Ladies First:
Understanding the Risk and Needs of Justice Involved Women

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Learning Goals

- Critically analyze how gender affects how we think and behave
- Develop a basic understanding of gender-responsive strategies
- Clarify how strictly gender “neutral” strategies harm women’s chances of success
- Emphasize how gender-responsive assessment can benefit your agencies
EQUALITY

EQUITY
700% Increase in Women’s Incarceration

Vera Institute Report: Growing Number of Women in Jails
Gender-Responsive Strategies

- Intentionally uses research on gendered experiences to direct policies, programs, and procedures for women.

- Goal is to produce favorable outcomes by tailoring supervision and services to women’s needs and strengths, by starting from a framework that gender matters.

Photo Credit: Noah Berger, The Center for Investigative Reporting
Major Concerns Expressed

• We are working with less and less resources.

• There are too few girls and women to justify the effort.

• This complicates our work as we have traditionally done it.

• Males and females in the system should be supervised and treated in exactly the same way.
EQUALITY

EQUITY
The reality is...

• If we choose to only see part of the evidence, women will continue to be in a losing position, especially women of Color.

• Consider what gender inequality is already costing your agency.

• Achieving equality of services and successful reductions in recidivism means starting with females in mind.

• Long-term effects on the children of justice involved women as primary caregivers
Gender-Responsive Practices are Evidence-Based Practices
Evidence-Based Practices

- Tested by methodologically rigorous research
- Found to be effective at reducing recidivism

Gender-Responsive Practices

- Tested by methodologically rigorous research
- Found to be effective at reducing recidivism
- Account for differences in characteristics and life experiences of girls/women and boys/men in the justice system
Gender-Responsive Principles

- Relational
- Trauma-Informed
- Strengths-Based
- Culturally Sensitive

Importance of Being Trauma-Informed

Nearly 1 in 5 women (18.3%) in the U.S. general population have experienced rape or attempted rape.

- 77-90% of incarcerated women report histories of emotional, physical, or sexual abuse

- Cumulative effect of trauma especially for poor, marginalized women of Color

- Trauma affects girls and women in fundamentally distinct ways.

- Strategies must promote safety and trust.
Women Probationers’ Pathways

**Childhood Victimization**
Women's abuse as children can lead to mental illness and substance abuse

**Unhealthy Relationships**
Women’s dysfunctional intimate relationships can lead to victimization as adults, reducing self-efficacy, and leading to mental illness and substance abuse

**Social & Human Capital**
Women’s needs in education, family support, self-efficacy, and relationship dysfunction can lead to employment and financial problems

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Crime and Imprisonment

Salisbury & Van Voorhis (2009)
• Most states use a variation of the NIC Model Prisons approach for custody classification of both men and women inmate populations.

• Strong evidence of over-classification of women prisoners across the nation.
Valid and Effective Custody Classification: How the Data Should Appear

% inmates with at least 1 Serious Misconduct

0%  20%  40%  60%

Minimum

Medium

Maximum

Women  Men
Over-Classification: Higher Custody Than Necessary

% inmates with at least 1 Serious Misconduct

International Reform and Human Rights

United Nations “Bangkok Rules” on women offenders and prisoners

Adopted in 2010
Effective Correctional Intervention

• Not all treatment programs are equally effective.
• Not every offender poses the same risk to the community.

• 3 Main Principles:
  • Risk – “who” to target
  • Need – “what” to target
  • Responsivity – “how” to target
Risk, Need, Responsivity

Risk: Who
- High
- Medium
- Low

Need: What
- Antisocial Attitudes
- Antisocial Peers
- Antisocial Personality Traits

Responsivity: How & Barriers
- Cognitive-Behavioral Approach
- Gender
- Motivation
- Cognitive Deficits
There is now enough evidence to promote the

*Gender-Responsive Principles of Effective Correctional Intervention*
“Risk” Manifests Differently

- Women pose far less risk
- Must consider the relative risk an individual poses within her peer group.
- Gender-neutral assessments appear to be less valid for women who follow gendered pathways to crime.
Psychometric Gymnastics

Cut-points and weights and equations, Oh My!

If statistically predictive, gender-responsive items are not included in an instrument in the first place, we will never see true and accurate measures of women’s criminogenic risk.
Women Have Needs Not Asked on Gender-Neutral Assessments

- Some traditional (male-based) criminogenic needs are not as predictive with women.

- There is little research to suggest that antisocial attitudes and peers should be primary treatment targets for women.
Women’s Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA)

2002: NIC & University of Cincinnati (Pat Van Voorhis) enter cooperative agreement to develop a risk and needs assessment instrument specifically designed for women.
Women’s Risk and Needs Assessment (WRNA)

Charged with answering these questions:

If we started with women in mind, what criminogenic needs would risk assessments measure?

Are gender-neutral (male-centric) assessments missing salient criminogenic needs for women?
Risk Factors Similar for Men and Women

- Criminal History
- Antisocial Attitudes
- Antisocial Friends
- Substance Abuse
- Employment/Financial
Risk Factors Predictive for Women

- Depression/Anxiety Symptoms
- Psychosis
- Anger
- Housing Safety

- Unhealthy Intimate Relationships
- Child Abuse
- Adult Abuse
- Parental Stress
Strengths Predictive for Women

Self-efficacy

Family Support

Educational Assets

Parental Involvement
From “Big Four” to “Female Five”

- Criminal History
- Antisocial Attitudes
- Antisocial Peers
- Antisocial Personality Traits
- Substance Abuse
- Economic Marginality
- Unhealthy Intimate Relationships
- Depressive/Anxious Symptoms
- Anger/Hostility
Rethinking Responsivity for Women

Responsivity: How & Barriers

Cognitive-Behavioral Approach?

Gender?

Motivation

Cognitive Deficits

CBT programs still most effective but gender-responsive CBT curricula are even better

Gender is no longer limited to being a specific responsivity factor

Rather, gender should be at the forefront in all of R-N-R
Meta-Analysis: 37 Studies & 22,000 Justice Involved Women

- Gender-responsive programs were as effective as gender-neutral programs in reducing women’s recidivism.

- When limited to the 18 most methodologically rigorous studies, G-R programs were significantly more likely to reduce women’s recidivism compared to G-N programs.

Gobeil et al. (2016)
If our goal is to reduce offending and extend positive outcomes to families, children, and communities, we have to know and address women and girls’ criminogenic needs and build upon their strengths.
Thank You

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Training Opportunity

Justice Involved Women: Developing an Agency-Wide Approach

Date(s)
Apr. 18, 2017 - Apr. 20, 2017

Apply By
Feb. 21, 2017

Location
11900 E. Cornell Ave,
Unit C, Aurora, CO 80014

Format
Classroom

Audience
Jails

Overview
The program is delivered in three sequential phases – online learning, face-to-face training and follow up coaching. Through blended learning delivery this 36-hour program leads participant teams through strategic planning to develop an agency plan that provides coordination and direction to manage women offenders effectively. The plan will guide development of agency policies and procedures to ensure that responsive...
Training Opportunity: Assn for Justice Involved Females and Organizations

Changing the Narrative for Justice Involved Women and Girls: The Journey from Reform to Transformation

Save the Date!
December 11-13, 2017

Registration, hotel details and a call for workshops coming soon!
Additional Resources

National Resource Center for Justice Involved Women
www.cjinvolvedwomen.org

National Institute of Corrections
Women Offender Initiative
www.nicic.gov/womenoffenders

Women’s Risk Need Assessment (WRNA) Research
www.uc.edu/womenoffenders

For WRNA implementation, Ashley Bauman
www.baumanconsultinggroup.com
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