

The Case Expeditor and Girls (Toolbox Book IV – C)

The case expeditor's role in reducing the use of secure detention for girls is guided by an appreciation that the decisions made at the front door begin a trajectory of differential treatment of girls. That role is variously held in the probation department, the public defender's office, Court Appointed Special Advocate or other CBO, or is collaborative based. The individual occupying the role must have the authority to act in a way that will affect case process. To be effective in reducing unnecessary detention for girls they must be aware both of the needs of girls and the factors that work to push girls deeper into the system. There is a critical role, often coming a time when an arresting officer or probation officer is advancing the idea of detention as a means of protecting the young woman.

The expeditor must have near instantaneous communication with the local child welfare agency when a girl is under their care, or if allegations of abuse or neglect emerge at intake. The expeditor will often be the first to raise the question of whether the girl would be best served in the delinquency system at all.

Family stress and disorganization are so frequently factors in the detention of girls that the expeditor must appreciate the dynamic created by family crisis. Knowing that the anger crisis breeds is not a permanent condition, allows the expeditor to approach the family from a strength-based perspective. Employing their experience working with families and knowledge of appropriate community resources, the expeditor can reduce length of stay by demonstrating that a girl can be safely returned home. The expeditor is poised to take note of other changes in circumstance that would allow for release.

The concern expressed for a girl's safety when she is brought to detention is genuine and well meaning, though often exaggerated or misunderstood. Nevertheless, the expeditor recognizes that those concerns will indicate the types of services needed in order for the girl to realize greater safety while remaining at home. The expeditor works with the detention nursing staff to arrange needed health services or follow-ups in the community. They may set appointments for drug and alcohol assessments and counseling, refer to family mediation and connect girls to trauma counseling or to school programs. Each of these efforts increases the likelihood that the girl and her family will take advantage of transitional services.

The role of the expeditor is on going in nature. Points of potential delay, such as the wait for placement, are monitored and system solutions for them are sought. The expeditor working from the public defender's office is particularly well placed to reduce unnecessary delays during the court process.