comfort factors. We are all comfortable with each other.”

All girls agreed that **group members had a say** in what things the group did. The girls described voting on the types of activities and on rules within the group.

“Yes, it was mostly left to us what we did. Asked us what we wanted to do.”

“Yes, [leader] would always ask if we were all comfortable with talking.”

“Yes, we all had a say. We voted on it. We voted on a trip to Boston.”

“We also made rules on being appropriate in the group. Like not judging people on what they wear or what they look like. We talked about how you couldn’t say someone was “acting queer” if they were being weird.”

“We made up the rules and wrote them down and then voted on them.”

“We signed a form, actually to keep our confidence. It was a form we filled out to keep it confidential and little things we could check off on what we wanted to discuss in our group.”

The girls were asked to **think about a girl who had gotten into trouble** (at school, or with the law, etc.) and what might have prevented that girl from that situation. Some girls suggested *having someone with whom a girl could talk might prevent trouble*.

“If she had someone to talk to.”

“If I had a true friend to tell me no.”

“Listen to her mother.”

When asked how they would help a girl who might be getting into trouble, one girl responded, “I would talk to her. Tell her the consequences . . . I would help her by being a true friend.”

Girls also suggested that *girls’ groups would help prevent a girl from getting into trouble*.

“Maybe if she was in one of these groups she would have known how guys just get what they want pretty much most of the time when you are at this age and about how she could have prevented that.”

“Maybe if I had a girls group before I started getting into trouble.”

“It [a group] would have turned her around. This group would have made her independent. She wouldn’t be a follower. I used to be a follower too.”

“Definitely [a group would help]. There are a lot of g irls who need to see what’s up.”

When asked how a **girls’ group would help a girl**, girls responded with a variety of reasons:

“Learning the difficulties of going through the things that you do.”

“We discussed actions and consequences. Everything has a consequence. Everything you do is like a ripple effect. It affects everybody else. That makes you think about what you are doing.”

“I don’t know but maybe if I had it before I got into trouble, it might have helped. I was really confused. The group really helped me straighten my perspective on things.”

“She [group leader] helped us cope with the feelings of after doing [something wrong]. I am sure if we had it before, [the group leader] can talk us into doing a lot of things.”

“Some people just like run away from their feelings. This group helped us get it all out.”

One girl added, “We learned to help others not just ourselves.”

The girls were asked for the **one thing the group would say to convince the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group that girls’ groups are a good idea**. Comments were:

“It taught us how to be individual. To be confident and not feel so bad.

To stick up for yourself.”

“It helps girls out (talking about sex, etc.)”

“It changes the way we think about things. The consequences and what it will lead to.”
“You feel better about yourself.”

The girls were asked to elaborate.

“My friend that is in it with me is suicidal, she was suicidal when she started the group, and she stopped feeling that way. That is a big thing. I stopped getting in trouble as much. It showed that you don’t have to prove, that you can be bad because you are a girl. You don’t have to prove to guys that you can be just as good as them.”

“It kind of shows everybody how to express themselves in the group. Just to be themselves and not try to act like someone else and we were acting like ourselves. We didn’t try to act like another member of the group. We were all individuals and we all accepted it...It helps to accept other people outside of school. There are so many people that are different in this world. They all have a good point too. That is what we learned in the group.”

“My biological brother overdosed and he died last spring. . . I haven’t told anybody about it until I just started in the group. In the group I can openly talk about it. Talking about family matters was really important because it helps to get some of those tightened up feelings out.”

A few mentioned *feeling less alone*:

“It makes you feel like you are not the only girl in the world that feels that way, a certain way if you have an issue.”

“Knowing that you are not the only person that it happens to, it happens to everybody.”

“You wouldn’t feel embarrassed about it any more. You wouldn’t feel bottled up.”

“If they can bring up statistics like you know there are sixty million other women that have excessive hair growth on their legs. It just makes you feel so much better. You think, good, I thought I was the only hairy woman out there.”

Two girls mentioned learning about *being a woman*:

“It is a place where you can talk about things that you really wouldn’t normally be able to talk to your mother about. Like other women that might know instead of having to talk to your mother and be embarrassed.”

“A different perspective on being a female in general, through this group, I learned a lot.”

Some talked about *specific group topics* that were helpful. One mentioned their group talk about self-image:

“Yes, it helped. I used to think I was fat & ugly because kids used to call me that. But I don’t think that anymore.”

One mentioned discussions on drugs:

“Talking about drugs was good too. I know a lot of people who do it. I wouldn’t. I don’t want to mess up my life.”

The girls were then asked **what they would do differently** in the group. Answers were:

“Stayed longer. Not just for 8 weeks. The group should have started at the beginning of the year.”

“We would go on more field trips. The trip brought us closer together. You get to know others better. Acting like a team. We learned how to act right in public.”
“I wish we had a “Baby Think it Over” class [seminar about having a baby]. That’s important.”

One girl felt strongly that girls’ group should be about women’s issues, not talking about personal problems:

“Girls group is stuff that girls have trouble with. It helps to have someone to talk to. The girls group talks about stuff that doesn’t concern boys like periods and stuff like that and men being sexist and stuff. Talk to your therapist about stuff like [personal problems]. Girls group is about girls.”

All girls said that they would join the group if it continued next year.

“I am definitely joining next year.”

“I would be more than interested. I was actually asking last week if they had a group in the high school and she said that she would look into finding a group like that.”

“Girls in high school should have these groups too.”

“They should have boys group too. They’re worse than girls—beating up people, raping girls, smashing windows.”

Finally, the girls were asked **what questions they would have asked** a group of girls had they been doing a focus group. Most said they would ask the same questions. Two had suggestions:

“Do you like being a girl?”

“Did this group make you feel a lot more comfortable with who you are and your surroundings and make you more self-aware?”

Group Leader Interviews

Every group leader reported feeling that their **group was successful**. All reported that there was camaraderie between group members. Although the groups ended up with a smaller number of members than the original number (of eight or nine), the leaders felt that the small number was preferable due to the girls’ high needs.

In describing how the **groups made a difference** for the girls, leaders responded:

- Girls formed relationships/friendships
- Girls made attachments/connections
- Girls gained more awareness
- Girls learned appropriate ways to get their needs met
- Girls were empowered to make choices
- Girls gained self-esteem

“I think in terms of the relationships—they were able to make a connection with us and with each other. They had someone to talk to. Someone to say, “I care about you” and “I expect more” when they’re not making a healthy choice. We were able to plant some really good seeds. I think they know we care about them. We stay away from being judgmental but advocate for good choices.”

“To me, success is attachment. The girls attached to us and to each other. Behavior change takes a long time. We really wanted cohesiveness—something happened—we start with that.”

“So the girls probably think about it [behavior] but does it make a difference? The girls would say to each other, “You shouldn’t do this . . .” Then they would do something different once the weekend came. Really, I’m a small piece of the puzzle. There’s at least more of an awareness. Maybe 10 years from now, they’ll look back and think.”

“What are the desired outcomes? As I define it, for what happens in the group, it’s teaching the girls appropriate ways to get their needs met. I’ll ask them to think about, “what are your resources?” If not your parents, then is it your aunt, etc?”

All leaders asserted that the **gender-responsive component of the program was essential**. All felt that what was shared would have been limited had boys been in the group.

“A pivotal thing about the group is the safety factor. Girls relate to girls. We talked about issues such as STDs, AIDS, pregnancy, and abusive situations. It was a closed group where the girls got to know each other and there was trust built in order to share with each other.”

“This way they really knew it was for them and to help them.”

The leaders felt that **most girls would not have been able to discuss difficult or embarrassing issues if boys had been part of the group**.

“They definitely would not have said what they did had boys been there. I see how they are in classroom work. They wouldn’t be as honest.”

“ . . .At this age, they have to present an image to others.”

“There’s competition for attention. These girls have low self-esteem and to build it they try to gain attention from boys. Their locus of control is all external. Boys would have completely changed how the group interacted.”

Leaders were asked whether the girls were able to talk about difficult issues. Some leaders described an initial period when the **girls had to get to know each other** and see past misperceptions.

“Not at first. Everyone knows each other in these towns, and we had to do conflict resolution the first few groups. Then the girls became good friends.”

“Yes, they came from different backgrounds. At the beginning, two girls hated each other. They still don’t hang out during the school day. They have their own cliques. But they’re tight with each other during group time.”

When groups were underway, the **girls were able to share and open up**.

“Each girl but one had “their” session where they talked about something. They would be center stage for that day. The sharing was immediate.”

“Yes, oh definitely. They trusted each other. They were very open about their family situations. About being sexually active.”

“ . . .in general, they were hungry. They just really knew what they needed. . . They appreciate you talking frankly with them because they’ve seen and done it all.”

“We tried not to minimize what they were feeling. We talked in a serious way.”

Two leaders commented that the **group dynamic allowed girls to open up** more than they would have if in individual meetings.

“You get much more than if it’s one-on-one.”

“When you meet with students one-on-one, they say that everything’s rosy—when you know it’s not. Then you put them in a group and they’ll say so much more. You learn so much about their lives. If one person says something about what it’s like in their home, the other girls feel it’s allowed. It breaks down barriers. It’s crucial. They feel comfortable and know they’re not alone.”

Leaders were asked **how the No Limits for Girls training influenced their curriculum** development. The leaders had positive experiences at the training and most combined ideas from the training and expanded with their own ideas.

“Greatly. Everything they [the training] brought up was a hot topic. The whole thing was wonderful. The things you kind of know about were brought to the forefront. You know girls are being exploited but you don’t really know how badly. We got cemented information and facts.”

“The training was great. It was a well-spent two days. . . It’s nice to have statistics and learn the little different things (2nd day with Clara Porter).”

“The No Limits for Girls training reinforced my feelings about working with girls. I met [a group leader] there and we were able to form a collaboration. . . I developed the curriculum based on the training. There were good resources and materials. The initial survey I gave to the girls came from there too.”

All leaders felt that having **schools involved with gender-responsive programs for female offenders is really important** because the girls are already there.

“Anyway we can get info to kids is great. Through school is the most accessible way. At school it’s ideal. They’re here—we have a captive audience.”

“I think it’s extremely important. The girls spend the majority of their time in school.”

One leader felt that schools may also develop a new awareness, “It’s really important. I learned so much just listening to these girls’ concerns. If schools heard their thoughts too, their policies could change. They would know better what’s really going on with these kids. . . what stands in the way of someone’s academic success.”

Leaders of a group run through a community center felt that their situation was ideal because the program was not located in the school, but the girls still had easy access (buses to the site from the school). The girls met in a room reserved for teenagers and the girls participated in deciding how the room would be decorated. This offered the girls a sense of ownership that may not be possible in a school setting. The leaders noted potential difficulties in having groups at schools, but agreed that any way to reach girls is a good method.

“The point is the relationship. It’s hard for schools because they’re so busy with other responsibilities. I’m lucky—this is my whole job.”

“In school, there would be a stigma with going to a group while others weren’t. It would be separate. But really do the groups wherever you can. We can’t do enough for these girls. Not just at-risk girls either. All teenage girls are really at risk. So anywhere you can do it as long as you have a facilitator.”

Leaders were asked to discuss **activities that worked particularly well** with the group. A number of ideas were shared.

“We had Planned Parenthood come for two weeks. The girls played Jeopardy focusing on STD’s and myths about sex and dispelling incorrect information. The girls had fun and learned a lot.”

“There were a bunch of statements about sex and relationships and the girls had to stand next to signs according to how much they agreed with the statement: with a scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Then they talked about why. The girls liked this.”

“We also hit a wall for a while talking about pot and substance abuse—it got really heavy, too heavy. So we thought, we need to lighten this up. I got a poster board and asked them to draw themselves. They put some really neat things on it like “girl power.” So then whenever we’d get stuck we’d shift and do a project. This helped them refocus and then we’d come back. Some of the things we talked about were devastating. Sometimes the girls really needed a step back.”

“Each week I asked them to read a story first and then relate their life to that story. Then we’d talk about how they would handle it.”

“We talked about a gynecologist’s spectrum. They had fun calling it a pubie tubie. There was a lot of humor but there were some really good questions.”

“The girls drew their families and it was wonderful—really interesting. They’re very creative. Expressed themselves through art.”

“Journals were good. We also did this thing where they would all bring in a quote for the day. They loved this.”

“At one of the first groups we asked them topics they wanted to talk about. They all checked off sex and drugs. So when we talked about sex, no one said they liked it. And so we asked, “Why are you doing it?” The room was silent. They didn’t know why they were doing it. And many times, they don’t talk. That was powerful.”

Most discussed including time for “checking-in” as a chance for girls to talk about their feelings.

“The first six or seven times we had a topic. A lot of times we’d say, “What were the issues or concerns for you?” Then they could process or bounce ideas off of other people. They really liked that. They could share ideas, thoughts, concerns.”

“We had a check-in with a Teddy Bear circle before each meeting. The girls would pass the teddy bear and talk about what was going on. This was facilitated by the girls themselves.”

Leaders were also asked **what they would change** about how they ran the group. No one had anything she would drop from the curriculum. Minor adjustments were discussed.

“We had a piece on Women Who Rock. I would make this more up-to-date. There were a lot of women who were dead. I think the girls would have related better to more recent women.”

“Role-playing was iffy—they really got into it but not in a good way—saying for example, “Can I be the drunk mother?”

“I would refine and change some things to make it better. A lot depends on who is in the group too. I’d like someone to co-facilitate. It’s always good to have another person there.”

“I wish I could have done more field trips. There’s just so much going on in the end of the year. We didn’t have enough time.”

“We didn’t have a formal curriculum. Next time, I would have more structure. But it’s also nice to have the flexibility. The girls really wanted this to be their group.”

The **timeframe** (number of weeks) and length of group meetings varied slightly. All agreed that meeting once a week works well. Most groups met for 8-10 weeks, although the Sweetser group met for 15 weeks.

Two leaders felt that shorter meetings 45-60 minutes work best for girls, while the other two felt that meetings of 84-120 minutes work best.

“I usually time-limit my groups to six to eight sessions. . .weekly meetings were good. The 45 minute time frame is also good. Longer than that and you start to lose them.”

“We met for one hour—this was a good amount. Any longer and they would have a tough time sticking with it. I think an hour is perfect.”

“Two 42-minute blocks rather than one make a huge difference. It’s hard to fit everything in a short period. Once a week is a good schedule. We talked about 42 minutes twice a week but we decided it would be better to have a longer period of time.”

“Two hours was about right. Otherwise, some couldn’t finish their thoughts. You knew what topics were going to generate discussion.”

One group leader would have liked the group to continue for a longer period, “The group is only stopping because of school ending. It takes a while just to get the kinks out and establish goals and rules. It takes time for each girl to get to a place where there is trust, and for cohesion. Each girl does this in her own time. A group for the whole school year wouldn’t be unreasonable.”

A concern that was raised was *attendance* in the groups. One leader stated, “My personal concern about it was that some girls weren’t always there, because of the population (many hospitalized, skip school a lot, tough home situations, running away).”

The Sweetser group took place over the summer. The group leader said she would not hold a group in the summertime again due to difficulties with family vacations and girls’ attendance.

In addition to attendance problems, *attrition* from the groups was a factor in all four groups. Two leaders mentioned that 8-10 would be a good size for a group. However, most agreed that the small number of group members enabled girls to become close.

“A good size for the group would be between 8-10. A lot of times girls aren’t in school. We didn’t meet because we didn’t think they would all be here. We have to plan on absences—there are circumstances beyond our control.”

“We started with six girls and two dropped out (they were part of the alternative education program off-campus and had to be shipped to campus for group meetings; they had to make a choice). I would have liked to have had eight or so.”

“We started with 8 girls (three 7th graders and 5 8th graders). One was hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital. One stopped coming to school. One is just out of the hospital. Another is not in school. If they’re in school, they come to meetings. In fact, the group was a reason they came to school.”

“The group was too big. There was such a discrepancy in what the girls needed. We felt there really needed to be two groups. The ideal number? It really depends on the girls involved. Their needs are so great. We couldn’t do more than an hour and they didn’t have enough time to share. I would say five at the most. The girls were very clear about what they wanted. Ultimately, we were all happy with four. They knit together well—were very close.”

The leaders were asked **what else girls need**. Leaders agreed that *teachers and community leaders need to be educated* on the importance of working with at-risk girls.

“To continue. Have coordination. A lot of schools have advisors working with teens. You need collaboration. I would also educate people on the goals of the girls’ groups.”

“And give training to teachers—they have to know how to detect trouble in teens. They need to have a sixth sense. We need people in schools who are watching out for what is going on. . . They need to notice when a child is depressed, quiet or acting out.”

“We need trained people who care about girls. Even girls who don’t come from bad homes need someone to talk to about being a girl.”

Other ideas included *connections for girls, role models, education on boundaries, and life skills*.

“We’re trying to help these kids find people who they can make a connection with. Some kids are better than others at finding this person. It could be a grandparent or a neighbor. If you can’t get your needs met by your parents, you need to find help elsewhere. In 6th grade they’re still young but by 8th grade, they’re ready to say, “I’m sick of this crap.” They start with all the risky behavior—smoking, drinking, unprotected sex. I try to connect kids with appropriate people who care.”

“They need to be exposed more to role models. To see people who have been in their situation and made it. That would be great for them. If they could hook up with people in the community—it’s important to make links together.”

“Education around dating violence. Saying “no” to guys. Boundaries are a major issue. We need to teach this is OK.”

“I’d also like to do some life skills—like how to budget or cook. They can’t count on mom to teach them these things.”

Group leaders also described how *field trips* out in the community provide girls, “a taste of something else.”

“Most of the girls come from socio-economically challenged families in bad parts of town. Getting dressed up and going to a fancy restaurant they acted totally different. In their environment, they’re never allowed to act like they’re on ‘Dallas.’ They had appropriate manners and their self-esteem—it was the most incredible thing.”

“At least one [field trip]. This is very important. When we went to Boston, we went to a nice restaurant and an art museum—all this is role modeling for the girls.”

“I took them horseback riding and they were all really quiet. They were all out of their element. They said they were enjoying the peace and quiet.”

“Getting the girls out in the community is important. Even to Aquaboggan they acted so different. They were allowed to be children. They didn’t care about make-up or anything and just truly had a good time.”

The leaders felt that the **amount of the grant funding was appropriate**. All agreed that money is essential to provide food and drinks for the girls. In addition, the funding helped provide supplies and materials, and was used to pay for field trips.

“We need to have money to feed the girls and have something for them to drink. We need money for field trips.”

“The amount of the grant was perfect. We had some money left over that will be used for the group to continue in the schools.”

“The funding was more than enough. I’m used to dealing with nothing. It did give a sense of creativity. I was able to use the money to make “teen survival bags” and filled them with books, nail polish, necklaces, pamphlets I had, and goodies that they don’t have. I never could have afforded that otherwise. The funding definitely helped for snacks, horseback riding, teen survival bags and transportation.”

“Funding is a huge piece. Having food is really important. And art supplies.”

“I’d like to have speakers too. As a non-profit, funding is always important.”

Finally, the leaders were asked **how school personnel would best be reached** in order to promote gender-responsive programs for girls. Many ideas were generated. Some felt that *training* is a good way to reach those with an interest in girls’ groups.

“You have to make the training affordable. You only have so much money to spend each year. Schools just don’t give us money. It has to be cheap.”

“Do another training in the fall—maybe October. The spring time of year was not conducive to starting a group. When a training is free, we jump to it. We’ll do it.”

Others felt that *guidance counselors and social workers are the best contacts*.

“People like me [Sweetser group leader] who work really closely with school administrators. Case managers are entrenched in the school system. We have the perfect situation because we work with school-based clinicians who are right in the schools.”

“Don’t send letters to the superintendent’s office or the principal. You need to get mailing lists of guidance counselors, social workers, or substance abuse counselors.”

“Just calling until someone will listen. Contacting guidance counselors and social workers. There are always teachers who feel passionately about the kids. They care. You can find someone who will support you. The conference [training] was nice because it brought together people from different backgrounds to collaborate. It’s networking.”

One leader suggested informing people on girls' groups' experiences and successes, "Let people know who else has done this and talk about their experiences. Have a panel with girls groups and look at the similarities and differences between what they did. That would show people different options of what they could do with a girls' group or best practice for what could be done."

Conclusion

Limitations

This results presented in this report reflect the experiences of a small number of girls' groups in Maine. In total, four groups were examined. The number of group members and leaders who took part in the evaluation was small: 15 girls answered a survey, eight girls participated in focus groups; and five group leaders took part in interviews. Due to this small number, the results should only be considered a description of specific people's experiences. The results do not apply to all girls' groups in Maine or to girls' groups in general. Instead, the descriptions here provide a valuable, look at how girls' groups have benefited this particular population. These results may suggest steps for future groups.

Overall Summary

The girls involved in the No Limits for Girls groups all agreed that the group had a positive impact on them and that they liked being part of the group. Girls felt emotionally and physically safe at meetings and trusted the group leaders. Knowledge was gained on issues such as unhealthy relationships, self-esteem, sex and STDs, drugs, and societal messages sent to girls. The group venue provided girls with an opportunity to talk to their peers and share their feelings with others. Girls reported feeling less alone and suggested that girls' groups may help other girls through offering them insights on actions and consequences, providing them a safe place to talk about their feelings, and teaching them how to be individuals. Members from each of the four groups felt they had a say in what the groups did. Suggestions for doing things differently included holding the group for a longer timeframe, and having more field trips.

On the surveys, half of the girls reported that they would have said the same things if boys had been part of the group. However, in the focus groups, the majority of girls said that they would not have been able to discuss "feminine" or "personal stuff" had boys been present.

Group leaders similarly felt very positive about the groups, commenting that the girls benefited through forming relationships, gaining self-esteem, being empowered to make choices, and gaining more awareness. All stated that the gender-responsive component was essential for the group to be able to discuss topics openly and share what it did. School involvement in the group is important because the girls are a captive audience in that location and all felt that any way to reach the girls is a good method. In discussing the timeframes of their groups, some would have liked the group to continue for a longer period. Others felt the number of weeks and length of meetings was appropriate. When asked what more girls need, leaders stressed the importance of educating teachers and community members on the issues concerning at-risk teenage girls. In

addition, girls need connections, role models, and education on girls' issues. All felt that girls benefit from field trips out in the community.

Group leaders felt that the grant funding was appropriate, but asserted that funding is important in order to provide groups with food, drinks, and art supplies/materials, and to take the girls on field trips. All felt strongly that the groups should continue and suggested reaching school personnel through further trainings, contacting guidance counselors and school-based social workers, and through informing people of girls' group's successes.

No Limits for Girls Evaluation Day One

Stone House Freeport, Maine
January 29-30, 2002

Pitfalls and Hurdles/Status of Girls	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant				5	7		12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content				3	9		12
Trainer(s) were engaging			1		11		12
Information was useful			1	3	8		12
Materials provided were useful				6	6		12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				Yes	No	n/a	
Why or Why not?				10	1	1	12

* Clear, high quality presentation
* Excellent information
* Yes, small group setting works well. Info is sufficient.
* Touched on areas which are often ignored in schools.

Gender Role Stereotyping/Girls' Development/ Physical Safety	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant			1	2	9		12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content				3	9		12
Trainer(s) were engaging			1	1	10		12
Information was useful			2	1	9		12
Materials provided were useful			1	2	9		12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				Yes	No	n/a	
Why or Why not?				10		2	12

* Good information

Sheros	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant			1	3	6	2	12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content			1	2	7	2	12
Trainer(s) were engaging			1	2	7	2	12
Information was useful			1	2	7	2	12
Materials provided were useful			2	2	6	2	12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				Yes	No	n/a	
Why or Why not?				9		3	12

*Loved this!
* Good way to get to know each other
* I don't remember what SHEROS means
* Thoughtful way of engaging girls

History, Culture and Mentoring		Below		Average		Above		
		1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant					4	7	1	12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content					4	7	1	12
	Trainer(s) were engaging			1	2	8	1	12
	Information was useful			1	2	8	1	12
	Materials provided were useful			1	3	7	1	12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings						Yes	No	n/a
Why or Why not?						10	2	12

* Makes me think of ways I need to let girls know about how women have impacted our culture

Sexual Abuse/Giving Girls Voice		Below		Average		Above		
		1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant				1	1	9	1	12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content					2	9	1	12
	Trainer(s) were engaging			1		10	1	12
	Information was useful				1	8	3	12
	Materials provided were useful				1	8	3	12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings						Yes	No	n/a
Why or Why not?						8	1	3

*Personally uncomfortable

Overall Training		Below		Average		Above		
		1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Physical setting for the trainings was					1	10	1	12
Food for this training was					3	8	1	12
Overall this training was				1	1	9	1	12

Additional Comments:

- * Thank you for this opportunity
- * 4.5 Always room for improvement
- * I have been exploring this issue for 20 years and support these efforts
- * It is interesting to talk about communication styles. The location, timing, and food were excellent. Information was so useful and thought provoking.
- * Great Day! Really appreciated interactive exercises. Great trainers, great location. Thanks!
- * Excellent. The setting is perfect and not where social workers/ teachers usually find our trainings. Good management of info sharing, materials and activities.
- * I would like to see teacher workshops in schools dealing with these issues.
- * A good balance of lecture and hands on. More ideas for adventure activities and trust games. Not 2 days in a row!!

No Limits for Girls

Evaluation Day Two

Stone House Freeport, Maine
January 29-30, 2002

	Sexuality		Below		Average		Above	
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a		
Session was organized and relevant			1	5.5	5.5			12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content			1	2.5	8.5			12
Trainer(s) were engaging			1	2.5	8.5			12
Information was useful			1	3.5	7.5			12
Materials provided were useful			2	3.5	6.5			12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				<u>Yes</u> 10	<u>No</u> 1	<u>n/a</u> 1		12
Why or Why not?								* Great job. * Good

	Personal Safety for Girls		Below		Average		Above	
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a		
Session was organized and relevant								12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content								12
Trainer(s) were engaging								12
Information was useful				2	10			12
Materials provided were useful					12			12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				<u>Yes</u> 10	<u>No</u>	<u>n/a</u> 2		12
Why or Why not?								* Excellent * I probably wouldn't be the person to bring this info to my school. * More discussion on prevention, especially with predators who are family members, friends, etc. * Very active! * "Girls" of all ages need more of this. * This is a topic that girls need to be aware of and involved in.

	Girls' Group Structure		Below		Average		Above	
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a		
Session was organized and relevant								5
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content			1	5	6			12
Trainer(s) were engaging				3	9			12
Information was useful				4	8			12
Materials provided were useful				3	9			12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				1	5	6		12
Why or Why not?					<u>Yes</u> 10	<u>No</u>	<u>n/a</u> 2	12
								* More on Martha and the Vandellas would be good * Allowed plenty of interchange in this and below topic.

Girls' Group Issues	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant				4	8		12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content				4	8		12
Trainer(s) were engaging				4	8		12
Information was useful				4	8		12
Materials provided were useful				4	8		12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				<u>Yes</u> 10	<u>No</u>	<u>n/a</u> 2	12
Why or Why not?				* Why did the Supremes break up?			

Girls' Group Programming	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Session was organized and relevant				3	4	5	12
Trainer(s) demonstrated knowledge of content				3	7	2	12
Trainer(s) were engaging				3	7	2	12
Information was useful				3	7	2	12
Materials provided were useful				3	7	2	12
I would recommend this session to be used in future trainings				<u>Yes</u> 8	<u>No</u>	<u>n/a</u> 4	12
Why or Why not?							

Overall Training	Below		Average		Above		
	1	2	3	4	5	n/a	
Physical setting for the trainings was				0.5	11.5		12
Food for this training was				0.5	11.5		12
Overall this training was				2.5	9.5		12

Additional Comments:

- * Thank you -- it was excellent.
- * In terms of reaching school people, perhaps an organized presentation to special ed/ social work staff rather than just a mailing . . . As a community agency, we are not really the audience you are trying to target...
- * Often when school has the in-service school meeting, social workers don't attend. Maybe you could offer training info on those days.
- * The ability to have two days to think and discuss ideas was a great luxury.
- * Excellent, I really enjoyed it and feel that just the idea of creating girls' groups around the area will be great.
- * Would recommend getting into schools for training days. Staff get training on how to teach and curriculum ad nauseum, but really zero developmental stuff on any gender issues.
- * Kate: I will be starting a girls group Feb 5. -- I would love to get together with you. Kristin (865-9600) X 25. Training was helpful. Thanks! Great info!
- * Sorry I missed the first day, it sounds informative. I thought the info was useful and informative.
- * This is a training that would be excellent to present to support staff (counselors, etc.) in schools. Also, presented to staff as an in-service or staff meeting.

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
MUSKIE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
NO LIMITS FOR GIRLS
GROUP LEADER CONSENT FORM**

I have been asked by the Muskie School of Public Service to participate in the evaluation of the No Limits for Girls project. I have been told that the purpose of the evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the girls' groups.

I have been asked to take part in an interview about my experiences with the girls' group I have led. I understand that the purpose of this interview is to obtain information on the activities the girls were involved in, discuss my perceptions of the group, and discuss my opinions on needed changes or improvements.

I understand that this interview is *voluntary*—I do not have to take part if I do not want to. There will be no penalty for not taking part and my standing as a group leader will not be affected in any way by my decision. There is a risk that certain questions may make me uncomfortable. I have been told that in order to prevent this, I may stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer a question. This interview is *confidential*—my name will not be used in any summary or report.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding the purposes and procedures of this program. I have been told that if I have any additional questions or concerns, I may call Amy Detgen at (207) 626-5003. If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may contact Susan Vines, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at USM at (207) 780-4108 or svines@usm.maine.edu. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
MUSKIE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
NO LIMITS FOR GIRLS
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM**

My daughter has been asked by the Muskie School of Public Service to participate in the evaluation of the No Limits for Girls project. I have been told that the purpose of the evaluation is to determine the effectiveness of the girls' groups.

I have been told that, to participate in this evaluation, my daughter will be asked to fill out a questionnaire about her perceptions of the group and what she has learned. The questionnaire is *voluntary*—if she does not want to complete the questionnaire, she does not have to. There is no penalty for not completing the questionnaire, and her participation in the group will not be affected in any way by this decision. She will be free to stop completing the questionnaire at any time or to skip any questions she does not want to answer. The questionnaire is *confidential*—no names will be used in any sort of report that is published.

My daughter will also be asked to participate in a focus group discussion about her experiences in the group. I understand that this information will be collected in order to look at the impact the groups have on girls. The focus group is *voluntary*—if she does not want to take part in the focus group, she does not have to. There is no penalty for not taking part in the discussion and her participation in her group will not be affected in any way by this decision. The focus group is *confidential*—privacy of participants will be protected and their names will not be used in any sort of report that is published. There is a risk of a breach of confidentiality by a group member, and in order to prevent this, focus group participants will only use first names and will be asked not to repeat discussion comments outside the room. There is also a risk that certain questions may make the girls feel uncomfortable. In order to prevent this, the girls do not have to answer any questions they do not want to. They are free to stop participating in the discussion at any time. Should she feel very uncomfortable, she can notify the evaluator who will direct her to someone to talk with.

The focus group discussion will be tape-recorded only if *all participants agree*. The purpose of recording the discussion is to maintain accuracy of the girls' comments. If the discussion is taped, the tape will only be heard by the evaluator and will be destroyed after analysis of the results is completed. Should the tape recorder make anyone feel uncomfortable, it will not be used and will be turned off at any time during the discussion at anyone's request.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding the purposes and procedures of this program. I have been told that if I have any additional questions or concerns, I may call Amy Detgen at (207) 626-5003. If I have any questions about my daughter's rights as a research subject, I may contact Susan Vines, Chair of the Institutional Review Board at USM at (207) 780-4108 or svines@usm.maine.edu.

Parents and Guardians: Please enter your daughter's name and answer questions 1 and 2 below, checking yes or no for both the questionnaire and focus group sections. Please return this slip to the No Limits for Girls group leader. Keep the second copy for your records.

CHILD'S NAME

1. Questionnaire

_____ Yes, my daughter has my permission to fill out the questionnaire.

_____ No, I do not want my daughter to fill out the questionnaire.

2. Focus Group

_____ Yes, my daughter has my permission to participate in the focus group discussion.

_____ No, I do not want my daughter to participate in the focus group discussion.

SIGNATURE of Parent or Legal Guardian

DATE

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE
MUSKIE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE
NO LIMITS FOR GIRLS
YOUTH CONSENT FORM**

I have been asked by the Muskie School of Public Service to take part in an evaluation of the No Limits for Girls project. I have been told that the purpose for the evaluation is to find out how effective girls' groups are. This evaluation is made up of two parts: a **questionnaire** and a **focus group discussion**.

I have been asked to fill out a questionnaire about my experiences in the group. This questionnaire is completely voluntary—I do not have to fill it out if I don't want to. Choosing not to fill it out will in no way affect my relationship with the group, the group leaders or the school. I can skip any questions I don't want to answer. **My privacy will be protected—my name will not appear anywhere on the questionnaire.**

I have also been asked to take part in a focus group discussion about my experiences in the group. I understand that this information will be collected in order to look at the impact the groups have on girls. This discussion is voluntary—I do not have to take part if I do not want to, and I can stop taking part at any time. Choosing to not participate will in no way affect my relationship with the group, the group leaders, or the school. If any questions make me feel uncomfortable, I do not have to answer them. If I feel very uncomfortable I may tell the researcher, who will connect me with someone to talk to.

In order to prevent anyone from repeating comments after the discussion, all focus group members will be asked not to repeat anything outside of the room. **My privacy will be protected and my name will not be used in any manner.**

I have been told that the discussion will be tape recorded only if all girls agree. If the tape recorder is used, it will only be used by the researcher to remember what we said. I have been told that I can state that I don't want the discussion to be taped and it will not be. I can ask that the tape be turned off at any time.

I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I wish regarding this evaluation. If I have any additional questions about the evaluation, I may call Amy Detgen at (207) 626-5003. If I have any questions about my rights as a research subject, I may call Susan Vines at (207) 780-4108. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form.

*Please write your name below and answer questions 1 and 2, checking yes or no for **both** the questionnaire and the focus group sections. Sign your name at the bottom.*

NAME

1. Questionnaire

_____ Yes, I would like to fill out the questionnaire.

_____ No, I do not want to fill out the questionnaire.

2. Focus Group

_____ Yes, I would like to take part in the focus group discussion.

_____ No, I would not like to participate in the focus group discussion.

SIGNATURE

DATE

No Limits for Girls Questionnaire

Girls' groups like the one you have participated in are taking place across Southern Maine. We are asking all of the girls in the groups for information on what kinds of things they've learned, as well as what they liked and didn't like about being part of their group. This information is *confidential* and *voluntary*. Your answers will help us better understand girls' needs and will help us develop more effective groups in the future.

1. What is your age? _____

2. The following questions concern how your group got along together and how you felt as part of that group.

Please read the following statements and place an X in the box that best describes how much you agree with the statement.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
a. I liked being part of this group.					
b. I felt physically safe at group meetings.					
c. I felt emotionally safe at group meetings.					
d. I felt like I could talk openly in front of the group.					
e. I don't think I would have said the same things to this group if boys were present.					
f. I trust the other girls in my group.					
g. I trust the leaders of the group.					
h. I see the group leaders as mentors/role models.					
i. I feel that I contributed something to the group.					
j. I felt respected by the group.					
k. Different cultures/backgrounds were valued by the group.					
l. I had a say in planning/choosing what our group did (activities, discussion topics).					
m. This group had a positive impact on me.					

3. The next questions concern what your group talked about together.

Please read the following statements and place an X in the box that best describes how much your group discussed these topics.

	A Lot	A Little Bit	Not at All	Don't Know
a. Our group discussed abuse (physical, emotional or sexual).				
b. Our group discussed abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs.				
c. Our group discussed spirituality.				
d. Our group discussed emotional/mental health.				

4. The next questions concern what you learned as a result of the group.

Please read the following statements and place an X in the box that best describes how much you learned about these topics. If your group did *not* have a discussion about the topic, check the “We didn’t talk about this” box.

	A Lot	A Little Bit	Not at All	Don't Know	We Didn't Talk About This
a. I learned examples of women role models (from the past or present).					
b. I learned about girls’ bodies and development.					
c. I learned about pregnancy and parenting skills.					
d. I learned about contraception.					
e. I learned about how society and culture send messages to girls about sexual behavior.					
f. I learned about safe sex and sexually transmitted diseases.					
g. I learned about self-esteem.					
h. I learned ways to change how I feel about myself (like myself more, improve my self-image).					
i. I learned about the importance of healthy relationships in my life.					
j. I learned how I can change my part in unhealthy relationships (say “no” to people I love)					
k. I learned about sexism.					
l. I learned ways our group could contribute to eliminating sexism in the community.					

5. Of what you learned in the group, which from the question 4 table was most important to you? Write the letter (a-l) in the space below.

6. Some things may or may not have changed for you as a result of being part of the group. Please circle your answer for each of the following.

- a. Since being in the group, do you like yourself....
 - 1. more
 - 2. less
 - 3. the same

- b. Since being in the group, do you like your body....
 - 1. more
 - 2. less
 - 3. the same

- c. Since being in the group, do you trust others....
 - 1. more
 - 2. less
 - 3. the same

- d. Since being in the group, are you confident....
 - 1. more
 - 2. less
 - 3. the same

The following questions are specific to your group's meetings.

7. The length of time (number of weeks) the group met was:

- a. too short
- b. just right
- c. too long

8. The number of meetings I missed was: _____

9. I would be part of this group if it continues.

- a. Yes
- b. No

10. I would join the group if it lasted for the whole school year.

- a. Yes
- b. No

11. The following table lists things that your group talked about together. Please rate your group's discussions on these topics by placing an X in the box that best describes your opinion of the discussion.

	Excellent	Good	Neutral	Fair	Poor	I Didn't Attend
a. insight						
b. creativity						
c. independence						
d. humor						
e. relationships						
f. morality						
g. initiative						

12. Which of a-f was the most important discussion? _____

Why?

13. The group would have been better if:

14. The best part about the group was:

Thank you for your input!

Interview with Group Leaders

1. In your opinion, how successful was your group? Did the group make a difference for the girls? Why?
2. How important was the gender-specific component of the program?
 - a. Were girls able to talk about difficult/embarrassing issues? Would they have if boys were there?
 - b. Was there camaraderie between group members? Would there have been if boys were there?
3. How did the No Limits for Girls training influence your curriculum development? Was there anything that stuck with you personally or professionally that guided the group? What did you factor into or drop from your group's curriculum?
4. How important is it that schools are involved in gender-specific programs for female offenders? Should the groups continue to be run through the schools?
5. What activity/discussion worked particularly well? Why? What would you change, add or drop in the future?
6. What is your opinion on the time frame of your group? Should the number of weeks for group meetings increase or decrease? How often or for how long of a time period would you hold a group?
7. What more do girls need? What would you ideally like to do with a group and what would you need (funding, resources) to make this happen?
8. How would school personnel best be reached to promote gender-specific programs for girls? How could we get schools to become more involved?

Focus Group Questions

1. What kind of impact did this group have? (Was it positive? Negative? Why?) Do groups like these help girls? How?
2. How would the group have been different had boys been a part of it? Would group members have been able to ask the same questions or say the same things about subjects like sex, pregnancy or girls' bodies?
3. Aside from group meetings, do girls have other "girls-only" space? How significant is it for girls to have space for themselves?
4. Did group members trust each other? Do group members trust people more now after being in this group? Do the members have a group of girls they can depend on?
5. What did the group think of the group leaders? Did the members like them? Could the members trust them? Did the group see them as role models?
6. Are boys treated differently than girls? Do boys get more privileges? How could a group like this improve things?
7. Did the group value the differences of group members? Would this be a safe environment for people of all races, ethnicities, classes, sexual orientations?
8. Did group members have a say in what the group did? Did group members get to do what they wanted? What specifically would group members have done differently?
9. Think about a time in the past when a girl you know has gotten into trouble (in school, with the law, etc.) What might have prevented her from getting in trouble? Would a group like this help? Will groups like this one help prevent other girls from getting into trouble?
10. The Juvenile Justice Advisory Group is a group that has money to create girls groups like this one. If this group could say one thing to convince them that this is or isn't a good idea, what would the group say? What would the group say to show the importance of this program?

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Madeleine Thibeault, Erin Hixon, Caroline Macdonald and the Education Committee of the Girls Collaborative, Jay Pennell, Susan Levine, Clara Porter, Donna Childs, Kristin Chandler, Mary Ann Ditalis, Nancy Fenney-Lorenzen, Jo Ann Martin, Annie Levine, Heather Jamison, Betti Fortin, Candy Price, and all the girls who participated in the groups for their help with the project.

Special thanks to Deborah Rafnell and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, which provided the funding for this project.