



# EVALUATION OF A DISCHARGE PLANNING PROGRAM FOR FEMALE INMATES

Kathryn Quina, Ph.D.  
University of Rhode Island



# URI-RIDOC

## Evaluation Partnership

- ✦ **John Stevenson, Ann Varna Garis, & Maria Garrido, URI Psychology**
- ✦ **John Boulmetis, URI Education**
- ✦ **Jody Brown, Family Violence Research Team**
- ✦ **Leo Carroll, Sociology**
- ✦ **Roberta Richman, Jeff Renzi, & Judith Fox, RI Department of Corrections**
- ✦ **Kim Mitchell & Dawn Salgado, URI Psychology PhDs**
- ✦ **11 graduate and 32 undergraduate team members**



*Supported by*

**Collaborative Development of Individual  
Discharge Planning for Incarcerated  
Women, NIJ #96-CE-VX-0012  
(1/1/97-12/31/98, extended to 12/31/99)**



## *Special Thanks to....*

The present and former inmates of the  
Women's Correctional Facilities,  
who gave us their time  
and taught us so much,  
and the staff who cared about them  
enough to support our research.



# My background

- ◆ Have studied and written about sequelae of sexual abuse for 30+ years
- ◆ In 1980s, focused on impact of childhood trauma on HIV risky behavior. Found:
  - complex interrelationships with other risks (drugs, partners) in low- and medium- risk women
  - interrelationships among traumatic experiences (e.g., CSA and family issues)



# Impacts of Childhood Violence

- ◆ Drug and alcohol problems
- ◆ Running away to escape violence
- ◆ Avoidant coping strategies
- ◆ Discontinued education, school difficulties
- ◆ Reenacting sexual and abusive experiences
- ◆ Adult violence, especially from partners



# Why Study Women in Prison?

- ◆ Invisible / ignored population by trauma researchers
- ◆ Extreme levels of all forms of trauma, as well as drug use, alcohol problems, poverty, racism, mental illness
- ◆ Outcomes are severe: HIV, overdose, suicide, family impact (especially children)
- ◆ Reveals societal attitudes in many arenas



# Incarcerated Women in RI

- ◆ Single prison campus for state, no jails
- ◆ Two women's facilities, min & med
- ◆ Prostitution and drug use heavily prosecuted; 70% nonviolent offenders
- ◆ *Suspected* violation of parole or suspended sentence can result in reincarceration
- ◆ Administration supports innovation, alternatives to incarceration



# RIDOC Demographics

- ◆ 54% between 25-35 years old
- ◆ 56% Caucasian, 19% African-American, 13% Hispanic (7% Spanish-language), 6% Native American, 7% other
- ◆ 61% have current emotional/sexual partner
- ◆ 81% have child(ren), State involved with over half
- ◆ 62% Catholic, 84% “religious”
- ◆ 51% report minor to severe health problems
- ◆ 24% on psychotropic medication, PTSD rates high



# RIDOC Programs for Women

- ✦ Education (GED, special ed, no college)
- ✦ Job Training (minimal, work release)
- ✦ Substance Abuse (AA, NA, therapeutic community)
- ✦ Health (HIV high risk, HIV positive)
- ✦ Sexual Abuse (psychoeducational)
- ✦ Domestic Violence
- ✦ Parenting Classes (most popular program!)
- ✦ Some Mental Health Counseling (inconsistent)
- ✦ Mentoring (Pre through PostRelease)



# Philosophy of RIDOC Women's Facilities and Programming

- ◆ Safe and Humane Environment
  - Sexual contact by staff is a felony
  - Involve outsiders at all levels
- ◆ Oriented to effective change
  - Community based menu of programs
  - Holistic approach
- ◆ Individualized assistance
  - Discharge planner assigned early
  - Mentor and aftercare available for some



# URI-RIDOC Evaluation Project

- ◆ Three-year longitudinal project, including a course at URI, student involvement in research, and partnership.
- ◆ Goal to evaluate RIDOC-instituted intervention programs, many community-based, for change after participation and after release.

*Change is not “all or none,” but incremental.*



# Ethical Standpoint

Proactive, mindful, open, humble, respectful, and...

When the best interests of the inmate conflict with  
the best interests of the researcher or the research,  
**THE INMATE'S INTERESTS MUST RULE.**

*(with credit to Brown, 1994; Fine, et al., 2003)*



# Survey Approach

- ◆ Three surveys, approx. 45 minutes, 200 items
- ◆ Written or oral, Spanish versions available
- ◆ Opportunity for discussion at end
- ◆ Three time points:
  - T1: early in incarceration
  - T2: 2 weeks before release
  - T3: 2-3 months post-release



## Pre-incarceration

### *Background*

Age, Race/ethnicity, Educational level, Job skills, Prior incarceration

### *Childhood*

Family of origin characteristics (e.g., substance use, family members in jail); Victimization (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual)

### *Adulthood*

Victimization (e.g., physical, emotional, sexual); Substance use (e.g., alcohol, illegal drugs); Stress (e.g., stability of residence, employment, responsibility for children and partner)

## During Incarceration

### *Psychosocial factors*

Social support (e.g., peer, family); Adapting to the prison environment; Coping strategies (e.g., active versus avoidant); Self-perceptions (e.g., esteem, purpose, meaning)

### *Utilization of services*

Program participation (e.g., health-related, vocational, educational)

## Pre-release

### **Psychosocial factors**

Self-efficacy/Confidence; Readiness to change behaviors; Self-perceptions

### **Structural factors**

Stable Residence; Employment; Reintegration with family

## Post-incarceration

### **Psychosocial factors**

Self-efficacy/Confidence; Readiness to change behaviors; Self-perceptions and negotiating identity; Social support (e.g., peer, family)

### *Utilization of services*

Receiving physical and psychology treatment; Involvement in other post-release services (e.g. mentoring)

### **Structural factors**

Stable Residence; Employment; Reintegration with family

**Recidivism**

# Participants

- ◆ Women participants
  - During incarceration (n=234)
  - 2 weeks pre-release (n=105)
  - 2 months post-release, full survey (n=41;
    - 26 re-incarcerated)
    - Received \$25 if out of prison or upon release
  - 6 months post-release records (n = 200)
    - 94 re-incarcerated
    - 106 not re-incarcerated in Rhode Island
    - 34 never released or deceased





# Childhood Experiences

- ◆ 59% single-parent homes
- ◆ 47% sexually abused (contact involved)
  - 40% by 3 or more people
- ◆ 58% physically abused
- ◆ 44% had family member using alcohol regularly
- ◆ 22% had family member using drugs regularly
- ◆ Before age 16, 60% used alcohol, 50% used drugs



# Adult Experiences

- ◆ 98% experienced violence - multiple forms
  - 78% sexually assaulted
  - 88% of those with steady partners are being physically abused by that partner
- ◆ 65% used drugs 3-4 times a week or more
- ◆ 33% used alcohol 3-4 times a week or more
- ◆ Many had multiple, high risk sex partners



# Education and Job Experience

## ◆ Education:

- 14% did not finish 8th grade
- 49% did not graduate from high school
- Staff reported undiagnosed learning disabilities

## ◆ Employment:

- 44% never trained for specific job or work
- 57% unemployed at time of arrest



# Program Participation

- ✦ Education: 70.5%
- ✦ Emotional Issues: 70.5%
- ✦ Substance Abuse: 51.4%
  - (limited availability)
- ✦ Health Issues: 23.9%

*Participation was voluntary and did not affect release.*



# Perceived Change after Programs

- ◆ Participation was rated as low-high for each type of program.
- ◆ Higher participation led to significant changes in self-reported attitudes and skills.
- ◆ High participation was associated with program-specific increases in confidence and reduced substance use after release.
- ◆ However, participation was *not* a significant predictor of recidivism overall.



# What Prevented Positive Changes?

- ◆ Pre-incarceration alcohol and drug use
- ◆ Stress
- ◆ Avoidant coping strategies
- ◆ Childhood victimizations

*Severe problems were clustered and needed more intensive intervention.*



# What Predicts Recidivism?

- ◆ Age (under 25)
- ◆ Prior incarcerations
- ◆ Drug use in 6 months before arrest
- ◆ Stress about having basic needs met
- ◆ Perceived **lack of** ability to make positive changes

*Program participation was a predictor for those with less severe problems, who had been able to benefit from them.*



# Complex Relationships

- ◆ Multiplicative effects of abuse and neglect in family of origin
- ◆ Multiplicative effects of poverty, sexism and racism
- ◆ Needs exist at multiple levels



# Recidivists revealed...

*Women back in prison at 2 months had:*

More stress, fewer basic needs met after release

More childhood victimization

More temptations to “go back to old ways”

Greater drug use after release

More violence, esp. from partner, after release

Fewer supportive family, friends

Children under the age of 18



# Not Set Up At Release

33% no place to live

46% no supportive family

58% no friends

66% no job or job interview

68% no financial support

68% no medical care

74% no job training or education



# Intervention Recommendations

- ◆ Intervene earlier (juvenile facilities)
- ◆ Address barriers to change, especially
  - Drug addiction
  - Education (beyond GED) and job training
  - Mental health
  - Trauma
- ◆ Post-release Support
- ◆ Alternatives to “revolving door”
  - Alternative sentencing (Drug Court, Community Corrections) with more time for intervention success



# Lessons for Researchers

- ✦ Go to jail! (More research on “hidden” populations)
- ✦ Ecological approach: examine economic and societal levels as well as individual problems
- ✦ Acknowledge oppression by gender, poverty, racism
- ✦ Develop early interventions, especially with high-risk children and adolescents
- ✦ Promote education as an intervention
- ✦ Evaluate alternatives to “punishment”



- ◆ All of the women we have met in this research have taught us that there can be joy, sometimes in the mere act of surviving the terrors of their past,
- ◆ They are grateful for our concern and compassion,
- ◆ *And they have given us hope for the future*