



INSTITUTE ON WOMEN
& CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Addressing Women's Incarceration:

A National Survey of State Commissions and Task Forces on Women in the Criminal Justice System

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WOMEN'S PRISON ASSOCIATION

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ABOUT WPA

The Women's Prison Association is a service and advocacy organization committed to helping women with criminal justice histories realize new possibilities for themselves and their families. Our program services make it possible for women to obtain work, housing, and health care; to rebuild their families; and to participate fully in civic life. Through the Institute on Women & Criminal Justice, WPA pursues a rigorous policy, advocacy, and research agenda to bring new perspectives to public debates on women and criminal justice.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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GENERAL NOTE

This survey represents the most up-to-date information available to us at the time of publication. If you would like to provide updated or corrected information for future versions of this survey, or if you would like contact information for any of the featured commissions/task forces, please send an e-mail to institute@wpaonline.org.

OVERVIEW

As the number of women behind bars continues its decades-long rise, states are facing new challenges in the management of correctional budgets, facilities, and practice. One way in which states have sought to respond to these challenges is through the creation of commissions or task forces established to advise or inform state governmental leadership including criminal justice and corrections systems of how best to develop implement policies and practices that benefit women.

This survey, *Addressing Women's Incarceration* documents these efforts so that the insights they bring forward can be more widely considered. It is also meant to serve as a tool for decision makers and concerned community members who are exploring the creation of a new commission or task force, or seeking to guide an existing one.

FEATURED STATES

The survey highlights 18 state-level commissions or task forces on women in the criminal justice system. The featured states are:

- [Alabama](#)
- [Arizona](#)
- [California](#)
- [Connecticut*](#)
- [Georgia](#)
- [Illinois](#)
- [Maine](#)
- [Maryland*](#)
- [Massachusetts](#)
- [Minnesota](#)
- [Missouri](#)
- [New Hampshire](#)
- [Oregon](#)
- [Oklahoma*](#)
- [Rhode Island](#)
- [Vermont](#)
- [Washington](#)

* Connecticut, Maryland and Oklahoma were each home to two separate commissions relevant to this survey.

WHY STATES ESTABLISH COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES

There are many reasons that a state may opt to set up a commission or task force to improve practice and policy regarding criminal justice-involved women. Some of the main drivers identified by this survey are:

- State budgetary pressures
- Overcrowding in correctional facilities
- High rates of recidivism
- Barriers women face in reentry
- Unique needs of women under correctional supervision (i.e. mother-child visitation)
- Charges of sexual harassment or violence toward women under custody
- Changes in the composition of the correctional workforce, including the increased presence of women in leadership roles within state bureaucracies
- Conditions of confinement settlements requiring the establishment of an external body to review correctional policy and practice

TYPES OF COMMISSIONS AND TASK FORCES

Where possible, we have linked to the authorizing executive order, legislation, or other mandate authorizing the commission or task force. Each of the commissions or task forces identified originated from one of the following sources:

- [Gubernatorial action](#)
- [Legislative action](#)
- [Executive Agency initiative \(non-corrections\)](#)
- [Corrections Agency initiative](#)
- [Litigation-Based Settlement](#)

This survey also documents the duration, staff, structure, membership, frequency of meetings, and tasks or products associated with each commission or task force.

COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY GUBERNATORIAL ACTION

Arizona	
Name:	Governor's Task Force on Improving Outcomes for Female Offenders and their Children
Authorization:	Governor Janet Napolitano (Democrat)
Duration:	February 2004 —August 2004
Staff:	Chaired by Director of Corrections. Staffed by DOCS Female Programs Administrator and representatives of Governor's office.
Structure:	Divided into two groups, one focused on custody and incarceration issues and the second on transition, community programming, and release issues.
Membership:	Approximately 25 appointed members, including staff from a variety of organizations, including religious, mental health, corrections, Native American, legal, health care, substance abuse, community corrections, prosecution, domestic violence, homeless services, employment and Girl Scout groups.
Frequency of Meetings:	Monthly.
Tasks/Products:	Final report completed.

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Massachusetts	
Name:	Governor's Commission on Corrections Reform (later Correctional Advisory Council, subsequently leading to Dedicated Female Offender Review Panel)
Authorization:	Governor Mitt Romney (Republican) Executive Order 468 (to amend Executive Order 461 (04-06) and Executive Order 465 (05-03)
Duration:	Started October 2003
Staff:	Director of Female Services and Associate Commissioner of Reentry and Reintegration, Department of Correction
Structure:	Five subgroups with a total of 38 members: 1) reducing overcrowding, 2) medical needs, 3) facility operations, 4) incarcerated women and their families, and 5) treatment and population management.
Membership:	15 appointed council members and 38 appointed subgroup members that include legislators, legislative staff, correctional superintendents, legal groups, treatment specialists, researchers, advocates, correctional program staff, and health care providers.
Frequency of Meetings:	Bi-weekly, but more often if necessary.
Tasks/Products:	Review Panel report consists of 5 subgroup reports, which contain 23 recommendations. The Council emphasizes reducing overcrowding through the movement of pre-trial detainees and sentenced women from the state prison at Framingham to their respective counties, and stopping the practice of confining civilly committed women at Framingham. Click here to read " The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Correction Advisory Council Preliminary Report ," June 17, 2005.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION

Alabama	
Name:	The Commission on Girls and Women in the Criminal Justice System
Authorization:	Legislative. Click here to read the authorizing legislation, HJR15.
Duration:	February 7, 2006 - December 31, 2007 (extended)
Staff:	Primary staffing provided by an appointed Commission member (representing the Alabama Bar); research staffing provided by Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama.
Structure:	Three committees: 1) planning, 2) risk and needs instruments, and 3) collateral consequences.
Membership:	24 members, including legislative, judicial, state officials and 3 advocates. One member from each legislative house shall be the co-chairs.
Frequency of Meetings:	Full commission meets monthly, plus committee meetings.
Tasks/Products:	The Commission is charged with developing a “comprehensive, evidence based plan for enhancing the safety and welfare of Alabama's persons and property.”

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Connecticut (See other Connecticut task force)	
Name:	Task Force on Women, Children, and the Criminal Justice System
Authorization:	Legislative. Substitute House Bill No. 6686, Special Act No. 87-91 (An Act Establishing a Task Force on Women, Children and the Criminal Justice System) to “examine the impact of the criminal justice system on women and their children.”
Duration:	1987-1989
Membership:	14 members, including judicial, legal, and legislative members; staffed by representatives from the Justice Education Center and Child & Family Services.
Methods:	Collected data from bail, police and court agencies, reviewed relevant policy, probation and substance abuse reports, and heard testimony from practitioners as well as formerly incarcerated women.
Tasks/Products:	Final report (January 1989) makes approximately 60 recommendations concerning pre-trial diversion, sentencing and sentencing options, residential placement, community-based non-residential services, children’s services, prison-based services, oversight and public awareness, and research and evaluation.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION, CONT'D.

Illinois	
Name:	Women's Advisory Board
Authorization:	Legislative. 20ILCS 305/5-103.1
Duration:	Started in 1995
Staff:	Deputy Director, Women and Family Services, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Executive board with seven working groups that cover the following topics: 1) substance abuse and adolescent females, 2) substance abuse and women involved in the child welfare system, 3) housing for women in the criminal justice system, 4) housing for women and children in treatment and recovery, 5) disease management strategies for women with co-occurring disorders or substance abuse, 6) parenting and prenatal addiction, and 7) developing a women's training manual. Each group works independently, bringing recommendations to the whole group, and makes policy recommendations to the Governor through the Department of Human Services' Division of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse (DASA).
Membership:	11 members representing state corrections officials, Chicago justice and human services, alcohol and substance abuse providers, and housing and court officials.
Frequency of Meetings:	Quarterly.
Tasks/Products:	Publication of a "White Paper" to identify specific issues in the field. Strategy includes making policy recommendations to the appropriate state agencies and implementing housing plans for post-release female inmates; augmenting existing resources; developing affordable housing; increasing gender-specific substance abuse treatment; improving assistance for child care, medical and transportation; developing job training programs, wrap around services for mental and physical health needs; and increasing medication available to released women.

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Maryland (See other Maryland task force)	
Name:	Governor's Committee to Study Sentencing and Correctional Alternatives for Women Convicted of Crime
Authorization:	Legislative, House Joint Resolution No. 84
Duration:	1986-1988 (created in 1986, aimed to complete work at end of 1987, but work was extended to mid-1988)
Structure:	Established a committee to survey prison and detention center administrators and incarcerated women and five subcommittees focused on 1) alternatives to incarceration, 2) health and mental health 3) economic independence through education and vocational and job training 4) community resources and support, and 5) women offender profiles.
Membership:	16 committee members from the judiciary, legislature, parole and probation, budget and taxation analysts, educational specialists, women's prison and pre-release center wardens, and public representatives; one staff person (assistant to commissioner of corrections); and a consultant.
Frequency of Meetings:	Monthly meetings.
Methods:	Carried out objective, "to study the status of women convicted of crime in (Maryland) and the existing and potential opportunities for rehabilitation of women incarcerated in the Maryland penal system," by holding public hearings and conducting literature reviews.
Tasks/Products:	Final Report: Governor's Committee to Study Sentencing and Correctional Alternatives for Women Convicted of Crime (June 1988) recommended permanent Advisory Board on women offenders, which would report to the Governor, other recommendations made by subcommittee groups. This report is available at the Maryland State Law Library.

COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION, CONT'D.

Minnesota	
Name:	Advisory Task Force on Female Offenders
Authorization:	Legislative. Minnesota Statutes 2005, Chap. 241.7, "to promote and advocate for gender and culturally responsive services for women and girls in the criminal and juvenile justice systems."
Duration:	Started in 1981
Staff:	Program Specialist at Shakopee, a women's state prison. Previously an assistant commissioner at the Department of Corrections.
Structure:	Elected chair with subgroups on various topics including case planning and gender-specific issues.
Membership:	23 appointed members, including officials from corrections, prosecution, community corrections, the public defender's office; a school official; an academic researcher; and a community service provider.
Frequency of Meetings:	Full task-force: monthly; subgroups: more frequently.
Tasks/Products:	Organizes annual conference and consults with the Commission of Corrections on model programs, funding priorities, and identifying problems. Co-authored report, " Minnesota Action Plan for Female Offenders " in February 2002.

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New Hampshire	
Name:	Interagency Coordinating Council for Women Offenders
Authorization:	Legislative. SB 262: An act establishing "...an interagency coordinating council on women offenders."
Duration:	Started in July 2006
Staff:	Administrator of Women Offenders and Family Services, Department of Corrections.
Membership:	19 appointed members including representatives of the Office of the Governor, State Senate, House of Representatives, Judiciary, and Attorney General; commissioners of Education, Children, and Family Services, the Department of Health and Human Services; members of the Citizen Advisory Committee of the New Hampshire State Prison for Women, New Hampshire Commission on the Status of Women, New Hampshire Association of Counties, and the New Hampshire Task Force on Women and Addiction; a community member; and a formerly incarcerated woman.
Tasks/Products:	Proposals include interagency cooperation, "in-kind services" for incarcerated mothers and their children, cross-agency training, gender-specific treatment for co-occurring disorders, interagency case management and re-entry planning, assessment of impact of incarceration on families, and applications for federal and private-sector grants.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY LEGISLATIVE ACTION, CONT'D.

Oklahoma (See other Oklahoma task force)	
Name:	Special Task Force for Women Incarcerated in Oklahoma
Authorization:	Legislative. SB 810
Duration:	Started in 2003
Staff:	Oklahoma Criminal Justice Resource Center, under the direction of K.C. Moon
Structure:	The Task Force met in open meeting at the State Capitol. Notices and agendas were posted in advance at the meeting place and filed with the Secretary of State. The general public was afforded the opportunity to comment at Public Forums.
Membership:	Members by policy are the Lieutenant Governor, representatives from the House and Senate, representatives from the Departments of Corrections, Human Services, Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, the District Attorneys Association, the Oklahoma Indigent Defense System, and the Vera Institute of Justice.
Frequency of Meetings:	Nine meetings were held at the State Capitol during 2003.
Tasks/Products:	Report to the Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and Speaker of the House of Representatives ; January 5, 2004.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY EXECUTIVE AGENCIES (NOT CORRECTIONS)

Vermont	
Name:	Vermont Agency of Human Services (AHS) Incarcerated Women's Initiative (IWI)
Authorization:	Human Services Agency initiative H.749 created a committee to study and propose solutions to problems as they relate to women offenders in Vermont. Prior to the launch of the Initiative, AHS published A Charge to Vermont Communities: Bending the Curve on the Number of Women Incarcerated in Vermont Without Compromising Public Safety .
Duration:	Started May 2005
Staff:	Project Manager, Agency of Human Services
Structure:	Project Manager works closely with the AHS Field Services Director and Program Services Executive for DOC as part of a leadership team. Statewide steering committee for the initiative called the IWI Core Team meets monthly. The Core Team oversees the statewide work and legislative agenda. A number of subcommittees have formed to address other areas of statewide interest. There are also 12 district based IWI groups that meet regularly.
Membership:	Members of Core Team and leaders from human services sector, criminal justice field, regional partnerships, legal and policy advocates, and service delivery systems.
Frequency of Meetings:	Bi-weekly meetings of the 3-person state leadership team; monthly meetings of the local and core team with extended membership.
Tasks/Products:	On January 1, 2007, AHS release the Incarcerated Women's Initiative Executive Summary , detailing the committee's accomplishments. In addition, each AHS District has developed regional plan.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY CORRECTIONS AGENCIES

California	
Name:	Gender Responsive Strategies Commission
Authorization:	Corrections
Duration:	Started March 2005
Staff:	Associate Director, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
Membership:	Representatives of community-based advocates and service providers; state, local, legislative and labor groups; and formerly incarcerated.
Frequency of Meetings:	Bi-monthly and held in different parts of the state.
Tasks/Products:	On-going.

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Georgia	
Name:	Women's Services Advisory Committee
Authorization:	Corrections.
Start-up:	Spring 2005
Staff:	Interim Director of Training, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Informal topic-focused subcommittees
Membership:	9 appointed members, including general counsel, field operations manager, women's prison warden, and employment, medical, risk reduction (programming), training and mental health directors
Frequency of Meetings:	Quarterly
Tasks/Products:	Assessing clarification tools and revamping parenting program to incorporate research-based practices such as juvenile girls sentenced as adults.

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Maine	
Name:	Task Force on Female Offenders
Authorization:	Corrections
Duration:	1989-1990
Membership:	12, including Associate Commissioner of Corrections (Chair), assistant attorney general, affirmative action coordinator, classification director, chief advocate, and juvenile, corrections and human services staff
Methods:	Review correctional programs, policies and procedures concerning juvenile and adult female offenders as "a first step in recognizing female offenders as a discrete population for which the Department is responsible." Site visits, interviews with 57 staff at the Maine Youth Center, the Maine Correctional center, Probation and parole, and outside service providers
Tasks/Products:	<i>Female Offenders: An Afterthought: Report of the Task Force on Female Offenders</i> (January 1991), 77 operational recommendations concerning Maine Youth Center, Maine Correctional Center, and Probation and Parole

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY CORRECTIONS AGENCIES, CONT'D.

Maryland (See other Maryland task force)	
Name:	Female Offender Management Work Group
Authorization:	Corrections. Secretary's Department Directive 03-2005
Start-up:	February 2004
Staff:	Workgroup chair: Commissioner of Corrections
Structure:	Elected chair and several subgroups covering facility design, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) concerns, visitation practices, and principles for working with female offenders.
Membership:	Approximately 15 members appointed by the Secretary of Corrections from within the Department of Corrections. Individuals from outside the Department of Corrections are invited to participate in the subgroups.
Frequency of Meetings:	Quarterly for full-workgroup; subgroups meet once or twice monthly.
Tasks/Products:	Reports annually to the Secretary of Corrections, identifies problems, and develops training.

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Missouri	
Name:	Women's Issues Committee, formerly Women Offender Programs and Policy Task Force
Authorization:	Corrections. Department of Corrections Section 217.015 : "The department will offer a continuum of services to empower (women) to reach their full potential. Through inter-departmental and community collaboration, we will assist women to develop knowledge and skills that will permit them to lead productive and crime-free lives."
Start-up:	October 2001
Staff:	Women's Program Manager, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Three organizational bodies: full-body committee, subcommittees, and six-person advisory committee.
Membership:	Appointed. Full-body committee includes Department of Corrections staff from the Divisions of Rehabilitative Services, Adult Institutions, Human Services, and Probation and Parole. Advisory committee members include Chief of the Office of Women's Health (Department of Health), Director of the Department of Mental Health, and four Director of Corrections designees.
Frequency of Meetings:	Full-body meets bi-monthly. Advisory Committee meets bi-annually.
Tasks/Products:	Produced " Status Report on Women Offenders " in August 2002 for the Women's Program Manager of the Department of Corrections. Report focused on incarcerated women's issues, gender responsive policies and procedures, comprehensive training for staff working with women offenders, establishing community partnerships, and enhancing community services and supervision strategies.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY CORRECTIONS AGENCIES, CONT'D.

Oklahoma (See other Oklahoma task force)	
Name:	Female Offender Management, formerly Female Offender Task Force. Read a description of the group's current mandate.
Authorization:	Oklahoma Department of Corrections
Duration:	Started in 1998
Staff:	Deputy Director of Treatment and Rehabilitative Services, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Members by policy are representatives of Corrections executive staff. Community partners and representatives from other state agencies who share in the major areas of concern outlined in the policy also attend the quarterly meetings.
Membership:	Representatives of Corrections executive staff representing the major areas of concern: Training of correctional staff who manage female offenders, Sexual misconduct and privacy issues of female offenders, Parity in work and programs, Medical , Mental health, Classification and custody levels, Contract beds, Re-entry programs, and Community Sentencing.
Frequency of Meetings:	Quarterly. Meetings are held at a female facility.
Tasks/Products:	Goals, Objectives and accomplishments are reported each fiscal year. Read the FY2006 Work Summary.

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Oregon	
Name:	Statewide Meeting to Develop Strategies to Meet the Needs of Women Offenders in Oregon
Authorization:	Corrections.
Duration:	Started July 1992, now defunct.
Staff:	Assistant Director, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Concept panels and facilitated workshops to follow-up on recommendations for female offenders made in the 1988 "Governor's Task Force on Corrections" Report and the 1991 "White Paper" that specifically focused on breaking the cycle of dysfunction and provision of alcohol and drug treatment.
Membership:	48 corrections officials, alcohol and drug treatment providers, community corrections, safety officials, child care service providers, and formerly incarcerated women.
Frequency of Meetings:	Two-day meeting, with concept panels and facilitated workshops.
Tasks/Products:	Produced <i>Women Offenders Planning Work Session: Proceedings of a Statewide Meeting to Develop Strategies to Meet the Needs of Women Offenders in Oregon</i> . Also created a steering committee to draft mission statement, identify data needs and next step, and address agency collaboration, assessments, interventions, special treatment needs, holistic approach, corrections culture, marketing, and community involvement.

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Rhode Island	
Name:	Female Offender Advisory Board
Authorization:	Corrections
Duration:	1992-2001

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY CORRECTIONS AGENCIES, CONT'D.

Washington	
Name:	Women Offenders Workgroup
Authorization:	Corrections.
Start-up:	July 2002-January 2005
Staff:	Assistant Deputy Secretary, Office of Correctional Operations, Department of Corrections
Structure:	Five subcommittees focusing on 1) Programs, 2) Policy, 3) Transition and supervision, 4) Construction and capital programs, and 5) Training.
Membership:	Roles include sponsor, process owner, team leaders, and facilitators. 15 members of the five subcommittees are crime victims, medical providers, sex offender treatment providers, risk management and psychiatric staff, and correctional managers.
Frequency of Meetings:	Monthly
Tasks/Products:	Female offender programs and facilities in Washington and throughout the United States. Submitted final report to the management team of the Department of Corrections.

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COMMISSIONS/TASK FORCES INITIATED BY LITIGATION-BASED SETTLEMENT

Connecticut (see other Connecticut task force)	
Name:	Task Force for Inmate Mothers and Their Children Under the Age of Thirty Months
Authorization:	Litigation-based settlement. Court settlement (<i>West v. Manson</i>) mandated Task Force "to study and make recommendations concerning the practices of the Department of Corrections for (Connecticut Correctional Institution – Niantic) inmates, including those in community placement, relative to the separation of inmate mothers and their infant children under 30 months of age."
Duration:	1984-1985
Membership:	Four members appointed by the Commissioners of Corrections and Mental Health and by child and inmate plaintiffs and included one social worker, one women's prison superintendent and two psychiatrists from the Yale Child Study Center.
Frequency of Meetings:	27 Task Force meetings, from one to four per month
Methods:	Literature review, prison and program site visits, interviews, and professional experience; work completed in four major phases: data collection, identification of infant-toddler program models, identification of guiding principles, and evaluation.
Tasks/Products:	Interim Report (December 1984) and Final Report (June 1985), recommended community-based programs that meet the needs of greatest number of mothers and their children

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