

Increasing Positive Outcomes for Women Offenders:

Applying the Research and Principles of Gender-Responsiveness to Parole Decision Making and Supervision


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National Resource Center 
on Justice Involved Women

*A project of the
Bureau of Justice Assistance
and the
National Institute of Corrections*

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National Resource Center 
on Justice Involved Women

The National Resource Center (NRCJIW) was established by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance in partnership with the National Institute of Corrections.

The NRCJIW advances evidence-based, gender-responsive practices for all women involved in the justice system.

Ultimately, with the aim of reducing recidivism and increasing successful outcomes for women involved in the justice system.

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The Resource Center Partners

The National Resource Center is administered by the Center for Effective Public Policy (www.cepp.com) and its partners:

- CORE Associates (<http://coreassociates.org>)
- Orbis Partners (www.orbispartners.com)
- The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (www.samhsa.gov/ncctic)
- The Moss Group (www.mossgroup.us)
- University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice (<http://www.cech.uc.edu/criminaljustice>)
- Women's Prison Association (www.wpaonline.org)

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The Resource Center's Mission and Audience

Provide guidance and support to criminal justice and other professionals who work with justice involved women.

Such as:

- Criminal Justice Stakeholders
- Law Enforcement
- Courts
- State and Local Corrections
- Paroling Authorities
- Community Corrections and Supervision
- State and Local Government Officials
- Service Providers

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Primary Activities

- Targeted Technical Assistance
- Training and Webinars on Key Topics
- Centralized referral for evidence-based, gender-responsive research, knowledge and resources
- Policy and Practice Briefs, Coaching Packets
- Professional Network

See our website at:

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NIC's Women Offender Initiative

- o 1970's to present...
- o What was out there specific to justice involved women? Not a lot....
- o Literature search, data collection, promising practices and dedicated practitioners, research, partnerships, collaborations, focus groups, staff experiences, enlisting and *listening* to the voices of the women
- o Also utilizing research and practices not specific to, but informing correctional practice.

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The Special Problems of Female Prisoners...."

At the 1971 National Conference on Corrections, Williamsburg, VA noted that the 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice document, Dr. Edith Flynn, Associate Director, National Clearinghouse for Criminal Justice Planning and Architecture noted,

"not a single paragraph or statistic on the female offender could be found in any of the material..."



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What the Research is Telling Us....

- o The Big 4, the Big 8...
- o What is predictive for women, sharpens our interventions...
- o Needs that inform risk...
- o Strengths that can contribute to success

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So what were we learning?

- o Policy/practice developed primarily with male populations in mind but applied to females
- o Differences in risk and need & pathways to justice involvement between males and females
- o The prevalence of/and impact of sexual & physical violence with women
- o Trauma? Responsibility for children? Poverty? Work experience?



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NIC's Women Offender Initiative

- o Training programs for pre-trial, jails, prisons, pre-release, transition, community supervision
- o Range of Technical Assistance opportunities
- o Partnerships, collaborations – such as **National Resource Center for Justice Involved Women & NIC** - reaching out to the field for promising practices
- o Build upon research and knowledge specific to, and external to criminal justice...
- o **How does this assist paroling authorities????**

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Innovations in response to the needs of the field...

Women's Risk & Need Assessment

- **NIC/U of Cincinnati** - Trailer & Stand Alone – pre-trial, prison, **pre-release**, probation
- **Other tools:** SPIN-W, Compas for Women
- **Gender-neutral factors, gender-responsive factors & strengths**

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Women Offender Case Management Model - WOCMM

- > Engage & Assess
- > Enhance Motivation
- > Implementing the Case Plan
- > Monitoring Progress

"The Woman as a Full Partner" in WOCMM

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Gender Informed Practices Assessment (GIPA)

...provides prisons with a measured assessment of their adherence to sound principles of evidence-based practice and gender-responsive programming and practices... 12 domains include:

Leadership & Philosophy, COLLABORATIONS, Mgmt & Ops, Facility Culture, Assessment/Classification, Services, Transition Planning, QUALITY ASSURANCE & EVALUATION

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Gender Responsive Policy and Practice Assessment

- > Internal, site-specific assessment
- > Performed in-house by agency staff
- > Foundational tool to initiate planning for gender-responsive change in policy, practice, programming

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Supporting and further professionalizing the correctional field...

- o **Guide for Implementing Tele-visiting** – Adjunct to on-site visitation and enhancement to building healthy relationships.
- o **Understanding Women Offender Health issues** – and the public health implications
- o **E-Learning – Working with Justice Involved Women** – Foundational & self-paced



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Desired Outcomes....

- o **Reduced Recidivism...risk reduction**
- o **Reduce minimum, low risk women sentenced to jails and prisons**
- o **Slow down the revolving door of returns to incarceration**
- o **Address risk, need while attending to strengths**
- o **Reduce need for justice interventions...**



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How Can We Help???

Contact Us!

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What Does the Term Gender-Responsive Mean?

"Understanding and taking into account the differences in characteristics and life experiences that men and women bring to institution corrections and community supervision AND adjusting correctional strategies and practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions."

(Bloom, Covington and Owen, 2003)

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Why Be Gender Responsive?

To achieve the same outcomes that criminal justice systems want for **all offenders and for our communities**:

- Safer communities: Promote law abiding behavior and reduce recidivism.
- Harm reduction: Improve the physical, social and economic well-being of women, their children and families.

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Why Focus on Women?

1. Their numbers are increasing at a rapid rate.

- More than 1,000,000 women are currently involved in the criminal justice system (1 out of every 109 adult women)
- From 2000-2010 the number of female arrests in the U.S. increased by 11.4%
 - this increase is in contrast to a 5% decline for male arrests
- During the same time period, the number of women incarcerated in federal and state correctional facilities increased by 22%
- In 2010, 104,600 women were sentenced to state or federal prison, representing a 25% increase from 2000

Sources: FBI, 2010; Glaze & Bonczar, 2010; Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011; Minton, 2010; The Sentencing Project, 2007; West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010

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Women on Supervision

- Women now constitute one-fourth of the probation and parole population, representing a 10% increase over the past decade
- From 2000 to 2010, women made up 12% of the parole population.
- In 2010, 103,374 women were on parole supervision.

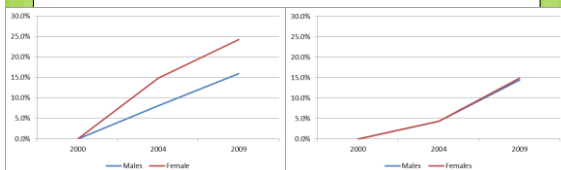
Source: Glaze & Bonczar, 2011

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Changes in Male and Female Correctional Populations

% Change in State and Federal Prison Populations Since 2000

% Change in State and Federal Parole Populations Since 2000



Sources: BJS, Prisoners and Parole and Probation in the U.S. Series

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Understanding Women Offender Population Growth

- Mandatory prison terms for drug offenses.
- Parole revocation rates, for both new offenses (often drug use) and technical violations.
- Similar rates of increases in all corrections' settings – jails, prisons and community corrections.

Question:

What patterns of growth are you experiencing in your state?

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Why Focus on Women?

2. If we acknowledge that women are different from men, we can improve outcomes.

- 46% of the women in prison were white, 25% were black and 18% were Hispanic
- Just over one third (35%) of the women sentenced to state prison in 2009 committed violent crimes, while 30% committed property crimes, and a quarter (25%) of women were sentenced for drug offenses
- Compare these numbers to the profile of males in prison: 54% of men were in prison for violent crimes, 18% for property crimes, and 17% for drug crimes

Source: Guerino, Harrison & Sabol, 2011

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Differences between Males and Females in Prison

DIMENSION	WOMEN	MEN
Victimization and Abuse	57% past histories of abuse 32-47% physical abuse 22-39% sexual abuse	6-13% physical abuse 2-6% sexual abuse
Mental Illness	73% report mental health problems; 23.6% diagnosed	55% report mental health problems; 15.8% diagnosed
Substance Abuse	60% have a history of substance abuse	53% have a history of substance abuse
Primary caretakers of children/families	2/3rds are parents of minor children	Less likely to serve as primary childcare provider
Poverty and Economic Marginalization	50% unemployed prior to incarceration	30% unemployed prior to incarceration

Ten Practice Targets for Parole from a Gender Informed Perspective

What are the practice targets for parole?

- Practices 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 project advisers, leadership, and project staff

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Why should paroling authorities be interested in evidence-based, gender responsive practices?

FROM THE FRAMEWORK FOR PAROLING AUTHORITIES IN AN ERA OF EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES BY NANCY CAMPBELL (2008):

"A well-educated paroling authority that uses current research to guide the way it operates and makes decisions can help make our communities safer and stop needless expenditures of precious public resources."

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Implications of Emerging Gender Responsive Research and Best Practices

- Use evidence-based AND gender-responsive research to inform the development of tools and interventions
- Target women's risk factors
- Recognize the low risk women generally present to society
- Create environments that are safe, supportive, respectful and dignified
- Avoid re-traumatization and assure that interventions are trauma-informed

Source: Bloom, Owen, Covington, 2003

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Implications (continued)

- ✓ Recruit staff who have both the interest and knowledge to work with women under criminal justice supervision
- ✓ Cross train staff regarding women's needs, trauma-informed approaches, relationships, risk, mental health
- ✓ Acknowledge how relationships affect women's lives:
 - Motivations
 - Children
 - Dysfunctional Relationships
 - Reentry issues
- ✓ Build partnerships with a wide range of community organizations to establish multidimensional, wraparound services

Source: Bloom, Owen, Covington, 2003

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Practice Target #1: Use good, empirically-based, actuarial tools to assess risks and criminogenic needs of offenders.

Research: Empirically-based assessment tools provide a more accurate statistical probability of reoffense than professional judgment alone.

Practice:

- ✓ Use empirically based assessment tools to assess offender risk and criminogenic needs
- ✓ Use specialized empirically based tools for special populations (sex offenders, women, juveniles, etc.)

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Lessons from GR Assessment

- ✓ Gender-informed assessment tools add predictive power to gender neutral tools:
- ✓ Many (newly applied) gender-responsive factors are predictive of misconducts and recidivism.
- ✓ Some factors emerged as *strengths* – family support, educational assets and self-efficacy.
- ✓ The traditional predictors of criminal behavior (gender-neutral) factors were *also predictive* of prison misconduct and reoffending for women.

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Practice Target #2: Develop and use clear, evidence-based, policy-driven decisionmaking practices and tools.

Research: Assure the fair and consistent application of concerns in release and revocation decisionmaking and condition setting in every case.

Practice:

- ✓ Use structured decisionmaking tools that articulate the board's concerns and includes an actuarial risk and needs assessment
- ✓ Measure the effectiveness of tools periodically over time to assure they continue to achieve goals; adjust as needed

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Gender-Informed Decisionmaking Practices

- ✓ Explore the availability, development, and use of gender responsive assessment tools for women and incorporate into decisionmaking guidelines
- ✓ Understand whether current institutional classification and disciplinary practices accurately reflect severity of women's behavior
- ✓ Remember that women generally pose a low level of risk but have a greater need for programming and treatment while in the community

Source: Special Challenges Facing Parole, National Institute of Corrections, 2011

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Practice Target #3: Develop meaningful partnerships.

Research: Adherence to activities, processes, and approaches across criminal justice system components are more likely to achieve agreed upon outcomes. Operations across system components should be coordinated to assure that there is added value.

Practice:

- ✓ Establish interagency agreements.
- ✓ 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

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GR Perspective

- ✓ Listen to women about what they need to be successful.
- ✓ Collaborate with institutional staff to make legal assistance and transportation available.
- ✓ Ensure that housing plans consider the safety needs of women and accommodates children.
- ✓ Link women to substance abuse and mental health treatment immediately to ensure continuity of care.
- ✓ Assist women in working toward job opportunities to earn a living wage.

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Practice Target #4: Use influence to leverage institutional and community resources for medium and high risk offenders to address their criminogenic needs.

Research: Recidivism rates can be reduced on average of 30% when interventions are targeted to those offenders who are assessed as medium or high risk to reoffend.

Practice:

- ✓ Clarify expectations for parole consideration of medium or high risk offenders early on in the prison term.
- ✓ Develop an agreement with corrections to prioritize and target treatment services to moderate and high risk offenders.
- ✓ Use parole release as an incentive to encourage offenders to participate in prison-based programming.
- ✓ Focus interventions on criminogenic needs.

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Risk Factors for Women Offenders

GENERAL NEUTRAL RISK FACTORS

- Criminal history
- Antisocial attitudes
- Antisocial associates
- Educational challenges
- Employment/Financial
- Family conflict
- Substance abuse history
- Dynamic substance abuse
- History of mental illness

GENDER RESPONSIVE RISK FACTORS

- Mental health history
- Depression symptoms
- Psychotic symptoms
- Child abuse (institutions)
- Relationship conflict
- Family conflict
- Parental stress
- Housing safety
- Adult victimization (sample variations)
- And strengths (self-efficacy, self esteem, family support, educational and financial)

Van Voorhis (2006)

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Critical Information to Collect when Assessing Women Offenders

FACTORS

1. History of abuse
2. Relationship status/issues
3. Self efficacy/self esteem
4. Mental health (particularly depression, anxiety, PTSD)
5. Parental stress (number of children, current arrangements, issues sense of competency in managing children)
6. Level of family support or conflicts
7. Financial status/poverty
8. Safety concerns (personal safety from violence/abuse)
9. Strengths and protective factors

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GR Programs and Interventions that Work

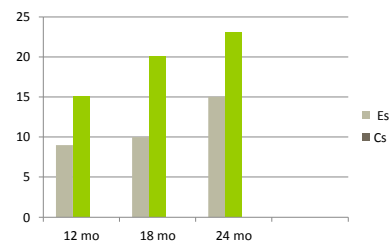
Moving On (Van Dieten)

Program components consider:

- Setting the Context for Change
- Women in Culture
- Stress Management
- Family Messages
- Relationships
- Identifying and Changing Negative Self-Talk
- Problem-Solving
- Assertiveness and Communication Skills
- Moving On

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Gender Responsive Models: Moving On



Getring, 2007

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Other GR Programs that Work to Reduce Recidivism

- **Seeking Safety** (Najavitz)
- **Helping Women Recover** (Covington)
- **Forever Free** (California Institute for Women)
 - *Implements the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) guide for treating women offenders (Kassebaum, 1999).*
- **Dialectical Behavioral Therapy** (Learner)

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Practice Target #5: Consider release of low risk offenders at the earliest stage possible.

Research: Offenders who are at low risk to reoffend are unlikely to benefit from a correctional intervention designed to change their behavior.

- Low risk offenders tend to recidivate at higher rates when services/interventions are over-delivered.

Practice:

- ✓ Develop a policy to release low risk offenders even if they don't receive institutional programming
- ✓ Add community conditions for low risk offenders who may benefit from programming or refer to community programming

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GR Perspective

- ✓ Acknowledge the low risk that women pose in release and violation decision making
- ✓ Provide community referrals (safe housing, childcare, livable wage jobs, mental health/substance abuse treatment, etc.) to help low risk women be successful
- ✓ Focus efforts on medium and high risk women

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Practice Target #6: Use the parole interview/hearing/review process as an opportunity to enhance offender motivation to change.

Research:

- Professionals' interactions with offenders can have a positive impact on their behavior.
- The use of incentives can be a powerful tool to enhance individual motivation in meeting case plan goals and for promoting positive behavioral change.
- Positive reinforcers used at a rate of 4 to every 1 sanction/ consequence can impact behavior positively.

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Practice Target #6 (continued)

Practice:

- ✓ Articulate goals and objectives for parole board interviews/hearings with offenders and victims.
- ✓ Consider interview strategies for reinforcing positive behavior.
- ✓ Develop rapport during the interview process.
- ✓ Use Motivational Interviewing techniques.

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GR Perspective

- ✓ Be trauma informed; recognize that many women who come before the Board and others during the hearing process have significant backgrounds of trauma and abuse that could be triggered during the parole process
- ✓ Establish trust and a respectful relationship; listening helps a woman in her recovery
- ✓ Recognize the woman's strengths and achievements
- ✓ Understand what motivates her (for example, children)

Source: *Special Challenges Facing Parole, National Institute of Corrections, 2011*

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Practice Target #7: Minimize requirements for low risk offenders, and target conditions to criminogenic needs of medium and high risk offenders.

Research:

- Risk of recidivism is greatly reduced when attention is paid to criminogenic needs (dynamic risk factors).
- There is a clear association between the number of criminogenic needs targeted and reduced recidivism; the higher the number of needs targeted, the lower the rate of recidivism.
- The most impactful programs aimed at changing criminal behavior and reducing recidivism are cognitive-behavioral and behavioral interventions.

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Practice Target #7 (continued)

Practice:

- ✓ Give low risk offenders stabilization services (e.g., housing, medical, transportation).
- ✓ Deliver prison-based programming to reduce anti-social behavior within prison and post-release.
- ✓ Encourage participation in risk-reducing programming.
- ✓ Consider program participation in release decision making
- ✓ Have available cognitive behavioral programs for the medium and high risk offenders.
- ✓ Direct, through policy, that staff address the top three (or more) criminogenic needs in case management planning.
- ✓ Match offenders' programming and services to their assessed criminogenic needs.

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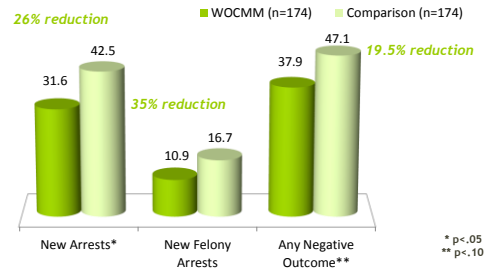
Setting Supervision Conditions for Women

- ✓ Set conditions for women that are consistent with their needs as defined by GR tools.
- ✓ Consider the extent to which financial penalties/fees contribute to failure.
- ✓ Direct women to treatment programs that are designed to address gender responsive needs.
- ✓ Take care to explain supervision conditions and expectations, as well as consequences (women are more compliant when they see sanctions as fair and predictable)

Source: *Special Challenges Facing Parole, National Institute of Corrections, 2011*

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Recidivism Rates of WOCMM & Comparison Participants



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What accounts for the lower recidivism rates of WOCMM participants?

- ✓ Enhanced contact activity with women (continuity of care; approach used by team members)
- ✓ Use of Gender Specific Assessment for risk/needs, strengths identification
- ✓ Fidelity to gender responsive supervision model
- ✓ Priority needs, supports and services

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Practice Target #8: Develop policy-driven, graduated responses to parole violations.

Research:

- Graduated sanctions (i.e., sanctions that increase in severity based on the nature or number of violations) decrease recidivism.
- Responses to violations should be swift, certain and proportional
- See Incentives Research (Practice Target #6)
- Risk of recidivism is highest in the initial weeks and months following release from prison; recidivism rates stabilize in years two and three.

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Practice Target #8 (continued)

Practice:

- ✓ Frontload supervision and support services for reentering offenders, providing more intensive services initially, and then diminishing the intensity over time as offenders' behavior dictates.
- ✓ Assign supervision conditions that are directly related to criminogenic needs.
- ✓ Develop a list of graduated incentives and sanctions to address behavior change and violations.
- ✓ Take a graduated and structured approach to addressing technical violations of parole in the community.

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GR Perspective

- ✓ Include her as part of the case management team
- ✓ Engage her in a discussion about goals and incentives for achieving them
- ✓ Engage in meaningful discussion about supervision progress
- ✓ Expect failure and recognize the interrelated nature of the many issues women face during the transition to the community

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

Research: The quality of the interpersonal relationship between staff and the offender, along with the skills of staff, may be as or more important to risk reduction than the specific programs in which offenders participate.

Practice:

- ✓ Train staff at all levels in case management strategies, evidence-based practices, motivating offenders to change, etc.
- ✓ 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 criminogenic needs.

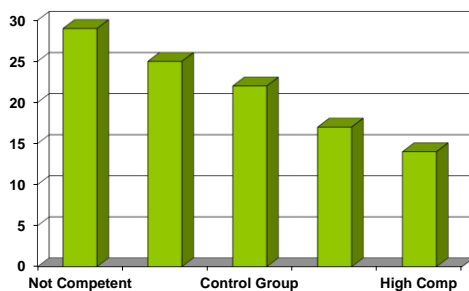
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GR Perspective

- ✓ Assure that all staff who work with women are trained and skilled in gender responsiveness
- ✓ Consider gender specific caseloads with staff who want to work with women
- ✓ Implement the WOCMM
- ✓ Remember that women are all about the relationship – their connections and disconnections with others

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Case Manager Traits and Recidivism



Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy, 2004
Outcome Evaluation of Waate's Research-Based Programs for Juvenile Offenders

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

Research: Paroling authorities will learn and improve when decisions are based on the collection, analysis and use of data and information

Practice:

- ✓ Assess practices and use data to guide decisionmaking; make adjustments accordingly
- ✓ Institute continuous quality improvement measures
- ✓ Commit to becoming a learning organization

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GR Perspective

- ✓ Acknowledge that gender matters in all data collection and analyses efforts
- ✓ Use gender data to guide decisions
- ✓ Incorporate a "gender lens" in research projects:
 - ✓ For example, a recent study by the GA Board of Pardons and Paroles found that risk assessment factors do vary across genders (Prevost, 2010)
 - ✓ The NJ State Parole Board found a 83% reduction in recidivism (rearrest and reincarceration) when women they paroled were placed on a gender specific caseload (Rutgers, 2009)

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A few take away points

- ✓ We can realize at least modest decreases in recidivism (10-15%) over what we currently do by implementing the principles of EBP (encompassed in the Ten Practice Targets)
 - ✓ We can further decrease recidivism rates for women offenders when we add gender responsive principles.
- ✓ We can apply the principles of EBP and GR in all aspects of parole decisionmaking and our interactions with offenders.

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A few take away points

- ✓ The professional judgment of board members regarding women is enhanced when informed by evidence-based and gender responsive knowledge.
- ✓ Every interaction with an offender (interview) offers an opportunity to contribute to harm reduction.
- ✓ Systems achieve better outcomes when they operate collaboratively.