

A MEMORIAL

REQUESTING THE CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES DEPARTMENT TO CONVENE A TASK FORCE TO DEVELOP A SUSTAINABLE PLAN FOR A CONTINUUM OF GENDER-RESPONSIVE SERVICES AND PROGRAMS FOR GIRLS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

WHEREAS, girls in the juvenile justice system in the state face many complex issues that differ from those facing boys in the juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, the office of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention in the United States department of justice reports that girls now comprise nearly thirty percent of all juvenile arrests in such categories as assault, drug abuse and property crimes; and

WHEREAS, the intervention team of the Bernalillo county girls probation unit reports that the number of girls in the juvenile justice system in Bernalillo county reflects a national trend of increasing numbers of girls entering the delinquency system; and

WHEREAS, gender-specific challenges and life circumstances faced by girls in the juvenile justice system in New Mexico and in the nation include a history of sexual, emotional and physical abuse and associated mental health needs, promiscuous behavior, running away, increased risk of pregnancy and involvement with child protective agencies; and

WHEREAS, a disproportionate number of girls in the juvenile justice system are girls in cultural minorities; and

WHEREAS, national studies verify that these challenges and life circumstances create a strong likelihood that girls in the juvenile justice system will become a future burden upon jails, prisons and the child and adult welfare systems; and

WHEREAS, studies also confirm that girls differ from boys in offense patterns; life and family circumstances; and learning and communication styles, needs and strengths; therefore, they require different services, treatment and environments for their rehabilitation; and

WHEREAS, the national institute of corrections recognizes that gender-responsive services and programs are necessary to achieve the goal of appropriate intervention for girls in the juvenile justice system; and

WHEREAS, the children, youth and families department recognizes the need for gender-responsive treatment and believes that full implementation of a continuum of gender-responsive services and programs will require collaboration between the state, experts in the field and stakeholders;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the children, youth and families department be requested to convene a task force to develop a sustainable plan for a continuum of gender-

responsive services and programs for girls in the juvenile justice system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force include representatives from the staff of the children, youth and families department, who have experience working directly with girls in the juvenile justice system, juvenile probation services and youth transitional services; the intervention team of the Bernalillo county girls probation unit; staff of the county juvenile detention system, who have experience working directly with girls; the children's court; the public defender department; a representative recommended by the New Mexico district attorney's association; the women's justice project; a provider of gender-responsive services; and two girls previously served by the juvenile justice system who have successfully transitioned into positive adult lives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force conduct a review of current risk assessment tools, existing treatment options for gender-responsive services and programs and best-practice models for implementing and sustaining gender-responsive services and programs in the juvenile justice system; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force develop a comprehensive strategic plan for implementation of a continuum of gender-specific services and programs for girls in the juvenile justice system in the state; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the task force present a report of its findings and recommendations to the interim legislative courts, corrections and justice committee by November 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of children, youth and families and to other organizations represented in the proposed task force.