

Promoting Success in the Community for Criminal Justice Involved Women



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Alternatives to Incarceration

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Why focus on women separately?



- In 2004, more than 1.1 million women were under criminal justice supervision, most often probation (~83%) or parole (~9%).
- Women make up less than 10% of the prison population, but are its fastest-growing segment. Effective community alternatives can help reverse this trend, thereby avoiding the direct and indirect costs of incarcerating women.
- Women are good candidates for community supervision; 2/3 are charged with non-violent offenses and most present minimal risk to public safety.

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The Guiding Principles

Bloom, B., Owen, B., & Covington, S. (2003). *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*.

When working with women, take into account that:

1. Gender makes a difference.
2. The Environment should feel safe, supportive, respectful.
3. Relationships are of fundamental importance, particularly with children and other family members.
4. Services and supervision should be comprehensive, and should be equipped to address the interrelated issues of substance abuse, mental illness and trauma.
5. Women need real opportunities to improve their socioeconomic status.
6. Women who are reentering the community after incarceration need coordinated access to comprehensive services.

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Understanding Women in the Criminal Justice System



Pathways Perspective: women are more likely than men to have experienced abuse, violence, poverty, addiction, mental illness, homelessness and dysfunctional relationships. These factors contribute to women's criminal behavior.

Relational Theory: men strive for independence and self-sufficiency, while women seek connection with others.

Trauma and Addiction are interrelated factors in the lives of many women offenders.

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Women tell us that it is important that they:



- reconnect with their children and other family members;
- have a safe place to live;
- have a legal way to support themselves and their families;
- stay sober and healthy;
- stay out of prison.

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Many women are mothers who want to retain or regain custody of their children.



- Traditionally, services are designed to address needs sequentially, and may require that a woman delay attending to other issues.
- The Adoption and Safe Families Act (ASFA) timeline requires swift reunification to avoid termination of parental rights.
- Women may refuse participation in drug and mental health services that do not allow for an immediate focus on reunification .

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WPA Approach



- In order to achieve stability, a woman must address several domains of her life, including housing, economic stability, family relationships, health and wellness, criminal justice and community.
- Explore and address these areas simultaneously by helping each woman identify goals and related strategies for achieving greater stability.
- Review progress regularly and re-set goals that are consistent with greater self-direction.
- Help each woman identify her positive attributes and talents and strengths regularly.

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WPA Approach, continued



Meet women where they are . . . But what does that mean?

- Believe women when they tell us what they need/want.
- Respect their aspirations, and use them as motivation.

“I’m gonna be a movie star.”

- What appeals to her about being a movie star? Fame, financial freedom, living in a mansion, being her own boss . . .
- Help her define strategies that can move her closer to achieving some of these goals.
- Progress occurs in steps . . . Every star had to audition and get her first part.

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WPA Approach, continued

Preparation for a law-abiding life should be taught in the classroom of real-life, in the community where a woman will make her home.

Take the mystery out of everyday life.

Model appropriate behavior in a variety of settings.

Create an environment of support and feedback where women feel safe taking the risk of trying new ways of responding to feelings and situations.

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WPA's Matrix, Success in the Community

We explore needs in at least six basic life areas:

- Livelihood
- Residence
- Family
- Health & Sobriety
- Criminal justice compliance
- Social/Civic Connections

We recognize that the plan for each of these areas depends on an individual's related strengths and circumstances:

- Survival
- Stabilization
- Self Sufficiency

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SUCCESS IN THE COMMUNITY:
A Matrix for Thinking about the Needs of Criminal Justice Involved Women

Success in the community is about more than a job or housing, or even staying clean and out of trouble. It is about all of that, and more. Whether returning to the community after incarceration or living in the community pretrial or as an alternative to detention or incarceration, a woman's success is related to the degree that there are adequate provisions in six domains of her life: livelihood, residence, family, health, criminal justice compliance, and social connections. The other basic human need is for encouragement, orientation to new things, and to be recognized as valuable by others. The domains are interdependent. A viable plan must include provisions in each domain that can be reconciled with each other.

PHASE	BASIC LIFE AREAS					
	Livelihood	Residence	Family	Health & Sobriety	Criminal Justice Compliance	Social / Civic Connections
<u>Survival</u>	Gate money Public assistance Soup kitchens, pantries Personal care kits	Shelter Family or Friend Street	Find children Make contact	Continuity of medication Relapse prevention	Report to supervising authority (court, probation, parole, etc.) Comply with requirements	Receive peer support
<u>Stabilization</u>	Public assistance / Workfare Employment/Education Training Clothes for Interviews	Transitional Residence Family or friend	Supervised visitation Get refamiliarized Trial discharge	Drug treatment and treatment of urgent health and mental health issues Counseling	Earn reduced supervision	Join support group or nurturing community Volunteer work
<u>Self Sufficiency</u>	Job that pays a living wage and provides benefits	One's own apartment with public subsidy, if necessary	Reunify Participate in family counseling Contribute to others	Regular health visits paid by health insurance Ongoing support: 12 step, therapy, community activities	Satisfy conditions of supervision	Help others Contribute to community life
<u>GOAL</u>	Adequate money for food, clothing, transportation, and personal and family expenses	Safe, clean, affordable home that accommodates household comfortably	Reunification with children Reconciliation with family members	Physically and mentally healthy, or receiving affordable quality care including needed prescriptions	Abide by laws Live without community supervision	Healthy friendships and network of supportive adults Opportunities to give back, civic participation (voting, etc.)

WPA's reentry and ATI plans include provisions in all of these areas. However, funding available for needed services is too often restricted to special needs populations (like the mentally ill or people who are HIV+). Further, there are more supports for families than for single adults seeking to live on their own. In fact, it is usually most difficult to find supports for the single woman or man without mental illness, HIV, or a substance abuse problem.

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Alternative to Incarceration Program

Features: in addition to mandates, program includes:



- gradual increase of responsibility and privileges
- individual case management
- community participation— within and outside program
- daily peer and staff feedback and support
- shared responsibility for household management
- taking advantage of conflicts and difficult situations as prime opportunities for expressing emotions and testing new responses
- assistance with family reunification, permanent housing, educational goals and employment

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Alternative to Incarceration Opportunities



- Broaden the scope of options to more than drug treatment or intensive mental health day treatment.
- Identify opportunities to add criminal justice supervision or case management to existing activities in order to reduce disruption of entire family system. Intensive case management that is based in the home and field is an option that would allow women to continue educational, job training and outpatient drug treatment activities.
- Use the situations that arise in a woman's life as the jumping-off point for examining the risks and benefits and results of different options.

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Summary



- Women and men are different.
- Women's programs should take into account women's pathways to crime and the circumstances that contribute to risk, including addiction, trauma, and mental illness.
- Women's programs must recognize the importance of relationships in women's lives and should foster healthy relationship development.
- Women are most engaged when we respect their truths and are willing to work on multiple fronts simultaneously.
- Our work with women should be conducted, as much as possible, in the environments where they live.

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Women's Prison Association

- Founded in 1844
- Committed to creating opportunities for change in the lives of women at all stages of criminal justice involvement
- Provide direct services to over 3,000 women a year at 4 NYC community sites, upstate women's prisons, and Rikers Island (NYC jail)
- Expanded our advocacy and research work in the last several years through the creation of the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice - a national policy center
- We take a dual approach to the issues facing criminal-justice involved women, combining a commitment to **changing the circumstances of women's lives one-by-one** with a commitment to **changing the systems that create opportunities and barriers for our clients.**



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