# THERE HAS TO BE

# ANOTHER OPTION

Creative Disposition Advocacy for Girls Facing Residential Placement

**Juvenile Defense Attorneys + Social Workers**

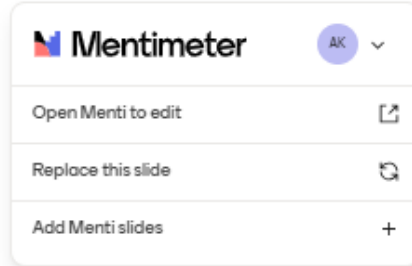
Presenters: Ashley Kogan Weed, Alexandra Anderes, Mykisha Atisele

# Who do we have in the room - attorney or social worker?

Responses can be up to 200 characters and will appear here.

You can group responses if you get more than 10.

Turn on voting so people can flag their favorite responses.

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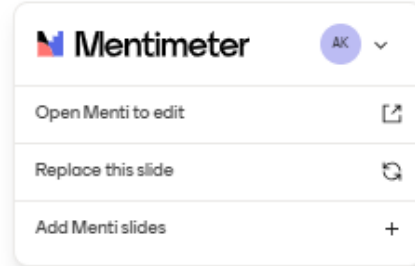
# Where are you from?

Responses can be up to 200 characters and will appear here.

You can group responses if you get more than 10.

Turn on voting so people can flag their favorite responses.

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# What are your disposition options for your clients?

Responses can be up to 200 characters and will appear here.

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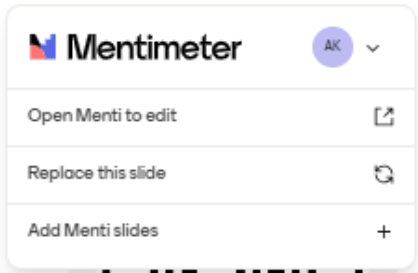
Turn on voting so people can flag their favorite responses.



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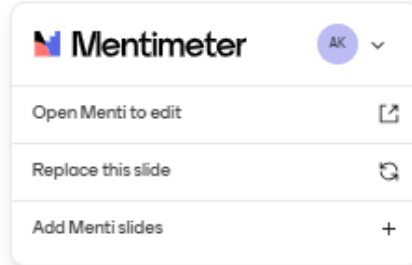
# What are some reasons that your girl clients end up going to residential?

Responses can be up to 200 characters and will appear here.

You can group responses if you get more than 10.

Turn on voting so people can flag their favorite responses.

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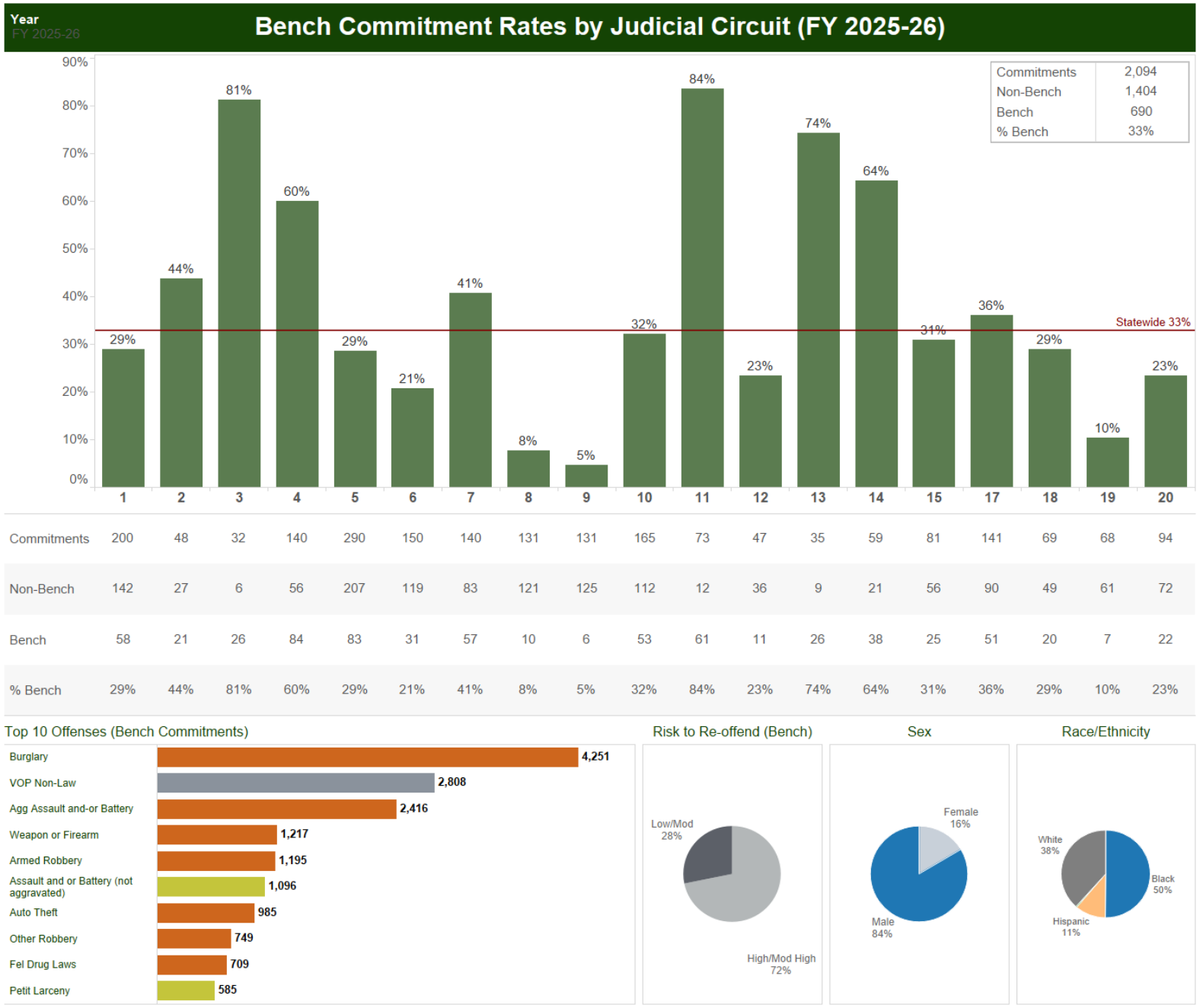
01

# THE PROBLEM

When “no other option” becomes the default answer.
It is for their protection and safety.

# Sample Look at Bench Commitments



# “Residential is the only option.”

Turn the statement into a question.

**LIMITED**

community resources

**WAITLISTS**

weeks or months

**DEFAULT**

residential becomes the answer

**The goal is not to minimize risk. It is to build a safe, individualized plan.**


Orange Regional
Juvenile Detention
Center
INVESTIGATES
WESH 2
6:15 / 86°

INSTEAD OF ASKING

## “What program has an opening?”

ASK

## “What does this girl actually need to succeed?”

Availability is a system constraint — not necessarily a treatment plan.

# Know the girl, not just the charge.

Build the disposition around the whole youth.

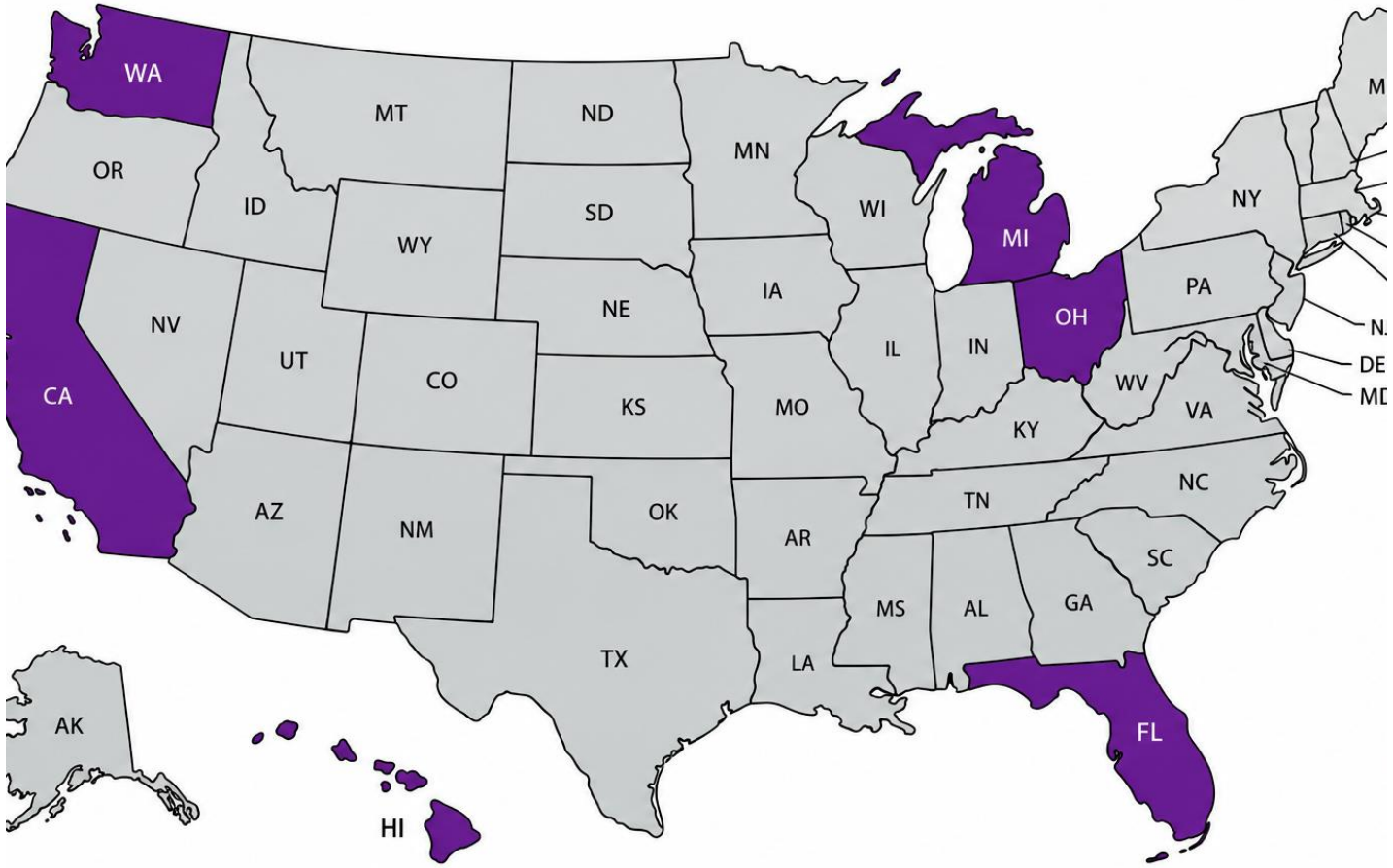


02

# BUILD THE ALTERNATIVE

A plan gives the court something concrete to say yes to.

# States where there are Girls' Specialty Courts



# Build the alternative before court.

Think in layers: people, services, structure, accountability.

1. Family supports
2. Therapy
3. School intervention
4. Mentoring ex. One more Child
5. Case management
6. Community programs
7. Faith / nonprofits
8. Safety planning

# Attorney + social worker = one plan.

Different roles. One coordinated disposition strategy.

**JUVENILE DEFENSE ATTORNEY**

Litigation
Legal framework
Disposition argument
Cross-examination
Court presentation

**SOCIAL WORKER / ADVOCATE**

Assessment
Resource identification
Family engagement
Service coordination
Stabilization plan

**ONE INDIVIDUALIZED PLAN**

# The creative disposition plan.

Give the court a plan it can understand, monitor, and enforce.

**Where will she live?**

**Who will supervise?**

**What happens after school?**

**Who provides treatment?**

**Who reports progress?**

**What happens if she struggles?**

# Sample disposition Planning Sheet

## YDAP Handout: Lesson 35 – Disposition Advocacy

ource is part of the Youth Defender Advocacy Program (YDAP) curriculum, a specialized trial advocacy training program for youth defenders.

## SAMPLE DISPOSITION PLANNING CHART

| **Framework:** Every disposition plan must account for three dimensions. **Three S's**: Status, Sleep, Schedule | | |
|---|---|---|
| **STATUS:**<br>Legal options at disposition | **SLEEP:**<br>Placement options for the client | **SCHEDULE:**<br>Conditions, requirements and programs imposed at disposition |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

03

# LITIGATE THE ALTERNATIVE

Move from “no” to “here is the plan.”

# Challenge the “no other option” narrative.

DJJ

**“There are no other options. The program will protect her from herself.”**

DEFENSE TEAM

**“Let’s look at the options we can create.”**

**The advocacy shift: from objecting to residential → presenting a workable alternative.**

# Creative disposition strategies.

Choose the combination that fits the youth — not the availability list.

1. **Delayed disposition**
2. **Suspend commitment to a program**
3. **Intensive community supervision**
4. **Wraparound services**
5. **In-home therapy**
6. **Mentoring**
7. **School-based intervention**
8. **Family preservation**
9. **Restorative justice**
10. **Structured safety plan**

# If all else fails, try, try, again : Post disposition work

**MOTION TO SUSPEND COMMITMENT AND PLACE ON PROBATION**

**COMES NOW**, the Child by and through undersigned counsel and requests this Honorable Court to suspend the commitment to a moderate risk program and place the Child on probation as allowed for under Florida Statute 985.455 (4). As grounds for this Motion, the Child states as follows:

1. The Child was committed to a moderate risk placement on August, 7, 2025.
2. The Child has been in secure detention since placement.
3. Since being placed in secure detention, the child has actively been participating in group and individual therapy.
4. The Child has started to receive services from One Child.
5. However, the Child has been unable to receive grief counseling for the recent loss of her stepfather, as Valerie's house is unable to see her while in secure detention.
6. The Child has been victimized while in secure detention, and is listed as an alleged victim in.
7. As of this filing, the Child is currently 11th on a wait list for , which would put her at a possible late December placement, which would be close to 5 months from date of commitment that it could take her to be placed.
8. According to Florida Statute 985.455( 4), "the court may, upon motion of the child or upon its own motion, within 60 days after imposition of a disposition of commitment, suspend the further execution of the disposition and place the child in a probation program upon such terms and conditions as the court may require."
9. In the alternative, if the court is not inclined to suspend the commitment and place the child on probation, the Child would respectfully ask the court to temporarily release her so she can engage in grief services.
10. All other arguments to be made Ore Tenus.

# Case study: “Meet Maya.”

## MAYA

Age: 15
Charge(s): DV batteries, battery on school board official
DJJ recommendation: Residential
Program waitlist: 6 months
Key needs: substance use, concern meeting older man at hotels, “aggression”, “not listening at home”, attendance issues, referrals

## WHAT WOULD YOU PROPOSE?

1. **What does Maya actually need?**
2. **What resources are available?**
3. **What can we create while she waits?**

# Case study: “Meet Brandy.”

Use this slide for a fictional case or anonymized client scenario.

## Brandy

Age: 17  and 11 months
Charge(s): VOCR
DJJ recommendation: Residential
Program waitlist: 7 months
Key needs: mental health, substance use, unhoused, child SA victim, dating older men to provide stability, communication issues with JPO, conflict with mom

## WHAT WOULD YOU PROPOSE?

1. **What does Brandy actually need?**
2. **What resources are available?**
3. **What can we create while she waits?**

# Case study: “Meet Nina.”

Use this slide for a fictional case or anonymized client scenario.

## NINA

Age: 16
Charge(s):GTA, VOP
DJJ recommendation: Residential
Program waitlist: 6-8 months
Key needs: substance use, grief counseling, school issues, negative peers, behavior, mental health

## WHAT WOULD YOU PROPOSE?

1. **What does Maya actually need?**
2. **What resources are available?**
3. **What can we create while she waits?**

WHY RESIDENTIAL? ↓ WHY NOT YET? ↓ HERE IS THE PLAN.

**A strong disposition argument does not just reject the recommendation.**
**It gives the court a safer, individualized alternative.**

“Give the court an option.”

# Three takeaways.

01 **Waiting in detention for months is not effective.**

02 **A lack of availability does not mean a lack of alternatives.**

03 **Creative advocacy requires a plan, not just an objection.**

# THERE HAS TO BE

# ANOTHER OPTION.

**What will you build when the system says there isn’t one?**

**Thank you!**

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This presentation was developed with assistance from ChatGPT (OpenAI) for content organization and slide design. All substantive information was reviewed and verified by the presenter.

# Resources

https://scao-connections.blogspot.com/2018/12/kent-county-girls-court-addresses.html
https://www.defendyouthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/NJDC-Disposition-Practice-Tool.pdf
https://www.americanbar.org/groups/litigation/resources/newsletters/childrens-rights/girls-juvenile-justice-system-case-for-girls-courts/
https://ccyj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/First-year-Girls-Court-Participants_Experiences-and-Challenges_Final.pdf
https://www.greenecountyohio.gov/2057/Girls-Circle
https://www.fox19.com/2025/12/11/hamilton-county-launches-ohios-first-girls-court-pilot-program/
https://www.floridabar.org/the-florida-bar-news/girls-court-serves-teenage-girls-considered-at-risk-in-duval-county/
https://www.17th.flcourts.org/2018/08/06/seventeenth-circuits-girls-court-chosen-for-national-study/
https://courts.ca.gov/programs-initiatives/collaborative-justice-courts/juvenile-collaborative-courts/girls-courtscsec-courts-overview
https://ittakesanohana.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Girls.Court-Brochure.pdf
https://digitalcommons.law.seattleu.edu/sjsj/vol13/iss3/10/

# Resources

- **Youth First Justice Co:** https://www.nokidsinprison.org/the-facts-report/
- According to **Gender Injustice: System-Level Juvenile Justice Reforms for Girls** over the past two decades, girls share of the juvenile justice system from courts through incarceration saw sizeable increases: arrests increased 45%, court caseloads 40%, detentions jumped 40%, while post-adjudication placement rose by 42%.
- The placement rate for all girls is 47 per 100,000 girls (those between ages 12 and 17). For white girls, the rate is 32 per 100,000. Native girls (134 per 100,000) are more than four times as likely as white girls to be incarcerated; African American girls (110 per 100,000) are three-and-a-half times as likely; and Latina girls (44 per 100,000) are 38% more likely.
- Though 85% of incarcerated youth are boys, girls make up a much higher proportion of those incarcerated for the lowest level offenses.
- Thirty-eight percent of youth incarcerated for status offenses (such as truancy and curfew violations) are girls.
- More than half of youth incarcerated for running away are girls.
- 
- **Reclaiming Futures:** https://www.reclaimingfutures.org/news/adolescent-girls-spotlight
- We found girls had higher rates of "harder" drug use such as cocaine, amphetamines, and heroin/opiates as compared to boys.
- The positive news is that we have seen the rates of illicit substance use significantly decrease for girls from 2008 to 2014 (26.5% versus 23.7%) and decreases in comparison to boys.
- And the proportion of overall drug arrests that involved girls was higher 2014 (20%) than at any other time since 1980.
- 
- **OJJDP:** https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/research-statistics/about-crime-data-juvenile-justice-facts/fast-facts
- Females accounted for 24 percent of the juvenile court cases that were processed in 2022.
- Overall, girls represent fifteen percent of the total juvenile residential population but represent between 30 to 50 percent of all youth in residential placement for status offenses.
- 
- **Vera: Criminal Boys and Immoral Girls** https://www.vera.org/girls-matter/criminal-boys-and-immoral-girls
- (offenses known as "immorality" or "incorrigibility") These offenses accounted for 80 percent of girls' cases in the Chicago court and only 2 percent of boys' cases as boys were usually involved in the court for larceny or other violations of laws or ordinances.
- … one survey of 1,400 children across seven jurisdictions nationwide found that 40 percent of girls in detention halls identify as LGB/TGNC, compared to 13 percent of boys.
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- **Vera: The Impact of the Previous National Status Offense Reform Efforts for Girls** https://www.vera.org/girls-matter/the-impact-of-the-previous-national-status-offense-reform-efforts-for-girls
- Nationwide, girls accounted for more than a quarter of all delinquency petitions in 2014—that is, children formally referred to court for committing a crime.
- They comprised more than 40 percent of all status offense petitions, including 55 percent of all petitions to court for running away.
- In 2013, status offenses and technical violations of probation accounted for a combined 37 percent of girls' total detentions nationwide—compared to 25 percent of boys' detentions.
- 
- **Females in the Juvenile System:** https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3965180/
- A review of later outcomes of delinquent female youth describes extreme variability in results across studies; studies included in the review indicated a 10% to 96% risk of adult arrest, a 0% to 90% risk of mental health problems, and up to a 90% rate of failing to complete high school (Pajer, 1998).
- More than half were petitioned for delinquency in their first juvenile court appearance (.59), most had multiple appearances in the court (.65), and more than half (.54) were born to caregivers at or above the median age. About a third (.34) became mothers prior to age 19.
- 