

MEETING THE NEEDS OF
WOMEN

**IN CALIFORNIA'S
COUNTY JUSTICE SYSTEMS**

A TOOLKIT FOR POLICYMAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

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May 2015



safeandjust.org



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

For California’s county justice systems, these are times of great challenge and equally great opportunity. Since 2010, both the nation’s health care system and California’s criminal justice system have undergone unprecedented reforms. County jails and probation departments must house and supervise many individuals who previously would have been the responsibility of state prisons and parole officers.

At the same time, the length of many jail sentences for nonviolent, non-serious, non-sex offenses is decreasing. Billions of dollars in new funding are now available for counties to develop innovative community-based sanctions and other rehabilitative alternatives to incarceration, along with services and programs to help formerly incarcerated people reenter their communities.

Because fewer women are convicted of crimes and incarcerated compared to men, they can be overlooked for what may be ideal approaches to reduce crime and recidivism.

This toolkit describes how counties can benefit from developing criminal justice solutions focused on women. It is designed to provide sheriff’s departments, probation departments, practitioners and other leaders with a blueprint for addressing women under local supervision.

The goals of this toolkit are to:

- Ensure that local justice systems are more gender-responsive and that women and their specific needs are not overlooked as decision-makers implement new policies and practices in a changing criminal justice landscape;
- Enable county justice systems to take full advantage of significant new state and federal funding streams available to implement rehabilitative alternatives to jail incarceration;
- Help safely reduce counties’ reliance on incarceration through implementing less restrictive alternatives and developing strategies to better manage female jail populations; and
- Provide information on research-based, community-based programs and services for women in the justice system.

The toolkit provides suggestions for innovative and focused interventions targeting the special risks and needs of women in the justice system. It provides an overview of risk and needs assessments, case management approaches, principles, strategies and programs that take into account the needs of women (*gender-responsive*). There are recommendations for creating community-based options for women and 10 key steps for working toward sustainable reductions in the number of women in county jails and the creation of gender-responsive community justice systems.

***Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*, a report by the National Institute of Corrections, documents the need for a new vision for the criminal justice system that recognizes the behavioral and social differences between women and men. This approach is defined as follows:**

“Gender-responsive” means creating an environment through site selection, staff selection, program development, content and material that reflects an understanding of the realities of women’s lives and addresses the issues of the participants. Gender-responsive approaches are multidimensional and are based on theoretical perspectives that acknowledge women’s pathways into the criminal justice system. These approaches address social (e.g., poverty, race, class and gender inequality) and cultural factors, as well as therapeutic interventions. These interventions address issues such as abuse, violence, family relationships, substance abuse and co-occurring disorders. They provide a strength-based approach to treatment and skill building. The emphasis is on self-efficacy.¹

Key Steps to a Gender-Responsive Community Justice System

- 1. Women's Advisory Group.** Create a community advisory group comprised of representatives of public and private agencies and individuals working with women in the justice system.
- 2. Profile of Female Populations.** Create a profile of the county's population of women in jail and on probation.
- 3. Provider Network Assessment.** Assess your service provider network for programs and services that meet women's needs.
- 4. Service Delivery Enhancement.** Enhance service delivery through integrated programming approaches and collaborative partnerships.
- 5. Risk/Needs Assessments.** Conduct risk and needs assessments of individual women in jail and on probation to inform pretrial, adjudication/trial, sentencing and case planning.
- 6. Integrated Case Management.** Develop an integrated case management plan for each woman focused on maintaining her in the least restrictive setting consistent with her needs and public safety.
- 7. Pretrial/Sentencing Alternatives.** Develop local research-based pretrial and sentencing alternatives that are gender-responsive, sensitive to the trauma history of many women in the justice system (trauma-informed) and are family-focused.
- 8. Data Collection for System Improvement.** Design an integrated data collection, evaluation and oversight process to monitor and improve system-wide supervision, programs and services.
- 9. Leadership Structure.** Create a leadership structure that plans, supports and monitors an integrated system of criminal justice and community services responsive to the needs of women.
- 10. Public Education Campaign.** Design and implement a public education campaign that informs community leaders—judges, district attorneys, public defenders, probation officers, crime victims and leaders of civic organizations—about the benefits of a strategy focused on women and their families.

HISTORIC CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC HEALTH REFORMS BRING NEW OPPORTUNITIES, FUNDING

In 2010, President Obama signed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), the first major policy change that created an opportunity to improve public safety outcomes. The ACA opens up new federal funding for mental health, drug treatment and other health services for individuals in local criminal justice systems (although not while they are incarcerated).

California lawmakers enacted Public Safety Realignment in 2011, shifting the management of individuals convicted of specified nonviolent, non-sex, non-serious felonies from the state prison system to county jails and probation (as well as supervision of most people coming out of state prison from state parole to county probation departments).²

Expanding significantly upon Realignment, in 2014 California voters approved Proposition 47, the “Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act.” Prop. 47 changed punishments for six nonviolent offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, meaning someone convicted now of simple drug possession or petty theft could face a maximum punishment of 364 days in jail – considerably less than the possibility of three years in jail or prison previously imposed for those offenses. Prop. 47 also allocates the hundreds of millions of annual savings (based on reduced incarceration costs) to mental health and drug treatment, victim services and programs in K-12 schools.

Realignment similarly was written with the intent to change how California spends its public safety dollars. The California legislature included a codified statement of intent declaring: “California must reinvest its criminal justice resources to support community-based corrections programs and evidence-based practices that will achieve improved public safety returns...Evidence-based practices will improve public safety outcomes among adult felons and facilitate their reintegration back into society.”

Realignment is intended to “generate savings that can be reinvested in evidence-based strategies that increase public safety.” Evidence-based approaches are defined as “supervision policies, procedures, programs and practices demonstrated by scientific research to reduce recidivism among individuals under probation, parole or post-release supervision.”³

Realignment specifically encourages counties to maximize the use of evidence-based sanctions, programs and supervision strategies such as the following:

- Day reporting centers
- Drug courts
- Drug and mental health treatment programs
- Home detention with electronic or GPS monitoring
- Community-based residential programs
- Educational and vocational programs
- Mother-infant care programs
- Restitution and community service

Since women are a significant share of the low-level offenders targeted by Realignment and Prop. 47 – and since they, their families and communities benefit significantly from these approaches – counties can enhance the success of their local justice systems in implementing these reforms by focusing their efforts on women.

Realignment, Prop. 47 and the ACA create new revenue streams from the state and federal government that make billions of dollars in new funding available to counties. Counties retain considerable discretion in how they spend these funds. Some already are investing in alternative sentencing and community-based programs and services while others are looking first to expand their jails. In either case, cost-effectiveness is key, requiring thoughtful planning and innovative implementation of a range of strategies.

Women in California's Prisons and Jails

Realignment already has had a significant impact on women in prisons and jails. Women's prison admissions were reduced by 60% between 2011, when Realignment began, and 2012.⁴ By comparison, male prison admissions in this period were reduced by 31%. While women's admissions to state prisons were significantly reduced, between 2010 and 2013 there was a 23.7% increase in the average daily female jail population in California. Women now comprise 13% of individuals in the state's county jails.

AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION OF WOMEN IN CALIFORNIA JAILS⁵

YEAR	DAILY AVG.	UNSENTENCED	SENTENCED
2010	8,637	5,482 (63.5%)	3,155 (36.5%)
2011	8,860	5,113 (57.7%)	3,747 (42.3%)
2012	9,932	5,464 (55.0%)	4,468 (45.0%)
2013	10,684	6,025 (56.4%)	4,659 (43.6%)

While it is unclear at this time what impact Prop. 47 will have on the numbers of incarcerated women, the new law's focus on nonviolent offenses likely means women will be resentenced and released from both jails and prisons. The California Legislative Analyst's Office's (LAO) official analysis appearing in the ballot pamphlet⁶ estimated an ongoing reduction of several thousand prisoners within a few years.

The LAO also estimated a temporary reduction for a few years after enactment due to several thousand current prisoners being resentenced to shorter terms and released. In February 2015, the LAO issued a follow-up analysis that projects 1,900 prison inmates will be released in 2015,⁷ though gender breakdowns were not provided.

In addition, the LAO predicted various effects on county jail populations. On the one hand, a significant reduction would result from shorter sentences being imposed for the crimes reduced to misdemeanors and from some individuals currently in jails being resentenced and released. That reduction would be slightly offset by an increase due to some individuals who would otherwise have been sentenced to state prison now being placed in jail.

The LAO estimated that, on balance, the number of jail beds freed up by Prop. 47 could reach into the low 10,000s annually within a few years. The LAO also noted, however, that the actual reduction in jail populations probably would be less than this; many jails that are currently overcrowded sometimes release individuals early, and such jails might use the newly available jail space resulting from Prop. 47 to reduce early releases.

The LAO analysis did not include a breakdown by gender, so estimating the impact of Prop. 47 upon the numbers of women in county jails is difficult. However, since greater proportions of women than men are incarcerated for the offenses affected by Prop. 47, it probably is safe to assume that the total population reductions will include greater proportions of women than men, leading to overall reductions in both the number of women in prison and jail and the proportion of women making up the total jail and prison populations.

The majority of women in jails, both before and after Realignment, were awaiting trial or sentencing. In 2010, more than 63% of the women in California jails had not been sentenced. That percentage has declined since Realignment, but in 2013 it still was more than 56%. Clearly, counties can make great headway in reducing the female jail population by implementing alternatives to incarceration for both pretrial detainees and those sentenced.

To date, county approaches to addressing Realignment's female jail populations have been varied.

The state has provided funding for jail expansion via AB 900 (2007) and SB 1022 (2012), which allocated \$1.2 billion and \$500 million respectively.⁸ San Luis Obispo County is replacing its current women's facility with a new 198-bed facility. San Diego County is replacing its current women's facility with a new 1,270-bed facility. Los Angeles County is proposing a new 1,604-bed facility at the Mira Loma Detention Center in Lancaster.* San Mateo County is constructing a new facility for women to replace a rundown existing jail.

Some smaller counties are undertaking limited expansions of their facilities. Sutter County is adding 14 new female beds. Lake County is constructing a new 40-bed dormitory. Napa County is constructing a step-down facility - a secure setting for formerly incarcerated women's transitions from jail to the community - that will include one 18-bed female dormitory.

Counties such as Alameda, Santa Clara and Solano, among others, have chosen not to build or expand their women's facilities.⁹ Counties that are not expanding their women's jails are making greater use of alternatives to incarceration (residential and day treatment) and pretrial release options for women. As more counties utilize split sentencing with mandatory probation supervision, we should see even less reliance on jail expansion. Counties should consider the abundant evidence that expanded treatment and services can reduce both recidivism and the crime rate, and invest in corrections strategies other than incarceration.

*Sitting in a women's facility in a remote location away from children and families can undermine the type of comprehensive local services that Realignment and this toolkit recommend.

CRUCIAL COMPONENTS

Understand the Backgrounds and Characteristics of Women

To develop best practices for working with women in the justice system, it is important to be familiar with current research and policies. The research is replete with documented evidence that the most effective way to deal with women in the system is through an approach that is gender-responsive and trauma-informed.

Gender-responsive approaches begin with a clear understanding of the backgrounds, characteristics and experiences of women in the justice system. Although there is not yet county-by-county data for California, the following national profile of incarcerated women has remained consistent over time and is likely to be applicable in California counties:

National Profile of Incarcerated Women

- Disproportionately women of color
- In their early to mid-thirties
- Most likely to have been convicted of a property or drug offense
- Fragmented family histories with other family members in the criminal justice system
- Survivors of physical and/or sexual abuse
- Higher rates of childhood and adult trauma than women in the general population
- Significant substance abuse histories
- Multiple physical and mental health problems
- Single mothers of minor children
- High school degree/GED education level
- Limited job skills and lack of vocational training¹⁰

African-American women comprise 13% of women in the U.S., yet they make up nearly half of women in U.S. prisons and jails. African-American women are imprisoned at nearly three times the rate of white women, and Latinas are imprisoned at nearly twice the rate of white women. The significance of this racial disparity underscores the need for staff training, preparation and cultural sensitivity for effectively understanding women of color in the justice system.

Many, if not most, of the women in the justice system have had significant trauma in their lives. Understanding the impact of those traumas and related triggers is particularly important when working with these women. Unfortunately, standard practices such as searches, seclusion and restraints may traumatize or re-traumatize these women.

Experiences in the justice system can also trigger memories of earlier abuse. It can be traumatic for a survivor of sexual abuse to undergo a full-body search or be made to shower with male correctional officers nearby. It is important for service providers to understand and implement trauma theory as a framework for clinical practice. A trauma-informed approach to working with women in the justice system will:

- Take the trauma into account.
- Avoid triggering trauma reactions or re-traumatizing the woman.
- Ensure that the behavior of counselors and staff members takes into account the individual's ability to cope.
- Allow survivors to manage their symptoms successfully so that they can access, retain and benefit from services (if services are even available).¹¹

Acknowledge and Address Women's Pathways to the Justice System

A body of evidence developed over the past 15 years demonstrates the distinct ways women and girls become involved in criminal behavior.¹²

- Physical or sexual abuse can lead girls to run away from home and engage in drug abuse as a means of coping with the trauma.
- Without a means of support, girls often resort to prostitution, drug dealing and other illegal means of survival.
- Adult women who are survivors of childhood abuse or of violence from their partners often resort to drug abuse as a means of coping.
- Poverty often contributes to women's involvement in the drug trade or selling sex for drugs to support their addictions or meet the needs of their families.

While it is undoubtedly true that many men who become involved with the justice system also are victims of trauma and abuse, numerous studies have found that women's pathways to criminality are significantly different from men's.¹³ Women are typically convicted of property and drug offenses; simple assault is the primary conviction for a violent offense. Women also are at lower risk of misconduct while incarcerated and reoffending in the community than men. Women are more likely to be diagnosed with depression or anxiety disorders than men.

Consider the Impact of Mothers' Incarceration on Children

Social damage to families, and especially the children of women in the justice system, should be a vital consideration for policy makers. Perhaps nowhere is the ripple effect of incarceration more apparent or troubling than on the families left behind.¹⁴ A staggering 1.3 million children have mothers who are incarcerated in the U.S. Incarcerated mothers often experience clinical depression and related trauma as a result of being removed from their children.¹⁵ Similarly, children typically suffer emotional and psychological harm because of such separations.¹⁶ Children with incarcerated mothers also are more likely to be placed in the foster care system, drop out of school and become involved in the criminal justice system.¹⁷

The needs of children should be included in planning effective interventions for their mothers. These interventions should include efforts to maintain mother-child relationships and promote family reunification. The types of crimes committed by women, their responses to custody and supervision, and their family situations and responsibilities also are significantly different than for men.

- A majority of women in the justice system are mothers of minor children.
- Of the more than two million children the Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates have parents or relatives in prison or jail, most live with their mothers. Most women in prison or jail had been living with their children before incarceration.
- Approximately 64% of mothers confined in state prison and 84% of women in federal prison lived with their children before incarceration, compared to 44% of fathers in state prison and 55% in federal prisons.
- Only 28% of the children of incarcerated mothers live with their fathers, but 90% of the children of incarcerated fathers live with their mothers.
- Most children of imprisoned women live with grandparents, other relatives or in foster care.¹⁸

Pregnant women can be served best outside of jail, where they are more likely to get the comprehensive prenatal care and services they need. For women in jail, quality health care must be provided, including pre- and postnatal care. In either setting, such critical health care services can promote mother-infant bonding and build family support. For mothers who are incarcerated, barriers to maintaining their relationships with their children are substantial. In fact, more than 56% of children never visit their mothers during their incarcerations. This is often due to the remote location of the prison or the inability or unwillingness of the child's custodian to make the necessary arrangements.¹⁹

Most women hope to reunite with their children upon release from incarceration, but there are significant legal barriers, including the Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997. The Act requires termination of parental rights when a child has been in foster care for 15 months or more of the past 22 months.²⁰ Given that some women serve jail sentences longer than 22 months, this stipulation has serious consequences. Even where there is no prior history of neglect, abuse or abandonment, the rigid time frame often leads to the termination of parental rights and destruction of the family. Not only does this undermine the mother's successful return to the community, it also can cause trauma for the children.

Taking into consideration the welfare of children will reduce the social and economic harm to families of those incarcerated. A family-oriented approach will help prevent future offenses by both the parents and children, consistent with counties' Realignment goals of reducing the impact and costs of crime.

Recognize the Greater Extent of the Barriers to Reentry Faced by Formerly Incarcerated Women²¹

Once released from prison or jail, formerly incarcerated women face tremendous barriers that prevent them from effectively reintegrating into society.²² They are more likely to be women of color, disproportionately poor,²³ and have more difficulty obtaining public benefits and finding and maintaining stable housing.²⁴ While many formerly incarcerated women depend on public housing and Section 8 vouchers,²⁵ prior felony drug convictions often act as barriers to such housing options. The public housing authority may consider criminal histories and records from treatment facilities as indicators of current drug use, thereby arbitrarily barring some women from affordable housing.²⁶ In addition, public housing authority and Section 8 landlords have the authority to bypass typical grievance and eviction procedures,²⁷ making formerly incarcerated women especially susceptible to eviction.

Formerly incarcerated women also have more difficulty with finding employment than men, despite the low risk women with criminal records pose to public safety.²⁸ Women are overrepresented in the fields of retail, childcare and

home health care – all fields where criminal records are of great concern.²⁹ Some states legally bar those with criminal records from working with children and seniors.³⁰ On the other hand, fields that tend to be more male-dominated, such as construction and manufacturing, tend to focus less on employees' backgrounds.³¹

In addition, formerly incarcerated women are more likely to lack education, often are responsible for young children, and can experience more health problems,³² including higher rates of HIV, and higher mortality rates from cardiovascular disease, along with breast and gynecological-related cancers.³³ Combined, these barriers result in unstable and impoverished living conditions for formerly incarcerated women, including mothers reunited with their children.

Develop Appropriate Rehabilitative Responses

Developing the most appropriate rehabilitative responses for women in the justice system requires comprehensive and innovative planning. Addressing women's pathways to offending and structuring a safe and productive rehabilitative environment are critical to reducing recidivism and improving post-release outcomes.³⁴ Community placements and supervision must address a wide range of needs, target and accomplish specific outcomes and help each county ensure it is successfully intervening with women.

A growing body of evidence shows that the majority of women (convicted of crimes) can be effectively managed in community settings that provide gender-responsive services and programs to reduce recidivism. A 2005 review of four studies funded by the National Institute of Justice found that successful treatment programs share the premise that the needs of women in the justice system differ in many respects from those of men. For women, the following attributes are associated with positive outcomes:

- Material and social concerns
- Access to childcare and transportation
- Protection from violence by intimate partners
- Comprehensive case management services³⁵

Community placement serves not only the best interests of women in the justice system, but that of their children as well. When custody is necessary, it should be short-term (split sentencing) and used as a step toward community-based supervision. Given the nonviolent nature of most women's crimes and their low level of risk to public safety, community-based and non-custodial placements should be the primary objective of Realignment planning for women.

A coordinated system of supervision and support should include:

- Housing
- Education
- Job training
- Employment
- Family counseling
- Child care
- Parenting education
- Drug and alcohol treatment
- Health and mental health care
- Peer support
- Aftercare

Wraparound services and similar integrated approaches are very effective because they address multiple needs in a coordinated way and facilitate access to services. Community programming also is a more cost-effective approach to public safety than incarceration because, at a significantly reduced cost, it can improve outcomes for women, preserve their families and reduce recidivism.

Non-custodial and community-based placements offer a number of advantages, as they:

- Provide a wider range of rehabilitation and reentry options than were available through the state criminal justice system before Realignment.
- Enable greater emphasis on research-based programs for women.
- Improve outcomes for women, their children and their communities through effective alternative sanctioning.
- Prevent the children of those in the criminal justice system from also entering it.
- Decrease criminal justice costs and increase public safety.
- Meet the physical and mental health needs of women in the justice system through gender-responsive and trauma-informed treatment.
- Create policies and operational practices that ensure safe and productive placements.
- Develop educational, vocational and treatment programs that target women's pathways to offending, thereby reducing recidivism.

PRINCIPLES AND STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE PLANNING, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Research-based and well-established guiding principles can make California’s Realignment and Prop. 47 initiatives on behalf of women cost effective, allowing counties to take full advantage of the new funding streams created by these changes to state law and by the federal ACA, all while producing successful results in rehabilitation, reducing recidivism and enhancing public safety.

The gender-responsive approach advocated in this toolkit and demonstrated to improve rehabilitative results has been incorporated into strategic plans as well as state and national standards throughout the U.S. The following six core principles³⁶ have been widely accepted by the scientific, policy and practice fields to consider when developing gender-responsive programming:

GENDER	ACKNOWLEDGE THAT GENDER MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
Environment	Create an environment based on safety, respect and dignity.
Relationships	Develop policies, practices and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others and the community.
Services and Supervision	Address substance abuse, trauma, mental health and other issues through comprehensive, integrated, culturally relevant services and appropriate supervision.
Socioeconomic Status	Provide women with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.
Community	Establish a system of community supervision and reentry with comprehensive, collaborative services.

Principle 1: Gender Makes a Difference

The foremost principle in responding appropriately to women is to acknowledge the implications of gender throughout the justice system. The criminal justice system *purports* to give equal treatment to everyone. However, this does not mean that the same treatment is appropriate for both women and men. Men and women come into the criminal justice system via different pathways. They respond to supervision and custody differently. They exhibit differences in terms of substance abuse, trauma, mental illness, parenting responsibilities and employment histories. They represent different levels of risk within the institution and the community. To successfully develop and deliver services, supervision and treatment for women in the justice system, we must first acknowledge these gender differences.

Strategies

- ✓ Allocate both human and financial resources to create women-centered services.
- ✓ Designate a high-level administrative position for oversight of management, supervision and services.
- ✓ Recruit and train personnel and volunteers who have both the interest and the qualifications needed for working with women under criminal justice supervision.

Principle 2: Create an Environment Based on Safety, Respect and Dignity

Research from a range of disciplines (health, mental health and substance abuse) has shown that safety, respect and dignity are fundamental to behavioral change. To improve behavioral outcomes for women, it is critical to provide a safe and supportive setting for all services. A safe, consistent and supportive environment is the cornerstone of a therapeutic process.

Many women in the justice system have grown up in less-than-optimal family and community environments. In their interactions with women, criminal justice professionals must be aware of the significant pattern of emotional, physical and sexual abuse many of these women have experienced. Every precaution must be taken to ensure that the criminal justice setting does not recreate the abusive environment that many women have experienced. Consequently, correctional practices such as cross-gender pat searches, shackling and isolation should be avoided. Because of their lower levels of violent crime and their low risk to public safety, women should, whenever possible, be supervised and provided services with the minimal restrictions needed to ensure public safety.

Strategies

- ✓ Conduct a comprehensive review of the institutional and community environment in which women are supervised to provide an ongoing assessment of the current culture.
- ✓ Develop policy that reflects an understanding of the importance of emotional and physical safety.
- ✓ Establish protocols for reporting and investigating claims of misconduct.
- ✓ Understand the effects of trauma to avoid further traumatization.

Principle 3: Develop Policies, Practices and Programs That Promote Healthy Connections

Understanding the role of relationships in women's lives is fundamental because connections and relationships – to children, family, significant others and the community – are important threads throughout the lives of women in the justice system. When the concept of relationship is incorporated into policies, practices and programs, the effectiveness of the system or agency is enhanced. This concept is critical when addressing the following:

- Reasons why women commit crimes
- Impact of interpersonal violence on women's lives
- Importance of children in the lives of women
- Relationships between women in an institutional setting
- Process of women's psychological growth and development
- Environmental context needed for programming
- Challenges involved in reentering the community

Strategies

- ✓ Develop training for all staff and administrators in which understanding relationship issues is a core theme. The training should include the importance of relationships, staff-client relationships, professional boundaries, communication and the mother-child relationship.
- ✓ Examine all mother and child programming through the eyes of the child and enhance mother-child relationships and connections of the mother to her child's caregivers and other family members.
- ✓ Promote supportive relationships among women in the justice system.
- ✓ Develop community and peer-support networks.
- ✓ Develop visitation policies that promote family contact, build positive relations and make phone calls readily accessible and affordable.

Principle 4: Integrate Treatment of Substance Abuse, Trauma and Mental Health

Substance abuse, trauma and mental health are three critical, interrelated issues in the lives of women in the justice system. These issues have a major impact on both women's programming needs and successful reentries. Although they are therapeutically linked, these issues have historically been treated separately. One of the most important developments in health care over the past several decades is the recognition that a substantial proportion of women have histories of serious traumatic experiences that play a vital and often unrecognized role in physical and mental health problems.

The concept of integrated treatment for women with co-occurring disorders, as originally articulated by Minkoff,³⁷ focuses on the need for correspondence between treatment methods for mental illness and addiction. The model stresses the importance of well-coordinated treatment of both disorders. Dual recovery goals are emphasized, as well as the need to employ effective strategies from both the mental health and substance abuse fields.

Strategies

- ✓ Service providers should be cross-trained in substance abuse, trauma and mental health.
- ✓ Adequate resources, including skilled personnel, must be allocated.
- ✓ The environment in which services are provided must be closely monitored to ensure the emotional and physical safety of the women being served.
- ✓ Treatment models should consider cultural differences among women and provide services that relate to their unique life experiences.

Principle 5: Provide Women with Opportunities to Improve Their Socioeconomic Conditions

Generally, women in the justice system are underemployed and unemployed, work fewer hours than men, make less per hour than men and often are employed in temporary low-level occupations with little chance for advancement. Criminal behavior by women is closely tied to their socioeconomic status, and rehabilitation often depends on their ability to become financially independent. Without the ability to support themselves and their children, women may feel economically or socially bound to unhealthy or abusive relationships.

Although men and women in the justice system face many of the same issues, women often have to deal with additional barriers, particularly if the women are the sole custodial parents for their children. Improving socioeconomic outcomes for women requires providing opportunities through education and training so they can support themselves and their children. In a survey of people in jail, women indicated that work and vocational training were among their important priorities.³⁸

Strategies

- ✓ Allocate resources within community and institutional correctional programs for comprehensive, integrated services that focus on the economic, social and treatment needs of women.
- ✓ Ensure that women leave prison and jail with provisions for subsistence, lodging, food, transportation and clothing.
- ✓ Provide traditional and nontraditional training, education and skill-enhancing opportunities to assist women in earning living wages.

Principle 6: Establish a Collaborative System of Community Supervision and Reentry

Women face specific challenges as they reenter the community from jail or prison, and women on probation face challenges in their communities. In addition to the stigma of being formerly incarcerated, they may carry additional burdens such as single motherhood, low income and limited employment prospects, the absence of services and programs targeted for women, responsibilities to multiple agencies and a general lack of community support. Navigating a myriad systems that often provides fragmented services and conflicting requirements can interfere with supervision and successful reintegration.

There is a need for wraparound services – that is, a holistic and culturally sensitive plan for each woman that draws on coordinated services within her community. The types of organizations that should work as partners in assisting women who are reentering the community include:

- Mental health systems
- Alcohol and other drug programs
- Programs for survivors of family and sexual violence
- Family service agencies
- Emergency shelter, food and financial assistance programs
- Educational organizations
- Vocational and employment services
- Health care providers
- The child welfare system, child care and other children’s services
- Transportation
- Self-help groups
- Consumer-advocacy groups
- Faith-based organizations
- Community service clubs

Strategies

- ✓ Create an individually tailored support plan and wrap the necessary resources around the woman and her children.
- ✓ Develop a one-stop approach to community services, with the primary service provider, if there is one, also facilitating access to other services.
- ✓ Use a coordinated case management model for community supervision and programming.

BEST PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS

To assist counties in developing or utilizing best practices and programs that embody these guiding principles, this toolkit identifies a number of models. Also included is a catalogue of promising gender-responsive materials to help counties that are considering implementing or replicating these or similar efforts.

The practices and kinds of programs recommended include:

Women-Centered Risk/Needs Assessment

The first rule of evidence-based practice requires the use of empirically valid risk and needs assessments. However, employing the same assessment tools that are used with men does not provide an accurate picture of women's risks to reoffend or their treatment needs.

Women-centered risk and needs assessments have been conducted in a range of jurisdictions (jails, prisons, probation and community-based programs) using:

- University of Cincinnati's Women's Risk/Needs Assessment (WRNA);
- Northpointe Women's COMPAS; and/or
- Level of Service Inventory - revised with a gender-responsive supplement for women.

Research shows that gender-responsive assessments are more predictive of women's reoffending than gender-neutral assessments. Women's risk/needs assessments can be beneficial in terms of pretrial release decision-making as well as identifying alternative sentencing options. Women-centered risk and needs assessments consider the following factors:

- Criminal justice history
- Housing/safety
- Mental health history
- Physical/sexual abuse history
- Substance abuse history
- Education/employment/financial history
- Parenting and family history

Studies of the Women's Risk/Needs Assessment and the follow-up "trailer" assessment by the University of Cincinnati and the National Institute of Corrections show the following promising results:

- Gender-responsive mental health factors, such as depression, anxiety, psychosis and anger were predictive of institutional misconduct and/or recidivism.
- Certain factors emerged from the research as strengths of women, such as family support (which significantly reduced the risk of both misconduct and reoffending) and educational assets and self-efficacy (which reduced the likelihood of reoffending).³⁹

Case Management

Case management is critical for providing coordinated services to women throughout the criminal justice process. It creates a link between treatment and criminal justice systems to ensure that women in the justice system meet both their criminal justice and treatment requirements. Case management services also have been found to enhance retention in community treatment among offenders with substance abuse problems, which is closely linked to reductions in recidivism.

Similar to the new risk and needs assessment instruments for women, a new prototype, called the Women Offender Case Management Model, evolved from gender-responsive, evidence-based practices, and was designed to reduce recidivism, increase the availability of services and enhance the lives of women. The model is intended for use not only with women sentenced to probation but also with those going through the spectrum of reentry processes.

Nine core practices guide the implementation of this model:

1. Provide a comprehensive case management model that addresses the complex and multiple needs of women in the justice system.
2. Recognize that all women have strengths that can be mobilized.
3. Ensure the collaborative involvement of women to establish desired outcomes.
4. Promote services that are ongoing.
5. Match services in accordance with risk level and need.
6. Build links with the community.
7. Establish a multidisciplinary case management team.
8. Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes.
9. Implement procedures to ensure program integrity.⁴⁰

One-year follow-up data revealed that participants had a significantly lower rate of new arrests in comparison to members of the control group – 32% vs. 43%.⁴¹

Alternative Sentencing

Innovative alternative sentencing programs that sanction and support women in the justice system are best illustrated by two examples of successful efforts: the Los Angeles County Second Chance Women’s Reentry Court and the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice’s Cameo House.

The Los Angeles County Women’s Reentry Court is an innovative alternative to criminal prosecution of female parolees and probationers facing new felony charges. The program aims to reduce recidivism and support successful community reintegration by providing access to intensive treatment services, case management and employment support. In lieu of state prison or local jail, this program provides evidence-based, gender-responsive, trauma-informed and culturally competent treatment services including substance abuse treatment,

mental health services, housing, employment assistance, child reunification and domestic violence counseling. The Women’s Reentry Court is a specialized drug court combining intensive supervision, mandatory drug testing and court-supervised treatment.

The program has proven effective in promoting positive outcomes for women as well as saving money, and has demonstrated that women deemed “high risk” can be treated successfully in the community. An evaluation of the Women’s Reentry Court was conducted in June 2011 by the UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs.⁴² It has received national, state and local recognition from such notable organizations as the National Association of Counties (NACO) and the California State Association of Counties (CSAC).

Cameo House is a residential alternative sentencing program established in 2014 by the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, in partnership with the San Francisco Adult Probation Department and San Francisco Human Services Agency. Cameo House serves pregnant and parenting women with one child age six or younger. The program provides substance abuse prevention, parenting skills, child development and reentry services for a period of 12 months, followed by aftercare services.

Cameo House’s services are rooted in the gender-responsive strategies model and focus on expressing the values of safety, dignity and respect for all residents. Cameo House is a 12-month program, but clients can remain for up to two years. During their stay at Cameo House, women are assisted with obtaining employment, reunifying with at least one of their children, remaining clean and sober, satisfying their probation requirements and securing permanent housing.

Collaborative Services

A prime example of the collaborative service approach is the Solano County’s Women’s Reentry Achievement Program, or WRAP, supported by a U.S. Department of Justice Second Chance Act grant and based on gender-responsive strategies. WRAP is a partnership among Solano County Health and Social Services, the Solano County Sheriff’s Office, Solano County Probation

Department, Solano County Office of Family Violence Prevention, Youth and Family Services and Mission Solano to provide services for incarcerated mothers and their families, both before and after their releases from jail. Services after release include intensive case management, transportation, employment services, parenting classes and individual/family counseling.

To date, 229 women have been admitted into WRAP. In early 2014, the program counted 79 women as active participants, 57 who had completed program requirements, 93 who had been discharged from WRAP and eight who were not formally enrolled. Recidivism data for WRAP participants a year after release indicate that only 19% of participants had reoffended, compared to 44% of women who did not participate in the program.⁴³

Programs for Pregnant Women and Mothers

Another impressive program for pregnant women and mothers is the Maximizing Opportunities for Mothers to Succeed, or MOMS, a program of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office. MOMS offers an innovative collaborative approach designed to reunite incarcerated mothers with their children, improve the health and well-being of family members and reduce recidivism.

The program combines a gender-responsive curriculum, case management and transitional housing followed by a range of community-based post-release services, including access to substance abuse and mental health treatment, domestic violence counseling and other supportive services. Continuity of care and integrated service delivery are the cornerstones of the MOMS program. A 2005 evaluation of the MOMS program found that, of the women who received case management services for at least 12 months after release from Santa Rita Jail, only 29% were re-incarcerated, compared to 67% of those who did not receive case management services after their releases.⁴⁴

Reentry Services

Reentry services are essential to effectively support women leaving incarceration. An example of a particularly productive reentry effort is the Time for Change Foundation's Positive Futures program in San

Bernardino County. Positive Futures is a project funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) that aims to provide reentry services for 135 adult, formerly incarcerated women to reduce their prevalence of alcohol and other drug use and reduce homelessness, unemployment and recidivism. Key elements include: creating a collaboration of agencies to provide wraparound services to Positive Futures clients; using evidence-based practices to address substance abuse and mental health issues, including trauma; and providing support services such as mentoring, transportation, education and job training.

Of the 78 women who have been enrolled in the program, at follow-up they reported:

- Increased abstinence from substances
- More stable housing
- Fewer crimes committed
- More employment or enrollment in education
- More income from wages
- Increased feeling of physical well-being
- More social connectedness

Employment Services

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program is one example of the type of comprehensive employment services that can be made available to women for reintegration into the labor force and community. To reduce recidivism as well as increase employment, the program provides residential drug abuse treatment, case management and parenting support along with vocational services to women coming out of prison with or without their children.

An evaluation by the UCLA Integrated Substance Abuse Programs found that the length of time spent in treatment is a major factor in predicting successful outcomes for the client, with longer periods reflecting significant reductions in return-to-custody incidents and related costs. Treatment for 120 to 150 days reduced the likelihood to returning to custody by 20%, treatment for up to 180 days reduced the likelihood by 43% and treatment for more than 180 days reduced the likelihood by 58%.⁴⁵

Curricula and Materials

The number of promising gender-responsive curricula and materials has grown with the increased understanding of women’s unique pathways to crime and their treatment needs. The following are examples of these curricula and training programs:

PROGRAM	DESCRIPTION
Helping Women Recover: A Program for Treating Addiction (Covington)⁴⁶	Addresses substance abuse by integrating theories of women’s psychological development, trauma and addiction.
Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women (Covington)⁴⁷	Uses psycho-educational, cognitive-behavioral and relational therapeutic approaches to help women develop coping skills and emotional wellness.
Beyond Violence: A Prevention Program for Criminal Justice-Involved Women (Covington)⁴⁸	An evidence-based curriculum for women in criminal justice settings with histories of aggression and/or violence. This model of violence prevention considers the complex interplay between individual, relationship, community and societal factors.
Moving On (Van Dieten)⁴⁹	Provides women with opportunities to mobilize and expand existing strengths and access community and personal resources. Incorporates cognitive-behavioral techniques with motivational interviewing and relational theory.
Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse (Najavits)⁵⁰	Treats the co-occurring disorders of trauma, PTSD and substance abuse based on research from cognitive-behavioral treatment of substance abuse disorders and post-traumatic stress treatment.

KEY STEPS TO A GENDER-RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY JUSTICE SYSTEM⁵¹

1. **Women’s Advisory Group:** Create a women’s community advisory group comprised of representatives of public and private agencies and individuals working with women in the justice system.

As collaboration is the cornerstone to developing gender-responsive policy and practice, the Women’s Community Advisory Group should include representatives from the sheriff’s and probation departments; judges and the courts; the public defender’s and district attorney’s offices; public health, domestic violence, child welfare and employment entities; colleges and universities; and community-based programs serving women in the justice system and their families. This advisory group should design and oversee the implementation of a gender-responsive community justice plan for the county. It should serve as a subcommittee of the Community Corrections Partnership and report regularly on the development and implementation of the plan.

2. **Profile of Female Populations:** Create a profile of your female jail (sentenced and not yet sentenced) and probation populations.

Gender-responsive planning begins with a clear understanding of the backgrounds, characteristics and experiences of the women involved in the criminal justice system. To obtain as much information as possible about the women to be served, the profile should include at least the following characteristics:

- Age
- Race/ethnicity
- Offense type (felony, misdemeanor) and category (property, drug, etc.)
- Prior offense history
- Marital status
- Children/families
- Educational level
- Employment status
- Housing status
- Physical and mental health status
- History of trauma
- Substance abuse history

3. **Provider Network Assessment:** Assess your service provider network for women-centered programs and services currently being offered in your county.

To clearly identify what is being done for women and by which agency, the county should develop a map of existing public and private programs and services for women that identifies the provider(s) of each program or service. In completing the assessment, it will be important to review program evaluations in terms of effective interventions for women and identify gaps in service delivery. Using this information and your profile data, create a plan to develop a collaborative structure that supports a continuum of programs and services. Once the programs and services are up and running, it is vital to continually monitor them to make sure they are using best practices and are informed by the guiding principles we have discussed.

4. **Service Delivery Enhancement:** Enhance service delivery through integrated programming approaches and collaborative partnerships.

Integrated programming approaches are coordinated efforts to address women’s psychological, social and developmental needs. The potential and probable service needs that integrated programming might address include physical, sexual and emotional abuse; family relationships; trauma; substance abuse; co-occurring disorders and educational and vocational skills. Consideration should be given to programs and services that are relationship and strength-based, trauma-informed, family-focused and culturally competent. The rationale for these programs and services includes:

- Strength-based services build upon the strengths of each woman in order to raise the motivation for treatment.
- Trauma-informed services take an individual’s experiences with trauma into account, avoid activities or behaviors that trigger trauma reactions, adjust the behavior of staff to support individual women and allow survivors to manage their trauma symptoms.

- Family-focused services are those that seek to strengthen family systems, promote healthy family functioning and encourage families to become self-reliant.
- Culturally competent services are those that value the importance of culture in the delivery of services and promote quality services to all by exploring differences and emphasizing integration of cultural attitudes, beliefs and practices into the program. They also consider these factors in the diagnostic and treatment methods to be used.

Women-centered criminal justice and community programs and services should be integrated through a coordinated, collaborative, multi-agency structure that includes:

- Drug treatment (inpatient and outpatient)
- Physical and mental health treatment
- Family violence prevention
- Family reunification
- Life skills training
- Transitional housing for women and children
- Job training and placement
- Employment support
- Education
- Child care

5. Risk/Needs Assessments: Conduct risk and needs assessments of the individual women in the jail and on probation to inform pretrial, adjudication/trial, sentencing and case planning.

Wherever possible, assessment instruments should be normed for women. A strength-based perspective should be used throughout the assessment process – i.e., what strengths does the woman have that can be used in her treatment plan? The assessment process should be appropriate for the woman’s language, culture, literacy level and cognitive functioning.

Research shows that women-centered assessments are more predictive of women’s reoffending than so-called gender-neutral assessments. See the discussion of the various women’s risk/needs assessment tools available in the earlier section, **Best Practices and Programs**.

6. Integrated Case Management: Develop an integrated case management plan for each woman focused on maintaining her in the least restrictive setting consistent with her needs and public safety.

It is important to use the assessment process as the foundation for a woman-centered case management plan. An individual treatment and rehabilitation plan should be developed to connect each woman to appropriate programs and services. In producing such a plan, consider:

- Beginning integrated case management at the individual’s first contact with the criminal justice system through pretrial services and continue case management throughout criminal justice involvement and community reentry.
- Focusing on gender-responsive and family-focused plans when developing probation presentence reports and initiating case planning.
- Creating an integrated case planning process to target services based on women’s needs, not based solely on their criminal justice statuses or locations, i.e., in jail or on probation.
- Using an evidence-based tool such as the Women Offender Case Management Model for integrated case planning.
- Tying service delivery to community-based programs and services at every stage of case planning.

7. Pretrial/Sentencing Alternatives: Develop local research-based pretrial and sentencing alternatives that are gender-responsive, trauma-informed and family-focused.

Given the nonviolent nature of most women's crimes and their low levels of risk to the community, it is important to consider the least-restrictive options for women consistent with public safety, with the overriding goal being reduced reliance on incarceration. Based on women's risks and needs, counties should:

- Start with nonresidential programs such as day treatment centers with gender-responsive services.
- Offer residential programs to women who are homeless or who need a safe and supportive place to live with or without their children.
- Provide in-patient and outpatient programs that address mental health, trauma and substance abuse treatment needs.

8. Data Collection: Design an integrated process of data collection, evaluation and oversight to monitor and improve system-wide supervision, programs and services.

Evaluation data supporting a gender-responsive approach is crucial. These data should be used for program planning, design, implementation and ongoing improvement. The following steps can be taken to achieve the county's data collection and evaluation goals:

- Partner with evaluation experts who have proven track records in conducting research on women's programs.
- Encourage public/private partnerships to enhance resources for services and evaluation.
- Pursue funding for program and system-wide studies.
- Establish process/action research and evaluation, including intermediate outcomes to improve programs during the evaluation process.
- Use data to conduct a needs assessment of women and their children.

9. Leadership Structure: Create a leadership structure that plans, supports and monitors an integrated system of gender-responsive criminal justice and community services.

Criminal justice and community programs and services should be integrated through a leadership structure that coordinates a women-centered, multi-agency system. To coordinate resources and services across multiple agencies and organizations, counties should consider:

- Appoint a Women's Community Justice Coordinator to oversee the implementation of the multi-agency system.
- Formalize public and private collaborations with inter-agency agreements and Memorandums of Understanding.
- Develop a process for data collection, planning and evaluation as in Step 8 above.
- Place the authority for overseeing the implementation of the multi-agency model within the Community Corrections Partnership (inter-agency entities at the county level tasked with determining the use of Realignment funds).

10. Public Education: Design and implement a public education campaign that informs community stakeholders (e.g., police, judges, district attorneys, public defenders, sheriffs' and probation officers, crime victims and civic organizations) about the benefits of a community strategy for women in the justice system and their families.

To improve public awareness and educate communities about the value of community correctional alternatives for women, consider the following activities:

- Define your communication strategy and frame issues around reducing reliance on jail incarceration and increasing cost-effective alternatives to incarceration. Use your communication strategy to educate the public about who the women are in the criminal justice system, the impact of incarceration on their children and the importance of community reintegration for successful rehabilitation.

- Identify stakeholders and include as diverse a group of community representatives and individuals as possible, from both the public and private sectors. It is not only criminal justice and service provider agencies that are interested in or affected by the county's correctional policies; consider also addressing education groups, children's service agencies, taxpayer groups and civic and service organizations as well.
- Develop a messaging plan, and consider producing a range of materials, including Web-based public education, fact sheets, public service announcements, op-ed pieces and myth/fact brochures.
- Identify barriers that interfere with success for women, such as affordable and/or public housing, licensing and job opportunities; identify laws that more thoughtfully consider the needs and implications of mother-child reunification after incarceration.

CONCLUSION

In implementing Realignment and Prop. 47, California has an opportunity to address the unique challenges facing women in the justice system while taking full advantage of the new funding provided by these changes in state law as well as new federal funding available under the ACA. Realignment transferred responsibility for managing many non-serious, nonviolent and non-sex offenders from state corrections to local county justice systems, and Prop. 47 continues and expands this trend. Women are a population that could greatly benefit from this correctional shift. By the nature of their lower-level offenses, women pose less of a threat to public safety than men and they often are more amenable to community-based programming than men. An overriding goal should be to reduce reliance on incarceration. When women are provided programs and services that support their living productive, crime-free lives, there is a strong possibility, as well as empirical evidence, that their children also benefit.

Strategically implementing Realignment and Prop. 47 as suggested in this toolkit will allow California and its counties to reap significant fiscal benefits by reducing the need to expand costly prisons and jails, while also increasing the flow of federal ACA dollars into state and local budgets. These savings and the increased federal funding can be invested into evidence-based, gender-responsive rehabilitative approaches for women – as well as improved planning and programming for men.

To take advantage of this opportunity, the toolkit has recommended key steps that can be taken to both enhance public safety and promote rehabilitation by providing comprehensive services to improve outcomes for justice-involved women and their families. These steps provide practitioners and policy makers with a detailed road map to assist them in developing community strategies that reduce reliance on jail and provide women with tools, ways and means to be productive members of their communities.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR RESOURCES AND PROGRAMS

A New Way of Life Foundation

www.anewwayoflife.org

(323) 563-3575

Cameo House – Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice

www.cjcj.org/Direct-services/Cameo-House.html

(415) 621-5661

Center for Gender and Justice

www.centerforgenderandjustice.org

(858) 454-8528

Community Works West

www.communityworkswest.org

(510) 486-2340

Connecticut Women’s Consortium

www.womensconsortium.org

(203) 909-6888

Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program

<http://cdcr.ca.gov/rehabilitation/female-offender-treatment-employment-program.html>

(916) 327-8376

HealthRIGHT 360

www.healthright360.org

(415) 762-3700

Leaders in Community Alternatives

www.lcaservices.com

(415) 546-5222

Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

www.prisonerswithchildren.org

(415) 255-7036

Maximizing Opportunities for Mothers to Succeed – MOMS

www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/moms.pdf

(510) 251-1910

Mental Health Systems, Inc.

www.mhsinc.org

(858) 573-2600

National Council on Crime and Delinquency Center for Girls & Young Women

www.nccdglobal.org/what-we-do/center-for-girls-young-women

(800) 306-6223

National Institute of Corrections

<http://nicic.gov/WomenOffenders>

(202) 307-3106

National Resource Center on Justice-Involved Women

www.cjinvolvedwomen.org

(301) 589-9383

Orbis Partners

www.orbispartners.com

(888) 682-7720

Prototypes

www.prototypes.org

(213) 542-3838

Rosenberg Foundation

www.rosenbergfound.org

(415) 644-9777

Time for Change Foundation

www.timeforchangefoundation.org

(909) 866-0218

Vermont Works for Women

www.vtworksforwomen.org

(802) 655-8900

Women’s Foundation of California

www.womensfoundca.org

(415) 837-1113 or (213) 346-3222

Women’s Prison Association

www.wpaonline.org

(646) 292-7740

Women’s Reentry Achievement Program – WRAP

www.solanocountyreentryresources.org

(707) 447-8982

Women’s Reentry Court

pd.co.la.ca.us/Rest_reentry.html

(213) 974-2811

Zellerbach Family Foundation

www.zellerbachfamilyfoundation.org

(415) 421-2629

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