



**Women's Prison Association  
Biannual Review  
Years 2016-2017**

## From the Executive Director

Dear Friend:

During my 18 years at WPA, I have been privileged to witness the positive transformation achieved by thousands of women who have sought our partnership. Women who arrive to one of our programs and cannot identify one personal strength or positive attribute leave months later, their heads held high, with direction and a solid sense of self. Most women arrive at WPA with a clear picture of their flaws, the burden of past trauma and secrets, and tremendous fear of exposure. Often, a woman is convinced that everything that has happened in her life is her fault and that there is no other person as bad as she is-- she is the worst person and nobody else could possibly understand. We understand, at WPA, that women who come in contact with the criminal justice system are almost always responding to multiple challenges—prior sexual abuse, domestic violence, mental illness, unsafe housing, substance use, parental stress, poverty, racism, limited education—that cannot be ameliorated by incarceration or other punitive measures.

WPA helps women address and reduce the influence of factors that contribute to their risk for criminal involvement. We meet women in the places they live, work, and socialize, and use their daily lives as the classroom in which to try new communication and negotiation skills. We are firmly committed to using a woman's strengths as the foundation for healing, forgiveness, development of self-acceptance, and the freedom to move forward. Every woman's story of transformation is unique, but the first step is to address urgent needs that are critical to stability. Once a woman trusts that her basic needs will be met, she can begin to think about the future.

Like the women who seek our support, WPA must also be stable before considering growth, and 2016 and 2017 were transformational years for the agency. We improved our financial stability by paying off a mortgage on our landmark townhouse, thereby alleviating our debt and the concerns about its impact on our long-term stability. Repayment of the mortgage was possible with funding from the New York State Homeless Housing Assistance Corporation that will also cover significant repairs to the building.

WPA took additional steps to improve stable functioning of the agency. We engaged an outside accounting firm to take over budget and finance functions. We also transferred management of payroll and health insurance to a professional employer organization which allowed us to continue offering excellent health insurance options to employees and to outsource management of payroll and benefits administration.

With these substantial changes in place, we could worry less about day-to-day operations and focus on the deliberate and effective expansion of our programs. In 2016, we created and launched the Women's Leadership & Media Project, a training program for formerly incarcerated who seek to achieve criminal justice reform. We now provide extensive leadership training to participants who, in turn, commit to public speaking engagements and media interviews that raise awareness of criminal justice issues through the lens of those most affected by the

system. Since its launch, WLMP has graduated 16 women, secured multiple media placements, and filled panels on everything from closing Rikers to the intersection of criminal justice and the #MeToo movement.

In 2017, with funding from New York State's Division of Criminal Justice Services, we launched Working It Out (WIO), a gender-specific work readiness and employment program designed for women who are on probation, court-referred, or enrolled in an alternative to incarceration program in New York City. The program's goal is to eliminate barriers that prevent justice-involved women from obtaining and maintaining employment. The WIO staff prepares women to enter the workforce with confidence and continued support, and works directly with employers to connect clients to jobs based on their skills and interests.

We also focused on expanding existing programs that were celebrating great successes. Our Community Linkage Unit was enhanced by the addition of the Women's Risk and Needs Assessment - a tool that allows us to measure a woman's criminogenic risk and partner with her to identify the most appropriate services to reduce that risk. Our successful community-based alternative to incarceration program, JusticeHome, which had previously only been available to women facing felony charges was expanded to include women facing misdemeanors. We began diverting more women from prison to programming, allocating more resources to the special needs of trauma survivors, and calling on our court systems to recognize how transformative models, when practiced within the community, contribute to fewer women in prison, fewer children in foster care, and less crime, at a lower cost than incarceration. Finally, WPA joined with a collaborative of women's service organizations to offer housing and community support as a means of diverting women from Rikers. Significant support from New York City makes it possible for women to be placed in partner agencies' housing and for WPA to offer diversion programming for more women.

WPA, as an agency, called on the very principles we apply in working with our clients and set ourselves on a path for continued success. We relied heavily on a community of supporters to believe in us, support our strengths, and stand beside us on our journey toward stability and, eventually, transformation. As so many of our clients come to do for themselves, when I think about WPA's future, I see new and exciting possibilities I couldn't see before. I see us providing more safe housing, creating more early diversion programming, and developing our work readiness and employment services. My vision for WPA, and for every woman who comes to WPA, is to exist in a community where our reliance on incarceration as the default response to crime has been replaced by constructive, community-driven responses. If ever I doubted the possibility, after these two years on the road, I know we will reach our destination.



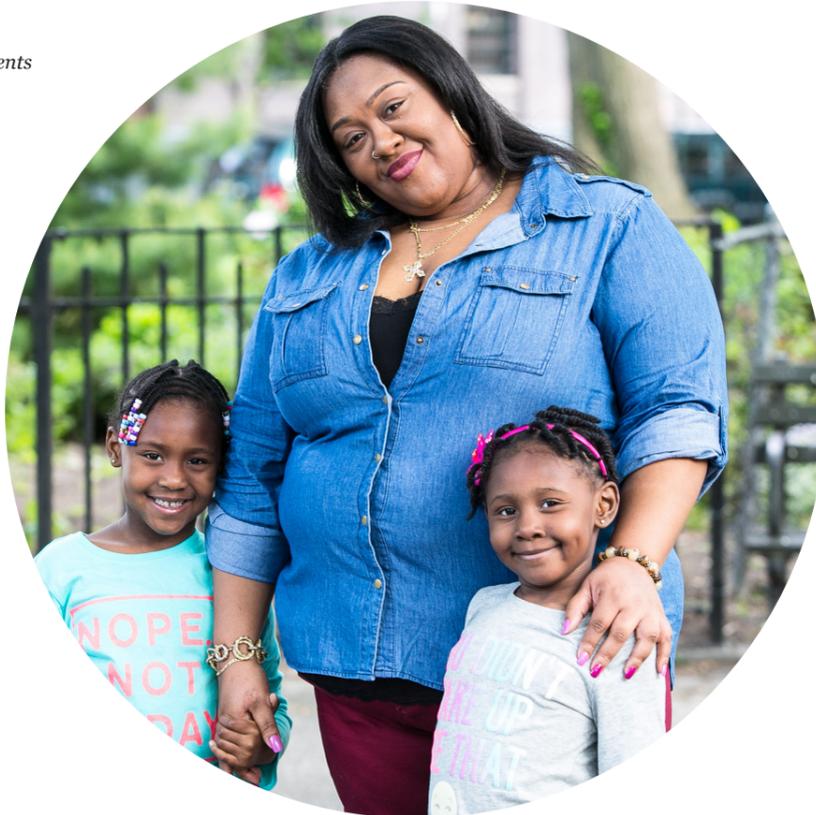
- Georgia Lerner, Executive Director

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## About WPA

WPA works with women at all stages of criminal justice involvement. We promote alternatives to incarceration and help women living in the community to avoid arrest or incarceration by making positive changes in their lives. Inside prison and jail, we are a source of support to women and a resource to them as they plan for release. After incarceration, women come to WPA for help to build the lives they want for themselves and their families in the community.

WPA helps women achieve what is most important to them. Women come to us to:

- Find safe and affordable housing
- Prepare for job interviews and obtain employment
- Reunify with their children
- Comply with criminal justice mandates
- Access addiction, health, and mental health services
- Gain peer support from other women
- Learn household budgeting and skills for daily life

WPA's programs are organized into four broad service areas including:

- Children & Family Services
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Reentry Services
- Policy & Advocacy



**WPA assists more than 1,500 women and 500 children per year from three community sites in Manhattan and Brooklyn. WPA has jail-based offices at Rikers Island's Rose M. Singer Center and at Taconic and Bedford Hills Correctional Facilities.**

*as of September 2017*



# 10 Things You Probably Didn't Know About Women & the Criminal Justice System

1. Women are more likely than men to enter prison with a history of **trauma**, addiction, and/or mental illness.
2. Most women in prison are **mothers**. Women are more likely than men to be the primary caregiver of their children before and after incarceration.
3. The number of women in prison or jail in the U.S. has increased by **832%** over the last three decades, twice the rate of increase that men experienced.
4. Incarceration rates for women reflect tremendous **racial** disparities. African American women and Latinas constitute more than 60% of those in prison.
5. Prison policies, procedures, and assessment tools utilized to determine the appropriate interventions were primarily designed for **men**.
6. 85% of women sent to New York prisons are there for **non-violent** offenses.
7. New York State spends a staggering **\$2.7 billion** per year on corrections and another \$812.5 million in prison-related costs.
8. Despite the significant investment of taxpayer dollars, programs inside prisons rarely address **women's needs** or prepare them to successfully reenter the community.
9. Women experience more **poverty**, lower employment rates, and have fewer safe housing options than men immediately after incarceration.
10. Women are less likely than men to return to prison and jail, but nearly **1/3** of the women released from New York prisons return within 3 years.

# 10 Ways WPA Addresses the Mass Incarceration of Women

1. WPA's programs are **gender-specific** and designed to address histories of trauma, mental illness, parental stress, and other risk factors specific to women.
2. WPA's housing and preventative services **keep families together**. Keeping a mother out of prison can minimize a child's experience of trauma and shame.
3. Most women in prison are not a threat to **public safety**. WPA's alternative to incarceration program works to reduce crime from within our communities.
4. WPA **elevates the voices** of the formerly incarcerated. We train women with criminal justice histories to advocate for reform and openly hire people with criminal records.
5. WPA does not believe in "one size fits all" strategies for men and women. We utilize **evidence-based**, gender-specific tools designed for and by women.
6. WPA welcomes any self-identifying woman seeking **new possibilities** for herself and her family, regardless of the nature of her crime.
7. WPA programs realize **fiscal savings**. It costs more than \$120K a year to send a woman to jail and her children to foster care. It costs less than \$20K to assist her and her children at WPA.
8. Inside prison and jail, WPA helps women **prepare** for release. We help women access housing, food, emergency assistance, HIV testing, employment services, and legal support.
9. WPA's employment program addresses untreated mental illness, addiction, and unsafe relationships that impede a woman's ability to secure and maintain **employment**.
10. WPA's mentoring program pairs clients and trained volunteers to strengthen each woman's connection to **community** and reduce recidivism.

## Program Reflections: Children & Families



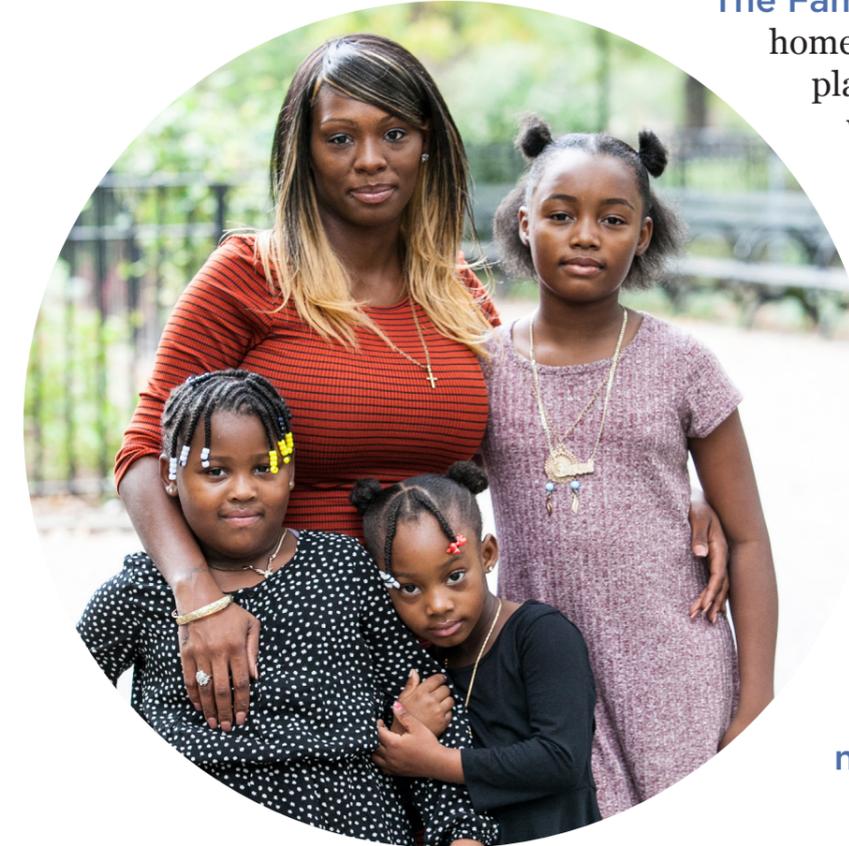
**Sarah Powell Huntington House (SPHH)** is WPA's homeless shelter for formerly incarcerated and at-risk women and their children. Since 1993, this unique residence has given recently reunified families the chance to access services designed to promote long-term health, stability, and self-sufficiency. WPA staff work with families to achieve goals such as securing safe and stable housing, enrolling in school, seeking employment, finding a healthcare provider, and managing the full range of day-to-day household and family challenges. Kids get homework help and recreational activities through WPA's youth services.

“Michelle and her kids moved out just before Thanksgiving, a notoriously busy time at Huntington House. On moving day, she left me a note that said ‘this is a perfect gift at a perfect time so we can have a perfect holiday!’ It was a great reminder to appreciate the big wins of our clients, but also the little ones, no matter how busy things may be.”

- Thomas Phillips  
Program Director, Sarah Powell Huntington House



## Program Reflections: Children & Families



**The Family Treatment Rehabilitation Program** provides intensive home-based preventive services for families at risk of having children placed in foster care. The program aims to strengthen families by working with moms to treat mental illness and get drug free while managing her children's needs and day-to-day home life such as getting kids ready for school, ensuring a good breakfast, dressing them in weather-appropriate clothes, and getting to school on time. These services are based in East New York and Brownsville, neighborhoods characterized by societal barriers that impede successful family connectedness, stability, and functioning, such as low educational attainment, high rates of poverty, and unemployment.

“One thing I value most about our work with families is that we empower them to reclaim and regain their own independence. We always refer to this quote: ‘Feedback is like rain, it should be gentle enough to nourish a person's growth without destroying their roots.’”

- Georgina Bailey-Dawes  
Program Director, Family Treatment Rehabilitation Program



## Program Reflections: Alternatives to Incarceration



**JusticeHome** is a trauma-informed and gender-responsive alternative to incarceration program for women of all experiences. JusticeHome is a community and home-based program designed to support women so they can stay in their communities rather than serving time in jail or prison. The JusticeHome team works with participants to enhance stability and overall well-being by addressing specific needs that may have contributed to criminal involvement. JusticeHome strongly believes in honoring each participant's resiliency, strengths, and voice. Our team works collaboratively with every participant to create an individualized change plan to identify needs and achieve goals.

“I love the work we do in JusticeHome because it is so unique. Not only are we providing a very rare kind of community-based alternative to incarceration, we're also focused on the individual needs of those who come through our program. We don't try to fit them into boxes, we build the box (our program) around them and enable them to dictate what they need to be successful.”

- Miriam Goodman  
Program Director, Alternatives to Incarceration



## Program Reflections: Reentry Services



**Hopper Home** Transitional Shelter is a 38-bed homeless shelter for women with or at risk of criminal justice involvement. The program provides transitional housing and case management to help women find permanent housing. WPA staff help women achieve long-term stability through access to mental health services, education, sobriety, stable housing, employment, and reunification with their children.

“This year, we had a woman released to Hopper Home after several years of incarceration. In her time with us, she overcame her addiction, graduated from college, and found a lovely and safe place to live. Amidst very challenging work, success stories like hers remind me why I love my job. At Hopper Home, we respect the struggle!”

- Sharon White-Harrigan  
Program Director, Hopper Home



## Program Reflections: Reentry Services



**HIV Services:** WPA offers a continuum of services for women who are HIV+ or at risk for infection. Our community, jail, and prison-based programs provide confidential rapid HIV counseling and testing, linkage to care, medication adherence support, connection to partner services, evidence-based risk reduction groups, and peer support. Inside Bedford Hills and Taconic Correctional Facilities, WPA provides transitional planning and education and trains women to

“This year, our Prison-Based Services and High Impact Prevention teams attended two national conferences where we presented on WPA’s work to address stigma and HIV risk among incarcerated women. It was incredibly moving to see our team on a panel, owning their experience, and emerging as leaders in the field. It was also a reminder of the unique expertise that WPA brings in providing gender-responsive care; the way we understand the intersections of incarceration, trauma, and HIV risk; and the way we honor the lived experiences of our staff.”

- Eric Grossman  
Program Director, Alternative to Incarceration & Reentry Services



## Program Reflections: Reentry Services



**WPA Law Project** staff offer on-site legal services, primarily in family law, including child custody cases. WPA also offers assistance in understanding and navigating other civil legal issues clients may encounter, including employment and housing discrimination and domestic violence.

“The challenges Arlene faced in reunifying with her young daughter were daunting, but she was determined to regain custody. We worked hard to secure several overnight visits to help prove her capacity to be a great mom. When the family court finally ordered custody restored to Arlene, she was elated – we all were.”

- Ellen Rosenberg  
Program Director, WPA Law Project



## Program Reflections: Reentry Services

**Working It Out (WIO)** is a gender-specific work readiness and employment program designed for women ages 18 and older who are on probation, court-referred, or enrolled in an alternative to incarceration program in New York City.

The program's goal is to eliminate barriers that have prevented justice-involved women from obtaining and maintaining employment. WIO staff prepare women to enter the workforce with confidence and continued support, and work directly with employers to connect clients to employment based on their skills and interests.

“As women, we often dedicate so much of who we are to helping others, yet we are overlooked in almost every aspect of society. The highlight of my day is witnessing the fullness of our work here at WPA. To witness a woman partnering with staff to successfully reach her goals, achieve program completion, and later obtain employment at WPA is AMAZING! This, for me, truly exemplifies the vital role of trauma-informed and gender-responsive supportive services in helping to enhance the lives of the women who need and deserve it most.”

- Nyasha Rivera  
Manager of Workforce Development



## Program Reflections: Reentry Services

**Community Linkage Unit (CLU)** staff conduct outreach to service providers across New York City to identify women who could benefit from our programming and services. They also provide case management to women with histories of criminal justice involvement, working collaboratively with women to define their short- and long-term goals, and help women implement plans to achieve those goals.

“To see women go through a transformation, from scared and unsure when they first come home and in time become confident and self-sufficient, that's the miracle I get to witness over and over and it never gets old.”

- Enrique Rojas  
Manager of Reentry Services



## Program Reflections: Arts-Based Intervention

**Blackbird at WPA** utilizes the power of the creative arts as a conduit to care for women in all areas of the criminal justice system and at any stage of their work with WPA. Blackbird at WPA groups feature a wide variety of arts-based activities including theatre-based techniques, playmaking and role play, creative writing and poetry, and visual arts and music as the basis for a series of targeted workshops designed to enhance and supplement the quality of care for our women. Participants are supported by their peers in a safe and secure group setting. They engage in fun, thought-provoking, and self-esteem building activities that improve their skills and harness the power of their own imaginations as stepping stones to making positive changes in their lives.

“Something that sets WPA apart is the commitment of staff to collaborate on behalf of our clients. Blackbird at WPA delivers arts-based programming and I have found extraordinary dedication and support from others in order to deliver the best options for our clients and gain access to women who might not otherwise have an opportunity to explore their creativity.”

- Cheryl Paley  
Project Director, Blackbird at WPA



## Program Reflections: Public Policy & Advocacy

**The Women's Leadership & Media Project (WLMP)** is a training program for formerly incarcerated women who seek to achieve criminal justice reform. After extensive leadership training, WLMP graduates commit to public speaking engagements, take media interviews, and write policy and advocacy-driven pieces to raise awareness of criminal justice issues through the lens of those most affected by the system. Participants have the opportunity to learn from field experts, speak in public, engage in lively discussion, meet people with shared experiences, and experience a “behind the scenes” view of

“At WPA, we believe those closest to the problem are closest to the solution. Our job is to give women the tools they need to tell their stories in safe and effective ways - and to elevate their voices - but their job is to change hearts and minds and lead us to positive and lasting reforms based on their direct experience with the system. Without fail, they do this with courage, enthusiasm, and a sense of responsibility to those with similar or similarly preventable experiences.”

- Diana McHugh  
Director of Communications



## WPA in the News

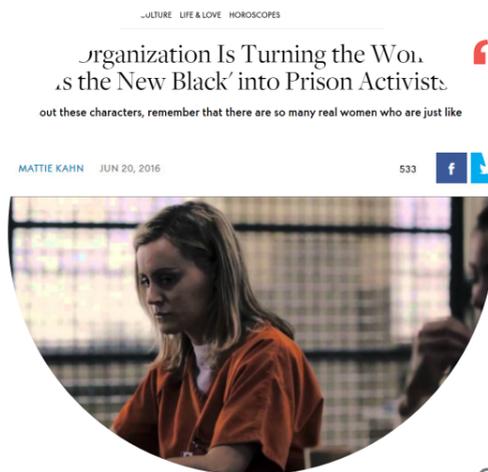


Taylor Schilling for Lenny Letter

“At WPA, on a big scale, we don’t want people to be limited forever by their worst act. If we all were judged by the worst thing we ever did, I think many of us would not be where we are today. It’s not fair to do that to anyone. I want women to stop doing it to themselves.”

- Georgia Lerner, WPA’s Executive Director

Mattie Kahn for ELLE



“No woman’s story starts when she gets arrested and it doesn’t end when she gets locked up,’ Lerner explained. And she wishes viewers of the show would learn more about the women who are locked up probably not too far from them. ‘So many people are just doing the best they can when they end up in prison or jail, which is not to excuse the crimes they commit. It’s just to say that as a society, we wait until we catch people screwing up, then we punish them, and then we expect them be fixed. The truth is a lot more complicated.’”

- Georgia Lerner, WPA’s Executive Director

## WPA in the News



Melissa Jeltsen for Huffington Post

“This bill could mark a profound shift toward treating people within our prisons as whole and feeling humans with a desire to do better for themselves and their families,’ said Diana McHugh, Director of Communications for the New York-based Women’s Prison Association. ‘We hope to see similarly well-informed policies at the city and state level, as well as a general shift toward alternatives to incarceration that promote public safety without prison.’”

- Diana McHugh, WPA’s Director of Communications

Read these articles and more from:



at [www.wpaonline.org/media/wpa-in-the-news](http://www.wpaonline.org/media/wpa-in-the-news)



**Strengthen**



**Empower**

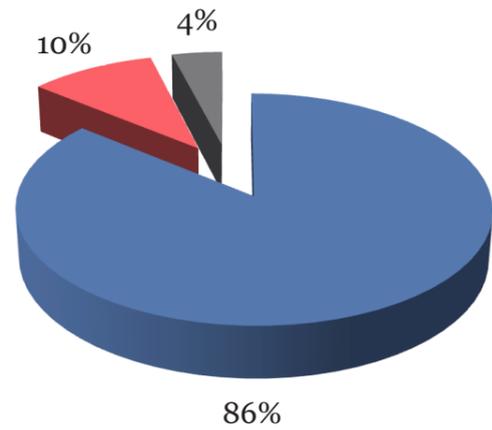


**Connect**

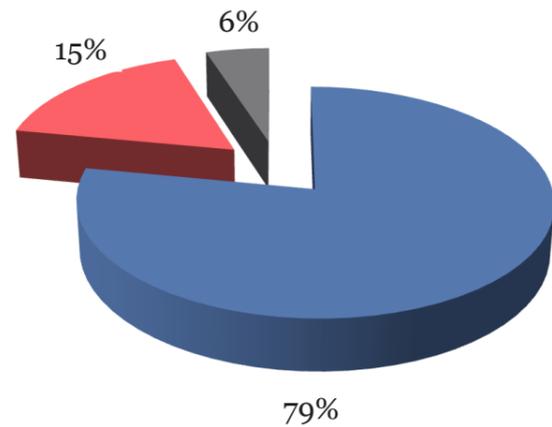
# Financial Summary

## Fiscal Year 2016

Total Revenue: \$6,201,800

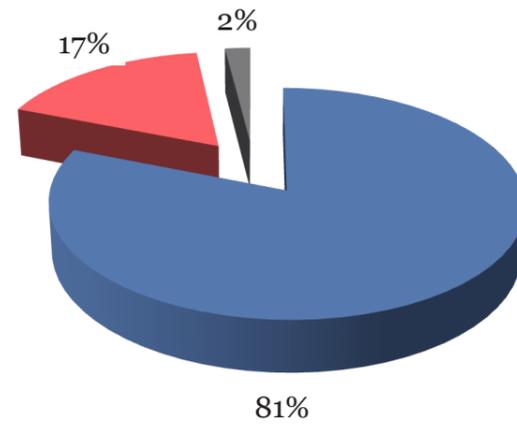


Total Expenses: \$6,911,091

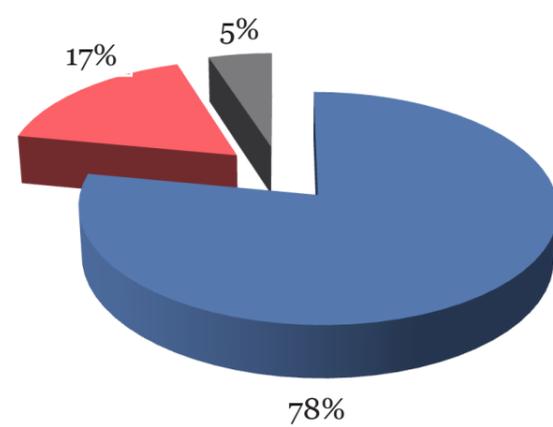


## Fiscal Year 2017

Total Revenue: \$7,149,629



Total Expenses: \$6,630,818



- Government Contracts
- Private Contributions & Special Events
- Other Revenue

- Program Services
- Administrative Management
- Fundraising

# Funders

## Gifts of \$400,000 +

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*\* multi-year gift made over three years*

## Gifts of \$200,000 to \$299,999

Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation

The Ambrose Monell Foundation

## Gifts of \$100,000 to \$199,999

Sills Family Foundation

## Gifts of \$50,000 to \$99,999

Edward S. Moore Family Foundation

## Gifts of \$25,000 to \$49,999

The MAT Charitable Foundation

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Broadway Cares Equity Fights AIDS

Eileen Fisher

FPWA

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Michael Tuch Foundation

The Leo S. Walsh Foundation

XL Catlin

## Gifts of \$5,000 to \$9,999

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Sacred Heart University

## Gifts of \$1,000 to \$2,499

Alcott HR

Cook Maran & Associates

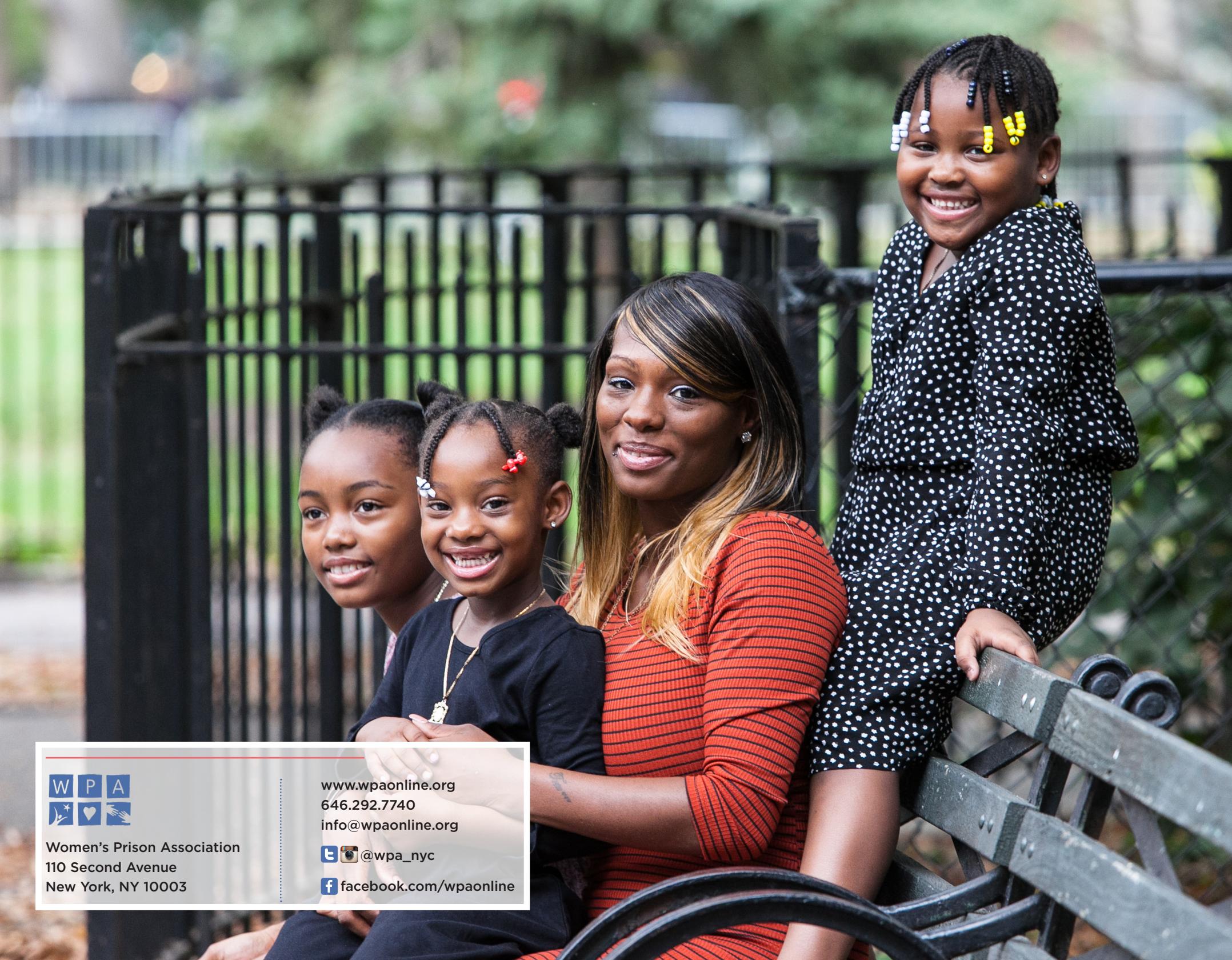
Edelman

Google

Ruth Norden Lowe and Warner L. Lowe Memorial Fund

*These foundation and corporate supporters have generously contributed to our work. These figures represent combined giving over the course of FY 2016 and FY 2017.*





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