



STRONGER VOICES... BETTER LIVES

Moving Women and Girls Forward

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A 2012 Research Project of the Women's Giving Alliance



WOMEN'S GIVING ALLIANCE

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Women's Giving Alliance (WGA) was established in 2001, as an initiative of The Community Foundation. Its mission:

“To inspire the women of Northeast Florida to be strategic philanthropists and to improve the lives of women and girls through collective giving.”



In its first 10 years, WGA has made grants totaling more than \$3 million to 37 agencies and has created an endowment of \$1.2 million.

WGA welcomes all interested women from the five-county Northeast Florida area.



ABOUT THE RESEARCH

This study, *Stronger Voices... Better Lives: Moving women and girls forward*, is in celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Women's Giving Alliance. It updates the status of women and girls described in WGA's 2004 study, *Voices Heard... Women & Girls Speak*. And, it outlines new perspectives.

The intentions of the study and focus of WGA's follow-up are to:

- Inform WGA and other donors so that their grants are targeted toward areas of greatest need and potential for impact.
- Influence the resources, services, collaborations and support provided by community-based organizations, social service agencies and public sector organizations.
- Provide information that will assist advocacy efforts designed to enhance the lives of women and girls, and by doing so, improve our communities.

This Executive Summary of *Stronger Voices... Better Lives* is supplemented by further detail and links to data and resources available at www.womensgivingalliance.org. See the back cover of this report for further information about what is on the website.

Included in this summary:

- Overarching themes — challenges and changes that cut across topics.
- Highlights of what's better, what needs more attention and what has emerged as new issues since the 2004 report.

The study has captured information and perspectives in the following ways:

- Seven round-table discussions with 77 representatives of 65 agencies that collectively serve thousands of women and girls.
- Questionnaires — one for women, one for girls — to capture the views of the clients those agencies serve. We heard the voices of 175 of their clients.
- Video-taped conversations with providers and clients.
- Collection and analysis of archival, quantitative and qualitative data with a particular emphasis on gender-specific information and, when possible, information by Northeast Florida county.



EMERGING ISSUES

Since WGA's 2004 research, these new issues have emerged, along with one commonality: to address them will put increased pressure on already taxed mental health services.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Victims of human trafficking are subjected to fraud or coercion for the purpose of sexual exploitation or forced labor. Florida is one of the top three destinations for human trafficking with more than one half the victims brought to the U.S. Runaways are a target, and the increase in homelessness has led to more domestic child sex trafficking. The needs of trafficking victims are similar to those of domestic violence victims. The Northeast Florida Human Trafficking Task Force is an active advocate for addressing the issue and needs of victims.

POSTPARTUM DEPRESSION

Postpartum depression is the number one complication after childbirth. The risk is exacerbated by low socioeconomic status, teen pregnancy, health problems and marital/relationship difficulties. While this disorder is highly detectable and treatable, very few services for the vulnerable population are available in Northeast Florida. Unaddressed, a variety of impacts affect the mother. Additionally, the long-term impacts on children include developmental delays and behavioral problems.



SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media provide great promise to reach and teach youth and adults on an array of topics. They also have the potential dangers of online predators, cyber bullying and "sexting." The concerns of agencies on this issue were reinforced with data from the 2011 Florida Youth Risk Behavior Survey, which reports girls being both cyber bullying victims and perpetrators more often than boys. Many school-based and after-school programs are working to address the issue.

WOMEN VETERANS

While all veterans face significant hurdles in adapting to civilian life, women experience several "homecoming" issues in disproportion to their male peers. Among them: higher rates of joblessness, homelessness (women are the fastest growing segment of the homeless veteran population), PTSD related to sexual trauma and other health issues. All have put pressure on available Veterans Administration resources not accustomed to gender-specific demands. The Wounded Warrior Project, Jacksonville University, FSCJ and UNF provide valuable services for veterans. However, more attention is needed to address the unique needs of women veterans.



WHAT'S BETTER

Despite the challenges facing women and girls, a few bright spots demonstrate the power of bringing the right resources to bear on an issue. Each of the following provides successes to be replicated as well as recognition of more to be done.

BUSINESS OWNERSHIP

Women-owned businesses in Northeast Florida are growing at twice the rate of all businesses and have done so for nearly three decades. While 33% of all local businesses are owned by women, they account for only 11% of all revenues. Most of these women-owned businesses are relatively small and have been operating for five years or fewer. However, 13% of Northeast Florida's women-owned businesses gross more than \$1 million in annual sales (compared to 3% nationally).

In comparison to WGA's 2004 findings, the resources have increased for business planning, educational and mentoring services to support the growth and success of women-owned businesses, particularly through the Jacksonville Women's Business Center.

WOMEN-OWNED BUSINESSES
In Northeast Florida from 2002 and 2006

County	2002	2006	% Change
Baker	197	265	+35%
Clay	3,155	3,524	+11.7%
Duval	17,733	22,503	+26.9%
Nassau	1,431	1,959	+36.9%
St. Johns	3,626	4,507	+24.3%

Source: "The Economic Impact of Women-Owned Businesses in Northeast Florida," Jacksonville Women's Business Center, November 2007

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

"The education level of a mother is the key influence on the health outcomes of her and her family and predicts long-term poverty." — Florida Dept. of Health

Women

The educational attainment of women, ages 25 and older, has increased in every Northeast Florida county since the 2000 Census. Some of this shift is due to migration of more highly educated women into the community, and some to

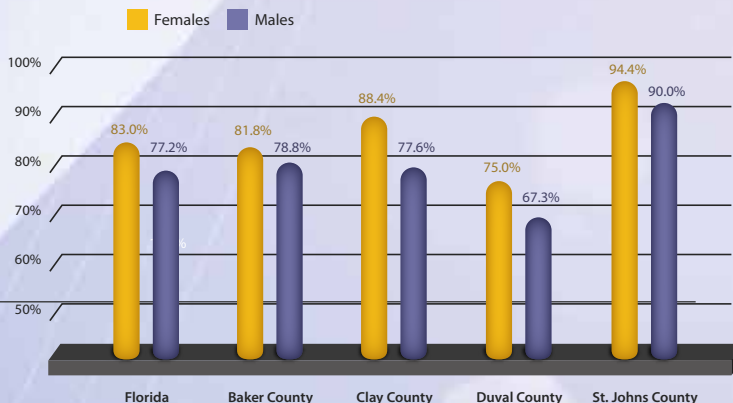
the increase of women attending and graduating from colleges and universities. Among 18-24-year-olds, more females than males are enrolled in college or graduate school. However, only 27% of female students nationally are in the areas of engineering and computer science — both fields with significant earning potential and job opportunities.

But some women are not experiencing this progress. Many, particularly poor women, failed in what was then a failing education system. They, along with immigrant women, need access to adult education (literacy, math, computer skills) as the basis for pursuing job skills training and retraining programs. Funding to support adult education continues to decline while the demand has increased. In addition, it requires a great deal of discipline and focus for adults to stay the course in remedial programs where progress is often slow while the demands of daily living continue. FSCJ's Pathways program has implemented a case manager approach to help address these realities, as well as link core literacy curriculum topics to job skills. The Women's Center of Jacksonville's Expanded Horizons and FSCJ's Challenge Program tailor efforts to meet the unique needs of adult women.

Girls

Every Northeast Florida school district is improving its high school graduation rate, with females graduating at a better rate than males. Two other measures predict future educational attainment — the dropout and FCAT passing rates. Females have lower dropout rates than their male counterparts. Girls perform better in all FCAT testing, with girls scoring significantly higher than boys in the early years. However, by 10th grade, girls score only slightly better than boys. Girls, in the surveys conducted for this research, see high school graduation as a certainty for them and have aspirations and plans for college.

GRADUATION RATES 2010 – 2011 School Year



Source: Florida Department of Education



OVERARCHING THEMES

Economic challenges impact those needing services.

- The last few years of economic distress have resulted in an increasing number of female heads of households and children living in poverty.
- Clients with a new profile are increasing: women who are well-educated, had a good job but now, with their families, face job loss and/or homelessness.

“I have been employed since I graduated from high school in 1982. Since my layoff I’ve lost everything: my home, my vehicle, my pets. I just want to be a productive member of society again.”

— Current resident in a homeless shelter.

Agencies are pushed to do more with less, be more creative.

- Given the complexity of issues, agencies have to address the “whole person.” Due to the ever-present funding challenges, agencies cannot add more services. Increasingly, they reach out to others to collaborate.
- Agencies acknowledge that they are not well-equipped to address the needs of the new profile of client.

Gender-responsive services for girls have increased; those for women have not.

- A growing body of work about gender-responsive programming addresses the unique developmental needs and strengths of girls. Some local programs are designed specifically for girls, and many of those that provide co-educational programming recognize gender-specific differences they address and accommodate through their activities. The First Coast Girls Initiative serves as a valuable resource for agencies to learn about gender-responsive programming, services and ways to partner.
- Despite the evidence that the education, health and well-being of a woman have a ripple effect on her family and the community, the resources for women remain the same as in the past — primarily women’s health services and domestic violence shelters — and even those are limited in their reach. Needs for mental health counseling, adult education and job training resources designed for adult women go largely unaddressed.

“Women need more support as the systemic and personal challenges create added stress to women who have minimal coping skills and inadequate ways to work through seemingly overwhelming challenges.” — Agency roundtable session participant.

Many needs cannot be addressed with a program. Systems needs to change — transportation, education, childcare, foster care, insurance, housing, public policy and funding.

- Transportation was named the highest priority need by agencies and those they serve. Duval County’s public transportation system is inadequate; and outlying counties have no public transportation other than what might be provided by a local council on aging.
- Access to affordable housing was also high on the list of needs. Since the 2008-09 recession, over one-quarter of all renter households now spend more than half their income on housing related costs.
- Understanding the importance of advocacy — taking your case to the public, and to public officials — is growing among agencies and funders.

And, yet, hope and a positive outlook abound. Despite the many challenges facing women, girls and the communities in which they live, the WGA research team was struck by:

- The incredible passion and patience of agency staff who provide much-needed services.
- The resilience of women who are struggling to get by. As typified by the comments of two women from a local shelter:

“I love life and a temporary set back is just another opportunity for a permanent breakthrough.”

“I will keep the faith and will not let anything get in my way of living, having a job and my own place.”

- The optimism expressed in the goals of the girls whom we surveyed — here are just a few:

“Become valedictorian of my class, get straight A’s, go to a good college.” (Age 16)

“Be a successful, healthy woman.” (Age 11)

“Play in the WNBA and own my own women’s basketball shoe company.”

(Age 14)

“I want to be a judge.” (Age 10)



INFANT MORTALITY

As the result of a 2008 Study by JCCI and the ongoing efforts by Northeast Florida's Healthy Start, the commitment to reduce the area's infant mortality rate has resulted in all Northeast Florida counties posting decreases. However, in Northeast Florida counties, the overall infant mortality rates are still the highest in the state with the exception of one segment, nonwhite infant mortality rates, which dipped below statewide rates for two consecutive years. The primary drivers of infant mortality remain the same: health/medical history of the mother; spacing of pregnancies; late or no prenatal care; births to women age 19 or younger, and stressors such as abuse, poverty, education level and access to health resources.

In addition to implementing more community-based health resources to reach women, new approaches to improve birth outcomes include the use of peer educators, and intergenerational work with moms and their daughters to break the potential cycle of poor birth outcomes.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Florida and Northeast Florida juvenile delinquency figures have declined in all major categories. The number of girls in Florida committed to residential facilities has declined faster than boys, as well as the number of female youth charged with a felony offense. Misdemeanor offenses, 47% of all referrals in the state, have dropped. DJJ Secretary Wansley Waters sees this latter trend as "...a tremendous opportunity to work with community leaders and law enforcement to keep delinquent youth from progressing deeper into the system and to help prevent other children from committing offenses in the first place."

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency: Center for Girls and Young Women is headquartered in Jacksonville. Its research, demonstration projects and the work of the "Justice for Girls: Duval County Initiative" have produced progress locally. Partnerships have formed with the Department of Juvenile Justice, the local Detention Center and the Jacksonville Assessment Center to implement gender-responsive training for staff and identify new ways to address justice-involved girls. The rate of girls from Duval County entering the system, once the highest per capita in the state, has declined.

"What is happening here is setting the standard, is a model for making justice-involved girls a priority."

— Lawanda Ravoira, NCCD Center for Girls & Young Women

More work to be done: African-American girls remain over-represented in the system; there are no local residential placement facilities, and no reentry services for girls who return to this area after serving time in residential placement elsewhere in the state.



WHAT NEEDS ATTENTION

Agencies at the roundtable sessions hosted by WGA and the follow-up secondary research identified the following issues that merit particular attention.

MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING

While mental illness constitutes 15% of the global cost of all diseases (more than cancers combined), it receives limited attention and resources. Florida as a whole and Northeast Florida are no different:

- Florida is the 4th largest state and ranks 49th in per capita adult mental health/substance abuse spending.
- Northeast Florida receives the lowest per capita mental health resources in the state.
- A 2006 study on the status of the local mental health system concluded: "the mental health system is fragmented, unresponsive to client needs and serves less than 20% of those with even the most severe mental illnesses."
- The cost of services shuts out those who are uninsured, and many private plans provide limited coverage.

The drivers of mental health needs in women and girls are: childhood abuse, domestic violence, sexual violence, postpartum depression, hormonal changes and stress. Women are two times more likely to suffer from depression than men. Needs that are left unattended result not only in more difficult cases to address, but in substance abuse (self-medicating), justice-system involvement, and a continuing cycle of abuse due to lack of coping skills. The needs have been intensified by the last three years of economic uncertainty. This has resulted in increased demands for mental health counseling and long waiting lists.

"There are a lot more resources available for children than adults. People think that women should have their own insurance and the resources to meet their own needs, and that's just not the case."

— Denise Marzullo, Executive Director of Mental Health America of Northeast Florida.

A bright spot on the horizon is The System of Care Initiative (Kids N'Care). This \$9 million, six-year federally-funded initiative will help transform Duval County mental health services into a system of care to better meet the needs of children and youth with serious emotional disturbance and their families.





PHYSICAL HEALTH

Adolescent Girls

Adolescents tend to slip through the cracks of the health care delivery system. Research has shown that teens are more likely to use and do better in clinics that offer a comprehensive, interdisciplinary model of physical, behavioral and reproductive health care that is explicitly designed to welcome adolescents and respond to their particular needs.

The quality of reproductive health resources particularly needs improving. The 2011 Youth Risk Behavior Survey for Duval County indicates 35% of public high school females are sexually active. Northeast Florida's extremely high rates of sexually transmitted infections and the teen birth rate (while declining) remain the highest in Florida and the nation.

Healthy Start's Teen Pregnancy Task Force is implementing a five-point plan to address these issues. Among the critical sources of input was listening to teens, who report that they get most of their information about sex from the media (often glamorizing teen pregnancy), friends, internet, family and but little in school health class. Teens expressed they wanted parents to be: "open with kids and talk about the issue."

Women — Access and Affordability

Due to its size, Duval County gets attention and resources to address an array of needs. However, the WGA research effort found particular difficulties facing those who live in the other four Northeast Florida counties (Baker, Clay, Nassau and St. Johns), particularly when it comes to affordable and accessible health care resources. Each of these counties is designated as a Health Professional Shortage Area,

and Baker is considered Medically Underserved. For low-income and/or uninsured women this results in few, if any, OB/GYN physicians who accept Medicaid; few clinics or other resources that specialize in women's health or primary care resources with that expertise.

Given these realities, a few clinics have emerged. The Way in Clay County, Wild Flower in St. Johns County, Barnabas Center Women's Clinic in Nassau, and Healthy Start in Baker County along with their partners are trying to fill the gap.

“Demand for services has doubled or tripled in the last three years in Nassau County. When women don't have access to health care, they will often neglect their own health and their own needs to take care of their children. Then if they become really ill, they can't work, they're at risk of losing their jobs and the whole family ends up in our Crisis Assistance Center because they can't pay the rent, can't pay the utilities, they can't even buy food. It becomes a vicious cycle.”

— Wanda Lanier, Executive Director of Barnabas Center, Nassau County

Seniors — The “Silver Tsunami”

Over the next 15-20 years Northeast Florida, as is the case nationally, will experience a significant increase in seniors. Women comprise the majority of the senior population and are living longer.

- The major issue facing elders is isolation and lack of socialization leading to mental health needs.
- Many older seniors are frail and need assistance at home on a range of needs — health, home maintenance, repair and financial management, as well as transportation.
- An increasing number of elderly are taken advantage of by their children with abuse and exploitation — a growing problem.
- Many healthcare professionals are not trained in geriatrics, and the field is not attracting enough physicians to address the current and growing needs.

Not only are women the majority of seniors, but 80% of caregivers are women who often are elderly themselves. Caregivers report suffering from stress, anxiety and are themselves depressed.

Northeast Florida is fortunate to have excellent, although strapped, agencies and resources for seniors. The Community Foundation has established an ongoing initiative to strengthen the collaboration of senior-serving organizations.

A GUIDE TO STRONGER VOICES... BETTER LIVES ON THE WEB

Go to **www.womensgivingalliance.org** to find links to archival, quantitative and qualitative data with a particular emphasis on gender-specific information and, when available, information by Northeast Florida county. The topics covered:

- The voices of women, girls and the agencies that serve them
- Gender-responsive approaches
- Demographics
- Economic autonomy
- Educational attainment
- Family
- Justice-system involvement
- Mental health and well-being—girls
- Mental health and well-being—women
- Physical health—girls
- Physical health—women
- Seniors
- Victimization
- Voices revisited—wishes for the future

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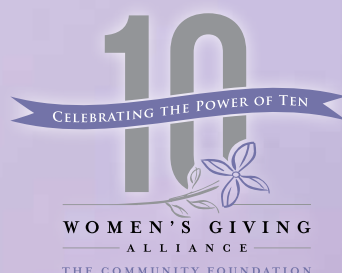
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