

## Example 24. Michigan's Gender Responsive Strategies for Reentry

There are five general approaches to effectively managing and assisting women parolees:

1. Acknowledge that gender makes a difference.
2. Create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity.
3. Develop policies, practices, and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community.
4. Address substance abuse, trauma, and mental health issues through comprehensive, integrated, and culturally relevant services and appropriate supervision.
5. Provide women with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.

See: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections manuscript, Research, Practice and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders: Gender Responsive Strategies (Bloom, Owen, Covington, et al; July 2003). (<http://www.nicic.org/Library/018017>)

### Approaches to Addressing Gender Responsive Strategies

#### Acknowledge That Gender Makes a Difference

- 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.

#### Create an Environment Based on Safety, Respect, & Dignity

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the institutional or 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.
- Understand the effects of childhood trauma to avoid further trauma.
- Establish protocols for reporting and investigating claims of misconduct.
- Develop classification and assessment systems that are validated by samples of women offenders.

#### Develop Policies, Practices, and Programs That Are Relational and Promote Healthy Connections

- Develop training for all staff and administrators in which relationship issues are a core theme. Such 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 (e.g. child-centered environment, context), and enhance the mother-child connection and to child caregivers and other family members.
- Promote supportive relationships among women offenders.
- Develop community and peer-support networks.

#### Address Substance Abuse, Trauma, and Mental Health Issues

- Service providers need to be cross-trained in these three primary issues.
- 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.
- Service providers and criminal justice personnel must receive training in cultural sensitivity so that they can understand and respond appropriately to issues of race, ethnicity, and culture.

### Provide Women With Opportunities To Improve Their Socioeconomic Conditions

- Allocate resources within both community and institutional correctional programs for comprehensive, integrated services that focus on the economic, social, and treatment needs of women (jobs, family services, alcohol/drug and mental health treatment). Ensure that women leave prison and jail with provisions for short-term emergency services.
- Provide training, education, and skill-enhancing opportunities to assist women in earning a living wage.
- Provide sober living space in institutions and in the community.

## **Comprehensive Prisoner ReEntry Plan**

### **EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF EVIDENCE BASED PRACTICES<sup>i</sup>**

1. Assess Actuarial Risk/Needs.
2. Enhance Intrinsic Motivation.
3. Target Interventions.
  - a) *Risk Principle*: Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.
  - b) *Need Principle*: Target interventions to criminogenic needs.
  - c) *Responsivity Principle*: Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender.
  - d) *Dosage*: Structure 40-70% of high-risk offenders' time for 3-9 months.
  - e) *Treatment*: Integrate treatment into the full sentence/sanction requirements.
4. Skill Train with Directed Practice (use Cognitive Behavioral treatment methods).
5. Increase Positive Reinforcement.
6. Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities.
7. Measure Relevant Processes/Practices.
8. Provide Measurement Feedback.

### **Implementing Evidence Based Practices**

Implementing the principles of evidence based practice in corrections is a tremendous challenge requiring strong leadership and commitment. Such an undertaking involves more than simply implementing a research recommended program or two<sup>ii</sup>. These 7 Guidelines provide insight into implementation.

#### Limit new projects to mission-related initiatives<sup>iii</sup>

- Clear identification and focus upon mission is critical within business and the best-run human service agencies.
- When mission scope creep occurs, it has a negative effect on progress, morale, and outcomes.

#### Assess progress of implementation processes using quantifiable data<sup>iv</sup>

- Monitoring system implementations for current, valid information regarding progress, obstacles, and direction changes is pivotal to project success.

#### Acknowledge and accommodate professional over-rides with adequate accountability<sup>v</sup>

- No assessment tool, no matter how sophisticated, can (or should) replace a qualified practitioner's professional judgment. All professional over-rides need to be adequately documented, defensible, and made explicit.

#### Focus on staff development, (research, skill development, management of behavioral/organizational change processes) within the context of a complete training or human resource development program<sup>vi</sup>

- Staff need to develop reasonable familiarity with relevant research.
- Informed administrators, information officers, trainers, and other organizational ambassadors are necessary to facilitate this function in larger agencies or systems.

Routinely measure staff practices (attitudes, knowledge, and skills) that are considered related to outcomes<sup>vii</sup>

- Critical staff processes and practices should be routinely monitored in an accurate and objective manner to inform managers of the state of the operation.

Provide staff timely, relevant, and accurate feedback regarding performance related to outcomes<sup>viii</sup>

- At an organizational level, gaining appreciation for outcome measurement begins with establishing relevant performance measures. Keys: If a certain kind of performance is worth measuring, it's worth measuring right (with reliability and validity); Any kind of staff or offender activity is worth measuring if it is reliably related to desirable outcomes; If performance measures satisfy both the above conditions, these measures should be routinely generated and made available to staff and/or offenders, in the most user-friendly manner possible.

Utilize high levels of data-driven advocacy and brokerage to enable appropriate community services<sup>ix</sup>

- In terms of producing sustained reductions in recidivism, the research indicates that the treatment service network and infrastructure is the most valuable resource that criminal justice agencies can access.
- Collaborating and providing research and quality assurance support to local service providers enhances interagency understanding, service credibility, and longer-term planning efforts. It also contributes to the stability and expansion of treatment services.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>i</sup> See: U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Corrections manuscript, Implementing Evidence Based Practice in Community Corrections (April 2004).

<sup>ii</sup> Minimally, a commitment to EBP involves: a) developing staff knowledge, skills, and attitudes congruent with current research-supported practice (principles #1-8); b) implementing offender programming consistent with research recommendations (#2-6); c) sufficiently monitoring staff and offender programming to identify discrepancies or fidelity issues (#7); d) routinely obtaining verifiable outcome evidence (#8) associated with staff performance and offender programming.

<sup>iii</sup> Harris & Smith, 1996; Currie, 1998; Ellickson et al, 1983

<sup>iv</sup> Harris & Smith, 1996; Burrell, 2000; Dilulio, 1993; Palmer, 1995; Mihalic & Irwin, 2003; Gottfredson et al, 2002

<sup>v</sup> Burrell, 2000; Clear, 1981; Andrews, et al, 1990; Kropp, et al, 1995; Gendreau et al, 1999

<sup>vi</sup> Latessa, et al, 2002; Elliott, 1980; Harland, 1996; Andrews, 1989; Miller & Rollnick, 2002; Taxman & Byrne, 2001; Taxman, 2002; Baer, et al, 1999; Gendreau, et al, 1999; Durlak, 1998

<sup>vii</sup> Gendreau, et al, 1999; Henggeler et al, 1997; Miller & Mount, 2001

<sup>viii</sup> Burrell, 1998; Lipton, et al, 2000; Carey, 2002; O'Leary & Clear, 1997; Bogue, 2002; Maple, 2000; Henggeler, 1997; Miller & Mount, 2001

<sup>ix</sup> Corbette, et al, 1999; Gendreau & Goggin, 1995; Gendreau, et al, 1993; Meyers & Smith, 1995; Bogue, 2002; Maple, 1999