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## **Girls Empowerment Network Receives \$10,000 Grant from Texas Bar Foundation, Expanding Services to Improve Self-Efficacy in At-Risk Girls in Dallas ISD**

Girls Empowerment Network helps girls stay in school, get on track, and stay out of juvenile court system

DALLAS — May 8, 2020 – Girls Empowerment Network today announced it will expand its unique prosocial intervention program for girls by establishing services in Dallas ISD with a \$10,000 grant from Texas Bar Foundation. Using its Girl Connect Program curriculum, Girls Empowerment Network will expand its referral-based, in-school and weekend programs for girls who are at first offense or are at risk for entering juvenile justice system.

This unique program from Girls Empowerment Network has been proven to reduce and prevent girls' involvement in court proceedings; increase their self-efficacy, bonding and pro-social behaviors; and improve their in-school functioning, attendance and behavior so that girls can build happy, healthy futures. The program currently takes place in the Greater Austin area and Houston.

“Our expansion into Dallas is building on the support and interest from Dallas ISD counselors who understand being a girl can be hard, and that the challenges faced by girls who are involved in the juvenile justice system are complex, and often re-traumatizing,” says Julia Cuba Lewis, executive director of Girls Empowerment Network. “Girls typically begin the program angry or resistant, but through intentional rapport building led by our staff, most girls report that they are thankful for their peers and leaders after the first few weeks and Girl Connect has become a special place for them to express their emotions and gain a sense of safety.”

Girls Empowerment Network piloted this program in partnership with Travis County courts in 2010 and provides services in three Central Texas counties. The program was launched in Harris County in 2018 and expanded in 2019 to serve more girls in the Greater Houston metropolitan area.

“Girl Connect has filled the gaps for thousands of at-risk girls across Texas, providing the consistent support, socio-emotional skills and encouragement they need to change the trajectory of their lives toward positive futures,” says Cuba Lewis. “Among girls who are mandated to participate by the juvenile court system, this evidence-based program prevents them from returning to court after a first offense. For the many girls who struggle in school, home and with relationships, Girl Connect empowers them with supportive role models who help them build healthy relationships, resist peer pressure and learn positive coping skills to manage their stress to last their entire lives.”

With funding from the Texas Bar Foundation, Girls Empowerment Network has had success in establishing Girl Connect in Travis, Williamson, Hays, and Harris counties, including both long term weekly programs and Saturday workshops to supplement additional learning. Recent outcomes include:

- 98 percent of girls promote to the next grade on time.
- 94 percent of girls said that group taught them how to handle stressful situations.
- 90 percent of girls reported positive peer bonding in their groups.
- 86 percent of girls reported learning ways to achieve their goals.

**About Girls Empowerment Network:**

Since 1996, Girls Empowerment Network has been helping girls discover they are powerful. Through school-based programs, camps and conferences, Girls Empowerment Network ignites power in girls ages 8–18 by teaching them skills to thrive and believe in their ability to be unstoppable. Previous Dallas County programs include We Are Girls Dallas, a conference for girls and the adults who care about them, first held in 2018 and made possible by a volunteer conference committee of community leaders.

[www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org](http://www.girlsempowermentnetwork.org).

**About the Texas Bar Foundation:**

Since its inception in 1965, the Texas Bar Foundation has awarded more than \$21 million in grants to law-related programs. Supported by members of the State Bar of Texas, the Texas Bar Foundation is the nation's largest charitably-funded bar foundation.

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