



2012 Sapphire Award Honorable Mention (\$50,000) Excellence in Community Health—Organization

PACE Center for Girls

PACE Center for Girls' (PACE) mission is to provide girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy. PACE annually serves over 2,000 girls, age 12 to 17, in 17 centers across Florida. Ninety percent of the girls PACE serves are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Sixty percent live in zip codes identified by the Department of Juvenile Justice as high-risk for criminal justice system involvement. Over 50 percent are the victims of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse. And 40 percent come to PACE with a prior criminal charge.



Notable Achievements:

PACE has been recognized as a national model for improving school success, employment and self-sufficiency by such groups as the Annie E. Casey Foundation, Children's Defense Fund, National Mental Health Association, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

By addressing the unique physical, emotional and mental health needs of girls, PACE has kept 90 percent of its girls out of the justice system and helped 96 percent increase their academic performance.

In 2011, PACE achieved the following:

- 95 percent of girls had no criminal justice involvement one year after leaving PACE.
- 95 percent of girls improved academically, including 79 percent that improved at least one full grade level.
- 92 percent improved their perception and engagement in health and wellness activities.
- 91 percent actively displayed positive self-esteem behaviors.
- 90 percent engaged in healthier relationships with peers and adults.
- 90 percent used new coping skills in stressful situations.
- 88 percent incorporated anger-management practices into their interactions.
- 85 percent increased their understanding of and participated in mental health and emotional wellness improvement activities.
- 85 percent stopped engaging in self-harm actions, recognized the harm being done and/or began and maintained active avoidance of harmful actions.

"Girls who are at risk for becoming involved in the juvenile justice system have significant health and mental health needs. Understanding and addressing these needs is a fundamental part of a holistic and comprehensive treatment plan and is what sets the bar for PACE at the level of excellence."

Shairi R. Turner, M.D., M.P.H., Medical Consultant, Division of Disability Determination, Florida Department of Health

Services Provided:

PACE programs provide the following services: academic education, individualized attention, therapeutic support services, parental involvement, student volunteer service projects, case management, transition services, career preparation and a gender-specific life management curriculum called Spirited Girls!® that teaches positive decision making and lifestyle choices.

For more information about PACE, visit www.pacecenter.org or call (904) 421-8585.