

## **Youth Pathways to Placement: The Influence of Gender, Mental Health Need and Trauma on Confinement in the Juvenile Justice System.**

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## **Youth Pathways to Placement: The Influence of Gender, Mental Health Need and Trauma on Confinement in the Juvenile Justice System.**

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### **Source**

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### **Abstract**

Although the juvenile crime rate has generally declined, the involvement of girls in the juvenile justice system has been increasing. Possible explanations for this gender difference include the impact of exposure to trauma and mental health needs on developmental pathways and the resulting influence of youth's involvement in the justice system. This study examined the influence of gender, mental health needs and trauma on the risk of out-of-home placement for juvenile offenders. The sample included youth referred to three urban juvenile probation departments in Texas between January 1, 2007 and December 31, 2008 and who received state-mandated mental health screening (N = 34,222; 30.1 % female). The analysis revealed that, for both genders, elevated scores on the seven factor-analytically derived subscales of a mental health screening instrument (Alcohol and Drug Use, Depressed-Anxious, Somatic Complaints, Suicidal Ideation, Thought Disturbance, and Traumatic Experiences), especially related to past traumatic experiences, influenced how deeply juveniles penetrated the system. The findings suggest that additional research is needed to determine the effectiveness of trauma interventions and the implementation of trauma informed systems for youth involved with the juvenile justice system.

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