

“ I learned how to defend myself and to think about how to stay safe.
 - Kayla, age 11 ”

Introduction

The Girls Inc. Experience empowers girls to succeed. Girls Inc. provides girls with trusting mentoring relationships, a girls-only environment, and research-based, hands-on programming. Three critical goals drive our programming: to help girls achieve healthy lives, succeed academically, and acquire the life skills needed to prepare them for adulthood. We work to ensure that girls have the skills, knowledge, and support to be safe and reduce their risk of experiencing violence.



Why is a personal safety and violence prevention program for girls important?

Girls Inc. believes that girls have the right to be confident in themselves and be safe in the world. Girls are entitled to feel safe as they go through life, and they are entitled to be safe in their homes, schools, and communities. In the U.S. and Canada, girls and young women are much more likely to suffer from domestic violence and rape or sexual abuse than their male peers. Girls are especially likely to experience gender-based violence, which, in addition to physical and sexual abuse, includes sexual harassment and partner or dating violence.



Girls receive mixed messages about how to respond to violence—“Depend on others to protect you,” “Get tough because you can count only on yourself,” “Give in because your world can never be safe.” Girls and young women deserve opportunities that equip them to increase their personal safety and the safety of others. More specifically, programs need to engage girls in analyzing the causes and effects of violence and expand their individual skills and strategies for protecting themselves.

In addition to stronger personal skills, girls deserve communities and a world that treats everyone with respect and that takes responsibility for providing a safe environment. Programs also need to engage girls and young women as important agents of change—developing their collective strategies and skills to help their communities live up to expectations for being safe and welcoming to all. Girls can feel safer and be safer, we believe, through programs that address both self-protection and community change.

About the program: **Girls Inc. Project BOLD**

Through Girls Inc. Project BOLD, girls learn skills and strategies to lead safer lives in their homes, in relationships, in their communities, and online. Girls learn specific self-defense techniques and strategies as well as how to seek out and talk to caring adults about personal and gender-based violence. Older girls also take on a community action project to advocate for a safer world for all women and girls.

- **Be BOLD** (for girls ages 6 to 8) builds girls' skills and personal power for avoiding or dealing with hurtful or dangerous situations and assists them in identifying resources that contribute to their safety. Parents have a key role in supporting girls throughout the program.
- **Action for Safety** (for girls ages 9 to 11) builds negotiation, assertiveness, and self-defense skills. It facilitates open and honest discussions to increase girls' understanding about interpersonal violence as well as encourage, support, and lessen the fear and isolation of girls experiencing violence.
- **Living Safe & Strong** (for girls ages 12 to 14) continues discussion of gender violence issues, reinforces and provides additional safety strategies and self-defense skills for teen girls, and introduces them to community experts and resources. Girls also develop and conduct community action projects addressing violence issues important to them.

Ancillary Components and Workshops:

- **What a Girl Wants: Discovering and Deciding on Healthy Relationships** (for girls ages 15 to 18). In this workshop, teen girls discuss healthy and unhealthy relationships, examine relationship violence, and determine strategies for developing and maintaining safe and healthy relationships.
- **Safe in My World: Girls Speak Out on Violence** (for girls ages 6 to 18). This effort engages girls in conducting a needs assessment to determine what violence girls are experiencing in their communities and then convening a community forum to raise awareness about the issues and inspire dialogue and action.



About Girls Inc.

Girls Inc. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold, providing more than 140,000 girls across the U.S. and Canada with life-changing experiences and solutions to the unique challenges girls face. The Girls Inc. Experience consists of *people*, an *environment*, and *programming* that, together, empower girls to succeed. Trained staff and volunteers build lasting, mentoring relationships in girls-only spaces that are physically and emotionally safe and where girls find a sisterhood of support with shared drive, mutual respect, and high expectations. Hands-on, research-based programs provide girls with the skills and knowledge to set goals, overcome obstacles, and improve academic performance. Informed by girls and their families, Girls Inc. also works with policymakers to advocate for legislation and initiatives that increase opportunities for girls. At Girls Inc., girls grow up healthy, educated, and independent.

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