



Gender Responsive Approaches with Women:

**Improve Outcomes - Reduce Recidivism
Transform Corrections**

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Setting the Context



The historical absence of women in the discourse on criminal justice discourse

Gender Responsive Policy and Practice and CJ Reform



- Essential given the research and evidence
- A key variable in improving outcomes, reducing recidivism and protecting public safety
- Can help facilitate the goals of criminal justice reform

Foundational Research

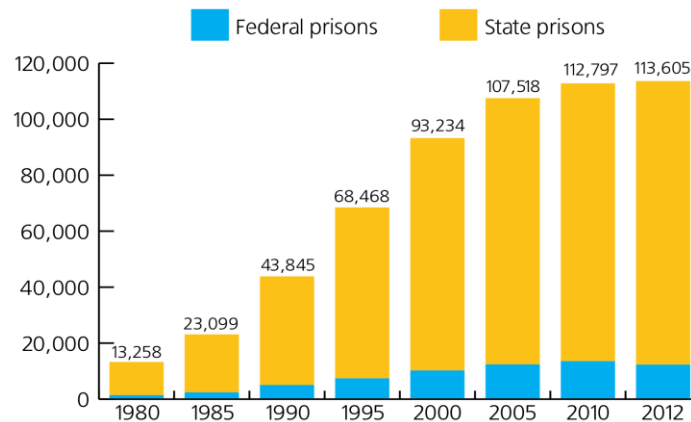
“The Ten Truths”

National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women,
Bureau of Justice Assistance, US Department of Justice

TRUTH # 1

- Women are the fastest growing criminal justice population, *yet they pose a lower public safety risk than men*

Number of Women in State and Federal Prisons, 1980-2012



Source: Carson, E.A., Golinelli, D. (2013). *Prisoners in 2012*. Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics



Statistics on Women

- **The number of women in prison has increased at nearly double the rate of men since 1985 (404% versus 209%)**
- Female state prison population growth has far outpaced male growth in the past 25 years
- The number of women serving sentences of more than a year grew by 757% between 1997 and 2004 - nearly twice the 388 percent increase in the male prison population
- Female prison populations have risen more quickly in all 50 states
- While the number of women prisoners has soared, the proportion of women convicted of violent crime has declined since 1979

(Frost, Greene & Pranis, 2006; FBI, 2010; West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010; Glaze & Bonczar, 2011)

Statistics on Women

- **Women of color are disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system.**
 - Black women represent over 30% of all females incarcerated under state or federal jurisdiction
 - Hispanic women represent roughly 17% of all incarcerated women in the criminal justice system.
- Crippling and demoralizing influence on Black and Hispanic households and communities.
- Black and Hispanic children are more likely to have a parent or caretaker behind bars than their white contemporaries.

Women Pose a Lower Public Safety Risk

- Enter the criminal justice system for non-violent crimes (often drug and/or property-related).
- Less likely than men to have extensive criminal histories.
- Within prison, incidents of violence and aggression committed by women are extremely low.
- Women released from prison have lower recidivism rates than their male counterparts



The women behind the statistics



And the corrections professionals who work with them every day....

Truth # 2

- Women follow unique pathways into crime and present risk factors that signal different intervention needs



Women's Pathways

(Frost, Greene & Pranis, 2006)

1. Most women in the CJ system come from neighborhoods that are entrenched in **poverty** and lacking in viable systems of social support
2. Alarming high numbers of these women have experienced very **serious physical and/or sexual abuse**, often beginning when they were young children
3. As adults, most of these women are plagued with **high levels of physical and mental health problems as well as substance abuse issues**
4. The majority of the women are far more likely than men in the CJ system to be the **sole support and caregivers for their children**

Substance Abuse

- Women who use drugs have higher incidences of childhood physical and sexual abuse than men
- Women more likely to suffer from co-occurring substance abuse disorders and mental illness
- Differences in onset and use are critical



Mental Health

- Significantly higher rates of mental health challenges/illness
- Twice as likely to take prescription medications for problems
- Women with mental health problems have higher infraction rates in prison
- Different types of mental illness than men: depression, anxiety, PTSD, eating disorders



Physical Health

- Reproductive health and pregnancy issues/concerns
- Higher rates of STDs and HIV
- Impact of post-traumatic stress disorders on self-harming
- Histories of poor health and poor access to medical services
- Chronic conditions and their impacts*



Family Roles

- Much more likely to serve as primary caretakers of children prior to entering prison
- 90% of the children of incarcerated fathers live with their mothers
- Ongoing concern for children's welfare and the potential loss of custody
- Difficulties and barriers of parenting while involved in the CJS



**THE ROLE OF
WOMEN IN
SOCIETY**

Poverty and Economic Marginalization



Not just Women's Pathways

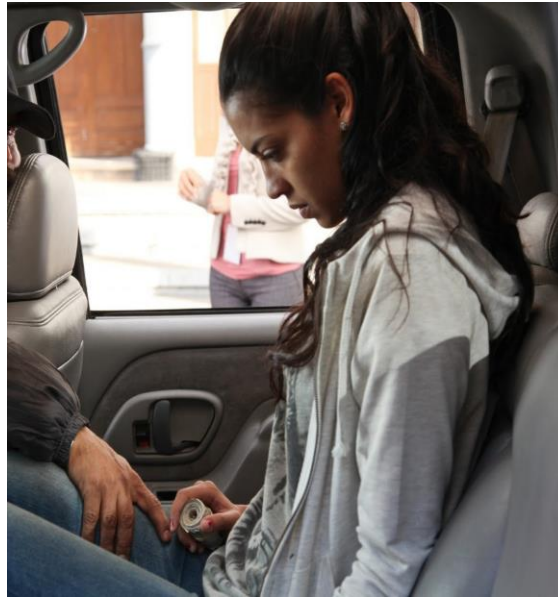
Children's pathways



Community pathways

Truth # 3

- Women's engagement in criminal behavior is often related to their relationships, connections, and disconnections with others.



The Relational Context is Critical

- Connections critical, yet they have been a source of pain and violation
- Past histories (trauma, violence, substance use) often inhibit ability to form and sustain healthy and trusting relationships
- Relationships with abusing or criminal partners
- Relationships with children, families, and significant others
- Need to create family, even in prison

Truth # 4

- **Traditional criminal justice policies and practices have largely been developed through the lens of managing men, not women.**



A system designed without women in mind...

- The current programs and services that are available to women - within institutional and community settings and during reentry – often do not adequately meet their needs (e.g., vocational/education training, healthcare, safe housing, family reunification).
- Access to appropriate mental and physical health care for incarcerated women is often inadequate.

***Develop and modify systems to be more responsive to women's risk and needs in order to achieve successful outcomes.**

Truth # 5

- **Justice involved women often report histories of sexual victimization and trauma, and continue to be vulnerable to victimization within correctional settings.**



Women and Trauma

- Trauma linked to mental health, substance abuse, and relationship difficulties AND contributes to crime pathways for women.
- Traumatic experiences have **neuro-physiological impacts** that impact reactions; how we work with women can increase their capacity and offer critical opportunities for healing and recovery .
- Trauma and accompanying mental health challenges are linked with difficulties with prison adjustment and misconduct.

**Trauma-informed policies and practices should be a core element of a gender responsive correctional system.*

Common Coping/Survival Behaviors

- Substance abuse
- Self-injurious and suicidal behaviors
- Compromised social and interpersonal functioning
- Mistrust of others
- Aggression or withdrawal/isolation
- Difficulty coping with stress
- Compromised intellectual performance
- High risk sexual behavior, sexual misconduct
- Defiance, “noncompliance”
- Fighting, arguing
- Indirect aggression
- Manipulation
- Over compliance, subservience to staff and/or peers
- Mood instability
- High levels of attention seeking

Benefits of Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches at MCI Framingham

Frequency of Incidents in 2011 and 2012				
Type	2011	2012	Frequency Change	% Change
Inmate-on-staff assaults	65	25	-40	-62%
Inmate-on-inmate assaults	112	51	-61	-54%
Inmate-on-inmate fights	129	70	-59	-46%
Segregation placements	966	748	-218	-23%
Disciplinary reports	5830	5470	-360	-6%
Suicide attempts	30	12	-18	-60%
One-on-one mental health watches	147	98	-49	-33%
Petitions for psychiatric evaluation	44	37	-7	-16%
Crisis contacts	1536	1316	-220	-14%
Self-injury incidents	114	99	-15	-13%

Source: Bissonnette (2013)

Truth # 6

- **Traditional prison classification systems tend to result in unreliable custody designations for incarcerated women.**



Women and Classification

- Tools normed for male offender populations and **not validated for women**, yet they are often used to guide key housing decisions for women.
- Institutional misconduct, prison adjustment and recidivism among women is more closely linked to specific intervention needs - **and to the lack of services and supports to address these needs** - than to current offense severity and criminal history factors captured in traditional tools.

**Tools that account for women's unique risk factors and pathways into crime provide a more reliable risk determination and better prediction of correctional outcomes for women.*

Truth # 7

- **Gender responsive assessment tools can enhance case management efforts with justice-involved women.**



Women and Assessment

- Dynamic risk and needs assessment tools commonly used in the criminal justice system (such as the COMPAS and LSI) do not incorporate important information for women
- Gender informed assessment tools capture both *gender neutral factors* and ***gender responsive factors that are specifically linked to outcomes for women.***
- Gender informed assessments also account for women's assets, or strengths, which in turn play a protective role and mitigate the risk of negative outcomes.
- The use of *gender responsive* tools helps practitioners to identify the most salient needs faced by women and informs case management and service delivery.

Expanding Models of Risk

Gender Neutral Factors

- Attitudes supportive of crime
- Social support for crime
- Criminal history
- Emotional/personal factors
- Substance abuse
- Family factors such as conflict
- Employment/school
- Leisure/recreation

Gender Specific Factors

- Past /current victimization, abuse and trauma
- Mental health
- Substance abuse (and link to trauma and mental health)
- Parental responsibilities, stress
- Relationships (intimate partner violence)
- Poverty and economic marginalization
- Housing safety

GR Assessment Tools for Women

- WRNA, NIC & University of Cincinnati
- Service Planning Instrument for Women (SPIN-W),
Orbis Partners
- COMPAS for Women, Northpointe
- Promising research emerging on the development of
gender responsive pretrial release assessment tools

Truth # 8

- **Using a comprehensive case planning process that attends to evidence-based, gender responsive and trauma-informed principles improves outcomes**



GR Case Management with Women

- Be knowledgeable and understand the implications of the research on evidence-based and gender informed practices including the following:
 - targeting interventions
 - Dosage and intensity based on risk level
 - understanding the importance of developing professional working relationships with women
 - having the skills necessary to engage them appropriately
 - recognizing women's strengths and mobilizing their personal and social supports.

Collaborative Case Work with Women (CCW-W) Outcomes

Outcomes: CT

1. Women identified as high risk (Level of Service Inventory-Revised).
2. Supervised in four large urban settings in the State of Connecticut and randomly assigned to CCW-W or probation as usual.
3. Training, coaching, booster training was provided to teams delivering CCW-W.
4. The CCW-W group was significantly less likely to reoffend or to receive technical violations than women receiving probation as usual (12-month period).

Outcomes: IA

1. At one and two year intervals, women who successfully completed CCW-W were “significantly less likely to be admitted to prison than the comparison group.”
2. At two years, women who successfully completed CCW-W had lower new conviction and new indictable conviction rates than the comparison group.

“Evidence-based”

- When we talk about a program or intervention being evidence-based, **who is it evidence-based for?**
- Much of the research conducted to generate the evidence base in corrections either did not include women, did not include enough women, was not asking questions and looking at variables that were relevant to women
- An exciting new evidence-based for women has emerged and is constantly growing

Effective Programs for Women

- Moving On (Van Dieten)
- Living Safely without Violence (Van Dieten)
- Seeking Safety (abuse, PTSD; Najavits)
- TAMAR (trauma; SAMHSA)
- Helping Women Recover (Covington)
- Forever Free (implements CSAT guide for treating women offenders; CA Institute for Women)
- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (PTSD; Linehan)
- Female Offender Treatment and Employment Programs (FOTEP)

Truth # 9

- **Incarceration and reentry are particularly challenging for justice-involved mothers of minor children.**



Women: No Entry and Re-entry

- Assisting women who might otherwise face incarceration to stabilize themselves and their families, and to attain self-sufficiency and successful lives in their communities.
 - WPA’s “matrix” approach to reentry
- Requires understanding how poverty, trauma and victimization (past and present) and choices can combine to propel women into substance abuse and criminal involvement.
- Assisting them effectively means providing access to coordinated services that address these multiple issues simultaneously.

Truth # 10

- **The costs of overly involving women in the criminal justice system are high.**



Costs of not Attending to Women

(Frost, Greene & Pranis, 2006)

- Unsuccessful supervision outcomes for women under community supervision are remarkably high
- 60% of women released from incarceration are re-arrested - nearly a third are returned to prison
- In addition to the high monetary costs to state and local jurisdictions from this revolving door, repeated exposure to the criminal justice system is detrimental to justice-involved women and their children.

***Supervision agencies have the opportunity to interrupt this flow by reconsidering their responses to parole and probation violations.**

The Ten Truths: Implications for System Design and Enhancement

In order to be more effective in our work with women and achieve more successful outcomes, **we need to adjust our policies and practices** in ways that appropriately respond to gender differences

Women and De-Carceration

(Frost, Greene & Pranis 2006)

- **While some states still remain on the same old “get tough” course, a handful have begun to significantly downsize their prison systems.**
- Given that the majority of women in the prison system are sentenced for nonviolent crimes that stem from drug abuse and economic marginalization, **women should be a key focus for policymakers** as they craft more humane and cost effective alternatives to incarceration.
- The prevalence of nonviolent conviction offenses and the lower recidivism rates experienced by women after release from prison indicate that **decarceration efforts targeting women would present few risks to public safety.**
- And the status of **many women as primary caregivers to their children** should weigh heavily in favor of diverting them to community-based programs designed to enhance their ability to lead self-sufficient, successful lives in the community.

A Critical Opportunity in Illinois

- **Gender Informed Practices Assessment (GIPA)**
 - One of 2 sites selected nationally
 - Identification of critical links between facility practices and system practices and outcomes
- **Chicago-based Women's Justice Initiative (WJI)**
 - Systemic perspective and stakeholder support
- **Participation in national trainings (NRCJIW, NIC)**
 - Operational Practices with Women Offenders
 - Enhancing Discipline Policies and Practices in Women's Facilities
- **Leadership, in house knowledge and data capacity**

GIPA Sneak Peak

- Facility and systemic analysis
- Generated key findings:
 - Implement Gender Responsive Risk Assessment Tool
 - Implement EB, GR and TI Case Management Model (e.g., CCW-W)
 - Adopt Model Disciplinary Policies
 - Implement High Impact Evidence Based Programming

Conclusion:

Seizing a Critical Opportunity

Focusing on women offers us important opportunities for de-carceration and CJ system reform

- Extraordinary rise in the number of women behind bars –
- Majority of women serving sentences for nonviolent drug and property offenses.
- Strong support for measures that address the causes of crime over strict sentencing.
- From both an economic and public safety standpoint, the advantages of employing substance-abuse treatment and gender-responsive services instead of prison for these women are clear.

(see Frost, Greene & Pranis, 2006)

Conclusion

The experience of the last five years demonstrates that continued female prison population growth is not inevitable....measures to reign in prison population growth may be especially beneficial to women.

-Frost, Greene & Pranis, 2006

Thank You

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