



# Resource Package for Paroling Authorities on Criminal Justice Involved Women

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## Introduction

Paroling authorities play a critical role within correctional systems across the nation. They make thousands of decisions a year about the timing of release from prison for a significant number of offenders each year, set conditions of release and respond to violations of post-release supervision for many thousands more, and serve as important partners in contributing to public safety and the wise use of resources.

Carrying out these responsibilities effectively is both complex and critical to the effective functioning of the criminal justice system. The [National Institute of Corrections \(NIC\)](#) recently made available a series of papers and other resources that address those complexities in detail and make the case that paroling authorities are uniquely positioned to assist the criminal justice system to target its resources toward risk management and recidivism reduction goals, and make significant impacts upon community safety. The [National Parole Resource Center \(NPRC\)](#)—a joint initiative of the [Center for Effective Public Policy](#) and the [Association of Paroling Authorities International](#) that is funded by [NIC](#) and the [Bureau of Justice Assistance \(BJA\)](#) of the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs—offers another resource for paroling authorities and has outlined ten "practice targets" that define ways of operating that can assist paroling authorities to more effectively carry out their responsibilities for risk reduction goals.

Most correctional policy has been designed and implemented to address the challenges of managing a predominantly male offender population. This male-driven focus stems from the fact that men have historically represented the vast majority of offenders in correctional institutions and on community supervision. However, as the population of women offenders has grown, so has an appreciation for the differences between male and female offenders. As such, the following Resource Package has been developed to assist paroling authorities to consider their current practices with justice-involved women, and the degree to which they mirror the National Parole Resource Center's practice targets for enhancing community safety and the wise use of resources. This resource package is one in a series of three on special populations (the other packages will focus on offenders with mental health issues and sex offenders) that will provide paroling authority members with preliminary insight into how their practices compare to the ten practice targets, and where they might want to focus further attention in strengthening their work in the future.

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**Women are a fast growing criminal justice population.** Over the past decade, the number of women on parole supervision increased by 8% (see Glaze, 2002 and Maruschak & Parks, 2012); the number of women sentenced to state and federal prisons also grew, and at a higher rate than men (1.9% versus 1.3%) (Carson & Sabol, 2012). **However, given that women are less likely than men to pose a violent or physical danger to others**, they are ideal candidates for prison diversion, as they can often be supervised in the community with little public safety risk. For instance, during the first year of California's Public Safety Realignment, when state officials transferred non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual offenders to county jail and community supervision, the number of sentenced female inmates in the California state prisons dropped at a faster rate than that of males, down 17.5% versus 8.7% from 2010–2011 (Carson & Sabol, 2012).

While women only make up about 19% of the total criminal justice population (Carson & Sabol, 2012; Maruschak & Parks, 2012), the implications of their experiences in jail, prison, or community supervision are far-reaching, **impacting their children, family members, and neighborhoods**. Incarceration and reentry are particularly challenging for those women who are mothers of minor children. For instance, over the past two decades, the number of children with a mother in prison has more than doubled, up 131% (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010). As a result of this incarceration, the majority of these children are likely to lose their main source of social, emotional, physical, and financial support (Glaze & Maruschak, 2010), which may lead to a host of poor outcomes such as substance abuse, trauma, violence, and educational difficulties (Hairston, 2002).

**While traditional criminal justice approaches have been developed primarily to address male offenders**, the increasing number of women in the system and a growing body of research on women signals the need for criminal justice professionals to better understand women's unique pathways to crime, risk to reoffend, and criminogenic needs and

### **Women Prisoners in 2011**

- Women made up 6.7% of the total sentenced prison population, 4.2% of the non-US citizen inmates in federal and state prisons, and 3.8% of inmates under the age of 18.
- At least 10% of the sentenced state prison population was female in eight states: South Dakota, Idaho, Kentucky, Montana, West Virginia, Wyoming, Alaska, and North Dakota.
- Black females were imprisoned at 2 to 3 times the rate of white females, and Hispanic females at 1 to 3 times the rate of white females in federal and state prisons.
- Twenty-five percent (25%) of female inmates in state prisons were incarcerated for drug crimes, compared to 17% of male inmates.
- Twenty-nine percent (29%) of sentenced females in state prisons were incarcerated for property crimes, compared to 18% of male inmates.
- While 54% of the male prisoner population was being held for violent crimes, only 37% of females in state prisons were held for violent crimes.
- When looking at the entire prisoner population, women convicted of violent crimes made up only about 2.5% of the overall population, as compared to the males sentenced to state and federal prisons for violent crimes, who made up 50.6% of the population.

other risk factors<sup>1</sup> for future reoffending. Parole Board members in particular, who wish to employ strategies for achieving public safety and reducing crime and harm to communities, will find it helpful to consider the role of women involved in the criminal justice system.

To date, there are indications that parole boards across the country are beginning to consider gender-responsive approaches to working with the female inmate population. This means that there are a number of parole boards utilizing gender-responsive approaches from which we can learn (to read more about innovative practices that are currently underway, visit the [state case study](#) section of this toolkit.) Fortunately, there is also a growing body of research and promising practices within other criminal justice sectors to guide parole board members in implementing evidence-based, gender-informed approaches.

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<sup>1</sup> Both the terms "criminogenic needs" and other "risk factors" refer to needs that are related (predictive of) future offending. Criminogenic needs are risk factors that involve a criminal life style (e.g., criminal associates and criminal thinking). Other risk factors, such as abuse and depression are not as embedded in a criminal lifestyle, but nevertheless may be associated with criminal behavior/recidivism.

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### What Does it Mean to be Gender-Responsive?

According to Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2003), **gender-responsiveness** means understanding and taking account of the differences in characteristics and life experiences that women and men bring to the criminal justice system, and adjusting strategies and practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions.

To determine whether a certain approach or practice is gender-responsive, one should consider whether it includes the following elements (Benedict, 2008):

- Relational: Work with women in a relationship-based way to promote mutual respect and empathy. According to Bloom et al. (2003), "relational models... posit that the primary motivation for women throughout life is the establishment of a strong sense of connection with others."
- Strengths-Based: Recognize that all women have strengths that can be mobilized.
- Trauma-Informed: Recognize that the history and context of personal abuse plays an important role in how women respond to services.
- Holistic: Provide a comprehensive case management model that addresses the complex and multiple needs of women in conflict with the law.
- Culturally Competent: Provide services that value and acknowledge the diverse cultural backgrounds of women.

Some examples of gender-responsive practices for women include:

- Classification tools used within prisons that have been validated on women (i.e., a tool that has been shown to predict accurately for women and is not simply a tool that is used with female inmates because it is used with male inmates).

#### **Victimization and Trauma: A Common Experience for Justice-Involved Women**

- The prevalence of sexual victimization and other maltreatment—whether in childhood, adolescence, or adulthood—is higher among justice-involved women than it is among women in the general public.
- Compared to incarcerated men, women in custody are disproportionately subjected to sexual victimization, not only at the hands of correctional staff, but also by other incarcerated women.
- Trauma is linked to mental health, substance abuse, and relationship difficulties and contributes to crime pathways for women.
- Traumatic experiences cause chemical and structural changes in the brain, therefore affecting the way that individuals react to future danger (real and perceived).

Trauma-informed policies and practices should be a core element of a gender-responsive approach and are necessary to achieving successful outcomes with justice-involved women.

- Prison staff interact with women in a way that does not have the potential to trigger past trauma (i.e., they use respectful language, refrain from name calling, do not raise their voices, etc.).
- Risk/need assessment tools are utilized that measure risk/need factors that are predictive of a woman's likelihood of reoffending (e.g., mental health, co-occurring disorders, trauma).
- Supervision staff work closely with service providers to ensure that women receive the necessary mental health, substance abuse, employment, and victim services. By understanding the research and applying gender-informed strategies, criminal justice professionals can promote law abiding behavior and improve the physical, social, and economic well-being of not only the women involved in the criminal justice system, but their children, families, and communities as well. While the research supporting gender-responsive approaches is relatively recent and less extensive than that available for other evidence-based approaches, it is nonetheless sound and continually growing. Given parole board members' critical role in the system, it is important that they become aware of gender-responsive practices in their own jurisdictions and support these efforts to move forward in this direction.

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### Key Definitions

**Evidence-Based**

Conclusions that are drawn from rigorous studies of gender-neutral correctional approaches. The term "evidence-based" is often associated with practices and programs that follow the risk, need, and responsivity principles, and include cognitive-behavioral and social learning approaches. Other gender-neutral activities, processes, programs, and services may fit the definition of evidence-based if they are supported by rigorous research (e.g., controlled studies using experimental and comparison groups), meta-analysis, or prediction research.

**Gender-Informed or Gender-Responsive**

Activities, processes, programs, and services that are guided by women-centered research and literature (i.e., socialization, psychological development, strengths, risk factors, pathways through systems, responses to traditional interventions, and unique program/service needs). Such interventions/approaches should also be relational, strength-based, trauma-informed, culturally competent, and holistic. Though common correctional usage often does not refer to these programs as "evidence-based" a growing body of research provides evidence to support them (Van Voorhis, 2012).

**Strengths-Based\***

An underlying assumption of this approach is that all individuals inherently possess strengths, talents, assets, and resources. Strengths-based interventions/approaches work intentionally to identify and mobilize client strengths, recast numerous "negative" behaviors as survival behaviors, teach new skills, give clients healthy power and control, use strengths-based language, allow clients to impact programming, and integrate a strengths-based perspective through all aspects of service delivery.

**Trauma-Informed\***

Interventions/approaches that incorporate the research on violence against women and girls and the impact of trauma; work intentionally to avoid triggering trauma reactions and/or (re)traumatizing the individual; enhance the knowledge and proficiency of staff and the organization to support each individual's coping capacity; and work to help survivors to manage their trauma symptoms successfully.

\*Definitions have been adapted from: Benedict, 2008.

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### **Women's Unique Pathways into Crime**

There are striking differences between the paths that men and women take into crime. Research conducted on women's "pathways" into the criminal justice system indicates that their experiences of victimization and abuse, poverty, mental illness, and substance abuse often play a significant role.<sup>3</sup> Consider the following:

- Justice involved women are more likely to have experienced sexual abuse and other forms of victimization or trauma than women in the general population. (Battle et al., 2002; Blackburn, Mullings & Marquart, 2008; Raj et al. 2008; Zlotnick et al., 2003). (More on trauma is provided in the text box to the right.)
- A large proportion of justice involved women have abused substances or have engaged in criminal behavior while under the influence and/or to support their drug use (Bloom et al., 2003).
- Justice involved women are more likely to experience co-occurring disorders; in particular, substance abuse problems tend to be interlinked with trauma and/or mental illness.
- Economic hardship, lower educational attainment, fewer vocational skills, underemployment, and employment instability are more common among justice involved women than justice involved men (See Flower, 2010 for a review of this literature).

Another critical finding from the research is that women's engagement in criminal behavior is often related to their relationships, connections, and disconnections with others.

Through relationships women shape their identities and develop a sense of self-worth (Bloom et al., 2003; Miller,

### Risk/Need Factors of Justice-Involved Women

For women, gender-neutral and gender-responsive factors combined are more predictive of outcomes than either gender-neutral or gender-responsive factors alone. Gender-responsive factors include:

- Victimization/Abuse
- Relationship Problems
- Mental Health
- Substance Abuse
- Self-Efficacy
- Poverty
- Parental Issues

Gender-neutral factors include:

- Criminal History
- Criminal Thinking
- Personality Attributes
- Criminal Peers
- Family/Marital Issues
- Education/Employment
- Substance Abuse
- Leisure/Recreation

Protective factors include the woman's strengths and aspects of her social environment that help the woman resist pressure to return to offending behavior. Protective factors include:

1976). While engaging and connecting with others is normal behavior for both men and women, *for many women, criminal justice involvement is fueled by the dynamics of their relationships with significant others* (Bloom et.al., 2003; Miller, 1976). For justice-involved women, the relationships they hold with the individuals closest to them are often unhealthy and abusive, which contributes to difficulties throughout their lives (Greiner & Brown, 2011; Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009.).

- Strong self-efficacy
- Positive social networks
- Family support
- High levels of education/skills

It is critically important to their success in the community that women are able to address mental health and substance abuse issues, heal from past victimizations, earn a livable wage, and learn how to develop and maintain healthy relationships with others.

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<sup>3</sup> While many women follow a gendered pathway into crime, it is important to acknowledge that this is not true for all women. For more information on women's pathways to crime see Bloom et al., 2003; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Daly, 1992; Dehart, 2005; Green, Miranda, Daroowalla, & Siddique, 2005; Lapidus et al., 2004; Salisbury, 2007; Salisbury & Van Voorhis, 2009.

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### **Critical Risk/Need Factors for Women in the Criminal Justice System**

Parole boards may be aware of assessment tools such as the COMPAS LSI-R, and the LS/CMI which can provide much needed information on the risk level and criminogenic needs of offenders in various criminal justice settings. However, like many criminal justice practices, the development of risk/need assessment tools have, for the most part, not incorporated the unique circumstances and needs of female offenders. Therefore, assessments such as the COMPASLSI-R, and LS/CMI do not, on their own, incorporate important information about women's pathways into crime, risk factors, strengths, and intervention needs (Van Voorhis et al., 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2010.)

Advances in our understanding of the challenges and needs faced by justice involved women have led to the development of *gender-informed* assessment tools.<sup>3</sup> These gender-informed tools:

- Include *gender-responsive* factors that are specifically linked to adverse outcomes for women (e.g., depression, psychotic symptoms, housing safety, parental stress) in addition to *gender neutral* factors (e.g., criminal history, antisocial associates) common to women and men.
- Take into account a woman's strengths or assets, which in turn play a protective role and mitigate the risk of negative outcomes such as misconduct and reoffending (Corsini & Wedding, 2006; Smith, 2006).

Women with a high number of risk/need factors are conceptualized as "high risk" and are likely-without intervention-to remain or return to the criminal justice system. However, given what we know about women's propensity for low-level, non-serious offenses, for women, being high-risk does not equate to being particularly violent or dangerous to society. Of course, this can be said of some men as well, since assessed level of risk typically denotes the "probability" of re-offense, but not necessarily the type of offense that might occur. However, given the high rate of low-severity, non-violent offenses among women, it is particularly important to recognize that among women, being high risk does not equate to being particularly violent or dangerous to society. This is a critical distinction that parole board members must consider when making decisions about women offenders.

The use of gender-responsive tools helps practitioners to identify the most salient needs faced by women. These needs are critical to informing case management, service delivery, release decisions, and condition setting. Such needs may include safety concerns and exposure to violence, mental health, medical illness, trauma (including PTSD), depression, anxiety, psychosis, and lack of good parenting skills.

<sup>3</sup> Gender responsive assessment tools include the University of Cincinnati's Women's Risk/Need Assessment and Orbis Partners' SPIn-W. See <http://www.us.edu/womenoffenders> and <http://www.orbispowers.com/index.php/assessment/spin-w/> for more information.



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### The Prison Environment

#### ***Programs and Services***

It is no surprise that prisons built for a majority male population pose particular challenges for female prisoners. Consider the following ways in which programs and services for women in prison may fail short of meeting their needs:

- The programs and services that are available to women within institutional settings, and to support them during transition and reentry, may not adequately meet their needs (Berman, 2005; Modley & Giguere, 2010). For example, women generally do not have access to: vocational training and education to assist them in earning a living wage for their families; programming that addresses the interconnected issues of substance abuse, trauma, and mental illness; and programs and visitation policies that promote good parenting skills and healthy relationships with children.
- Access to screening and appropriate healthcare for incarcerated women may not be adequate, including services for women's unique and reproductive health.<sup>4</sup>
- Reentry services for women do not always consider the unique challenges that women face when they transition back to their communities (Covington & Bloom, 2007). For example, women need assistance finding safe and affordable housing for themselves and their children (i.e., away from previous abusers), gaining and sustaining employment, navigating the challenges of finding childcare and transportation, and reunifying with their children.

#### ***Impact on Trauma and PTSD***

Another significant challenge with traditional prison environments, policies, and practices is how they can inadvertently trigger past trauma and aggravate PTSD (NRCJIW, forthcoming). Incarcerated women with a history of trauma and accompanying mental health concerns are more likely to have difficulties with prison adjustment and misconduct (Van Voorhis et al., 2010). Oftentimes correctional policies and procedures can trigger previous traumatic experiences, exacerbate trauma-related symptoms, and interfere with a woman's recovery (National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, 2011). For example, disciplinary policies that include the use of physical restraints might "trigger" a woman who has experienced rape in her past. Similarly, isolating a woman in administrative segregation might remind her of the trauma of losing a parent or other family member at a young age. Finally, strip searches, room searches, and frequent room changes may elicit behaviors in response to a lost sense of control.

Past trauma can affect how women adjust to prison life and must be considered when looking at their behavior and misconduct. Consider some of the following coping behaviors to trauma that are often displayed by women in prison (Benedict, 2011):

- Defiance
- Fighting
- Withdrawal/isolation
- Arguing
- Sexual misconduct
- Indirect aggression
- Manipulation
- Over-compliance
- Subservience to staff and/or peers
- Mood instability
- High levels of attention seeking

There is some evidence to suggest that revising policies and practices to be more trauma-informed can reduce prison misconduct in women's prison settings. For example, the Rhode Island Department of Corrections realized a significant reduction in female inmates assaulting inmates and staff, inmate fights, and the use of force as a result of incorporating trauma-informed practices (National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, 2011).

#### ***The Use of Gender-Neutral Classification and Assessment Tools***

A third consideration for parole board members when considering how women adjust and perform in traditional prison environments, is whether they are being classified into appropriate custody designations for their risk level. Oftentimes, women are classified using static tools and/or tools that were developed for men (Van Voorhis & Presser, 2001), and, as a result, these tools fail to address the security-related concerns and needs of women (Bloom et al., 2003; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, & Spiropoulos, 2009; Van Voorhis et al., 2010; Wright, Salisbury, & Van Voorhis, 2007.).

Research on women has consistently shown that traditional prison classification systems tend to result in unreliable custody designations for incarcerated women. Consider the following:

- Women are often over-classified into "male-based" high risk categories even though the actual level of threat women pose may be significantly lower than the threat of high-risk men (Van Voorhis, 2012, Bloom et al., 2003; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, Wright, & Bauman, 2009; Wright et al., 2007). Validation studies indicate that high-risk women reoffend, commit serious misconducts, and recidivate at much lower rates than high-risk men (Wright, Van Voorhis, Salisbury & Bauman, 2012, Hardyman and Van Voorhis, 2004). In one study by the University of Cincinnati only about 3% of women engaged in aggressive behavior during their 12 months in prison (Van Voorhis, 2010; Wright et al., 2009).
- It is important to note that this does not mean that women are less likely to have infractions on their records while in prison. Instead we find that women are more likely to commit minor infractions (such as insubordination), while men are more likely to display serious and aggressive misconduct in prison settings Hardyman & Van Voorhis, 2004; Van Voorhis, 2012).
- The research indicates that troubled women—or those with many gender-responsive needs such as being abused, having a history of substance abuse, suffering from mental health problems, relationship difficulties—are likely to have the most trouble adjusting to prison rules and environment (Wright et al, 2012 and Van Voorhis et al., 2010).

Classification tools play a pivotal role in affecting correctional management practices and offender liberties. These tools often guide placements by level of security/custody, eligibility for and accessibility to various programs and services, inmate movement, work details, and privileges in correctional facilities (Hardyman & Van Voorhis, 2004; Wright et al., 2012; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, Wright & Bauman, 2009). Since their results may be a primary consideration for parole board members as they make release and community supervision decisions, it is imperative that the custody and classification tools used with women are designed to match the unique risk and needs of women.

Ideally, each correctional system would also have in place risk and needs assessment tools—ones that determine the risk of reoffending upon release to the community *and* assess those needs that are driving the risk to reoffend. This is equally important for men and women offenders. Although there has been a good bit of progress on the development and use of risk/needs tools for male populations, much remains to be done with women offenders. Some states have taken the step of developing and validating such tools for justice-involved women, but many states have not. It is important to be clear that standard risk/needs instruments (such as the LSI-R, LS/CMI, or COMPAS) do not identify some of the most important risk factors for women offenders. Gender-neutral factors are indeed predictive of women's risk, but gender-neutral and gender-responsive factors *together* are more predictive of outcomes than either one alone (Van Voorhis et al., 2010).

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<sup>4</sup>BJS Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) studies indicate that while a majority (94%) of pregnant inmates in state prisons received an obstetric exam, less than half (48%) of the pregnant inmates in jails received one (Maruschak, 2008; 2006).

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### **Supervising Women in the Community: The Success of the Women Offender Case Management Model (WOCMM)**

The *Women Offender Case Management Model* (WOCMM)<sup>5</sup> has shown promising results with women on community supervision. A recent outcome evaluation of the WOCMM model piloted on a sample of medium and high risk offenders (as determined by the LSI-R) of Connecticut probationers confirmed the effectiveness of case management strategies informed by a gender-responsive risk/need tool. WOCCM participants were 26% less likely to be arrested than non-participants (i.e., those on traditional probation) over a one year period (Millson et al., 2009).

Evaluation results revealed clearly that this intensive case management model was most effective with higher risk cases. As the research with male offenders has similarly demonstrated, providing unwarranted services to women offenders who are assessed to be at low risk to reoffend is not only an imprudent use of scarce resources, but can also increase a woman's likelihood to reoffend (Gehring et al., 2010; Brusman et al., 2007).

Under WOCMM, a case management team works collaboratively with women offenders to identify their individual needs and strengths, and to define mutually agreed goals and outcomes. The team utilizes a common framework to monitor progress as women transition through the criminal justice system. WOCMM's four stages include:

- **Engage and assess:** Gather a complete picture of the factors that contribute to criminal justice involvement and identify women's protective factors and strengths.
- **Enhance women's motivation:** Increase commitment and self-efficacy by enhancing intrinsic motivation.
- **Implement the case plan:** Identify personal goals for

#### **WOCMM's Core Principles**

Provide a comprehensive set of mutually supportive services that address the complex needs of women.

- Recognize that all women have strengths and resources that can be utilized to address their challenges (i.e., do not solely focus on risk factors).
- Work intentionally to ensure that women are involved in case planning and the supervision process (i.e., enhance their intrinsic motivation) and respect women's rights to choose which needs to addressed and in what order.
- Promote services that are "limitless" and are available to women and their families long after the termination of criminal justice supervision.
- Match services to the risk level and criminogenic needs of women.
- Build essential partnerships with the community and enhance its capacity to serve women offenders (i.e., ensure that critical resources are available and readily accessible).
- Establish a multi-disciplinary case management team (including women as part of this team).
- Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes (i.e., assure that case plans address the unique needs of women offenders).
- Establish quality assurance methods to ensure program integrity.

For more information on WOCMM visit:  
<http://static.nicic.gov/Library/021814.pdf>

the case plan, and deliver and broker the necessary services to assist women in achieving these goals.

- **Review progress:** Determine if goals have been achieved, and update the case plan with new goals or alternative steps in achieving goals that have not been realized.

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<sup>5</sup> WOCMM was developed by Orbis Partners Inc. in partnership with the National Institute of Corrections.

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## Background

### In and Out of Prison: The Revolving Door of Women

Approximately 92% of women under the jurisdiction of correctional authorities are currently being supervised in the community by probation or parole agencies (see, e.g., Carson & Sabol, 2012 and Maruschak & Parks, 2012).<sup>6</sup> The less serious nature of their crimes, shorter criminal histories, and lower propensity for violence and aggression generally suggest that women pose a lesser threat to public safety than men (Deschenes et al., 2006; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, Wright, & Bauman, 2009). Yet there remains a large group of women who do not successfully complete supervision. Consider that approximately 60% of women released from incarceration were arrested and nearly 30% were returned to prison within three years of release in the latest national study (Deschenes et al., 2006).

There remains a significant problem of women cycling through the criminal justice system; this revolving door oftentimes is the result of a system that has not been able to assist women in meeting their basic needs for survival in the community. Rather than being charged with new crimes, women are given technical violations for failing to meet supervision conditions, such as not meeting financial obligations, not being able to find employment, missing meetings due to childrearing responsibilities, not attending treatment, having police contacts as a result of violence in their relationships, and being unable to secure safe housing (Salisbury, Van Voorhis, Wright & Bauman, 2009). When women violate the terms of their supervision, they may receive further sanctions and increased supervision requirements or may be remanded or returned to prison (Deschenes et al., 2006; Langan & Levin, 2002; Salisbury, Van Voorhis, Wright & Bauman, 2009).

As a result, the criminal justice system, as well as the larger society, pay a hefty price to incarcerate women who are, primarily, not dangerous to society. Instead, with appropriate support, the majority of women leaving prison can become self-supported individuals, responsible parents, and productive citizens.

<sup>6</sup> The latest estimates from BJS indicate that 1,086,753 women were under probation and parole supervision and 93,504 women were incarcerated in 2011.

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## Ten Practice Targets

The ten practice targets for paroling authorities—which form the basis for this guide—are designed to assist paroling authorities to:

- Enhance public safety.
- Contribute to the prudent use of public resources.
- Offer an important opportunity for victims of crime to be respectfully heard and acknowledged.
- Preserve paroling authority discretion.
- Provide important transparency and credibility.
- Insulate paroling authorities in the event of community failures.

These practices are:

- Supported by the research as effective in enhancing public safety and the prudent use of public resources.
- Embraced as "best practices" by the field.
- Articulated by the NPRC's project advisers and leadership.

The ten practice targets are:

1. Use good, empirically-based actuarial tools to assess risk and criminogenic needs of offenders.
2. Develop and use clear, evidence-based, policy-driven decisionmaking tools, policies, and guidelines that reflect the full range of a paroling authority's concerns (e.g., punishment, victim issues, community safety, etc.).
3. Maintain meaningful partnerships with institutional corrections and community supervision (and others) to encourage a seamless transition process and the availability of sound, evidence-based programs.
4. Use their influence and leverage to target institutional and community resources to mid and high risk offenders to address their criminogenic needs. Consider for release at the earliest stage possible—in light of statutes and other sentencing interests—offenders assessed as low risk.
5. Use the parole interview/hearing/review process as an opportunity to—among other goals—enhance offender motivation to change.
6. Fashion condition-setting policy to minimize requirements on low-risk offenders, and target conditions to criminogenic needs of medium- and high risk offenders.
7. Develop policy-driven, evidence-informed responses to parole violations that incorporate considerations of risk, criminogenic need, and severity; assure even-handed treatment of violators; and utilize resources wisely.
8. Develop and strengthen case-level decision making skills/capacities in these areas.

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9. Develop and strengthen agency-level policymaking, strategic management, and performance measurement skills/capacities.

The NRPC has developed a [Self-Assessment Toolkit for Paroling Authorities](#) to provide a structured, self-assessment guide to assist paroling authorities to consider their current practices, and the degree to which they mirror the National Parole Resource Center's practice targets for risk reduction. By completing this Toolkit, paroling authority members can gain preliminary insight into how their practices compare to these targets, and where they might want to focus further attention in strengthening their work in the future.

## Applying the Practice Targets to Women

The following are considerations for parole boards on how each practice target below applies to justice-involved women and recommendations for how parole boards can operationalize sound gender-informed practice in each of these areas. Go to [Practice Target 1](#).

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## Ten Practice Targets

### **1: Use good, empirically-based actuarial tools to assess risk and criminogenic needs (and other risk factors) of offenders.**

- Use an empirically based, gender-responsive risk/need assessment tool developed for women (e.g., the Women's Risk/Need Assessment (WRNA), University of Cincinnati; the SPIn-W (Service Planning Instrument for Women, Orbis 2006). Where empirically-based, gender-neutral tools are already in use, parole boards may wish to supplement gender-neutral risk/need information with a "add on" tool such as the Women's Risk/Need Assessment (WRNA) Trailer from the University of Cincinnati (see [www.uc.edu/womenoffenders](http://www.uc.edu/womenoffenders)).
- Consider using such tools "seamlessly" (i.e., use the same tool regardless of correctional setting, e.g., probation, prison, parole).
- Validate all assessment tools on the population for which they are intended.
- Where possible, parole board members should encourage other criminal justice partners to adopt gender-responsive tools and use the information collected to inform their policies and practices with women.
- Even where such tools may not be currently available, parole board members may want to consider gender-relevant risk factors, including:
  - Victimization/abuse
  - Relationship problems/family conflict
  - Mental health (depression and psychotic symptoms)
  - Substance abuse
  - Self-efficacy
  - Poverty
  - Parental issues/stress

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**2: Develop and use clear, evidence-based, policy-driven decisionmaking tools, policies, and guidelines that reflect the full range of a paroling authority's concerns (e.g., punishment, victim issues, community safety, etc.).**

- Use structured decisionmaking tools that articulate the parole board's concerns regarding women. Considerations for decisions in regard to women may include risk level as dictated by gender-responsive risk/needs assessments, types of intervention needs, reentry needs, safety concerns, reunification with children, etc.
- Measure the effectiveness of tools used with women periodically over time to assure they continue to achieve goals, and adjust as needed.
- Explore the availability, development, and use of gender-responsive risk/need assessment tools for women, and incorporate results into decisionmaking guidelines.
- Understand whether current institutional classification tools accurately reflect the severity of women's behavior. If classification policies are gender-neutral, consider that women classified as high risk will not incur as many serious misconducts as males classified as high risk. In other words, understand that the meaning of high risk is different for men and women. Understand whether disciplinary practices within institutions take into account women's unique circumstances and adjustment to prison. Consider whether infraction records accurately reflect the severity of women's behavior, not just the frequency of minor misconduct. Some research suggests that a history of minor misconducts in prison may be a reflection of a lack of officer training/knowledge on gender-responsiveness, the absence of trauma-informed policies and practices, or overly punitive approaches.
- Consider the potential impact of any gender-neutral tools that the parole board uses on the appropriate assessment of women offenders (e.g., gender-neutral risk tools may over-classify women as higher risk).
- Remember that women generally are less likely to commit serious or violent crimes, but women appropriately assessed as "high risk" still have significant needs that should be addressed in order to lower their likelihood of recidivating.
- Consider the following information on women offenders to inform decisionmaking about matters such as release, condition-setting, and responding to violations:
  - History of abuse or trauma that may be impacting her current behavior and that should be treated.
  - Mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, PTSD) that must be addressed as a basic survival need.
  - Parental stress that a woman might be facing when she leaves prison (number of children, current

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arrangement for care, competency in managing children) Are there resources available to help her reunify with her children?

- Level of family support/conflict
- Financial status/poverty. Has the woman been able to position herself to earn a livable wage? Are there resources available to help her find/keep a job? How will the woman balance employment with child-rearing?
- Safety concerns that should be considered prior to her returning to the community: Will she be safe from violence or an abusive partner? Does the proposed housing offer a safe environment for the woman and her children?
- Strengths and protective factors (self-efficacy, self-esteem, family support, educational opportunities, and financial resources) that can be built upon to enhance the likelihood of success.
- Consider whether the woman has successfully completed programming within the institution during release decisionmaking.

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### **3: Maintain meaningful partnerships with institutional corrections, and community supervision (and others) to encourage a seamless transition process and the availability of sound, evidence-based programs.**

- Consider the success of comprehensive, seamless approaches such as WOCMM and apply the lessons to current efforts. Parole boards should work with their partner agencies to build a more seamless transition process for women from prison to the community. Toward this goal, parole boards, institutional corrections, and community supervision agencies should:
  - Develop a common vision and definition of parole success across components.
  - Deliver consistent messages across components.
  - Realign operations to better coordinate with corrections and supervision.
  - Establish interagency agreements.
- Articulate as a value and a goal that the parole board, its staff, and its partner agencies will listen to women about what they need in order to be successful.
- Work toward the practical goals of:
- Collaborating with institutional and community staff to make legal assistance and transportation available.
- Ensuring that housing plans consider the safety needs of women and accommodate children (e.g., women and their families are not being placed in an environment where there may be access to drugs or a violent partner).
  - Linking women to substance abuse and mental health treatment when appropriate and ensuring continuity of care.
  - Assisting women in working toward job opportunities to earn a living wage.
  - Conducting a scan of programming to determine what gender-responsive practices are occurring in the state. Ensure that these resources are being appropriately used.

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### **4: Use their influence and leverage to target institutional and community resources to mid and high risk offenders to address their criminogenic needs.**

- Encourage institutional leadership to consider/implement gender-informed risk assessment tools, if they are not using them already. Ensure that such information is being provided to the parole board.
- Alert key personnel to the risk factors likely to cycle women back into the system.
- Encourage institutional leadership to adopt programming that addresses women's needs.
- Clarify expectations for parole consideration of medium- or high risk offenders early in the prison term so that they may comply with expected requirements for release consideration.
- Use parole release as an incentive to encourage offenders to participate in gender-responsive prison-based programming.
- Influence institutional leadership to offer programming by community providers. To facilitate continuity of care, institutions should partner with organizations that can provide services to women, both inside the prison and in the community.
- Apply the risk principle to women offenders.<sup>7</sup> Prioritize and target treatment services to moderate- and high risk female offenders. Medium- to high risk women should be considered for a risk-reduction track, while concerns for low-risk women should be about stability. Outcomes for low-risk women placed in intensive programming tend to be worse than if they had not been programmed in such a manner.
- For medium- to high risk women, addressing their most significant needs, as indicated through a gender-responsive risk/need tool, will ensure that they have the support necessary to be successful in the community.
- For low-risk women who have mental health or substance abuse issues, referring them to appropriate treatment should be part of the stability effort. These needs are best addressed in the community, rather than maintaining women in correctional facilities to receive treatment.

<sup>7</sup> In Connecticut, participating in WOCMM produced a larger reduction in negative outcomes (e.g., arrest, absconding, technical violations) among higher risk women than among medium risk women on probation (Millson, Robinson & Van Dielen, 2010).

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### **5: Consider for release at the earliest stage possible—in light of statutes and other sentencing interests—offenders assessed as low risk.**

- Develop a policy to release low-risk offenders even if they do not receive institutional programming. Low-risk women often have multiple strengths such as healthy relationships with children, supportive family members, and employment opportunities. To increase her likelihood of success, these positive influences must be capitalized on rather than taken away, as they often are when women are incarcerated. As long as mental health and substance abuse issues are treated, low-risk women should be kept in the community and enmeshed within their pro-social networks as much as possible. If mental health and substance abuse issues are present, low-risk women in need of such services should receive mental health and substance abuse treatment in the community whenever possible in an effort to maintain vital pro-social networks. (This is also important when considering halfway houses for women. Even though many facilities will only accept low-risk women, the best option for this low-risk group is to keep them in their pro-social family environments.)
- Recognize that low-risk women are harmed (i.e., have adverse outcomes) when placed in intensive programming (Millson et al., 2010; Brusman et al., 2007; Gehring et al., 2010).
- Acknowledge that women more often than not fail on community supervision due to technical violations, and not for committing new (serious or violent) crimes. Release and violation decisionmaking should consider that failures by women are often linked to unaddressed survival needs (unable to pay fees, not meeting with parole officers due to parenting responsibilities, inability to gain steady employment given a lack in job skills, etc.).
- Prioritize resources, including community referrals, on medium- and high risk women who have significant deficits in finding safe housing, childcare, livable wage jobs, mental health/substance abuse treatment, etc.

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### **6: Use the parole interview/hearing/review process as an opportunity to— among other goals—enhance offender motivation to change.**

- Articulate goals and objectives for parole board interviews/hearings with offenders and victims.
- View the interview as an opportunity for a personal interaction with an offender, which could potentially have an impact on the offender's motivation to change. Consider interview strategies for reinforcing positive behavior, such as Motivational Interviewing techniques.
- Parole board members may wish to utilize some of the same strategies used by WOCMM officers to enhance a woman's motivation. For example, during the interview:<sup>8</sup>
  - Provide feedback to the woman on her assessment results and progress made towards goals.
  - After recognizing the woman's strengths and achievements, move on to a discussion of the challenges and barriers she is facing or anticipates.
  - Explore with her what her personal goals or targets are, given the needs identified through the assessment.
  - Review with her the barriers, incentives, and disincentives to achieving her desired outcomes.
- Consider lengthening the interview with women. Officers report that women seem to need more time to discuss and process challenges they are facing on a day-to-day basis.<sup>9</sup> Spending more time with women could make them feel more supported and help them achieve successful outcomes.
- Establish trust and a respectful relationship; listening helps a woman in her recovery.
- Be aware of what motivates her. Consider that while parenting is a key source of stress for female prisoners, it is also a significant motivating factor that should be capitalized on. Engage the woman about her children, the status of the relationship, and steps she can take to reunify, mend, or enhance relationships with her children.
- Ask women how their family might have an impact on their supervision on parole. Given the importance of relationships to women's success, it is critical that healthy and unhealthy relationships are explored with the woman.
- Be trauma informed; recognize that many women who come before the parole board during the hearing process have significant backgrounds of trauma and abuse that could be triggered during the parole process.

<sup>8</sup> Adapted from National Institute of Corrections, 2006.

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### **7: Fashion condition setting policy to minimize requirements on low-risk offenders, and target conditions to criminogenic needs/risk factors of medium and high risk offenders.**

#### **For low-risk women:**

- Minimize conditions on low-risk women. Ensure that treatment options are not tied to conditions.
- To the extent possible, encourage case management of this group of women to focus on ensuring their stability needs are met for the first couple of months after release (e.g., safe housing, clothing, medical services/medication, and bus passes for transportation).
- Refer low-risk women with mental health or substance abuse issues to appropriate treatment, but refrain from making participation a condition of release.

#### **For medium- and high risk women:**

- Set conditions to encourage participating in gender-responsive programming in accordance with the results of a gender-responsive risk/needs assessment tool.
- Direct, through policy, that staff address the top three (or more) needs in case management planning.
- Prioritize gender-responsive programming with a cognitive component (see. the Programs for Justice-Involved Women with Cognitive Behavioral Components section below of this document for a list of these programs)... If none are available, work with other criminal justice partners to develop them.
- Set conditions for women that are consistent with their needs as defined by gender-responsive tools.
- Balance the goal of addressing women's most significant needs with the goal of not overwhelming women with conditions or setting them up to fail.

#### **For all women:**

- Consider whether the woman has successfully completed programming within the institution when stipulating conditions.
- Take care to explain supervision conditions and expectations, as well as consequences, as women are more compliant when they see sanctions as fair and predictable.
- Consider the extent to which financial penalties/fees could serve as a barrier to a woman's success in the

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community. Parole boards should take into account the economic status of the woman, her dependents, and other financial obligations when attaching financial conditions of supervision.

- Avoid "overconditioning." Conditions of supervision should be limited in number; attainable by the offender; focus only on the circumstances in which the agency is prepared to consistently hold offenders accountable; and relevant and tailored to the specific level of risk and needs domains assessed as likely to enhance the risk of re-offense (see, e.g., Solomon et al., 2008).

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**8: Develop policy-driven, evidence-informed responses to parole violations that incorporate considerations of risk, criminogenic needs/risk factors and severity, assure even-handed treatment of violators, and utilize resources wisely.**

- Frontload supervision and support services for reentering offenders, providing more intensive services initially (particularly for medium- and high risk offenders), and then diminishing the intensity over time as women become more self-supporting and independent, and as their needs dictate.
- Develop a list of graduated incentives to reward women for their positive behavior and accomplishments.
- Develop a list of graduated sanctions that can guide officers in their supervision of women. Sanctions should be proportional to the behavior or violation, with opportunities for overriding them based on the individual circumstances of the woman.
- Take a graduated and structured approach to addressing technical violations of parole in the community. Since some failure is expected (e.g., missing an appointment, inability to pay all fees in full), this structure should allow for officers to be flexible in working with women offenders to meet their parole requirements.
- Include the woman as a member of the case management team.
- Engage the woman in a discussion about goals and incentives for achieving them.
- Engage in meaningful discussion with the woman about her supervision progress. Recognizing the woman's strengths and accomplishments will help her to build her self-esteem and sense of self-worth, which are critical gender-responsive needs for women.
- Expect that the woman will experience setbacks and recognize the interrelated nature of the many issues women face during the transition to the community. WOCMM officers indicated that filing violations for non-compliance seemed inconsistent with the goals of WOCMM, given their knowledge that it could take many months for a woman to stabilize. One WOCMM officer whose client repeatedly tested positive for PCP use, decided not to pursue a violation. Instead, the officer took effort to uncover the reasons underlying the use and was able to better facilitate the woman in taking the necessary steps to address the reasons and work toward abstinence (Millson et al., 2010).
- When filing a violation is necessary—such as when a woman becomes a risk to herself or becomes unmanageable in the community—parole boards and officers should treat it as a setback, rather than a failure. Explain to the woman that this setback and violation is part of the process but that she is still capable of being successful in the community. When used in this manner, sanctions often provide a temporary opportunity to

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provide stability (see Morash, 2010).

- Review parole policy and practice in an ongoing way to ensure that parole boards and officers address obstacles and barriers women most commonly face in successfully complying with parole supervision conditions. If needed, revisit strategies that can help women to overcome these issues or discuss whether certain conditions may need to be modified to encourage success with compliance.

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### **9: Develop and strengthen case-level decision making skills/capacities in these areas.**

- Train staff at all levels in case management strategies, evidence-based practices, motivating offenders to change, etc.
- Ensure that all staff who work with women are trained and skilled in gender-responsive approaches/interactions. Particularly critical for engaging women:
  - Avoid the use of confrontation. When staff use confrontational approaches (e.g., to respond to antisocial attitudes), they often shut women down. Instead, to encourage engagement, officers and others should form a professional working relationship, that includes a respectful and empathic approach to working with women (Millson et al., 2010).
  - Focus on small victories and reinforce, affirm, and encourage all efforts to change behavior.
  - Remember the importance of healthy (and unhealthy) relationships in women's lives. Their connections and disconnections with others may influence their behavior and therefore should be emphasized and discussed regularly. The goal is to encourage women to build relationships that are mutually respectful and pro-social. Staff can achieve this by serving as a model of a healthy relationship and helping women to assess, explore, and develop the skills to expand their social network.
  - Consider gender-specific caseloads with staff who have a desire and skill capacity to work with women offenders.
- Collaborate with corrections officials to ensure that offenders' case plans (i.e., in-prison, during transition, and in the community) identify and include plans to effectively address needs as dictated by a gender-responsive assessment tool.
- Develop gender-responsive policies that focus on the transitioning of women to lower supervision levels and the eventual termination of supervision. One of the lessons learned from WOCMM was that women continued to visit their officers even when they did not need to officially report; it appeared that the women wanted to continue to report their achievements and continue their relationship with their officer (Millson et al., 2010). Parole boards and community supervision agencies should consider how best to get women off of supervision while adequately helping them to achieve independence.

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### **10: Develop and strengthen agency level policy making, strategic management and performance measurement skills/capacities.**

- Learn what the state's parole rates are for men and women.
- Conduct a scan of gender-responsive programming and approaches available to the women who come before the parole board.
- Treat women and men as separate populations and collect data so that gender can be distinguished.
- Assess practices that are being applied to women (separately from men) and use that data to guide future decisionmaking. Over time, make adjustments accordingly.
- Institute continuous quality improvement measures.
- Commit to becoming a learning organization that values research on female offenders, their unique needs, and management considerations.

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## Individual Case Studies

The following case studies profiling three individual women ([Uilani](#), [Lynne](#), and [Beth](#)) are designed to provide parole board members with a series of examples of cases involving types of women offenders that might come before them (for hearings, in response to violations, or when making release determinations). Each of the case studies provides a substantial background description of each woman's experience, addressing issues including her criminal background and instant (current) offense, history of trauma and abuse, prior correctional experiences, and other demographic information about her education, employment, housing and financial situation, and family relationships. This information is provided in an effort to give parole board members a full picture of each woman's particular experiences, risk factors, and needs. Suggestions about issues that parole boards should consider when making release determinations are also provided. These suggestions are meant to provide a framework through which parole board members can consider a woman's experiences, risk factors, triggers for re-offense, and needs that should be addressed in order to encourage her success while under supervision. One significant gap in the practice reported through the case studies is the absence of gender-responsive risk and needs assessments. While it is optimal to have such assessment practices in place, in their absence the reader is still encouraged to consider each case in the context of current knowledge about those factors that the research suggests are related to their level of risk and the nature of needs that should be addressed.

Although most parole boards have not yet fully integrated gender-responsive practices into their release decisionmaking, these case studies highlight the need for parole boards to advocate for more gender-responsive and evidence-based practices. To this end, parole boards should consider moving toward and advocating for practices that include the utilization of gender-responsive assessments, the provision of gender-responsive and evidence-based programs for women, and the delivery of trauma-informed care for justice-involved women, all of which will reduce women's risk for re-offense and better inform parole board decisions.

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## Individual Case Studies

### **Uilani**

#### **Current Offense**

Uilani is 37 years of age. She was arrested for Theft in the Second Degree and 9 counts of Unsworn Falsification to Authorities. She reported that she failed to report the charges to Child Welfare Services because she did not have transportation or a phone. She owes the Department of Human Services \$7,413.01 for overpayment. An assault on her former boyfriend (see "Criminal History/Risk") led to Uilaini serving the remainder of her three year parole sentence in prison.

While incarcerated, Uilani has had several misconducts for not obeying direct orders and for confronting or assaulting other inmates. She has served some of her time in segregation as a result of the assaultive misconducts. She did participate in a treatment program but did not successfully complete it. She is on a waiting list to get into a "Thinking for a Change" program that has been recommended by her counselor.

#### **Criminal History/Risk**

Uilani has a prior conviction for Criminal Property Damage in the First Degree for attacking and confronting her ex-boyfriend/father of her children and was placed on probation. One year later, her probation was revoked as a result of new assault charges on the same ex-boyfriend (whom she was to have no contact with) and despite the added difficulty that she lives with his parents—one of her only supports. Uilani has no prior juvenile record or arrests.

Uilani scored moderate to moderate high on the LSI-R. She has moderate to high criminogenic needs in the areas of antisocial cognitions, emotional/personal, employment, family, and leisure/recreation. She has served half of the remainder of her sentence and plans to resume her life as it was before incarceration.

#### **Family**

Uilani has never been married. She has four children ranging in ages from 2 to 21. At age 16, Uilani had Moke. When her relationship with Moke's father ended, he was adopted by her parents. At age 20, she conceived Katie while in another relationship that lasted one year. Although she has custody of her daughter, Katie lives with her paternal grandparents. Her two youngest children currently reside with her.

Uilani reported that both of her parents had severe alcohol problems. She described her father as a quiet man who tried to support his children. However, her mother was extremely volatile and they never got along. At age 14, she was kicked out of the house by her mother but moved back with her family; she was later kicked out again at the age of 16. Uilani is currently estranged from her mother; however, she does see her father on occasion and describes him as supportive. She has four siblings, one of whom is currently serving a sentence for sexual assault.

There were reports to suggest that her brother Charles sexually assaulted Uilani and another sister, though he was never officially charged for these crimes. Uilani has frequent contact with one of her sisters, who is supportive.

At present, Uilani reports a dissatisfactory relationship with her boyfriend. According to Uilani, he is often angry and frequently hits her. However, she feels that staying with him will allow her two youngest children to have their father around.

### **Education**

Uilani completed high school and participated in the music program. During 10th grade, she played the flute and travelled to Europe with her music class. She started to have difficulty managing her course work in the 11th grade after giving birth to her son.

### **Employment History**

Uilani has never been employed for a full year, and her work history is sporadic. Her first job was working at a pizza restaurant, but she quit to give birth to her third child. Financial support mainly comes from her boyfriend's parents and food stamps. She has not held a full-time job for the last four years.

### **Financial/Housing**

Uilani describes a history of financial instability and always felt as if she was barely making ends meet. For the most part, Uilani has relied on social assistance and has lived with her boyfriend's parents for the last eight years. Uilani describes the neighborhood as a safe place for herself and her children. There is no indication that this is a high-crime neighborhood.

### **Peers and Social Support**

Uilani's social supports include her sister, her father, and her current boyfriend's parents. She could not identify any other friends or acquaintances. Uilani is not involved in any organized activities. However, her free time is limited given the responsibility she has as the primary caregiver of her two children.

### **Substance Abuse**

Uilani reported that she used alcohol between the ages of 20 and 35. When she did drink, she consumed four to five drinks in a sitting, and drank approximately five times a month. Uilani claims that she smoked marijuana between the ages of 17 and 25. She snorted and smoked cocaine from 23 to 24.

### **Personality and Temperament**

Uilani has limited problem-solving and decisionmaking skills. For example, she would like to find alternative living arrangements and get a job so that she feels less financial pressure; however, she is unable to describe how she would achieve these goals.

### **Attitudes and Orientation**

Uilani shows little remorse when discussing the offense, as she tended to place responsibility on her boyfriend and his family for the crimes she committed. She also expressed concern about being under supervision for such a long period of time and complained at length about how she was treated unfairly by her parole officer.

### **Emotional/Personal**

Uilani has not received treatment for suspected sexual abuse. When she was in high school, a school counselor

attempted to work with her; however, Uilani's mother ended this relationship. Uilani and her boyfriend frequently engage in interpersonal violence that includes verbal abuse and physical abuse (e.g., pushing and hitting). She recognizes that the relationship is not a healthy one, but is unable to identify options to address relationship problems.

#### *Issues to Consider When Making Release Determinations*

From the case study, questions that one might consider to gain a greater understanding of Uilani and the circumstances surrounding her incarceration:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the context and circumstances that impact Uilani's offending behavior?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to support herself and children, unhealthy relationships, and intimate partner violence.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Uilani's challenges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhealthy relationships, lack of employment history, poor problem solving and decisionmaking skills, financial instability, few community supports.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Uilani's strengths/protective factors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High school degree, little/no substance abuse/addiction, wants to be a "good" parent to her children.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Uilani's history of trauma (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, loss, intimate partner violence, community violence)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past suspected sexual assault, intimate partner violence, thrown out of the house by mother, alcoholic parents.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were Uilani's experiences in the aftermath of trauma? How did she respond? How do those experiences continue to affect her?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At times, Uilani acts aggressively and in an assaultive manner. She continues to act out aggressively with anyone who "gets in her face" or who she feels threatened by. Uilani has never received any trauma-informed care.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is her current level of danger from other people?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uilani may be in danger from her ex-boyfriend/parent of her two youngest children upon release and because she feels she has no choice but to continue to live with his parents who have been one of the few supports in her life.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How should we consider Uilani's institutional behavior (participation in programming and misconducts)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uilani continues to act out aggressively and physically when confronted or asked to do something she does not want to do. She was terminated early from a treatment program that was not gender responsive and relied on confrontational tactics to identify underlying behaviors.</li> </ul>

*Additional considerations for parole release and condition setting:*

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Effectively addressing Uilani's past trauma is key.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will Uilani be able to be supervised on a gender-specific caseload? With staff trained and knowledgeable about trauma and gender responsiveness?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there mental health resources in the community that Uilani can take advantage of?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uilani may need ongoing support in learning how to develop healthy relationships, addressing and understanding how she contributes and is responsible for her criminal behavior, how past untreated trauma may exacerbate her behavior, and in gaining better problem-solving and decision making skills to deal with life stressors.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other treatment concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are gender specific services available? All female treatment groups? Treatment opportunities that feel safe?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uilani intends to return to her ex-boyfriend's parents' home and resume parenting her children. In the past this has been a stable and supportive living environment. Is this the best option? Are there any others that might afford more support and safety?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has anyone helped Uilani to develop a safety plan (or better coping plan) should she resume a relationship with her ex-boyfriend?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supervision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Will Uilani be able to be supervised on a gender specific caseload? With staff trained and knowledgeable about trauma and gender responsiveness?</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment/Education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uilani does have a high school degree, but little employment history and no marketable skills. She will need some help in developing job skills and motivation to work. Helping her to find an appropriate work situation where she can realize positive results is important.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uilani may need some help with financial planning, budgeting especially if she is to realize her dream to be more independent, living on her own, and supporting herself and her children.</li> </ul>



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## Individual Case Studies

### **Lynne**

#### **Current Offense**

Lynne, 34, was sentenced to three years in prison for Possession with Intent to Distribute. She had been acting as a drug mule for her boyfriend and was apprehended at the state border with a large quantity of cannabis and heroin. She has served the minimum (1/3) of her sentence and is now eligible for parole.

While incarcerated, Lynne participated in a six-month substance abuse treatment program and has received some mental health counseling. She has a few minor institutional misconducts for being out of place, for cutting herself, and for not following the rules. She plans to reside in a halfway house for women upon release. Her parents have also invited her to live with them until she can support herself, as long as she does not use drugs.

#### **Criminal History/Risk**

Lynne has several previous convictions for drug trafficking, possession, and prostitution, for which she has served some short jail sentences, and at least one probation sentence, which she eventually completed. Prior to her most recent arrest, Lynne was using heroin on a daily basis. When she ran out of money she turned to a former boyfriend, Doug, who is well known to the police. Doug supported Lynne's drug addiction by forcing her into prostitution, where she was often beaten, and asking her to steal and transport drugs for him. Lynne scored in the moderate range on the LSI-R risk/needs assessment and has moderate/high criminogenic needs domains in antisocial attitudes, family, and substance abuse.

#### **Family**

Lynne was raised in an intact, middle income family and is the youngest of three sisters. She reports an excellent upbringing and maintains occasional contact with her parents and siblings. Though they disapprove of her lifestyle and no longer offer her money, they are willing to play a part in her treatment and rehabilitation.

Of note in Lynne's development was her victimization at the hands of an uncle. At 13 years of age, she was sexually assaulted during a family party. She has never shared this experience with family members, but it is clear that the event had a significant impact on her life. She has no children and has never been married.

#### **Education**

Lynne was an average student who was forced to change schools frequently due to her father's employment in the military. When Lynne was in 9th grade, she was found to be suffering from depression and was engaging in self-injurious behaviors. She participated in therapy for several months and was prescribed anti-depressants. She

managed to complete her high school education but chose not to attend college.

### **Employment History**

After graduating from high school, Lynne obtained employment as a waitress and later as a hairdresser but did not make enough income to live alone and returned to live with her parents when she was unable to pay her rent.

### **Financial/Housing**

Lynne has primarily lived on the streets for the past 10 years. Her family is willing to support her as long as she remains clean, and they have also offered some financial assistance until she can get re-established.

### **Peers and Social Support**

Lynne is susceptible to negative peer influences and does not maintain any friendships other than those from the street. She realizes the importance of creating a different social support network.

### **Substance Abuse**

Lynne reports that she was a good student at school and could have done much better with her life had she not started to use drugs. She is confident that she can be gainfully employed if she gives up her addiction.

### **Personality and Temperament**

Lynne is socially skilled and still has her license as a hairdresser. She is creative and artistic. Lynne is easily led and her relationships can be described as chaotic and unstable. Because of her need to be liked by everyone, she has difficulty saying "no" to others. Lynne has extremely poor self-esteem and considers herself to be worthless. She feels that her addiction is insurmountable and that ultimately she will relapse. It is during these times that she feels that suicide may be her only option (she has attempted suicide on two occasions). Despite being surrounded by turmoil and violence, Lynne has never acted out aggressively towards anyone. When she is angry, she is most likely to turn inward and hurt herself.

### ***Issues to Consider When Making Release Determinations***

From the case study, questions that one might consider to gain a greater understanding of Lynne and the circumstances surrounding her incarceration:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the context and circumstances that impact Lynne's offending behavior?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug use, low self-esteem, unable to support herself.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Lynne's challenges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Few social supports, unhealthy relationships, unstable housing, unemployed, belief that she cannot manage her addiction.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Lynne's strengths/protective factors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High school degree, hairdresser license, social skills, creative, artistic.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Lynne's history of trauma (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, loss, intimate partner violence, community violence)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past sexual assault, frequent moves as a child, physical and sexual abuse by partners and johns.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were Lynne's experiences in the aftermath of trauma? How did she respond? How do those experiences continue to affect her?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drug use, low self-esteem, unable to support herself.</li> <li>• Lynne uses maladaptive strategies to cope with trauma including substance use, self-harm behaviors, suicide attempts, etc. Lynne has never received treatment for trauma.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is her current level of danger from other people?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynne may be in danger from Doug if she renews her relationship with him upon release.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does Lynne continue to have suicidal thoughts and behaviors or any indications of continued self-harm?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lynne has been cited for at least one incidence of self-harm while incarcerated.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How should we consider Lynne's misconduct behavior while incarcerated?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall, Lynne has had few misconducts, all of them minor, and at least one (self-harming) that should be considered a mental health issue, rather than a misconduct.</li> </ul>

*Additional considerations for parole release and condition setting:*

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effectively addressing Lynne's past trauma is key. Are there mental health resources in the community that Lynne can take advantage of?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is treatment available to address the trauma? Was the substance abuse treatment program she participated in while incarcerated trauma informed? Will she be able to continue to address her trauma (if not in the institution) in the community? In the halfway house where she plans to reside? Lynne may need ongoing support in learning how to develop healthy relationships, addressing low self-worth, gaining coping and problem solving skills to deal with stress (rather than turning to drugs).</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other treatment concerns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are gender-specific services available? All female treatment groups? Treatment opportunities that feel safe?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the halfway house where Lynne plans to reside a safe place for her to live? Will she have peer and professional support?</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has anyone helped Lynne to develop a safety plan should Doug seek her out when she is released?</li> </ul>

Supervision	Will Lynne be able to be supervised on a gender specific caseload? With staff who are trained and knowledgeable about trauma and gender responsiveness?
• Employment	• Lynne has a hairdressing license and likes this work. Helping her to find an appropriate work situation where she can realize positive results is important.

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## Individual Case Studies

### **Beth**

#### **Current Offense**

Beth is 35 years of age. Recently, she was charged with a felony involving a fraud of goods over \$500 and given a two-year prison sentence. She has served 12 months and is eligible for parole. She has not had the opportunity to participate in any institutional programming due to the short term she has served thus far and is very compliant with all institutional rules.

#### **Criminal History/Risk**

Beth has a total of nine previous convictions mainly involving fraud/using stolen checks. Her first arrest was at the age of 14 when she was apprehended for shoplifting after stealing food from a local supermarket. She was cautioned by the police and no charges were filed. At the age of 16, she was adjudicated for shoplifting from a clothing store and given diversion. Beth was not apprehended again until the age of 20 when she was given a 12-month probation sentence for fraud after attempting to buy goods with stolen checks. She was similarly charged at age 22 and convicted of three additional fraud charges. At this time, she spent three months in custody. Subsequent to this charge, Beth was convicted of two additional shoplifting charges at the ages of 28 and 32 years and was fined for the former and given 40 hours of community service for the latter. Despite her criminal history, Beth is low risk on the COMPAS, with moderate-to-high criminogenic needs domains in financial/stability, leisure/recreation, and family issues. Beth has no record of violent behavior in her past and no indication of a propensity toward aggressive reactions to environmental stressors.

#### **Family**

Beth has five children ranging in age from 4 to 19 years and two grandchildren, aged 2 and 3. Beth has been married and divorced twice and involved in several other serious relationships. Each of the children have different fathers. Beth describes most of her relationships as unhealthy (i.e., most of her partners did not contribute financially, several had serious addiction problems, and two were involved with the criminal justice system). Beth has limited support from her family. She was raised by her mother and step-father. At one point, charges were filed against the step-father for sexual abuse, and he served a one-year sentence. Beth was subsequently placed in foster care because her mother said she could not manage her disruptive behavior.

Beth has frequent contact with her sister who has always been supportive and who will help when possible with child care. Her mother died several years ago. She has no contact with extended family members.

At present Beth reports a dissatisfactory relationship with her boyfriend. She has been seeing him for two years and has been hospitalized on two occasions for physical abuse. Beth has made several attempts to leave him and stayed in a shelter for three months. She subsequently returned to him stating that he was usually good to her and was quite

generous when offering financial support.

### **Education**

Beth dropped out of school at the age of 15 when she became pregnant with her first child. She successfully completed the 10th grade and no academic difficulties were reported.

### **Employment History**

Beth has relied on benefits throughout her adult life. She has had a sporadic work history and has not held a full-time job for the last three years. While Beth did say that she liked to work, she admitted that she has no immediate plans to find work and no intention to make this a priority area.

### **Financial/Housing**

Beth describes a history of financial instability and always felt as if she was barely making ends meet. For the most part Beth has relied on social assistance, and she currently resides in subsidized housing. Beth has lived in her current home for 10 years. She lives in a high-crime neighborhood that is heavily patrolled by the police. Despite this, Beth describes the neighborhood as a safe place if you learn to mind your own business. She indicated some concern for her children with respect to bad influences but feels that this is part of being poor and surviving the city.

### **Peers and Social Support**

Beth has few social supports other than her sister and several women whom she describes as close friends. Her friends live in the neighborhood and can be relied upon for emotional and child-care support. They have also been instrumental in encouraging Beth to leave her current relationship and to seek vocational training in an effort to avoid further criminal justice involvement.

### **Substance Abuse**

Beth reported that she has used alcohol since the age of 12. She describes her current usage as moderate and indicated that she will occasionally (twice a year) "tie one on" with her sister. Beth claims that she has never experimented with any drugs with the exception of marijuana. There is no indication that alcohol or other drugs have contributed to her criminal behavior.

### **Personality and Temperament**

There are no obvious interpersonal skill deficits that emerge in talking with Beth. She has a friendly and likeable style of interacting and makes no assumptions about the intentions of people with whom she is engaged. While she recognizes the consequences of her actions and can understand what happens after the fact, she feels unable to anticipate and then address problems. There is a suggestion in Beth's responses that she sees most of her behavior as being under the control of external forces, although she hints that she would like to gain control over those forces.

### **Attitudes and Orientation**

There appears to be a strong link between Beth's offending behavior and depression and feelings of hopelessness. Beth acknowledges that prior to each offense she experienced a period of time where she felt hopeless and embittered about her financial situation. On each occasion, she became preoccupied with buying something for her children or her home and easily justified her behavior by rationalizing that her children deserved it. Beth takes full responsibility for her criminal behavior and acknowledges that stealing is not acceptable. She also indicated that when things get really bad she is unable to stop herself from writing bad checks.

### **Emotional/Personal**

Beth first saw a mental health practitioner when she was incarcerated in jail for fraud. During this time, she was diagnosed with depression and given prescription medication. When she was released, Beth discontinued the medication because she felt she did not need it. She is not currently seeing a mental health practitioner despite the fact that she continues to report long periods of depression where she feels immobilized and unable to take care of the children and her home. During these times, Beth relies on her sister to manage the household and she spends the majority of her day in bed. In addition to the sexual abuse she experienced as a child, there has been some trauma from abuse by a partner.

#### *Issues to Consider When Making Release Determinations*

From the case study, questions that one might consider to gain a greater understanding of Beth and the circumstances surrounding her incarceration:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the context and circumstances that impact Beth's offending behavior?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unable to support herself and children, impulsivity.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Beth's challenges?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhealthy relationships, limited parenting skills, difficulties finding and maintaining employment, limited opportunities for employment as lack a GED.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of Beth's strengths/protective factors?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Despite unhealthy relationships, many pro-social friends, social skills, insightful, no substance abuse/addiction.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is Beth's history of trauma (physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, neglect, loss, intimate partner violence, community violence)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past sexual assault, physical and sexual abuse by partners/boyfriends.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were Beth's experiences in the aftermath of trauma? How did she respond? How do those experiences continue to affect her?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At times, Beth suffers from severe depression and is unable to take care of herself and her children. She has committed fraud, shoplifting and theft in reaction to life stressors and when she is depressed.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is her current level of danger from other people?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth may be in danger from her current boyfriend upon release even though she has tried to get away from him at times in the past.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does Beth continue to have suicidal thoughts and behaviors or any indications of continued self-harm?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth has been cited for at least one incidence of self-harm while incarcerated</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How should we consider Beth's institutional behavior (participation in programming and misconducts)?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beth has not had any misconducts nor has she been able to participate in any programming.</li> </ul>

*Additional considerations for parole release and condition setting:*

• Are there mental health resources in the community that Beth can take advantage of?	• Beth may need ongoing support in learning how to develop healthy relationships, addressing and understanding her depression and how this is linked to her criminal behavior, gaining coping and problem solving skills to deal with stress (rather than stealing and fraud).
• Other treatment concerns	• Are gender-specific services available? All female treatment groups? Treatment opportunities that feel safe?
• Housing	• Beth intends to return to her home and resume parenting her children. Does any additional support need to be provided?
• Safety planning	• Has anyone helped Beth to develop a safety plan should her old boyfriend seek her out when she is released?
• Supervision	• Will Beth be able to be supervised on a gender specific caseload? With staff trained and knowledgeable about trauma and gender responsiveness? Who are willing to work with her to achieve small steps/successes and who recognizes the importance of Beth's relationship to her children to as a key factor in her success?
• Employment/Education	• Beth does not have a high school degree/GED and will need some help in this area. Beth will also need some help in developing job skills and motivation to work. Helping her to find an appropriate work situation where she can realize positive results is important.
• Financial	• Beth may need assistance with financial planning and budgeting.

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## State Case Studies

The following case studies provide examples of gender-responsive practices four parole agencies around the nation are employing.

- [Michigan](#)
- [Minnesota](#)
- [New Jersey](#)
- [Texas](#)

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## State Case Studies

### **Michigan Department of Corrections and Field Operations Division**

The Michigan Department of Corrections' Correctional Facilities Administration (CFA) and Field Operations Administration (FOA) are responsible for the custody and the state probation and parole supervision, respectively, in the state of Michigan. The state has been working to continuously enhance its approaches to working with justice-involved women. Preliminary data indicates that as of January 1, 2013, Michigan had 1,359 female parolees (representing 7% of the state's entire parole population) and 1,996 women in prison (representing 4.5% of the overall prison population in the state).

### **Innovation in the Women's Prison**

All women are housed in one prison – the [Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility](#). The facility serves as the only prison in Michigan that houses females.

Interviews are conducted with all women at intake. In this way, staff are able to make clear with the women up front what their expectations are about what women can do inside of the institution to increase their chances of parole eligibility. Since 2012 this also includes a Phase 1 Prisoner Reentry interview conducted by the Parole Board to roadmap a programming plan designed to prepare the prisoner for parole at the earliest eligible date. An evidence-based risk assessment tool (COMPAS) is utilized to assess women's criminogenic risks and needs, and a collaborative case management approach is used to reduce criminal behavior and also increase the health and well-being of women, their families, and the community.

Within the institution, women may be provided with programming that is both evidence-based and gender-responsive, including:

- *Beyond Violence: A Prevention Program for Women (Covington)*. The goals of this program are 1) reducing recidivism and 2) helping women to develop ways of living that are incompatible with violence. The curriculum uses a social-ecological model to contextualize violence. This four-level model of violence prevention considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community, and societal factors that create conditions for victimization and victimizing. The theoretical foundation of the program is based on the integration of the following theories: pathways, addiction, trauma, and women's psychological development. For more information about this program, see [http://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org/books\\_beyond.php](http://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org/books_beyond.php).
- *Moving On (Van Dieten)*. Moving On is a 26-session, curriculum-based program. The program consists of six modules: Orientation, Listening and Being Heard, Building Healthy Relationships, Expressing Emotions, Making Connections and Staying Healthy, and Endings. During each session, participants engage in exercises that increase their self-awareness, emphasize their existing strengths and competencies, and teach them new skills.

The program helps participants realize the patterns of their behavior and the major events or negative feelings that cause them to offend. This awareness allows participants to recognize these situations when they arise and motivates them to use positive coping mechanisms they learn throughout the program. These coping mechanisms help them avoid these criminogenic circumstances and aide them in choosing positive, crime-free alternatives to these situations (Bauman et al., 2009; Van Dieten & MacKenna, 2001). For more information about Moving On, see <http://www.orbispartners.com/females/movingon>.

- *Meridians for Incarcerated Women (Catholic Social Services of Washtenaw County, MI)*. This is a 20-session gender-informed, evidence-based support and intervention program for women who have experienced, perpetrated, survived, and/or witnessed domestic violence. The skills-based program provides women the unique opportunity to reflect upon their pasts as they make choices for violence-free futures. For more information, see <http://csswashtenaw.org/index.php?page=bibliography>.

Women may also receive programming to address their trauma needs, including:

- *Seeking Safety (Najavitz)*. Seeking Safety is a present-focused therapy to help people attain safety from trauma/PTSD and substance abuse. This treatment has been used with people who have a trauma history, but do not meet criteria for PTSD. The key principles of Seeking Safety are: 1) safety as the overarching goal (helping clients attain safety in their relationships, thinking, behavior, and emotions); 2) integrated treatment (working on both PTSD and substance abuse simultaneously); 3) a focus on ideals to counteract the loss of ideals in both PTSD and substance abuse; 4) focus on four content areas: cognitive, behavioral, interpersonal, case management; and 5) attention to clinician processes (helping clinicians work on countertransference, self-care, and other issues). For more information about Seeking Safety, see <http://www.seekingsafety.org/3-03-06/aboutSS.html>.
- *Healing Trauma, Strategies for Abused Women (Covington)*. This trauma intervention is designed for women who have been abused. Session topics include: the process of trauma, power and abuse, grounding and self-soothing, and healthy relationships. There is a strong emphasis on grounding skills. Healing Trauma (HT) is an adaptation of *Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women*. It is particularly designed for settings requiring a shorter intervention: jails, domestic violence agencies, and sexual assault services. The materials focus on the three core things that both staff and clients need: an understanding of what trauma is, its process, and its impact on both the inner self (thoughts, feelings, beliefs, values) and the outer self (behavior and relationships). For more information, see [http://www.stephaniecovington.com/b\\_healing.php](http://www.stephaniecovington.com/b_healing.php).

Women in prison are prioritized for programming based on their COMPAS risk and needs scores to ensure appropriate intervention. An institutional parole agent is assigned to the women's facility, and the agent works within a reentry and transition team to start planning for the woman's release six to eight months prior to release. Women are assigned to community-based providers in advance, her appointments are made, and transportation is arranged prior to her release in order to maximize her chances of success.

## Innovations in Community Supervision

The Parole board begins to review all prisoners six to eight months prior to their release date. A snapshot of data from January 2013 revealed that the female parole approval rate stood at 90.6% (as compared to 74.6% for males) – the female parole approval rate has been consistently high for years.

The state also operated three parole reentry centers, one of which accepts women after release for prison and doubles as a program for parolees who are encountering trouble on

[The Lake County Reentry Facility \(LCRRP\)](#)

supervision (the women can be diverted into the Lake County Reentry Facility (LCRRP) first rather than returning automatically to confinement). In this way, staff are able to work with the women to help them to achieve/maintain sobriety, to make referrals to community-based interventions, and to assist them in seeking stable housing.

While the number of offenders on parole is at nearly an all-time high, the rate of parolee failure is at an all-time low, particularly for women offenders. Only 70 women were returned to prison in 2011 (as compared to 1,825 men during the same time period). Female offenders who are being supervised on gender-responsive caseloads have fared exceptionally well. The rate of return for female probationers dropped from 30 per 1,000 to 20 per 1,000, and female parolees are succeeding at a rate of nearly 88% compared to a baseline success rate of only 65%. MDOC staff attribute the success of women to specialized supervision caseloads, collaborative approaches to case management, staff who are specially trained in working with women, and the increased availability of community-based services for women.

To learn more about the efforts in Michigan to work more effectively with justice-involved women, contact the Correctional Facilities Administration (CFA) Office of Offender Reentry at (517) 335-7194 or Field Operations Administration (FOA) Offender Reentry Services Section at (517) 373-3184. More information can also be found online: [www.michigan.gov/documents/corrections/2010\\_Annual\\_Report\\_390338\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/corrections/2010_Annual_Report_390338_7.pdf)

The LCRRP is a 300-bed facility for male (240 beds) and female (60 beds) parolees. The female wing opened in March 2008. The program is 90 to 120 days in length. The target date is 90 days for offenders whose behavior in the program indicates they are ready to transition to the community. For offenders who are not yet ready to transition to the community, there is an extra 30 days of programming that can be utilized. Gender-specific programming is provided to the LCRRP population. Women sent to LCRRP for substance abuse programming participate in the Helping Women Recover—A Woman's Way Through The Twelve Steps (Covington) program. Women also participate in various cognitive-behavioral therapy programs and general programming such as Budgeting, Stop the Chaos, Moving On, Parenting Skills, Taking Action, Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Healthy Relationships, Self Esteem, and Cultural Diversity.

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### Minnesota Department of Corrections

Minnesota's Advisory Task Force on the Woman and Juvenile Female Offenders in Corrections has existed formally since 1981. Established by Minnesota statute, its purpose is to advise the Commissioner of Corrections about issues facing female offenders in Minnesota and to recommend strategies to address them. The Task Force is dedicated to promoting and advocating for gender- and culturally responsive services for women and girls in the criminal and juvenile justice system, and it is comprised of a geographically diverse group of up to 20 members. By policy, the Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) provides leadership, direction, and staff services to the Task Force.

The Task Force consults with the Commissioner regarding the choice of model programs to receive funding, reviews and makes recommendations on matters affecting female offenders, identifies problem areas, and assists the Commissioner in seeking improved programming for female offenders. The Task Force supports the DOC in ensuring that the range of gender-specific services for female offenders exists in all communities of Minnesota and that such services are substantially equivalent to the programming offered to males.

In May 2007, the Task Force issued a summary document titled, "[Transition to 'FOCUS'—Minnesota Action Plan for Female Offenders: History, Progress on 2002 Action Plan, New Directions](#)." During the latter half of 2007 through 2010, the Task Force continued to pursue its mission by engaging in selected projects and expanding its reach. Building upon the actions undertaken from 2007 through 2010, the following six areas were selected for priority development for 2011–2013:

- ***Evidence-Based Practices.*** As Minnesota's most significant focus and strategy in corrections, evidence-based practice is the Task Force's recognized framework for gender-specific programming.
- ***Outreach.*** The Task Force and the Girls Collaborative will broaden its membership by recruiting relevant expertise in key subject areas and encouraging leadership development within its ranks and in the community. In addition to strategic recruitment, outreach in the sense of community service will also be explored through such projects as the creation of an education and skill-development program for women inmates in collaboration with community library systems.
- ***Education and Training.*** In addition to continued education and training for corrections and related professionals, the Task Force is committed to providing training to the Minnesota judiciary on gender-specific assessment and programming. The Task Force will provide education programs with a combined focus on women and girls; continue to expand and amplify gender-responsive and related cultural training as a whole; and continue to refine and deliver training on the LSI-R Trailer.
- ***Visibility.*** The Task Force is making efforts to increase its public visibility in order to gain support for its work. It will seek support for relevant legislative initiatives backed by the DOC and plans to expand the venues for

presentations in the community.

- *Communication.* In order to advance its priorities, the Task Force is enhancing its communications to be maximally useful for a variety of audiences, including the public, the legislature, the judiciary, correctional and justice professionals, female offender populations, and educational institutions.
- *Research.* Recognizing the value of research in supporting its policy initiatives, the Task Force is pursuing gathering research on issues, including, but not limited to, matching programming effectiveness to valid, gender-responsive needs and risks assessments, and advocating for data collection breakdowns to include cultural responsiveness as well as race, gender, and ethnicity.

For more information about the work of the Task Force, contact Kelly Heifort, Director of Community Reentry for the Minnesota Department of Corrections, at [Kelly.Heifort@state.mn.us](mailto:Kelly.Heifort@state.mn.us).

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### New Jersey: The Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE) Initiative

The New Jersey State Parole Board (NJSPB) recognized that the distinctive rehabilitation needs of women should be addressed with distinctive solutions during parole supervision. In New Jersey, parole officers had long noted that female parolees did not succeed as often as men when placed in community-based rehabilitative programs.

The Female Offender Reentry Group Effort (FORGE) was developed as a gender-responsive strategy designed to improve reentry outcomes for female parolees. NJSPB launched the program in Essex County in 2004, and participation became mandatory for all Essex County parolees in 2006. Based on the FORGE initiative's success, NJSPB was awarded a federal grant to create FORGE resources in Passaic and Camden Counties over 2 years. The program has since expanded into Mercer County. The grant enabled the hiring of a resource specialist in each county to deliver gender-responsive case management for female parolees, provided funding for services necessary to help parolees gain and maintain employment (such as paying for bus tickets and obtaining birth certificates), and allowed the program to purchase much needed printed materials and other resources.

In partnership with the parole boards and their local community-based reentry programs, local FORGE collaboratives include, but are not limited to:

- Department of Corrections
- Law enforcement
- Community colleges, charter, and technical schools
- Labor and Workforce Development
- Private businesses (including banks)
- Private foundations
- Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Divisions of Youth and Family Services
- Housing non-profits
- Divisions of Disability Services
- Faith organizations
- Legal services
- Social services

This coalition of state, county, city, and non-profit partners share resources for job training, substance abuse treatment, life skills training, and other social services in a one-stop reentry center. FORGE offers women parolees:

- Assignment to an all-female caseload, supervised by a parole officer with gender-responsive skills and expertise.
- A resource center at the local community college to assist them with obtaining birth certificates and other forms of identification necessary for employment and housing, and by connecting them with job training, education, food, housing, and medical assistance.
- Participation in Parole Accountability Conference Team (PACT) support group meetings.

Research conducted by Rutgers University found that placement on the female-only caseload is associated with an 83% decrease in recidivism (i.e., an arrest for a new crime or return to custody for a parole violation), and women parolees who attend PACT meetings are 72% less likely to recidivate. Run by NJSPB in a neutral setting such as a church or other community-donated space, PACT meetings function as peer-to-peer mentoring groups to increase women parolees' self-esteem and accountability. Topics addressed during these meetings include legal barriers, parenting and family reunification, advice about finding housing, and other common challenges. PACT meetings routinely involve an NJSPB member, the parole officer supervising the all-female caseload, a faith-based community member, and guest speakers. A unique feature of these meetings is the opportunity for the participating parole board member to interact with the women under supervision.

*Sources: New Jersey State Parole Board, FORGE: Small Cost, Big Return (Abstract). (Trenton, NJ: New Jersey State Parole Board, 2010); Rutgers University, How Does FORGE Affect Recidivism: A Summary of Quantitative Findings (New Brunswick, NJ: Economic Development Research Group, School of Management and Labor Relations, 2009).*

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### Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles recently adjusted the risk assessment tool that is used to assist decisionmakers with release decisions to account for key differences specific to women offenders. In order to determine what types of changes to the instrument would be most impactful, an initial sample of several thousand female offenders in Texas was reviewed, and a smaller sample was selected for additional study.

Based on the findings of this research, the scoring of female offenders was modified with respect to age and overall risk scores. The assessment instrument (see below) is completed by an Institutional Parole Officer prior to every offender's scheduled review. Although these changes have been recently implemented and as such have not yet been assessed, the Board is confident that these modifications are assisting release decisionmakers to reach more sound decisions when considering women for release.

**RISK ITEM FACTORS SCALE**

Offender's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ TDCJ/SID #: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: Circle the correct score for each item and compute the correct risk level designation using the instruction guide.

Static Risk Factors	Pts	Dynamic Risk Factors	Pts
<b>1. Age at First Commitment</b>		<b>6. Current Age</b>	
26 years or older	0	MALES	
18 to 25 years	1	Males 57 and above	-1
17 years or younger	2	Males 49 – 56	0
		Males 29-48	1
<b>2. History of Revocations</b>		Males 22-28	2
No parole or probation revocations	0	Males 21 and younger	3
Had one revocation	1	FEMALES	
Had more than one revocation	3	Females 50 and above	-1
		Females 37-49	0
<b>3. Other Incarcerations (Juv. &amp; Adult)</b>		Females 36 and younger	1
None	0	<b>7. Security Threat Group / Monitored Clique</b>	
1-2	1	No	0

3 and above	2	Yes	2
		<b>8. Completed Education/OJT/Vocational Program</b>	
		Yes or GED/High School Degree	-1
<b>4. Employment History</b>		No	0
Employed 6 months prior to prison	0	<b>9. Disciplinary Conduct</b>	
None or less than 6 months	1	Goodtime awarded	0
		Demoted in class below entry status <u>and/or</u> lost good time in last 18 months; and/or Zero <u>Balance of Goodtime</u>	1
<b>5. Commitment Offense</b>		<b>10. Current Custody Level</b>	
All Others	0	Outside Trustee, G1 – G3 and P1 – P3	0
All Property Related Offenses	2	G4 – G5, P4 – P5, Ad Seg and All Others	2
Total Static Risk Score		Total Dynamic Risk Score	
<b>Total Risk Score: (add static risk and dynamic risk scores): _____ Points</b>			
<b>Overall Risk Level: (Check Correct Risk Level)</b>			
<b>MALES</b>		<b>FEMALES</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Low Risk (3 pts or less) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate Risk (4-8 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> High Risk (9-15 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> Highest Risk (16+pts)		<input type="checkbox"/> Low Risk (3 pts or less) <input type="checkbox"/> Moderate Risk (4-9 pts) <input type="checkbox"/> High Risk (10+ pts)	
Form Completed By: _____ Date: _____ / _____ / _____			

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# Resource Package for Paroling Authorities on **Criminal Justice Involved Women**

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## Links

### Key Documents for Paroling Authorities on Justice-Involved Women

- [Executive Summary, Ten Truths That Matter When Working With Justice Involved Women](#)
- [Research Brief, Ten Truths That Matter When Working With Justice Involved Women](#)
- [Reentry Considerations for Women Offenders](#)
- [Resource Brief: Achieving Successful Outcomes with Justice Involved Women](#)
- [On Behalf of Women Offenders: A Women's Place in the Science of Evidence-Based Practice](#)
- [Special Challenges Facing Parole](#)
- [Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders](#)
- [The Five CORE Practice Areas of Gender-Responsiveness](#)
- [Gendered Pathways: An Empirical Investigation of Women Offenders' Unique Paths to Crime](#)
- [Women Offender Transition and Reentry: Gender Responsive Approaches to Transitioning Women Offenders from Prison to the Community](#)
- [Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders](#)
- [A Summary of Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders](#)

Please note that this is not an exhaustive list. These documents represent a core set of recommended readings for professionals working with justice-involved women. See below for additional information and literature for paroling authorities about more specific topics regarding women offenders.

Please visit the [National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women's Resources](#) section of the [National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women](#) web site for more information and resources on:

- Correctional Environments
- Offender Management and Supervision
- Classification, Assessment, and Case Management
- Treatment, Interventions, and Services
- Community Reentry

- Critical Issues Facing Justice-Involved Women

## Key Organizations

- **National Resource Center on Justice-Involved Women:**  
<http://www.cjinvolvewomen.org/>
- **Association of Paroling Authorities International:**  
<http://www.apaintl.org>
- **Adult and Juvenile Female Offenders (AJFO):**  
[www.ajfo.org](http://www.ajfo.org)
- **Center for Effective Public Policy:**  
[www.cepp.com](http://www.cepp.com)
- **Center for Gender and Justice:**  
[www.centerforgenderandjustice.org](http://www.centerforgenderandjustice.org)
- **Chicago Legal Advocacy for Incarcerated Mothers (CLAIM):**  
[www.claim-il.org](http://www.claim-il.org)
- **CORE Associates:**  
[www.COREAssociatesLLC@comcast.net](mailto:www.COREAssociatesLLC@comcast.net)
- **CURE – Women Incarcerated:**  
[www.womenincarcerated.org](http://www.womenincarcerated.org)
- **Family Justice Program:**  
<http://www.vera.org/centers/family-justice-program>
- **The Moss Group:**  
[www.mossgroup.us](http://www.mossgroup.us)
- **National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD): Center for Girls and Young Women:**  
[www.justiceforallgirls.org](http://www.justiceforallgirls.org)
- **Legal Services for Prisoners with Children (LSPC):**  
<http://www.prisonerswithchildren.org/>
- **National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC):**  
<http://www.nationalgirlsinstitute.org/>
- **National Girls Institute:**  
<http://www.ncchc.org/>
- **National Institute of Corrections Library:**  
<http://www.nicic.org/Features/Library/>
- **National Reentry Resource Center:**  
[www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalreentryresourcecenter.org)
- **National Resource Center on Children and Families of the Incarcerated (Family and Corrections Network):**  
[www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org)

- **National Trauma Consortium:**  
[www.nationaltraumaconsortium.org](http://www.nationaltraumaconsortium.org)
- **National Women's Law Center (NWLC):**  
[www.nwlc.org](http://www.nwlc.org)
- **Orbis Partners:** [www.orbispartners.com](http://www.orbispartners.com)
- **Women Offenders Project Web Site:**  
<http://nicic.gov/WomenOffenders>
- **Women's Risk Needs Assessment Project:**  
<http://www.uc.edu/womenoffenders.html>
- **Women's Prison Association:**  
<http://www.wpaonline.org/>

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## Programs for Justice-Involved Women

### Programs for Justice-Involved Women with Cognitive Behavioral Components

Program Name	Description	Evaluation and Resources
<b>Moving On</b> (Dr. Marilyn Van Dieten)	Goals are to provide women with opportunities to mobilize and enhance existing strengths, and access personal and community resources; incorporates cognitive-behavioral techniques with Motivational Interviewing and relational theory.	A recent evaluation of its use with women on probation in Iowa confirmed its effectiveness in reducing recidivism (Gehring, Van Voorhis, & Bell, 2010).  <b>Van Dieten, 1998</b>  <a href="http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?item=11528&amp;sitex=10020:22372:US&amp;HZPR=BQAIBh1MTqS4gox8Vod8AKfBWQ&amp;HZPR_pses=ZG582067D39C7210AB6685C806F4F4AD1949023FA875E9022161638F829DAA623E856E52C177082A0CCDFF86DAE257E34C">http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCtpItmDspRte.jsp?item=11528&amp;sitex=10020:22372:US&amp;HZPR=BQAIBh1MTqS4gox8Vod8AKfBWQ&amp;HZPR_pses=ZG582067D39C7210AB6685C806F4F4AD1949023FA875E9022161638F829DAA623E856E52C177082A0CCDFF86DAE257E34C</a>
<b>Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women</b> <sup>ii</sup> (Dr. Stephanie Covington)	Uses psycho-educational and cognitive skills approaches to help women develop coping skills and emotional wellness to counter the effects of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse.	<b>Covington, 2003</b>  <a href="http://www.stephaniecovington.com">http://www.stephaniecovington.com</a>
<b>Helping Women Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction</b> <sup>iii</sup>	Addresses substance abuse by integrating the four theories of women's offending and treatment: pathways, addiction,	<b>Covington, 2008</b>  <a href="http://www.stephaniecovington.com/pdfs/5.pdf">http://www.stephaniecovington.com/pdfs/5.pdf</a>

<p>(Dr. Stephanie Covington)</p>	trauma, and relational theories.
<p><b>Seeking Safety</b> <sup>IV</sup> (Dr. Lisa Najavits)</p>	Treats the co-existing disorders of trauma, PTSD, and substance abuse; draws from the research on cognitive-behavioral treatment of substance abuse disorders, post-traumatic stress treatment, and education.
<p><b>Forever Free</b><sup>V</sup> (California Institution for Women)</p>	Goals are to reduce in-prison disciplinary actions as well as substance use and recidivism; run as a modified therapeutic community; provides substance abuse treatment and relapse prevention services.
<p><b>Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT)</b><sup>VI</sup></p>	A cognitive-behavioral approach involving skills training, motivational enhancement, and coping skills.

For more information about these programs and resources, see:

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<sup>i</sup> This program has some cognitive components, but also uses relaxation, guided imagery and other approaches.

<sup>ii</sup> This program has some cognitive components, but also uses relaxation, guided imagery and other approaches.

<sup>iv</sup> Not developed specifically for offender populations, but addresses abuse and trauma.

<sup>v</sup> This program implements the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) guide for treating women offenders (Kassebaum, 1999).  
Not developed specifically for female offender populations, but addresses abuse and trauma.

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