



The Princess Project (Steadfast)

Because every girl deserves to know they are a daughter of the King

What is the Steadfast Princess Project?

An initiative within Steadfast Ministries with the goal of providing caring one-on-one mentors to incarcerated girls

There are eight residential commitment facilities in Florida for girls. Currently, Steadfast serves in all of them, providing mentors to approximately 350 girls annually. The goal of the Princess Project initiative is to continue providing these life changing services to the girls in Florida and expand into additional states.

Why is the Princess Project Important?

- **Girls experience complex and multiple forms of trauma at disproportionate rates.**

They have higher rates of complex trauma and multiple forms of victimization. The literature documents girls' chaotic home lives, which often include violence in the household, parental incarceration, death of a parent or sibling, and residential instability. It describes the trauma, abuse, neglect and other forms of violence that are common among this population.

- **Girls in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately victims of sexual violence.**

Girls who are sent into the juvenile justice system have typically experienced overwhelmingly high rates of sexual violence. This is the girls' sexual abuse to prison pipeline. Sexual abuse is one of the primary predictors of girls' entry into the Juvenile justice system.

Studies have shown that anywhere from 80-93 percent of girls in the juvenile justice system have been sexually or physically abused, the majority (75% percent) who have been sexually abused by age 13.

- **Girls treated as delinquents in the justice systems are disproportionately victims of sex trafficking**

The rate of domestic sex trafficking is on the rise in Florida and across the country.

The victims have almost entirely been abused prior to being targeted by traffickers. Being abused is the only way of life many of these girls have known. Girls who are sexually abused at home may escape from their abusive home environments by turning to the streets, where traffickers who claim to be rescuing them instead use their past abuse experiences for profit.

Risk factors for domestic child sex trafficking include having a history of sexual and physical abuse and/or involvement in the child welfare system, being a runaway or homeless youth, and poverty. Sadly, many of these characteristics are also risk factors for girls' involvement in the juvenile justice system.

Traffickers purposely troll for youth in group homes and leaving residential facilities because they are aware of this vulnerability. They prey on the kids they know are the most vulnerable. They seek out children who are neglected and in need of help.

Why Mentoring?

Simply, because it works!

While in residential programs (from 6-18 months or longer), youth receive on-going therapy, education, structure, life skills and much more. What they do not provide is a caring, adult who can support the child during their time in the program and when they return home. That is where Steadfast steps in to fill this major gap.

The role of relationships is paramount. A consistent finding in the trauma literature is the impact of a caring adult. Given the lack of adequate support systems for these children, the presence of trustworthy, committed adults is especially important in helping provide skills to overcome obstacles.

What Can We Do?

There are many ways to support these girls and the Steadfast Princess Project. Contact Cheryl Jackson at 813-766-4146 or Cheryl@steadfastmentoring.org to discuss opportunities!