NIC Services in Managing Justice-Involved Women

Maureen Buell

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC) was established by legislation (Public Law 93-415) in 1974 in response to the 1971 riots at Attica in which at least 39 people were killed, including 10 correctional and civilian staff. Now, just as then, the mission of NIC is to “shape and advance effective correctional practice and public policy” in our Nation’s pre-trial, jail, prison, and community corrections systems.
The truth about us is that we’ve been in jail—some of us many times, some only once.

We might as well go ahead and say that first ‘cause most of you think that’s who we are before anything else.

The truth about us is most of us have been addicted to drugs or alcohol and did just about anything we could to make a buy.

Yea, the truth about us is some of us sold our bodies, stole money, wrote bad checks, sold drugs, and a few of us have hurt other people in a blackout rage, but mainly we take it out on ourselves.

That’s the truth about us.

The truth about us is that we’re women and mothers, and sisters, and daughters, and partners.

We miss our kids and our families, we cry at night, and we wonder what’s happening at home.

That’s the truth about us.

The truth about us is we’re scared and confused and angry and sad and lonely and desperate.

We don’t know how to be in a relationship that’s good—but we’re really good at taking care of other people.

We don’t know a lot about boundaries—we’ll trust everybody, but really we don’t trust anybody.

That’s the truth about us.

The truth about us is we’re hopeful and eager and creative—we can learn.

We’re artists and writers and store managers.

We get depressed and we have nightmares.

We know how to act real tough.

We cry a lot.

We sometimes get confused about whether it’s today or a long time ago.

We can’t remember a lot about being kids.

We remember a lot about being little—about being raped by people we trusted.

We’ve kept a lot of secrets.

That’s the truth about us.

The truth about us is we don’t know how to ask for your help.

We don’t know the names of your agencies, but we do know the faces of the people that treat us with respect.

We can tell when you really don’t want us around.

We can tell when you really care.

We feel safer in jail than we do out there.

We are survivors.

That’s the truth about us.

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women in corrections will apply to or information. Much of what has to contact NIC for assistance and/ and sexual assault continues into adolescence and adulthood with level of interpersonal violence abuse as children; however, whereas also experienced physical and sexual indicates that male inmates have the criminal justice system. Research tribute to women’s involvement in behavioral health challenges, and and alcohol, how they contribute to childhood physical and sexual research on employment and women offenders, and legal issues impacting justice-involved women. Other documents are specific to women’s risk and needs assessment, design considerations for women’s jails, mother and child programs, and various other titles. Visit www.nicic.gov/womenoffenders or go to the NIC Information Center (http://info.nicic.gov/Customer/Ask.aspx) for further information.

Models of Practice—In collaboration with other professional organizations, NIC has developed a number of products—again covering a wide range of topics—that can be advanced through technical assistance. Some of NIC’s areas of focus include:

- Valid women’s risk/need assessment tools (i.e., Women’s Risk/Needs Assessment).
- Model of case management specific to women (i.e., Women Offender Case Management Model).
- Process for assessing gender-responsive practice within institutional settings (Gender-Informed Practices Assessment) and a shorter version that is an internal agency assessment tool to help identify gaps in services specific to women (Gender-Responsive Practices Assessment).

Each of these tools is designed to improve both systemic and individual outcomes and can also be used to support strategic planning initiatives. Other relevant items include assessing sexual safety within women’s institutions and the various Prison Rape Elimination Act offerings.

NIC strongly encourages correctional professionals in detention/jail settings to become familiar with the resources available through NIC and to pick up the phone to inquire about issues either specific or broadly applicable to women in detention/jail settings. If NIC does not have the information you are seeking, we will do the work to find a resource that can provide assistance and guidance, often another system that has faced similar challenges and worked through them. An excellent resource is the Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded National Resource Center for Justice Involved Women (NRCJIW) located at www.cjinvolvedwomen.org. NRCJIW and NIC work closely together to provide the broadest range of assistance to the corrections field and to ensure that there is no duplication of services. This continues to be a productive and successful partnership.

### References


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