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Maine's Women Offenders: What Do We Know?

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Maine's Women Offenders:

WHAT DO WE KNOW?

2007 – 2009

UPDATE

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**ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE (USM)
MUSKIE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC SERVICE**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary..... 3

Introduction 4

Purpose 4

Methodology..... 5

 Variables/ Measures: 5

 Methods..... 6

 Limitations 6

Findings: What Do We Know? 7

 Demographic Characteristics: 7

 County Characteristics: 9

 Criminal History and Offense Patterns: 10

 Risk Levels: 11

 Recidivism Rates: 12

 One-year Recidivism Rates by County: 14

 Criminogenic Risk Level and Recidivism: 16

Policy Implications 17

Resources..... 18

Figure 1: Number of Women Entering Probation by Year, 2004-2009 7

Figure 2: Returning County of Maine Women Probationers Sample, 2007-2009 9

Figure 3: Maine's Average 1-year recidivism for Women who entered probation in 2004-2009..... 12

Figure 4: 1-year Recidivism Rate by County 15

Table 1: Characteristics of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009 8

Table 2: Returning County of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009..... 9

Table 3: Characteristics of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009 10

Table 4: % scoring in each Risk Level by Year Entering Probation 11

Table 5: One-year Recidivism Rates by Risk Level and Cohort 13

Table 6: One year Recidivism Rate of Women Probationers by County, 2004-2009 14

Table 7: Risk Level and LSI-R Predictors 16

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970's women have disproportionately been impacted by a massive increase in incarceration rates in comparison to men. From 1977 to 2009 the U.S. has experienced an 838% increase in the number of incarcerated females¹. Maine has experienced an increase of 864% for the same time period. Much of this increase has to do with the fact that very few women were incarcerated in the 1970's (Frost, Greene, & Pranis, 2006; West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). However, the disproportionate growth of the female prison population continues in recent years as well.

In the U.S. from 2000 to 2009 the number of incarcerated females increased by 24%, compared to 16% for males. In Maine, the numbers are much more staggering. From 2000 to 2009 the increase of incarcerated females in Maine was 118%, for males during the same time period it was 17%. However, females in Maine are now about 7% of the incarcerated population, which is the same as the nation. Whereas in 2000 Maine was below the national average with 4% of its prison population being females, compared to 6% in the U.S. What is clear is that the female incarceration rates are increasing and thus we need to make sure that our previously male-based policies and procedures address the needs of the growing female population. This report looks at two samples of Maine Women Probationers in order to try and understand those needs.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this paper is to update the previous 2009 report (King, 2009) with new data. The previous report focused on a sample of Maine women entering probation in the years of 2004, 2005, and 2006. This report uses a new sample of Maine women entering probation in the years of 2007, 2008, and 2009. The goal is to present the latest data and any trends between the two samples. This report aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic characteristics of Maine's women offenders?
2. What are the recidivism rates of Maine's women offenders?
3. Are there any trends over the 6 year time period?

¹ Incarceration statistics were calculated using data from Frost, Green, and Pranis (2006) and Bureau of Justice Statistics (West, Sabol, & Greenman, 2010). All incarceration rates (unless otherwise specified) were based on the number of incarcerated people serving a sentence of at least 1 year.

METHODOLOGY

Variables/ Measures:

Recidivism

Recidivism is the measure that most use to gauge the effectiveness of correctional/ criminal justice programs designed to reduce future criminal behavior. For this study, recidivism in Maine is defined as arrest for a new crime (misdemeanor or felony) while under probation supervision (King 2009). In this study researchers looked at 1-year, 2-year, and 3-year recidivism rates.

Level of Service Inventory- Revised (LSI-R)

The Maine Department of Corrections uses the Level of Service Inventory-Revised (LSI-R) as its primary offender risk assessment tool. The LSI-R is an actuarial risk assessment that surveys 54 measures of criminogenic risks that have been shown to predict recidivism (King 2009). The tool is comprised of ten domains, which include: criminal history; education/employment; financial; family/marital; living situation/accommodations; leisure/recreation; companions/associates; alcohol/drug; emotional/personal; and attitudes/orientation. The score is used to determine a woman's level of criminogenic risk (administrative, low, moderate, high or maximum). The LSI-R is a gender neutral tool, and thus may not measure risk areas that are of particular importance to women offenders.

Research Sample

The sample consists of case records of 1939 women who entered probation in 2007, 2008, and 2009. This sample is compared to a previous sample of women who entered probation in 2004, 2005, and 2006. All case records in this sample include basic demographic information such as gender, age, and race/ ethnicity. All case records were imported from the MDOC's Correctional Information System (CORIS). CORIS is an electronic database that serves as a case management system for juvenile and adult correctional staff. It holds the official records of all demographic, sentencing, supervision, case management and custody data for those under the supervision of MDOC, including all probationers in the state (King 2009).

Methods

Researchers used statistical software (SPSS) to conduct three levels of analysis:

1. Basic descriptive statistics to provide an overview of the population.
2. Bivariate analysis (Pearson's Chi Square), to examine the association between recidivism and the following variables:
3. Multivariate analysis (binary logistic regression) to examine which subscales of the LSI-R are most strongly and statistically correlated with recidivism for Maine's women offenders.

Cox/ Snell and Nagelkerke R^2 scores were used to determine how well the model explained the outcome of analysis, recidivism. Values for statistical significance were provided through the regression analysis.

Limitations

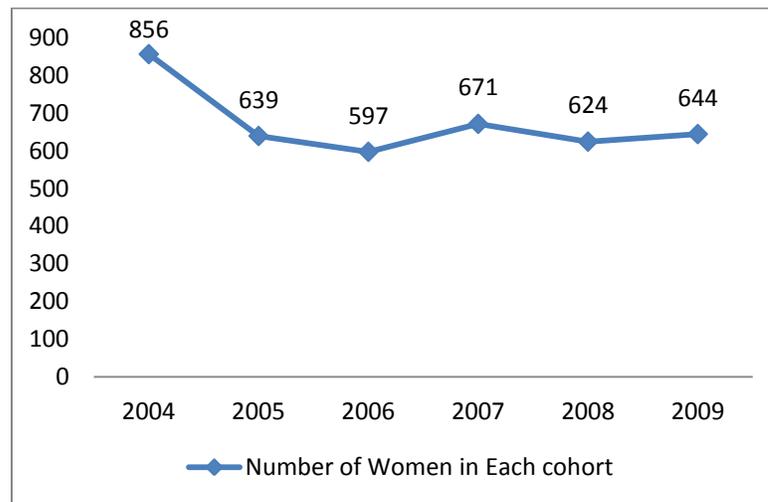
One limitation in this study is the use of a secondary data source. The data is taken from an outside database and thus accuracy is not controlled by and is unknown to the researchers. The data is also entered by correctional staff/ case workers throughout the state. The accuracy and completeness of data is therefore dependent on these staff members and cannot be controlled by the researchers. Staff may have inaccurately entered data into the database. The data is also based on measures of self/ staff reporting, which again may not be accurate or consistent.

FINDINGS: WHAT DO WE KNOW?

Demographic Characteristics:

As Figure 1 shows the number of women entering probation decreased from 2007-2009, but increased from 2006 (n=597)². On the next page, Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the 2007-2009 Maine Women Probationer Sample.

Figure 1: Number of Women Entering Probation by Year, 2004-2009



The race of Maine's women offenders is predominantly white (96.4%). Almost half of the Maine women probationers were single (45.1%). More than half of the women were between the ages of 17 and 34 years old (57.6%). The mean age at entry into probation was 34 years old. Almost half of the women were unemployed (44.4%) and only 26% were employed full-time. Almost half (48.5%) of the women had a High School Diploma or GED, while 41.6% of the women had not completed a High School education. Only 9.9% had some college or higher.

² All Maine 2004-2006 data see (King, 2009).

Table 1: Characteristics of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009

Cohort	N=1939	%
2007	671	34.6%
2008	624	32.2%
2009	644	33.2%
Race	N=1895	%
Asian	4	0.2%
Black or African American	24	1.3%
Native American	39	2.1%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0.1%
White	1827	96.4%
Marital Status	N=1939	%
Single	875	45.1%
Married	329	17.0%
Divorced/ Widowed/ Separated	505	26.0%
Other/ Unknown	230	11.9%
Employment Status	N=1464	%
Full Time employed	381	26.0%
Part Time employed	178	12.2%
Self employed	15	1.0%
Unemployed	650	44.4%
Other	53	3.6%
Not in the Labor Force	187	12.8%
Education Level	N=1306	%
Up to 8th grade	82	6.3%
Some High School	461	35.3%
High School Diploma/ GED	633	48.5%
Some College	85	6.5%
Bachelor or higher degree	45	3.4%
Age	N=1939	%
17- 24	469	24.2%
25 - 34	647	33.4%
35 - 44	478	24.7%
45 - 54	279	14.4%
55 - 64	58	3.0%
65+	8	0.4%
Mean age	34	

County Characteristics:

As Table 2 and Figure 2 show, nearly (62.1%) two-thirds of the women in this sample resided in one of five counties: Cumberland (n=303), Kennebec (n=248), Penobscot (n=242), Androscoggin (n=222), or York (n=190).

Figure 2: Returning County of Maine Women Probationers Sample, 2007-2009

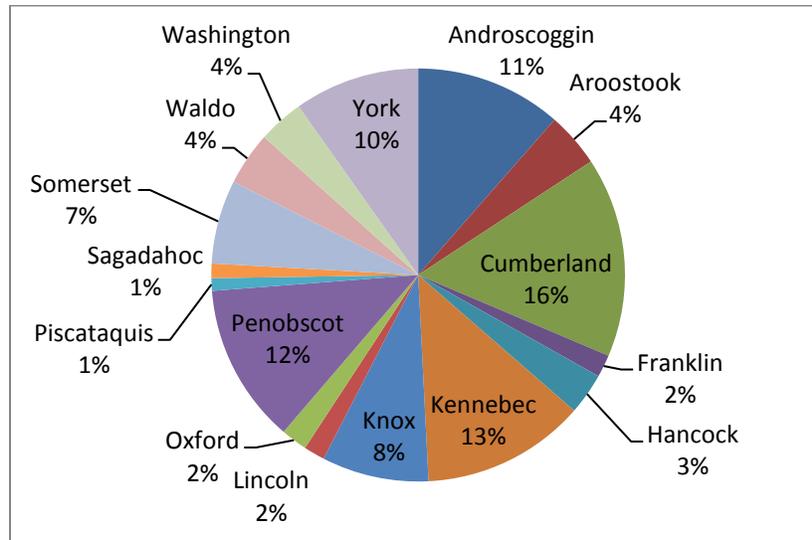


Table 2: Returning County of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009

County	N	%
Androscoggin	222	11.4%
Aroostook	83	4.3%
Cumberland	303	15.6%
Franklin	34	1.8%
Hancock	63	3.2%
Kennebec	248	12.8%
Knox	162	8.4%
Lincoln	32	1.7%
Oxford	40	2.1%
Penobscot	242	12.5%
Piscataquis	19	1.0%
Sagadahoc	22	1.1%
Somerset	127	6.5%
Waldo	81	4.2%
Washington	69	3.6%
York	190	9.8%

Criminal History and Offense Patterns:

The mean age at first arrest was 24 years old (n=1850), which was the same as the 2004-2006 sample. The range of ages at first arrest was quite varied. The youngest was 8 years old and the oldest was 70 years old at first arrest. On average the women in the 2007-2009 sample had 3 prior offenses (mean=3.58). The number of prior offenses ranged from 0-75, meaning that while some women had no criminal history, some had as many as 75 prior offenses. About one quarter (24.58%) of the women offenders were under the age of 18 at first arrest, thus indicating that they had experience with the juvenile justice system.

Table 3: Characteristics of Maine Women Probationer Sample, 2007-2009

Age at First Arrest	
Mean	24.53
Prior Offenses	
Mean	3.58
Number of Misdemeanor Offenses	
2007	276
2008	252
2009	289
Top 5 Misdemeanor Offenses	
Assault and Threatening	288
Operating Under the Influence	162
Drugs	157
Theft	72
Forgery	22
Number of Felony Offenses	
2007	348
2008	314
2009	309
Top 5 Felony Offenses	
Drugs	333
Theft	262
Burglary	86
Forgery	62
Assault and Threatening	47

The number of Misdemeanor offenses committed by the women in the sample increased slightly over the three year period (2007 n=276, 2008 n=252, 2009 n=289). In order of frequency, the most prevalent types of misdemeanor offenses of Maine's women offender population were assault and threatening (n=288), operating under the influence (n=162), drugs (n=157), theft (n=72), and forgery (n=22). Cumulatively, these five offenses (n=701) accounted for 85.8% of all misdemeanor offenses committed by women probationers from 2007 to 2009.

The number of felony offenses decreased slightly over the three year period (2007 n=348, 2008 n=314, 2009 n=309). In order of frequency, the most prevalent felony offenses were drugs (n=333), theft (n=262), burglary (n=86), forgery (n=62), and assault and threatening (n=47). Cumulatively these offenses (n=790) accounted for 81.4% of all felony offenses committed by women probationers from 2007 to 2009.

Risk Levels:

The differences in the risk levels over the last few years could be a result of recent policy changes in regards to probation and the addition of the low risk category to the LSI-R assessment (introduced in 2006). Table 4 shows the percentage of women scoring in each LSI-R risk level from 2004-2009.

Table 4: % scoring in each Risk Level by Year Entering Probation

Risk Level	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Administrative (0-13)	24.1%	18.9%	15.6%	13.0%	14.6%	13.8%
Low (14-20) ³			16.9%	33.1%	33.8%	31.2%
Moderate (21-25)	59.4%	61.6%	47.7%	33.7%	34.0%	34.9%
High (26-35)	3.9%	5.0%	10.6%	14.0%	10.4%	11.2%
Maximum (36-54)	0.7%	0.9%	2.2%	1.5%	1.0%	1.2%
No Score	12.0%	13.5%	7.0%	4.8%	6.3%	7.6%
Average Score	17.4	18.6	19.3	19.50	18.68	18.74

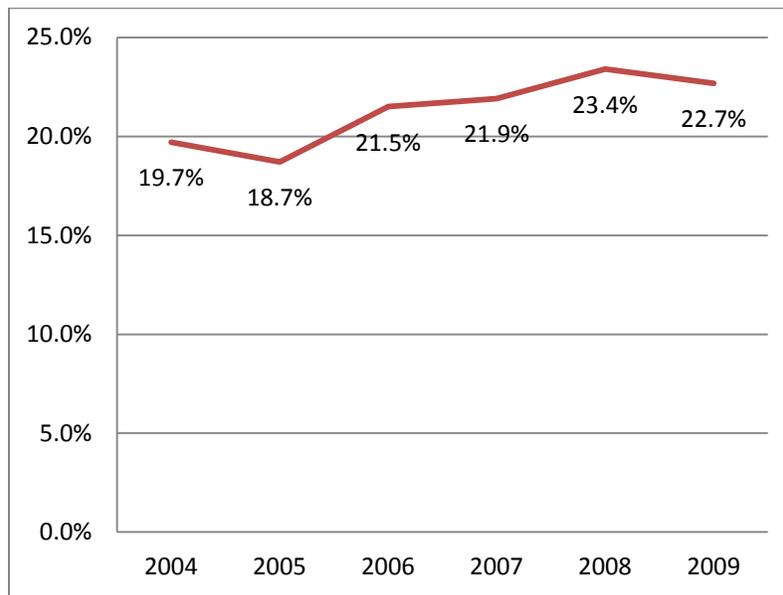
Two-thirds of the women offenders in 2009 were considered low to moderate risk (66.1%). The administrative and maximum levels have remained about the same from 2004-2009. However, the low category has increased from 16.9% in 2006 to 31.2%, though it remained about the same from 2007-2009. The moderate category fluctuated the most, decreasing from 59.4% in 2004 to 34.9% in 2009. The high category has increased from 3.9% in 2004 to 11.2% in 2009. The average score of Maine women offenders entering into probation has remained in the range of 17-19.5 over the 2004-2009 time period, though it has increased slightly. In 2004 the average score was 17.4 which increased to 18.74 in 2009.

³ Low category was not added until 2006.

Recidivism Rates:

To avoid distortion in comparison of recidivism rates due to different lengths of time spent on probation, researchers compared 1-year recidivism rates for each cohort. As Figure 3 shows, the average statewide recidivism rate has increased from 19.7% in 2004 to 22.7% in 2009.

Figure 3: Maine's Average 1-year recidivism for Women who entered probation in 2004-2009



As Table 1Table 5 shows, recidivism rates among risk levels varied greatly. In 2009, about one-third of the women in the Administrative (30%), Low (29.75%), Moderate (36.05%), and High (28.09%) risk levels recidivated. Recidivism rates among the Maximum category have fluctuated the most from 2004-2009, ranging from 0-58.80%. In the 2009 report, King stated “In the last year, MDOC is continuing to expand their use of evidence-based practices by incorporating a new model of female supervision that will require case plans for all probationers scoring above a moderate risk level” (p. 10). It is important to note that both the high and maximum recidivism rates decreased from 2008-2009, which could possibly be associated with the new WOCMM model. The one-year recidivism rate among women scoring in the High risk level decreased from 30.34% in 2008 to 28.09% in 2009, and the recidivism rate among women scoring in the Maximum level decreased from 44.44% to 22.22%.

Table 5: One-year Recidivism Rates by Risk Level and Cohort

Risk Level		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Administrative	N	15	8	4	5	9	6
	% within risk level	7.50%	6.60%	4.30%	25.00%	45.00%	30.00%
Low⁴	N	-	-	25	38	47	36
	% within risk level			13.70%	31.40%	38.84%	29.75%
Moderate	N	108	76	29	59	51	62
	% within risk level	24.10%	20.90%	23.80%	34.30%	29.65%	36.05%
High	N	8	11	41	37	27	25
	% within risk level	47.10%	52.40%	44.60%	41.57%	30.34%	28.09%
Maximum	N	1	0	10	3	4	2
	% within risk level	25.00%	0.00%	58.80%	33.33%	44.44%	22.22%
Total⁵	N	132	95	109	142	138	131
	% within cohort	15.40%	14.90%	18.30%	21.16%	22.12%	20.34%

4 Low category was not added until 2006.

5 Totals do not include recidivism cases with no LSI-R scores.

One-year Recidivism Rates by County:

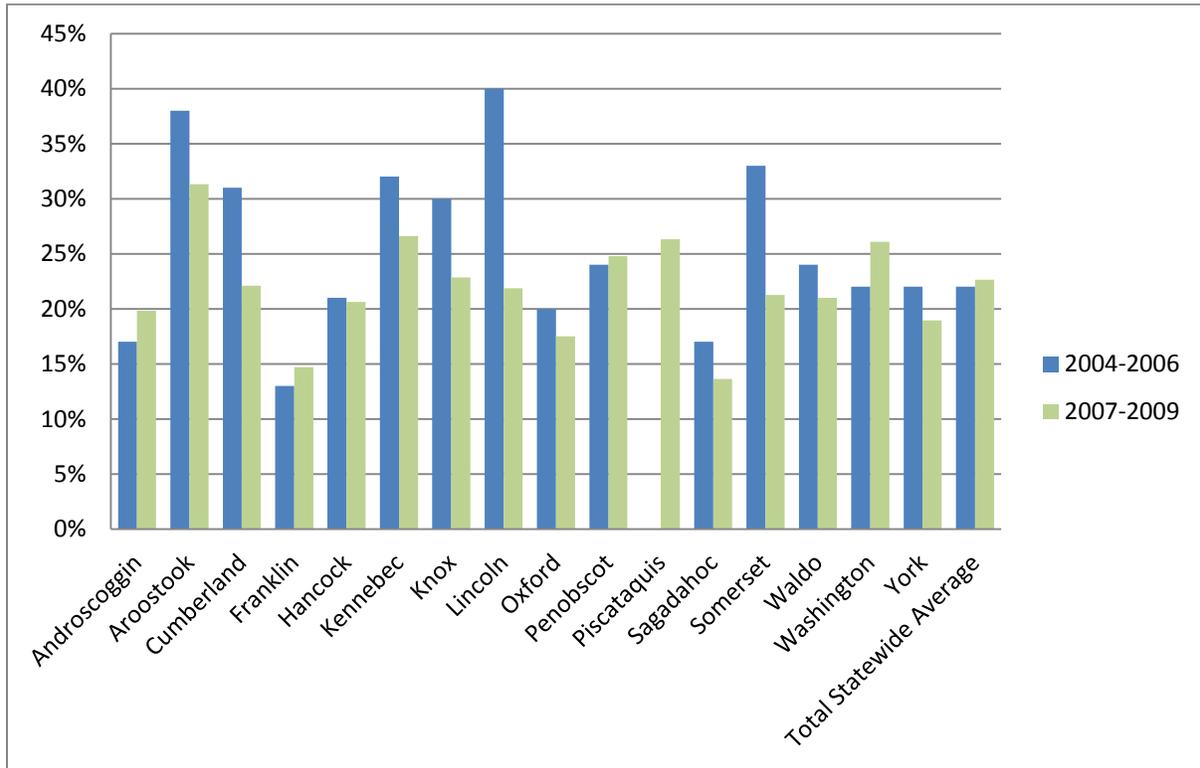
As Table 6 and Figure 4 show the recidivism rates by county vary greatly. The differences between the 2004-2006 sample and the 2007-2009 sample are shown in the right column. The county with the greatest reduction in recidivism was Lincoln with a decrease of 18%. The county with the greatest increase in recidivism was Washington, with an increase of 4%. Overall the majority (10 out of 16) of the counties had decreases in recidivism rates between the two samples. One county remained the same, Hancock, and 4 counties increased.

Table 6: One year Recidivism Rate of Women Probationers by County, 2004-2009

County	2004-2006	2007-2009	Difference
Androscoggin	17%	20%	3%
Aroostook	38%	31%	-7%
Cumberland	31%	22%	-9%
Franklin	13%	15%	2%
Hancock	21%	21%	0%
Kennebec	32%	27%	-5%
Knox	30%	23%	-7%
Lincoln	40%	22%	-18%
Oxford	20%	18%	-2%
Penobscot	24%	25%	1%
Piscataquis	*	26%	-
Sagadahoc	17%	14%	-3%
Somerset	33%	21%	-12%
Waldo	24%	21%	-3%
Washington	22%	26%	4%
York	22%	19%	-3%
Total Statewide Average	22%	23%	1%

*sample size was too small to calculate

Figure 4: 1-year Recidivism Rate by County



Criminogenic Risk Level and Recidivism:

Table 7 presents the results from a regression model of LSI-R subscale scores and their combined relationship to 1-year recidivism within each risk level. The variables presented are those which showed statistical significance in their relationship to 1-year recidivism. The variables that were significantly associated with recidivism within the High risk levels were Leisure and Recreation ($p=0.044$), and Attitudes and Orientation ($p=0.015$). The variables that were significantly associated with recidivism in the low risk category were Companions ($p=0.017$), Alcohol and Drugs ($p=0.036$), and Attitudes and Orientation ($p=0.031$). In the moderate risk level the only significant variable was Education and Employment ($p=0.030$). There were no statistically significant variables that were correlated with recidivism in the Administrative and Maximum risk levels in this model.

Table 7: Risk Level and LSI-R Predictors

Risk Level	LSI-R Subscale	N	p	R ²
High	Leisure/ Recreation	89	.044	.086
	Attitudes/ Orientation		.015	
Low	Companions	121	.017	.043
	Alcohol/ Drugs		.036	
	Attitudes/ Orientation		.031	
Moderate	Education/ Employment	172	.030	.021

Statistical tests were done to find other variables that may be correlated with recidivism. Age at first arrest, number of prior offenses, and race were all found to be significantly associated with changes in recidivism at the $p<.05$ level. Education, employment, and marital status were not found to be statistically significant in this sample.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

In 2003, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) sponsored the groundbreaking report, *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders* by Barbara Bloom, Ph.D., Barbara Owen, Ph.D., and Stephanie Covington, Ph.D. The report established the following six guiding principles to ensure correctional agencies provide gender responsive management, supervision and treatment services for women:

- Acknowledge that gender (being female) makes a difference;
- Create an environment based on safety, respect and dignity;
- Develop policies, practices and programs incorporating the fact that women are relationship-oriented;
- Address substance abuse, trauma and mental health issues in a comprehensive, integrated and culturally relevant manner in services and supervision;
- Provide women an opportunity to improve their socioeconomic status; and
- Establish a system of community supervision and reentry with comprehensive, collaborative services.

National correctional policy has begun to change as more data becomes available on women and girls. The most recent version of the ACA policy "Public Correctional Policy on Adult and Juvenile Female Offender Services," extensively revised in 2006, reflects the NIC guiding principles and calls for "gender responsiveness in the development of services and programs for adult and juvenile female offenders." Rather than simply import services designed for males, it specifies "programs must be designed and implemented to meet the needs" of the female population.

An emphasis on implementing gender-responsive programs in the community is critical. Most women and girls under supervision are not in institutions but are assigned to probation, parole (aftercare) or other community-based programs that historically have received the least attention. Single-gender caseloads and gender-responsive policies for women and girls in community programs might help alleviate alienation of those returning to the community and they certainly can save money. The Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, for example, implemented single-gender caseloads for girls more than 10 years ago, and in two years, they reduced the number of girls from Baltimore being sent to juvenile facilities by 90 percent.

However, gender-responsive services cannot be successful without the support and involvement of others. Seeking out and building alliances with academic institutions, medical and mental health organizations, other governmental agencies, individuals, and groups in our community is essential in implementing meaningful gender-responsive services for women and girls in the criminal justice system. By sharing information and program ideas, implementing the principles of gender-responsive programming, and following the policies and standards established by ACA and related organizations, we can ensure that Maine's corrections system will meet the needs of women and girls.

RESOURCES

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