



# IMPACT REPORT

**FREEDOM.**

**SAFETY.**

**INDEPENDENCE.**

October 1, 2019 –  
September 30, 2020



# Year in Review

Dear Friend,

WPA is accustomed to helping women address obstacles every day – from open criminal cases to poverty and homelessness – and in 2020, COVID-19. This year, WPA forged ahead despite unprecedented challenges. We were quick to find ways to offer uninterrupted partnership and support in a safe manner, with video calls, virtual groups, delivery of emergency food, masks and other essentials, and socially-distant meetings. We secured electronic devices and reliable internet access for women and hosted virtual support groups and social events.

2020 was significant for another reason: it was WPA's 175th Anniversary. Together, we reflected on our centuries long fight for justice and bold vision for the future. With the need for WPA more evident than ever, we updated our brand to communicate our steadfast commitment to women facing injustice and incarceration. Our mission statement has evolved:

**WPA empowers women to redefine their lives  
in the face of injustice and incarceration.**

**Together, we forge pathways toward  
freedom, safety, and independence.**

Our new mission features the historic inclusion and prioritization of the word “injustice” acknowledging how, for too many women, justice is not what the system provides them. It also centers the agency of our participants, reflecting our firm belief that women are the experts in their own lives and our commitment to centering their voices in all efforts toward systems change.

As we look back at 2020, we honor the strength and resilience of WPA's participants who, despite COVID-19, achieved important milestones on their journeys toward freedom, safety, and independence. As we reckon, as a community, with uncertainty and loss, I am proud that WPA has found ways to be there for so many other women and families for 175 years.

Thank you for joining us.

Sincerely yours,



Georgia Lerner  
Executive Director



# Fighting for Justice since 1845



In 1845 an abolitionist named Abby Hopper Gibbons saw how incarcerated women were mistreated and created WPA to do something about it.

2020 marked WPA's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary. A tremendous milestone, but also a reminder of the long history of injustice in this country. For nearly two centuries we have fought alongside women who have been marginalized by violence, poverty, racial bias, and systems of oppression.

Women come to WPA to achieve what is most important to them. Together, through our gender-informed, trauma-responsive services we:

- find safe, emergency shelter, and/or affordable housing;
- develop workplace skills and build careers;
- reunify with their children and families;
- plan for release while incarcerated;
- achieve stability in the community rather than behind bars;
- access healthcare;
- work toward personal goals;
- learn leadership, media, and public speaking skills;
- participate in arts workshops to facilitate creative outlets for self-expression; and
- avoid additional systems involvement.

## We believe women belong with their families and not behind bars.

### Community-Based Solutions

When women first seek support from WPA they meet with a community team member who listens and suggests the WPA program or community partner best suited to meet their needs. Sometimes, that connection is all women need for short-term support, but more often, that experience is the first of many women explore across WPA programs.

WPA's innovative alternative to incarceration (ATI) model allows women to return to, or stay in, their communities rather than serving time in jail or prison. The ATI team works with participants to enhance stability and overall well-being by addressing specific needs that may have contributed to their systems involvement, including, but not limited to, intimate partner violence and sex trafficking.

In the face of COVID-19, the community-based solutions team provided services remotely unless absolutely necessary to meet a client in person. Staff delivered food and other essentials to clients in their homes, as needed. In 2020, WPA partnered with 40 women to achieve stability in the community rather than behind bars.



“ATI was not easy. It forced me to take a hard look at my life and how I became systems involved. My incredible WPA case manager visited my home, connected with my son, put me through groups, got me in therapy, and made me feel like a whole person.”

– KAMILAH

# SAFETY

**We offer safe spaces  
to live, heal, and grow.**

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## **Housing**

WPA operates two shelters for women experiencing homelessness: one for single women and one for mothers and their children. Residents access a broad range of programs, defined by their individual goals, focused on education, employment, safe housing, health and mental health care, substance use support, and family reunification. In our family shelter, mothers manage the full range of day-to-day household and family challenges with WPA's support and children receive homework help and recreational activities through WPA's youth services.

When NYC became the epicenter of the pandemic, our shelters remained open and staff provided uninterrupted services to residents. Our essential workers worked around the clock to keep our shelters clean, safe, and open. In 2020, WPA provided housing for 136 women and 96 children.

## **Preventive Health and Education**

WPA is a supportive and nonjudgmental presence to women with, or at risk of, HIV and Hepatitis C infection in the community, jail, and prison. We conduct HIV testing and education to ensure women have the information they need to protect themselves and their partners and to learn their own HIV statuses. If positive, we provide referrals to health care. Whether positive or negative, we provide counseling and peer support groups to reduce transmission risk and ensure a caring and consistent support system.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff mailed kits to participants for at-home testing, as well as provided virtual treatment and counseling.

# SAFETY

## Emergency Assistance

At WPA, we meet women wherever they are in their journey. Sometimes, they are in a difficult place where unforeseen stressors stand in the way of progress. Women facing emergency circumstances can find food, hygiene items, MetroCards, baby supplies, bill assistance, and emergency shelter support at WPA.

In the wake of COVID-19, WPA addressed the rapidly changing needs of the women with whom we partner. WPA provided Wi-Fi, tablets, and headphones to families for remote learning, delivered meals, paid rent and utility bills, purchased furniture, and kept our food pantries stocked to address the increase in need.



“ I came to live at WPA when I got out. Their programs strengthen families because they know—we all know—that the best way to keep a family safe is to keep them together.”

– TAMANIKA

# INDEPENDENCE

We honor each woman's experience  
and empower her to make  
supportive community connections.

## Employment

Women seeking jobs become the narrators of their own career-focused stories through WPA's work readiness and employment program. Participants are empowered to enter the workforce with confidence through multifaceted trainings, connection to paid internships, and jobs that match their skills and interests. Once employed, WPA remains a consistent source of support to both the participant and the employer.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, our Workforce Development staff developed and implemented a condensed online version of the workshops so that women could gain the skills and networks they need to build careers, even in the face of the crisis. In 2020, 201 women engaged in workforce development services.

## Legal

WPA offers on-site legal services, primarily in family law, including child custody cases. Additionally, we assist women in understanding and navigating other civil legal issues, including employment and housing discrimination and domestic violence.



“There is no shortage of support at WPA. They truly recognize women on an individual basis, and I can honestly say I would not be as secure with myself and my experiences right now if it were not for them. Women have specific needs and there is no other organization out there that supports only women with systems involvement.”

– JENNIFER



# INDEPENDENCE



Graduates, ELAINE and TAMANIKA, representing WPA at the 2020 Sundance Film Festival.

## Advocacy

Program participants are often inspired to tell their personal stories to make change, so we offer leadership and media trainings that prepare women to share their stories at events, in writing, and in the news to raise awareness through the lens of those most affected by the system.

## Arts

We believe that the arts cultivate safe spaces where women can find sisterhood, relief, and liberation as they reflect on their personal experiences and connect to their inner artist. Through regular workshops, women experiment with a wide range of materials and ideas, which transform jail cells and shelter walls into galleries of self-expression. As women open up, their needs are shared and WPA is there to support them.

In 2020, the arts program expanded to include virtual performances and Get Out the Vote campaigns ahead of the 2020 Presidential Election.



“WPA was right there and always allowed me to express myself. It was a matter of being pointed in the right direction when I needed it.”

- KAREN



# In the News

“Most women enter prison with histories of trauma, mental illness, addiction, and parental stress. Nothing about prison helps them address those things. Prison only mimics the violence, isolation, and lack of control women have experienced before they arrive.”

- MIRIAM GOODMAN, WPA



Medium



Diane Karsch May 6 · 3 min read



Exploited First, Criminal Second:  
Women in Prison Are Surviving  
Lifetimes of Violence

“Supporting survivors with healing and growth can be challenging — and we are committed to providing patient and enduring partnership so that women can claim their freedom, safety and independence.”

- GEORGIA LERNER, WPA

# Financials

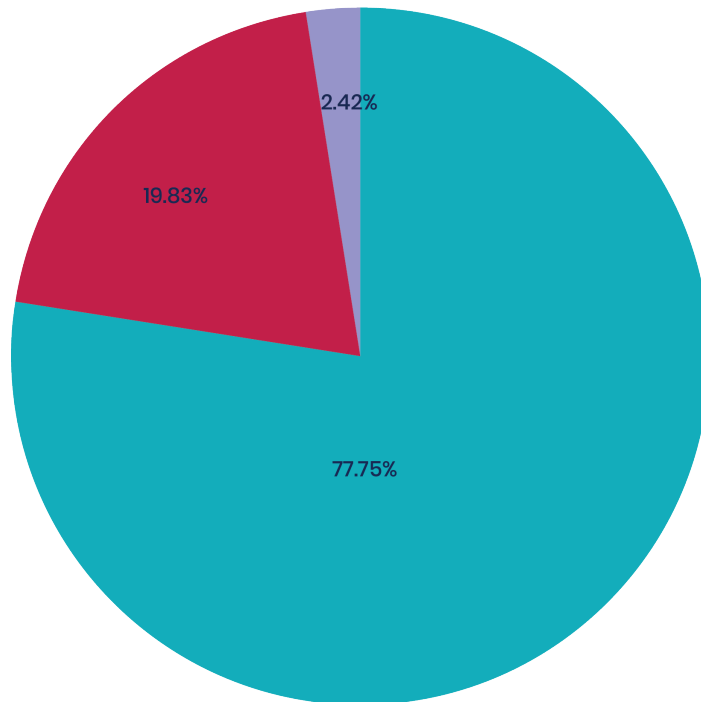
**October 1, 2019 – September 30, 2020**

**Total Revenue: \$9,519,138**

**Government: 77.75%**

**Private: 19.83%**

**Other: 2.42%**

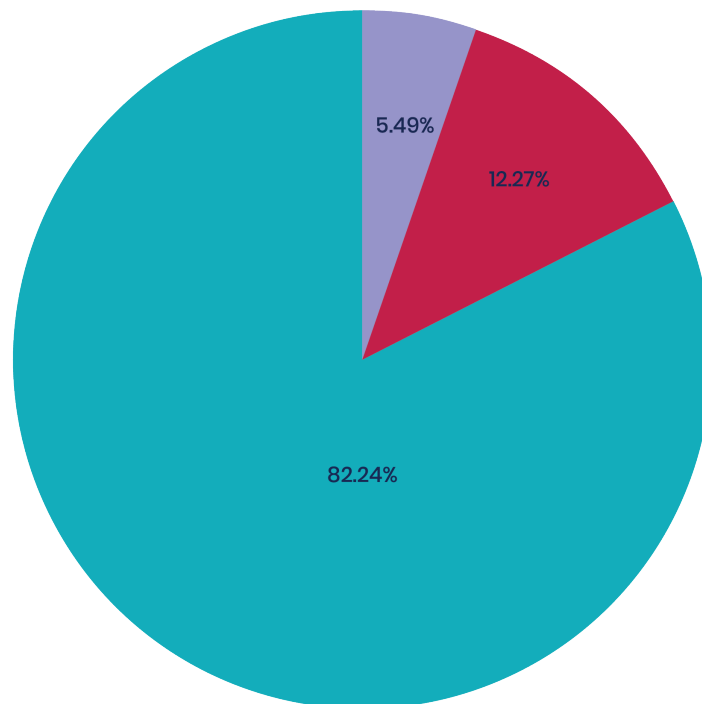


**Total Expenses: \$8,974,592**

**Fundraising: 5.49%**

**Administration: 12.27%**

**Programs: 82.24%**



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