Parenting with Mental Illness and Substance Use Issues

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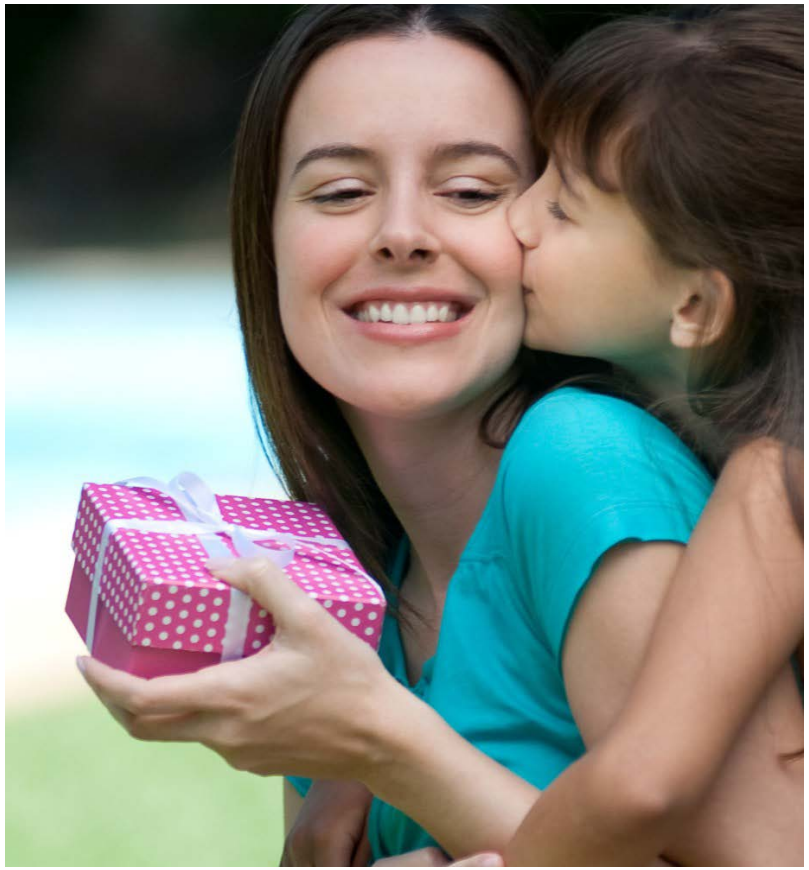

What Does a Mother with Mental Illness or Substance Abuse Issues Look Like?

Prevalence of Mental Illness

In 2017 the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics found that women in prisons and jails report having mental health problems at a much higher rate than incarcerated men.

Women make up only 7 percent of the prison population

66 percent of women in prison reported having a history of mental illness, almost twice the percentage of men.

1 in 5 women said they had recently experienced psychological distress in prison, compared to 1 in 7 men.

What's Working In Our Community…

- Strong Families Healthy Homes In-home Program
- Community Based parenting program that specializes in supporting parents living with mental illness and/or substance abuse issues
- Culturally responsive outpatient services for mental health and AODA
- Community Partnerships

Thank you!

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Incarcerated Women in Milwaukee County Jails

What We've Learned in a Decade of Research Partnerships

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Studies Involving Incarcerated Women Conducted in Milwaukee County

- Women in Jail (2006 – 2008)
  - **Drs. Begun, Rose, LeBel, & Stojkovic**
  - **Women in jail** screened for substance abuse (*AUDIT-12*) after booking or while serving sentences.
  - Number of women in study = 1,267 (HOC = 403; CJF = 864)
  - Randomized Control study – Involving a brief motivational intervention to engage in SUD treatment post - release
- Keeping Families Together (2009 – 2012)
  - **Drs. Rose & LeBel**
  - **Mothers of minor children** screened (AUDIT-12) for substance abuse 30 – 45 days before release.
  - Pregnant women offered screening for substance abuse as soon after entry to jail as possible.
  - Number of women in study = 267 (HOC = 240 mothers; CJF = 27 pregnant women)
  - If screened "positive" were given an informational intervention focused on reconnecting with their children.
- Improving the Transition to the Community for Incarcerated Poor Women (2015-2017)
  - **Drs. Rose, LeBel, & Blakey**
  - **Women in jail** screened for physical health, mental health & substance abuse 45 days before release
  - Also screened for ACEs and SLEs
  - Number of women in study = 117 (all at HOC)
  - Women randomly assigned to "services as usual" or "enhanced intervention" group
  - Enhanced intervention included intensive reentry planning and 5 days of case management post-release

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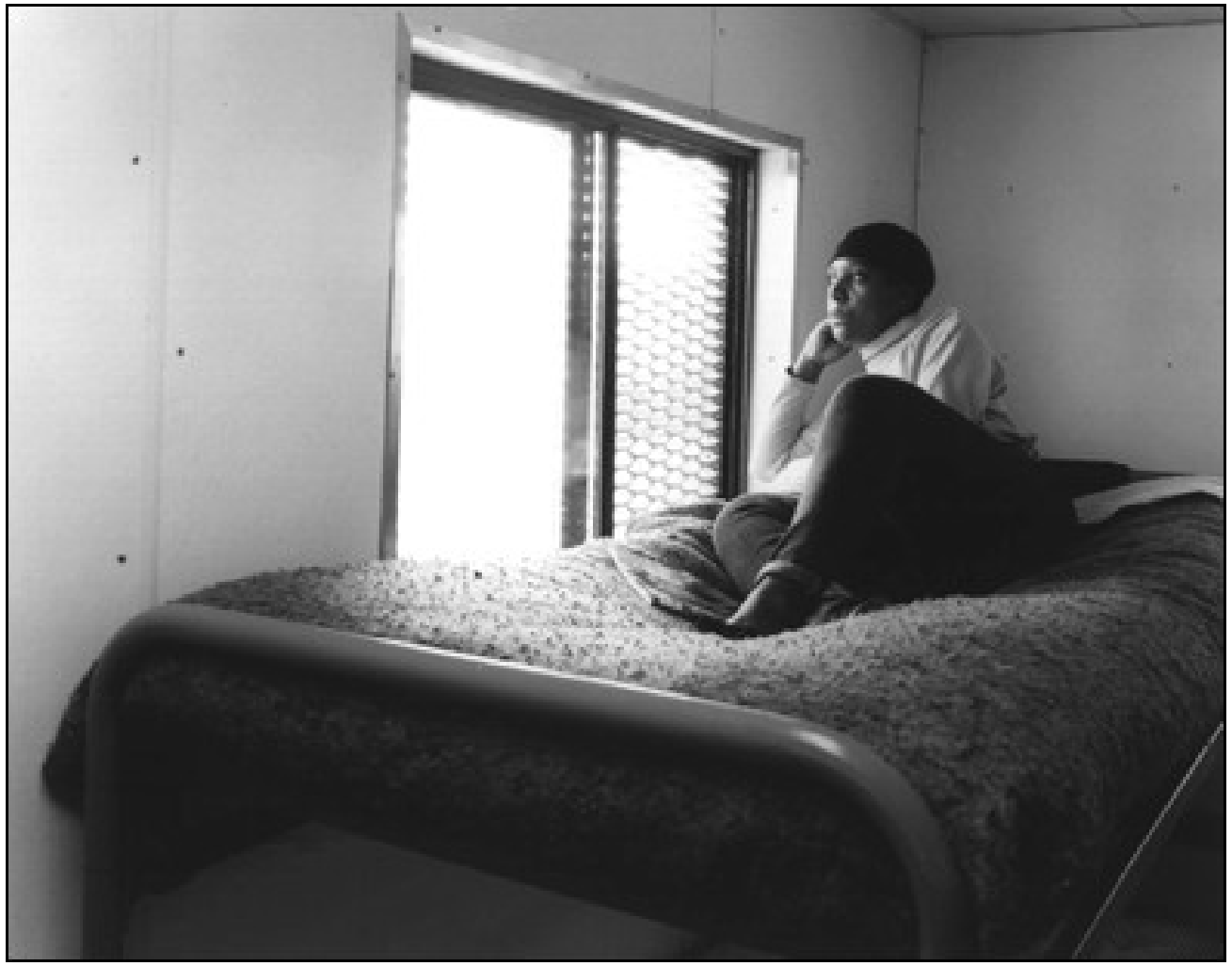
- We want to thank our community partner, The Benedict Center.
- Finally, we are profoundly grateful to the women at the *House of Correction* who were willing to talk with us and share their stories.

Selected Sample Characteristics Across Studies

Characteristic	2006-08	2009-12	2015-17
Age	33.7	31.5	33.6
Mother (yes)	79%	100%	82%
Teen Mother ≤ 18	43%	49%	42%
Living with minor children before jailed	70%	72%	64%
Black, non-Latino	62%	51%	50%
Education level (Lack HS diploma or GED)	46%	45%	32%
Income (household monthly < $1,000; or annual, < $10,000)	62%	54%	60%
Living with a permanent or steady partner in past year (Yes)	46%	45%	51%
Jailed before in lifetime (yes)	82%	74%	83%
AUDIT-12 Score (screened positive ≥ 8 for substance use problem)	68%	72%	72%
Drug causing most serious problem – Heroin/Opioids	9%	24%	44%

“Being a mother in jail is more stressful than being just a woman in jail. It’s more stressful than a woman that’s locked up without children. Because the one that’s the parent, she’s gotta worry about what she’s in jail for, like if she’s got court dates and whatnot and then at the same time she’s got to worry about what’s going on with her kids, be concerned, have that sorrow, the grief, the shame. Going to jail’s not just affecting them but it’s affecting their kids.”

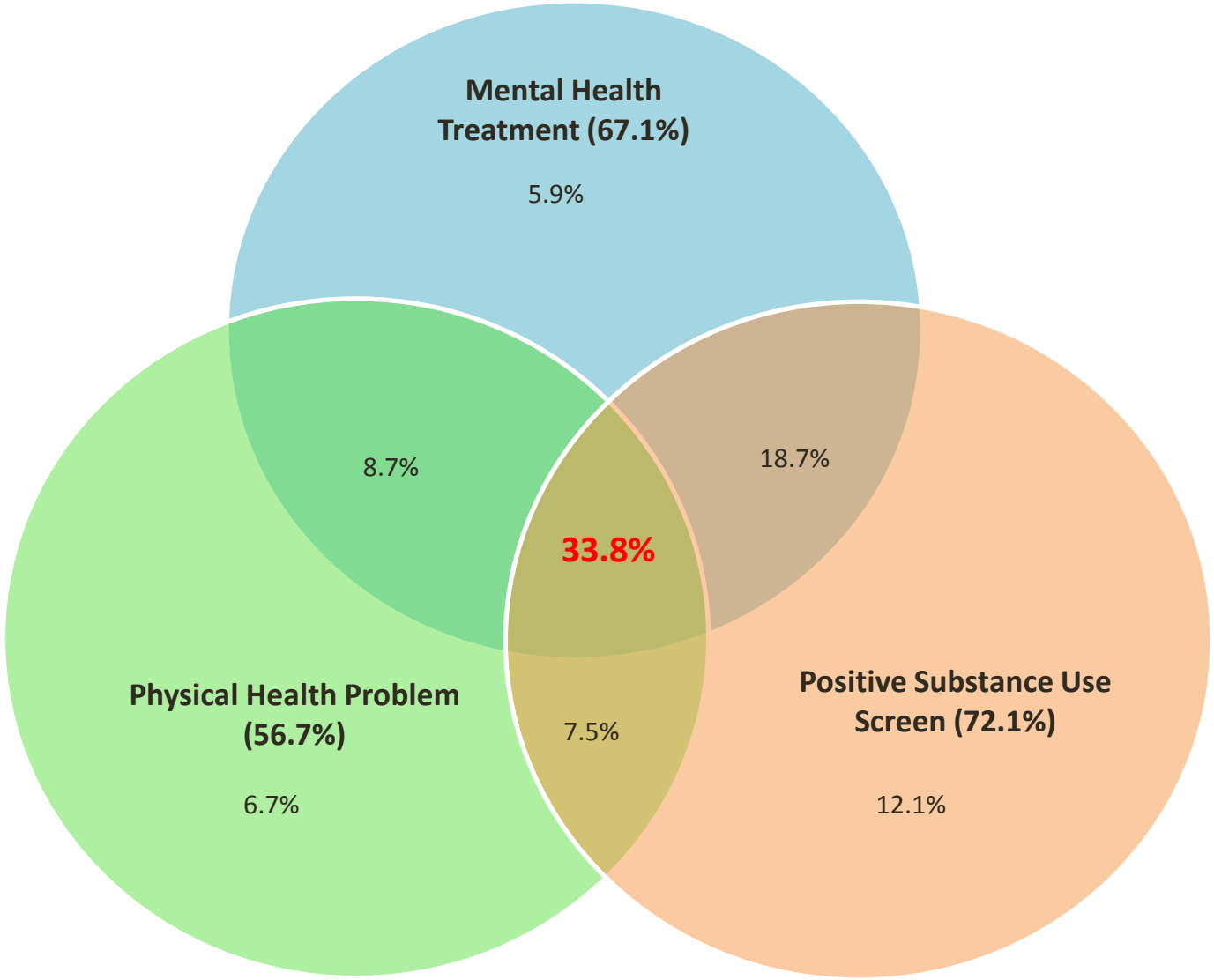


Selected Measures

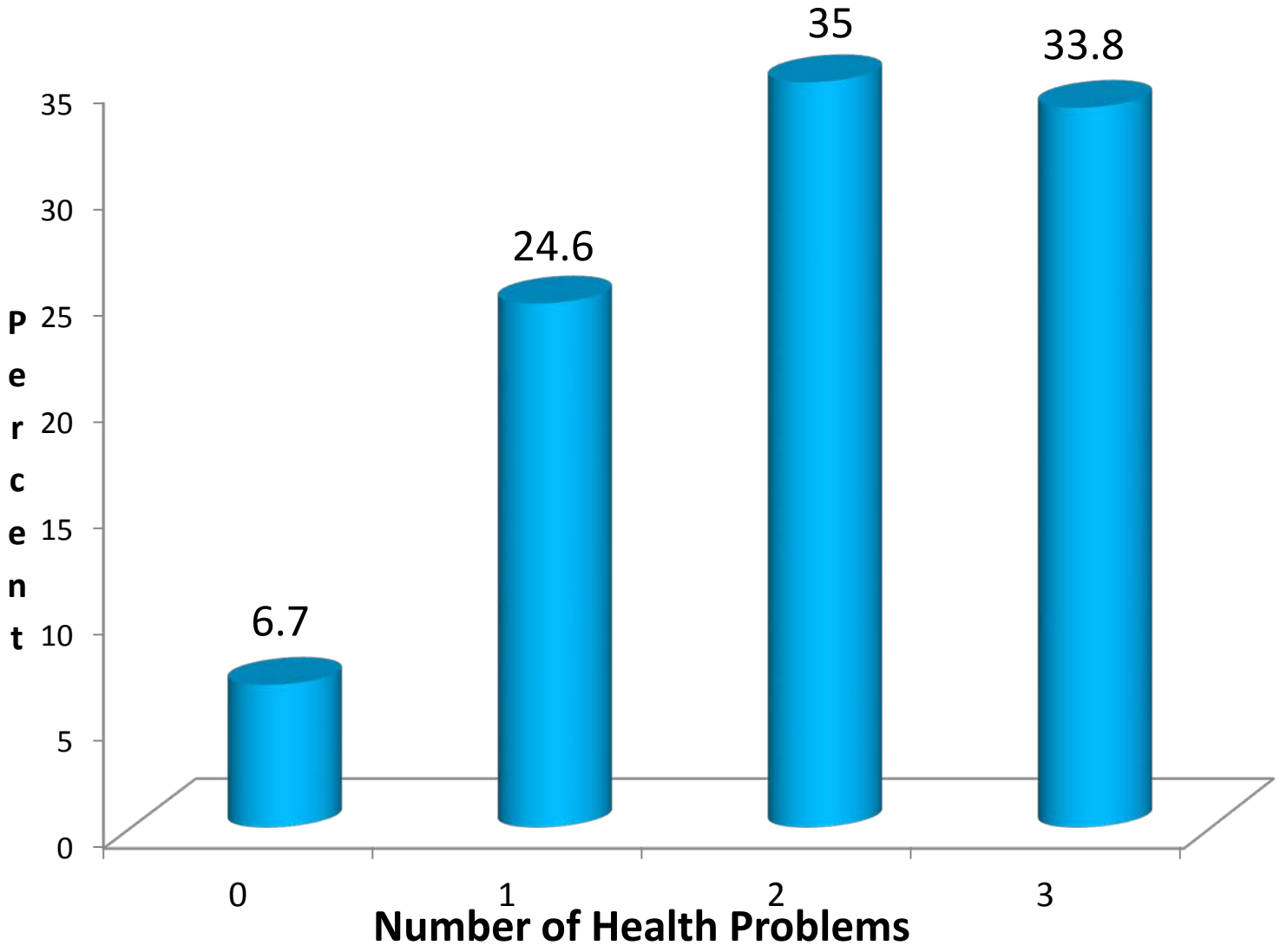
- **Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test – 12** (including drugs)
- **Mental health** treatment history (for 9 concerns)
  - Also, **current mental health** (previous 30 days) - using K-6 Distress Scale
- **Physical Health** problems
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**
  - Measures **childhood** trauma that occurred in one's family or social environment
- **Stressful Life Events Screening Questionnaire (SLESQs)**
  - Measures **lifetime** exposure to traumatic events (including interpersonal violence)

Co-Occurring Disorders

Mothers of Minor Children at HOC (n = 240)



Comorbidity of Substance Abuse, Mental Health and Physical Health Problems



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Results (N = 110)

Before the age of 18 . . .	%
Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often swear at you insult you, put you down, humiliate you?	40.0%
Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often push, grab, slap or throw things at you?	**40.9%**
Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle you, or have you touch their body in a sexual way, or try to or actually have oral, anal or vaginal sex with you?	**42.7%**
Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?	54.6%
Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, or had no one to protect you?	19.1%
Were your parents ever separated or divorced?	**72.7%**
Was your mother or stepmother often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped or had something thrown at her?	**46.4%**
Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?	**54.6%**
Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?	44.6%
Did a household member go to prison?	40.9%
Total ACE Score	**4.56** (SD = 2.72)

Stressful Life Events (SLESQ) Screen Results (N = 110)

	%
Have you ever been in or seen a bad accident	76.4%
Have you ever been in a flood, fire, or other disaster?	22.7%
Have you ever had a life threatening illness	19.1%
Have you ever been in a war zone or feel like you have been in a war zone?	47.3%
Have you ever personally experienced violence in a relationship?	**74.6%**
Have you ever been sent to jail?	100.0%
Have you ever been put in foster care or put up for adoption?	24.6%
Have you ever seen a robbery, mugging, or attack taking place?	50.0%
Have you ever been robbed, mugged, or physically attacked (not sexually) by someone you did not know?	**52.7%**
Have you ever been shot or stabbed?	**20.0%**
Total SLESQ Score	**4.87** (SD=2.04)

Selected Findings

- About 80% of incarcerated women are mothers
  - Majority were living with minor children before jail
  - About 40% were teen mothers ≤ 18
- About 1/3 of women self-report co-occurring substance use, mental health, ***and*** physical health concerns
  - Most reported multiple barriers to engaging in SUD treatment post-release
- K-6 scores are high suggesting ongoing and even increasing depression and anxiety while incarcerated
  - 43% screened above cutoff score for serious mental health problems
  - 56% reported symptoms “more often than usual” during past 30 days
- Women who report that many ACEs and SLEs were prevalent, suggest the persistence of traumatic experiences over their lifetime.
  - Most had experienced intimate partner violence in a relationship

Measuring Recidivism: Women Released from Jail (2015-17) (n = 109)

Characteristic	Mean	(SD)
Any (filed) criminal charges after release (yes)	26.6%	
Time at risk (days since release) Median = 494.0; Range = 336-653 days	490.5	(86.27)
Time to first criminal charge Median = 232.0, Range = 10 – 449	231.1	(98.26)
Most serious criminal charge since release (n=29) Felony Misdemeanor Traffic (all criminal misdemeanors)	 9 13 7	

Preliminary Results for Factors Related to Recidivism

Positively Related to having a new criminal charge:

- Perceived likelihood to be rearrested
- White, non-Latino (yes)
- Heroin/opioids as drug causing the most problems (yes)
- Mental health treatment in the past year (yes, for any reason)
- Mental health treatment for anxiety
- Perceived number of barriers to SUD treatment
- Married, living together as if married, or intimate partner (yes)
- SLE Violence Total Score

Negatively Related to having a new criminal charge:

- Child living with you before jail (yes, only for mothers)
- Confident will not break the law

What do mothers returning home from jail tell us they need?

1) Access to **concrete services** quickly upon release
2) Finding a pro-social **community support** system
3) Finding & maintaining a **job** that provides a livable wage
4) Finding safe and adequate **housing**
5) Education and **skill training**
6) Access to **substance abuse services** and **mental health services** quickly
7) **Trauma-informed** care
8) **Gender-sensitive** treatment
9) Help in **re-connecting** with their children

Practice and Policy Implications and Recommendations

- Universal screening is needed for health problems and trauma.
- Trauma Informed Care (TIC) should be instituted for women in jails.
- Incarcerated women in jail should have access to mental health, physical health, **and** substance abuse treatment services quickly upon admission.
- Gender-responsive treatments should be offered.
- Jail based parenting programs should be expanded.
- Jail staff should receive training about TIC, ACEs, and SLEs.
- Re-entry planning should include:
  - Transition planning a minimum of 30 – 45 days before release
  - Developing and using re-entry handbooks and resource manuals
  - Connecting women with specific agencies and needed physical health, substance use and mental health services before release.
  - Expand enrollment of eligible women in health insurance (the ACA)

" The soul of man exists in the Contemplation
of the nature of women behind bars."
Henry David Thoreau

Thank You!

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Benedict Center

Compassion • Justice • Action • Transformation

Programs supporting women impacted by the criminal justice system

September 19, 2019

Issues Facing Women Involved With the Criminal Justice System

- Revolving door of incarceration
- Little to no formal and informal supports
- Family separation
- Trauma
- Housing instability
- Economic insecurity/basic needs

Why it Works

- Women find support from other women with similar experiences through group interactions
- Services are accessible to women regardless of their stage of change
- Staff use motivational interviewing techniques to work with women to set goals that are meaningful to them
- Programs work together to support women pretrial, during incarceration, and post-release and during community supervision periods

Benedict Center Services for Women

- Serves women at all points in the criminal justice system
- Utilizes research about what women need in order to advance programming
- Provides group and individual counseling to help women develop coping skills and connections to community resources
- Addresses basic needs issues
- Services focuses on harm reduction and contain the Five CORE practice areas of gender responsiveness
  - Relational
  - Strengths-based
  - Trauma-informed
  - Culturally competent
  - Holistic

The Five CORE Practice Areas of Gender Responsiveness, CORE Associates

Women's Harm Reduction Program

Women's Harm Reduction Program

- Licensed outpatient mental health and substance use clinic
- Serves as a Day Reporting Center (DRC) for women in Milwaukee County through the House of Correction (HOC) and for the Department of Corrections
- Provides advocacy and case management for clients participating in the Early Intervention Program
- Provides employment readiness skills
- Connects with other community providers to bring needed resources to women (ARCW, Mental Health America, Marquette Mobile Legal Clinic)
- Provides adult education through a partnership with MATC

Women's Reentry Program

Women's Reentry Program

- Assesses women's strengths, risks, and needs during their incarceration at HOC and throughout their transition back in to the community
- Provides strength-based case management services
- Develops reentry plans with clients
- Provides individual and group psychoeducation and therapy

Trauma-Informed Yoga

Intensive Case Management (ICM)

- Clients start working with a case manager 45 days prior to release to develop reentry plans
- The case manager picks-up women at the HOC on their release date and provides them with transportation to address essential needs that are often barriers to successful reintegration to the community.
- Clients are also given phones so they can stay in contact with needed resources
- Addresses central barriers facing justice-involved women and assists in linking, coordinating, and making referrals during incarceration and after release, including:
  - Physical and mental health issues
  - Substance use treatment
  - Employment
  - Basic needs (i.e., legal identification, clothing, insurance, food, safe housing, etc.)
- Is advocacy-based:
  - Within the community
  - Within the criminal justice system (i.e., progress reports for clients with open cases, bridging the communication gap between Department of Corrections (i.e., Probation and Parole agents) to assist women in obtaining safe housing, referrals to treatment post-release, etc.)

Janet's Story

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