

Senator Grassley's Questions for the Record
Yasmin Vafa of Rights4Girls

1. Please elaborate further on some best practices used by judges who encounter runaway girls, especially when the runaway doesn't see herself as a human trafficking victim and won't agree to return home or go to a shelter.

When judges encounter girls in their courtrooms who are there for running away, it is critical for them to look behind the charge. When possible, judges should ask the child themselves what their reasons are for running. Judges should also be mindful that if a child is running from abuse within the home and the parent is in the courtroom, that child will be unlikely to disclose abuse. If a girl is unresponsive in the courtroom, the judge should engage with those working with that child to decipher what it is that the girl was either running *from* or running *to*. Our research has shown that the majority of girls in the juvenile justice system have past histories of physical and/or sexual violence.

Considering this data together with the fact that one of the most common offenses for girls in the juvenile justice system is running away, suggests that many of these girls are either running from abuse and/or running to safety. In some cases, trafficked girls may be running to an exploiter. Juvenile judges should make every effort to employ a child-centered, collaborative approach to discern exactly why a girl might be running and work with the child's advocates, defense counsel, prosecutor, child welfare worker (when relevant), family, and community-based providers to help address the underlying reasons for that child's behavior. This child-centered approach helps foster greater communication between the child, her providers, and the court, reduces the risk of revictimization of survivors of violence and exploitation by ensuring that the child is connected to a multitude of supports and services regardless of whether she views herself as a victim in need of services or not. By leveraging the collective resources of various agencies, the team can make placement recommendations to the judge that take into account any immediate safety concerns as well as the unique circumstances of each individual child.

2. Which community-based options are most likely to achieve positive outcomes with runaway girls, and why? Do we have an objective way to measure the impact of the various programs that exist?

Whether a runaway girl is a victim of trafficking or of some other type of violence or trauma, her needs will be best met in the community rather than in detention, where she risks further trauma as well as a juvenile record that may create future barriers to stability. An ideal program should be strengths-based, gender-responsive, trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate, and culturally responsive. Research over the last several years has shown that youth who are referred to such community-based programs have much better long-term outcomes and lower recidivism rates, than youth who were

referred to detention. Not only are these measures more cost-effective, but they yield better results because girls are able to access therapeutic interventions, do not have their education disrupted, have continued access to their families and other support systems, and are not subjected to harmful or traumatizing conditions of confinement.

Senator Grassley's Questions for the Record
Jake Horowitz of The Pew Charitable Trusts

1. Can you identify some specific challenges faced by rural states, if any, in meeting the requirements under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act as well as the ways federal regulators have contributed to these challenges through the adoption of implementing regulations?

2. Can you describe some of the best alternatives, other than juvenile detention, on which judges should rely when they encounter juveniles who run away from home, break curfew, skip school, or engage in underage drinking? Which of these strategies have proven to be the most effective in states that worked with Pew to implement reforms? What about when they violate a court order in regard to these kinds of violations?

Senator Grassley's Questions for the Record
David Kuker, Iowa Department of Human Rights

1. Should the core mandates or the state formula grants program under the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act be modified, and if so how?
2. Can you tell us more about the specific efforts that Iowa has made to reduce disproportionate minority confinement?
3. Is there adequate oversight by OJJDP with respect to states' use of federal grant funding?
4. Can you elaborate further on the specific challenges faced by rural states in meeting the requirements under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act as well as the ways federal regulators have contributed to these challenges through the adoption of implementing regulations?
5. Should federal resources for juvenile justice be devoted to programs that promote rehabilitation or accountability or both?