



# Issues to Consider When Facilitating Groups with Battered Women in Jail or Prison

By Andrea Bible  
Special Projects Coordinator  
National Clearinghouse  
for the Defense of Battered Women

March 2011

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women  
125 S. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 302  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
Tel: 215/351-0010 or 800/903-0111, ext. 3  
ncdbw.org



## **Foreword**

This resource is for advocates<sup>1</sup> in community-based anti-domestic violence organizations who are thinking of starting a group for battered women incarcerated in jail, state prison, or federal prison, and for advocates currently facilitating groups in these settings. The issues and topics explored have emerged from a review of writings by group facilitators, sample curricula, and academic research; conversations with group facilitators; and work with incarcerated women over the years.

While many of the issues highlighted in this resource focus on working with women in state prisons, we believe much of this information also is relevant to and important for advocates facilitating groups in jails (and possibly even for those working with incarcerated women in ways other than facilitating groups).

It's important to note that the legal and logistical issues of facilitating groups often differ considerably between jails and prisons – particularly regarding issues of confidentiality for defendants awaiting trial, as well as the fact that people tend to be in jail for a much shorter duration of time than in prison. We have done our best to note the places where the differences between jails versus prisons are significant.

We at the National Clearinghouse are very excited that you are exploring (or already doing) the important work of supporting incarcerated battered women. We believe that working with incarcerated battered women is essential to our movement's efforts to end intimate partner battering and to create safer, healthier, more equitable relationships and communities.

It is not possible to cover all of the issues that may be relevant to doing group work with women in jail or prison in one document. This resource is intended as a general overview only, particularly to assist advocates who are just getting started.

We are eager to learn more from advocates and incarcerated women who are doing this important work. If you have additional strategies to share, issues to flag, contentions to raise, or any other feedback about this document, please contact the National Clearinghouse.

We would like to express tremendous gratitude to the numerous group facilitators we have spoken with over the years, whose experiences, successes, and challenges have informed this document; to Sue Osthoff, Brenda Ratcliff and Tracy Wylie for providing specific suggestions for strengthening this document; and to the many incarcerated women whose wisdom and commitment to healing and transformation helped shape this resource. It is an honor to work with and learn from all of you, and to share a deep commitment to justice and healing for incarcerated survivors of battering.

---

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this resource, an advocate refers to employees and volunteers of private, non-profit organizations serving victims of domestic violence who “work to provide for the needs of battered women and battered women as a class” (Avalon, 1997). For a brief overview of community-based advocacy practices and principles, see Davies, Lyon & Monti-Catania (1998) and Pence (2001).

## Table of Contents

Foreword .....	1
Introduction.....	5
Incarcerated Women in the U.S.: A Brief Overview.....	5
▪ <i>Becoming familiar with experiences of incarcerated women</i> .....	5
▪ <i>A note about language</i> .....	7
Purpose and structure of the group .....	9
▪ <i>Goals and objectives of the group</i> .....	9
▪ <i>Structural considerations of the group format</i> .....	9
▪ <i>Criteria for participation for groups</i> .....	10
▪ <i>Time of day</i> .....	11
▪ <i>Frequency and duration</i> .....	11
▪ <i>Open groups, closed groups, and mixed groups</i> .....	12
▪ <i>Roles of facilitators in jail</i> .....	13
▪ <i>Roles of facilitators in prison</i> .....	14
▪ <i>Identifying “outside” group facilitators</i> .....	14
▪ <i>Identifying “inside” facilitators: Co-facilitating with women in prison</i> .....	16
▪ <i>General information about group facilitation</i> .....	17
▪ <i>Evaluation</i> .....	17
Group guidelines.....	18
▪ <i>Confidentiality</i> .....	18
▪ <i>Issues of power, privilege &amp; oppression within groups</i> .....	20

Certificates and letters of support .....	22
▪ <i>Giving certificates and or writing support letters</i> .....	22
Jail or prison administration, staff, and rules .....	24
▪ <i>Relationships with administration and staff</i> .....	24
▪ <i>Jail or prison staff and confidentiality</i> .....	25
▪ <i>Jail or prison rules</i> .....	26
▪ <i>A special note about institutional practices in response to suicide</i> .....	27
Group topics .....	29
▪ <i>Healing tools and strategies</i> .....	29
▪ <i>Domestic violence within the prison</i> .....	32
▪ <i>Grief and guilt</i> .....	38
▪ <i>Supporting survivors who are about to be released</i> .....	41
▪ <i>Unique safety issues facing formerly incarcerated battered women</i> .....	43
Other possible forms of advocacy or support .....	45
▪ <i>Training women in prison to serve as their own group facilitators or as peer educators</i>	45
▪ <i>Newsletters</i> .....	46
▪ <i>Support or help organize once-a-year domestic violence awareness (or other) events</i> ...	46
▪ <i>Meet with established groups or classes on a quarterly basis</i> .....	46
▪ <i>Individual/collective advocacy (i.e., pre-trial advocacy, parole support, clemency)</i> .....	46
Conclusion .....	47
Additional resources .....	48
▪ <i>References cited</i> .....	48
▪ <i>Resources specific to incarcerated women’s histories of abuse</i> .....	51

- *General information about incarcerated women & mass incarceration.....* 51
- *Information about women’s experiences of returning to the community after prison ....* 52
- *Information about prison-based arts groups & collections of writings by incarcerated women .....* 53
- *Curricula and workbooks addressing abuse & other forms of trauma.....* 53
- *Resources for preventing and responding to incidents of abuse .....* 54
- *Documentaries about incarcerated battered women .....* 55

## **Introduction**

If you want to start a group with domestic violence survivors in jail or prison, there are many issues to consider as you're getting started. This document is designed to help you identify some of the things that are helpful to think about before you start the group, and hopefully will continue to be a helpful resource once the group is underway.

For example, you or your organization most likely will have to get permission from the jail or prison administration to start meeting with incarcerated women. Jail and prison officials probably will want to know about the goal, purpose, and format of the group; therefore, below you'll find information that is designed to help guide you in answering such questions. In addition, you'll find background information about working with jail or prison staff. Further, this resource highlights some of the ways that facilitating groups with incarcerated women is different from working with survivors who are not incarcerated, such as group topics that may be different, or unique concerns that require a different advocacy approach. Also, below you will find a general overview of issues affecting incarcerated women that may be helpful as you get started.

## **Incarcerated Women in the U.S.: A Brief Overview**

### ▪ *Becoming familiar with experiences of incarcerated women*

Despite the fact that, in many ways, people in jails and prisons are largely invisible to most people in the U.S., the mainstream media has done a lot to create and perpetuate myths and misconceptions about what jails and prisons are like, and what the people are like who are incarcerated in them. Thus, even if you haven't worked with incarcerated women before, you nevertheless might have some ideas about what to expect from the jail or prison, the group, and the women themselves. In many cases, what you experience may be very different from what you expect.

Therefore, before starting to work with incarcerated women, it might be helpful for you to become familiar with the context of incarcerated women's lives and the conditions in which people incarcerated in your local or state institution live, in particular. At the end of this document is a listing of articles, books, and documentaries that may offer a helpful overview of incarcerated women's experiences. Also, throughout this document, resources that may be particularly relevant to a given topic are highlighted in that section.

### ▪ *Jail vs. Prison*

People outside the criminal legal system may use the terms "jail" and "prison" interchangeably, but there are important differences between jails and prisons.

A *jail* is generally a short-term detention facility. When a person charged with a crime is held without bail, or when that person is unable to pay the bail that was set, she will be sent to jail until her trial (or until she is able to make bail).

Most jails also incarcerate people who have city or county sentences (as opposed to state or federal sentences). City or county sentences tend to be shorter, generally a year or less, although they may be up to two years in some jails.

Women with longer sentences will generally be sent to a state or a federal *prison*, where the state or federal government imprisons them, rather than the city or county.

Typically, the percentage of women in jail who are awaiting trial will be larger than the percentage of those who have already been sentenced. As a result, the population of a jail is in constant flux. Some women may be out of jail within a day if they are able to post bail; some women will wait a few weeks to be released, for example, if their charges are dismissed at an early stage of the legal process; others can wait as long as two years or more before their cases go to trial.

Jails are usually local, while prisons are often hundreds of miles from a woman's neighborhood. Incarcerated women may get infrequent visits from friends and family, or none at all. The geographical distance of prisons often make visitation nearly impossible.

Jails often place greater restrictions on a woman's mobility within the facility than do prisons. While prison may offer opportunities to move around outside of one's cell, jails may require more confinement.

→ This excerpt is taken from the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women (2009) manual *Working with Battered Women in Jail: A Manual for Community-Based Battered Women's Advocates*.

In general, as you probably already know, the vast majority of women in jails and prison are survivors of incest, other forms of sexual assault, and battering; most have experienced various forms of trauma throughout their lifetimes, and usually have been abused by multiple people (DeHart, 2004; Green, Miranda, Daroowalla, & Siddique, 2005).

Also, people from marginalized communities – women of color, poor women, lesbian, bisexual, transgender<sup>2</sup> and gender non-conforming<sup>3</sup> people, and women with mental health issues – are disproportionately incarcerated, not because they're more likely to commit crimes, but because conditions of oppression within our communities restrict people of color and other marginalized people's access to resources, subject them to increased surveillance and brutality, create institutional responses that criminalize their survival strategies, and/or subject them to greater punishment, all of which contribute to their being disproportionately arrested, charged, convicted, and incarcerated (Kearney, 2003; Richie, 2005; Sudbury 2002).

Therefore, it's important to be familiar with the experiences of – and comfortable working with – women of color, poor women, lesbians, bisexual people, transgender people, and gender non-conforming people, and women and other people with mental health issues when starting to work with incarcerated women.

---

<sup>2</sup> Transgender is a term defined by the Transgender, Gender-Variant, and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) as "an umbrella and political term used predominantly in North America and Europe that describe people whose gender expression does not correspond to traditional gender roles, and/or whose gender identity is different from their birth-assigned gender. Can include everything from transsexuals to butch women and feminine men."

<sup>3</sup> Gender non-conforming and gender-variant are umbrella terms defined by TGIJP as describing "people who defy gender norms, but for cultural and/or personal reasons do not identify as 'transgender.'"

→ There are many books, articles, and other resources that address the experiences of women of color in prison. See, for example, Beth Richie's (1995) *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered, Black Women*, Julia Sudbury (2002), *Celling black bodies: Black women in the global Prison Industrial Complex*, and other articles cited in the resources section.

→ For more information about/for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and/or gender non-conforming people in prison, the following organizations and resources may be helpful: the California Coalition for Women Prisoners (see *Fire Inside* issue 35 about the experiences of transgender and gender non-conforming people in women's prisons at [www.womenprisoners.org/fire/issue\\_35\\_springsummer\\_2007.htm](http://www.womenprisoners.org/fire/issue_35_springsummer_2007.htm)); LockedOut, c/o the Prison Book Project, a list of resources for LGBT people in prison ([www.prisonbookprogram.org/nprl-lgbt.pdf](http://www.prisonbookprogram.org/nprl-lgbt.pdf)); the Sylvia Rivera Law Project ([srlp.org/areas/criminal\\_justice](http://srlp.org/areas/criminal_justice)); and the Transgender, Gender-Variant, and Intersex Justice Project ([www.tgijp.org](http://www.tgijp.org)).

▪ *A note about language*

The majority of people charged with or convicted of crimes who contact the National Clearinghouse are women who have been battered by a male intimate partner and have been charged with or convicted of a crime. Thus, for clarity and consistency, this document primarily uses the term "battered women" throughout when referring to people in prison. We recognize, however, that not all people incarcerated in women's jails or prisons identify as women. In fact, over the past decade, some prisoner rights organizations have started talking about "working with people in women's prisons" in an effort not only to be more inclusive of people's gender expressions or presentations, but also to expand notions of gender justice to reflect the struggles for self-determination of people who challenge the gender binary system (i.e., a system of dividing the world into two mutually exclusive categories of masculine and feminine) (Sudbury, 2011).

It's also worth noting is that approximately 70% of incarcerated women have minor children (Greenfeld & Snell, 1999), and many women struggle to maintain contact with their children through letters, phone calls, and visits despite tremendous institutional barriers. Most women are charged with or convicted of drug-related or property crimes, many of which were either directly or indirectly related to their experiences of trauma, oppression, and survival. Of those charged with or convicted of crimes against a person, their histories of being battered by an intimate partner or otherwise abused also are either directly or indirectly related to the crime for which they are charged or convicted (and many survivors never have the opportunity to fully explain the relevance of this history of abuse to the courts).

In addition, it's important for group facilitators to know that in many jails and prisons, access to adequate (let alone quality) health care, dental care, pre-natal care, and mental health care is



extremely limited. In many states, budget crises mean that not only are educational and supportive programming for incarcerated people is being cut back, but even basic necessities such as meal portions, toilet paper, tampons, and cleaning supplies also are being cut. Further, correctional officers sometimes ration prisoners' access to basic needs as a tool to punish people for alleged transgressions or for resisting efforts by the institution to control and repress them.

These are just some of the issues with which it's critical for advocates working with incarcerated women to familiarize themselves. This brief review of incarcerated women's experiences is, of course, an oversimplification. As in all other areas of life, each individual person's experience will be quite different from anyone else's, despite commonalities.

Among battered women in jail, for instance, the needs and experiences of the 22-year-old woman from Shanghai in the U.S. on a student visa who was arrested last week on a misdemeanor assault charge against her boyfriend will be very different from the 31-year-old Latina mother of three who still is breastfeeding her youngest, who also was charged with a misdemeanor assault against her partner. Their experiences will be very different from the 28-year-old white woman who was picked up three days ago for the third time for alleged drug possession. Her experience, in turn, will be very different from the 29-year-old African American woman who has been in jail for 11 months, awaiting trial on multiple felony charges relating to the stabbing of her boyfriend, or the 42-year-old self-identified butch who was arrested six weeks ago with her co-defendant girlfriend and charged with armed robbery.

Further, among people in women's prisons, the 63-year-old African American Muslim woman who has been incarcerated for 21 years who is serving a life sentence will have very different lived experiences – including her experiences in prison – from the 25-year-old African American, lesbian-identified, gender non-conforming Christian who has been in prison since she was 17 and is also serving a life sentence. Their experiences in turn will be very different from the 34-year-old white woman who is serving her 14<sup>th</sup> prison term for a drug-related charge who is scheduled to be released in 11 months, or from the 46-year-old Latina immigrant who learned English since entering prison 16 years ago who faces deportation to her country of origin once she is released on parole.

In addition to the resources listed at the end of this document, for more information about the demographics of incarcerated women in your county, region, or state, and the specific issues and concerns facing incarcerated women in your area, you might want to review your county or region's sheriff's department website or the state department of corrections website for demographic data, as well as resources from your local or regional prisoner rights organization for information about conditions of confinement.

→ To find a prisoner rights organization near you, consult the *2009 Prisoner Support Directory* published by the Prison Activist Resource Center (PARC). Available online at: [www.prisonactivist.org/sites/all/files/prisonersupportdirectory\\_June2009.pdf](http://www.prisonactivist.org/sites/all/files/prisonersupportdirectory_June2009.pdf)

## **Purpose and structure of the group**

### ▪ *Goals and objectives of the group*

What type of group are you planning to develop? What do you hope to achieve through the group process? It's important to articulate the goals of the group so facilitators and participants will have a clear understanding of the group's purpose – and, perhaps to a lesser extent, to secure approval for the group from jail or prison administrators. Identifying specific goals and purposes of the group also will help you match the right group format to your goals and identify appropriate facilitators. Some possible goals – particularly for groups in prison – may include:

- To educate women about the dynamics of domestic violence
- To support domestic violence survivors' healing from the effects of trauma
- To support group participants in healing of the full range of trauma they may have experienced (i.e., intimate partner battering, child abuse and neglect, sexual abuse, including abuse that happened while incarcerated)
- To support survivors of abuse in developing strategies and identifying resources to help prevent them from experiencing abuse again in the future (while in prison and/or once they are released)
- To help survivors address the impact of incarceration on their lives (i.e., the re-traumatizing effects of prison conditions and/or abuse within jail or prison; the impact on their children and families)
- To support survivors through the grieving process (i.e., about the death of their intimate partner and/or their children; about the loss of those and other relationships; about the incident that led to their incarceration; about the loss of their freedom)
- To help survivors plan and prepare for being released, including developing comprehensive strategies for enhancing their safety while in the community
- To identify ways for incarcerated survivors to be part of the larger movement to end violence against women/family violence while they're in prison and after they are released

Clearly, there are many issues that group work with incarcerated battered women may address (and many more than those listed here). While it may not be possible to address all of the above issues in one group, it may be helpful for facilitators to have a general sense of the initial goal(s) of the group as you review the following factors to consider when facilitating groups with incarcerated women. Also, keep in mind that the goals and objectives may change and evolve over time, with input from group members.

### ▪ *Structural considerations of the group format*

As with groups with women who are not incarcerated, establishing a group with incarcerated women requires making many decisions about the structure of the group. Working within jails or prisons, however, may require different or additional considerations when weighing how best to structure the group.

There are many different models, types, or formats of groups that you might choose to utilize when working with incarcerated survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and/or other forms

of interpersonal trauma: psycho-educational groups, peer-led groups, arts-based groups (i.e., creative writing, drama, and visual arts), advocacy/social change groups, and others. One group of women in prison even formed a group to discuss their nightly dreams, which ended up providing a forum for discussing their experiences of domestic violence outside of a traditional support group model (DeHart, 2010).

A full exploration of the benefits of one group format over another is beyond the scope of this document; little research has been done on the efficacy of one model of community-based group work with survivors of battering as compared with other models, let alone the efficacy of different types of groups among battered women in prison (see Messina, Grella, & Cartier, in review, for an exception).

For a listing of group curricula and related resources for people who are doing group work with survivors of trauma, please see *Curricula and workbooks for addressing abuse & other forms of trauma* at the end of this document. Please note that we could find very few published curricula specifically designed for working with incarcerated women, although we do have some developed by community-based anti-domestic violence organizations that we are happy to share.

Please keep in mind, however, the heightened legal risks to people with pending criminal charges that may be associated with certain types of groups (i.e., psycho-educational groups, writing groups). Generally, for jail-based groups, we suggest general information sessions about available services, rather than a support group model where people are invited to make personal disclosures. If you have questions about the risks associated with particular group formats for women in jail, please contact the National Clearinghouse.

- *Criteria for participation for groups*

Given that the vast majority of women in jail or prison have experienced some form of abuse during their lifetimes, often by multiple people over time, it's possible that every single woman incarcerated at the jail or prison at which you wish to facilitate a group may be a survivor of abuse and may wish to join the group.

The jail setting generally lends itself more to discreet information sessions about what services in the community are available to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of trauma, and how women can access them from the jail or upon release, rather than a traditional support group that your organization may be familiar with facilitating for abuse survivors who are not incarcerated. A more in-depth discussion follows in the *Confidentiality* section (below), but generally, it's preferable for legal reasons for jail-based groups to avoid opening groups up to conversations about individuals' experiences, unless group members already have been convicted and are serving out their sentence in the jail.

*Note: If you wish to facilitate a group at the jail that is a more process-oriented support group (instead of conducting informational sessions), it's preferable to limit participation to people*

*who already have been convicted and are serving their sentences due to confidentiality concerns.*

Thus, for most groups in the jail, if you are providing general information sessions about domestic violence and/or about community-based advocacy services that are available to survivors of abuse, there probably is no reason why you would need to create a process to determine who is eligible for participation in the group. Most likely, the information you are providing will be valuable to everyone incarcerated at the jail, and you can open the group up to whomever wants to attend.

For battered women who are in jail on more serious felony charges, and thus may be in custody for a longer period of time, there may be opportunities to provide individual advocacy and support, in consultation with the woman's defense attorney. A discussion about individual advocacy with battered women charged with crimes is beyond the scope of this document; please see the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women's (2009), *Working with Battered Women in Jail: A Manual for Community-Based Advocates* for further information.

In the prison setting, however, what will work best for your group in terms of determining participation probably will depend on a variety of factors, including the number of women at the prison and the training, expertise, and preference of the group facilitators. Given the significant needs of women in prison, some facilitators decide to keep their group open to anyone who would like to participate (Moon & Bennett, 1987). Others limit participation only to survivors of adult domestic violence, rather than including women who were abused as children but not as adults (Davidson & del Rio, 1988).

- *Time of day*

As with groups on "the outside," whether you offer the group during the day or during the evening depends not only on the availability of the facilitator(s), but also on the availability of the participants. In jails, women may have other programming that they are required to attend during the day, such as school classes or substance abuse treatment groups; on the other hand, many jails have no structured programming available at all for women. In prisons, many women work full-time jobs within the prison (and, for some incarcerated at lower security-level facilities who are eligible for work-release programs, they may work off-site), or women may be attending classes or other programming during the day, so evening groups may be preferable.

Also, the schedule of the jail or prison often is organized around shift changes for guards and other staff, as well as "counts," when staff count the number of prisoners to ensure that everyone is present. Check with people at the jail or prison, including incarcerated women, to determine when the best time for a group would be.

- *Frequency and duration*

Many advocacy programs are accustomed to offering weekly support groups for battered women at their shelter or community offices. While it would be ideal to offer equivalent services to

incarcerated women, it may not be feasible for your program to provide this level of service. Traveling to the prison on a weekly basis, for example, may be difficult, given that prisons in the U.S. – especially women’s prisons – often are located far from urban areas or even rural town centers. Or, even if the local jail is geographically closer to your program, it may be difficult to add another weekly group to your already overloaded workload. If a weekly group with women in jail or prison doesn’t feel sustainable, consider offering groups every other week or at another interval that works for your program and for the group participants.

Similarly, even if the duration of the group itself is the same as the group you offer at your organization (i.e., 1½ or 2 hours), be sure to build in sufficient time before the group meetings for facilitators to go through security at the jail or prison, and expect delays each time you enter the facility. Generally, something happens to slow down the clearance process – whether it’s that necessary paperwork was not sent or received, a staff person is out and someone new is filling in, an incident happened within the facility that needs to be addressed, or the staff person who is assisting you is simply not in the mood to process you through quickly.

▪ *Open groups, closed groups, and mixed groups*

Related to issues of frequency and duration of the groups are questions about whether or not to offer the group as a “closed” group cycle, where new members are invited to join the new group only when the group is getting started, but not after the initial meeting.

Again, in the jail setting (with a few exceptions, particularly in large urban areas), there probably will not be enough people serving their sentences in the jail to comprise a closed group. For people whose cases have not been adjudicated, any kind of group or information session that varies from one week to the next tends to be open, if only because new people are coming into the jail and others are leaving.

Prisons tend to be better suited for closed groups. Some facilitators of groups in prison choose to offer a structured educational curriculum for a certain number of weeks (i.e., 8 or 16), and to give a certificate for people who complete the group cycle.

Questions that arise from a closed group structure within prisons include:

- Who determines who gets to join the group – do prison staff have a role in choosing who participates? Is it first-come, first-served? Is it only open to those who will be released from prison soon (i.e., in the next 6 months – 2 years)? What about access for women who are serving longer prison terms, including life sentences?
- Is there value in having different groups for particular “subgroups” within the prison (i.e., “short-termers”, “long-termers”, those serving Life Without Parole sentences, young women, elders, women on death row – if they are eligible for services) who may have unique concerns or experiences that they would want to explore primarily with other similarly situated women? Or is it better to maintain a mix of experiences and identities in order to help build solidarity between women of diverse experiences?

- What might the implications of these various decisions be on the racial composition of the group?

The diversity of women’s experiences regarding the terms of their incarceration is one area where the context of doing groups in prison may differ significantly from doing groups “in the community,”<sup>4</sup> especially given that some women may be serving sentences that extend for decades – or even the rest of their lives. As former long-time group facilitator Barbara Davidson said, “It’s such a different setting from the shelter. The group members attend over a very long period of time. Women at the shelter, whether residents or nonresidents, come and go” (Davidson & del Rio, 1988, p. 4).

Several programs have chosen to address some concerns raised by limiting group participation to a set number of people by having an “initial” group for a set cycle (i.e., 16 weeks), after which point members who want to continue to meet can move into an “ongoing” group that people can join at any time (i.e., Moon & Bennett, 1987). The goal and purpose of the “ongoing” groups vary, but such groups often address not only more advanced topics around support and healing from the effects of trauma, but also can be a place to attend to group business and/or social change efforts.

For example, participants in longer term, ongoing groups have engaged in such activities as participating in political campaign work for supportive politicians; creating art projects or videos for public education efforts; speaking to groups of battered women living at the local shelter; and organizing larger domestic violence awareness events for other women at the prison, with invited outside guests, among other activities.

Depending on your organization’s capacity and the number of women incarcerated at the prison, it may be possible to try out different group configurations over time to see what arrangement works best.

- *Roles of facilitators in jail*

As you consider starting a group with battered women in jail, it’s helpful for yourselves and for group members to have clarity about the facilitator’s role. Because for the most part – although this varies tremendously by community – the majority of women in jail have not yet been convicted of a crime, and because two-thirds of people in jail are released within one week of being arrested (Minton & Sabol, 2009), group facilitators’ roles in jail may be very different from facilitators’ roles in prison.

As previously mentioned, the jail setting generally lends itself more to discreet information sessions about what services in the community are available to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and other forms of trauma, and how women can access them from the jail or

---

<sup>4</sup> We use “in the community” here to signify groups that happen outside of jail or prison. In doing so, our intention is to acknowledge the ways that jails and prisons structurally isolate people from their families and the communities from which they come, not to imply that incarcerated women are not part of our communities, nor that they do not build their own community inside jail or prison.

upon release. If you wish to facilitate a process-oriented support group at the jail, it's preferable to limit participation to people who already have been convicted and are serving their sentences due to confidentiality concerns.

In some communities, advocates also take on the role of encouraging other community-based organizations to do similar information sessions in the jail as well, such as civil legal services (e.g., child custody issues or child welfare system involvement), employment assistance agencies, health educators (e.g., HIV/STI prevention), etc.

Thus, the facilitator's role in jail-based groups is primarily to ensure that information about available community-based services is shared with as many people as possible. Sharing such information in a consistent and compassionate way helps send a message to women in jail that they are important, that they are worth investing in, and that they are not alone.

- *Roles of facilitators in prison*

In the prison setting, the goal and purpose of groups often are quite different from the jail setting, given that prisons and jails are quite different; people in prison have been convicted of a crime and generally are in prison for longer periods of time (see section on "Purpose and structure of the group" above for additional information). Therefore, in prison, there is more opportunity – with perhaps less legal risk – to engage in more of a process-oriented group, where the facilitators' role generally includes facilitating discussions and exchanges.

There are some ways that the roles of prison group facilitators are similar to the jail setting, however; as Moon and Bennett (1987) described their group, "The group is designed as a support group with members maintaining control over their process and direction. The role of the facilitators is to provide information, make suggestions about group process and direction, and to be a link to the outside community" (p. 1).

While the facilitators' roles may shift and evolve over time in your group, coming to the group with clear intentions about your roles may help bring transparency to the group and help build the supportive community you're trying to create.

- *Identifying "outside" group facilitators*

We all know that advocates in our communities are working incredibly hard under difficult conditions, with diminishing resources, to address the needs of battered women and their children and to promote safer, healthier families and communities. It's difficult to imagine adding more work to advocates' already significant workloads. Yet we also know that U.S. jails and prisons are full of women who have been battered, and that these women also are a part of our communities and deserve support and tools for healing and transformation, too.

Several long-time facilitators of groups with battered women in prison suggest that prison-based groups ideally would have two people serving as co-facilitators, for a variety of reasons. Because working within a prison setting creates different conditions for facilitating a group as compared to working with women who are not incarcerated (see further details below), it can be helpful for

facilitators to have another person with whom to process, strategize, and share responsibility for the group. The need for multiple facilitators may not be as great for groups in jail, but it may also be helpful to have more than one person who is trained and experienced in working in the jail setting.

Also, many – if not most – incarcerated women have had repeated experiences of being disappointed and disrespected by people, including people representing institutions and organizations designed to assist them. Therefore, once an organization commits to working with incarcerated women, there’s a heightened need for consistency. Having more than one facilitator who is experienced with running a group within a prison setting can help increase the chances that a group session still can happen if one of the facilitators is sick, has transportation or childcare issues, is on vacation, or encounters any unforeseen administrative barriers to getting to the prison.

What if your program doesn’t have the resources to devote two program staff to facilitating a group? Given community-based advocacy organizations’ limited resources, how can organizations increase their capacity to provide ongoing support to incarcerated battered women? Some possibilities for mobilizing additional resources include:

- Think about former advocates who may no longer be working with an advocacy program, or therapists or others who have a background in working with domestic violence survivors, who may be open to (re-)engaging in the work as a volunteer. There often are people who have moved on from working or volunteering with our organizations for a variety of reasons, but who may retain a desire to make a difference in the lives of battered women. They may be interested in re-engaging in the work in such a specific and important way if you were to invite them to join you.
- Explore partnerships with faculty or graduate students at area colleges and universities who either could participate as volunteers or through a more formalized institutional arrangement in collaboration with a Masters of Social Work or Counseling Psychology program, for example. Creating an ongoing internship opportunity in partnership with a graduate program or other training program, where interns would have access to ongoing training and supervision, may be worth exploring, although this strategy also may be complicated given the heightened need for consistency in working with incarcerated women. If you utilize interns, it’s preferable for that person to co-facilitate with a more consistent staff person or volunteer. Also, it is important that group members know from the beginning how long the intern will participate as a co-facilitator. Further, if possible, build in time for group members to give feedback about working with interns (e.g., through anonymous evaluation surveys at the end of a group cycle).
- Ideally, recruit formerly incarcerated domestic violence survivor(s) to co-facilitate the group, if possible. Many formerly incarcerated battered women are eager to “give back” to the community and seek out ways to provide ongoing support to those who remain imprisoned. Many also have years of experience facilitating peer-led support or education



groups within prisons. Still others may appreciate receiving the same kind of training and support about how to facilitate groups that your organization would offer to any facilitator.

Either way, it might be helpful to check in with the person, both before she starts co-facilitating as well as occasionally once the group has started, about the emotional effects of returning to a jail or prison and/or hearing other women's stories of surviving abuse. Depending on how long it has been since her release, how long she was incarcerated, whether she's returning to the same institution, and/or what her individual experiences were like, returning to jail or prison may bring up difficult feelings. With any facilitator, but especially with formerly incarcerated women, it may be helpful to build in self-care strategies or ways that co-facilitators can support each other in the event that old traumas are re-activated during the course of the group or being in jail or prison.

Also, before explicitly recruiting someone who is formerly incarcerated, you might want to check with the jail, prison, or corrections department to ensure that the person would not be barred from entering the institution because of her record. There may be challenges for formerly incarcerated people in getting clearance to enter the prison, especially if they were incarcerated at the same prison, but it's not impossible. Depending on the individual jail, prison, sheriff, warden, or state or federal correctional system's policies, the length of time since the person was released, and the original charge(s), a formerly incarcerated battered woman may be successful in securing permission to serve as a facilitator.

Regardless of who the outside facilitator(s) is/are, it's important that they receive training and supervision from your community-based advocacy program in order to ensure that the philosophy and values of the program are reflected in the group work. Also, building in organizational oversight helps protect the rights and interests of group participants in the event that the facilitator(s) engage in any unethical or unprincipled behaviors.

- *Identifying "inside" facilitators: Co-facilitating with women in prison*

One approach you might want to consider when facilitating groups in prison is whether it is feasible to co-facilitate the group with an incarcerated woman (possibly as a rotating position over time). Depending on what programming is (or has been) available at the prison, as well as the skills and experiences women brought with them to prison, there may be some skilled facilitators among the women in the group or women who would thrive in the role if given the opportunity.

The practice of co-facilitating the group with an incarcerated woman may be an excellent opportunity to model sharing power with women inside. Chances are high that drawing on the leadership skills of incarcerated women will help ensure that the group content is relevant to the experiences of incarcerated women (i.e., that exercises reflect the experiences of women inside and that topics are most on-point with what women inside want to discuss).

At the same time, the possibility exists for the practice of co-facilitating with a woman in prison to create a complicated group dynamic, if such a position is seen as showing favoritism to a particular prisoner or if people assign power to that role in ways that are destructive to the group. For this

reason, it might be preferable to have the co-facilitator be a rotating position, perhaps after the first cycle of the group is finished (if you chose to have a closed, time-limited group; see below for further discussion), with someone who has gone through the group filling that role.

- *General information about group facilitation*

If you haven't already done so, you might want to check out some general resources for practitioners about running groups. Group work is incredibly challenging in any setting, particularly when you are trying to do it in a way that models equitable power dynamics. If possible, it's important for facilitators to get support and supervision when facilitating groups. Ideally, such support (either from within or outside your organization) would be from people who are experienced at group facilitation and/or have worked with incarcerated people, although we understand that such expertise is rare and you may not be able to identify someone in your community. If that's the case, please feel free to contact the National Clearinghouse; we're happy to talk with you and to connect you with other advocates who are doing group work with incarcerated women.

There are many books available to help guide facilitators, as well as academic journals such as *The Journal for Specialists in Group Work* (published by Routledge).

→ See also Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2006). *Circle of Hope: A Guide for Conducting Psychoeducational Support Groups*.  
[www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf](http://www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf)

→ See, for example, Marianne Schneider Corey, Gerald Corey, and Cindy Corey. (2010) *Groups: Process and Practice, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

→ See also Charles D. Garvin, Lorraine M. Gutierrez, and Maeda J. Galinsky (Eds). (2004). *Handbook of Social Work with Groups*. The Guilford Press.

- *Evaluation*

We encourage you to build an evaluation component into your group or information sessions, either at the end of each session or at the end of a group cycle. You can ask participants for feedback about how relevant the topic, exercises, and discussions were to them. We encourage you to seek ongoing feedback from the participants and adjust your activities in ways that incorporate the women's suggestions. Contact the National Clearinghouse for sample evaluation forms.

More information about evaluations would be incredibly helpful to the National Clearinghouse as well, given how little information is available about what tools and strategies are effective for group work with incarcerated women. If you do build evaluation into your group, please consider sharing your results with the National Clearinghouse (we might even be able to help identify a researcher to help you think about how to structure your evaluations; if you're interested in working with a researcher, please contact us).

## **Group guidelines**

As with any group, it can be helpful to have guidelines regarding group members' participation in order to support all group members (including facilitators) in having a clear understanding of what's expected of them and in building positive group dynamics. Working with women in jail or prison, however, warrants heightened attention to issues of confidentiality and managing differences in power and privilege. Below are some ideas for issues to include within your group guidelines to help create effective groups.

- *Confidentiality*

Confidentiality is a cornerstone of advocacy with survivors of battering and generally is a guiding principle of any support group for battered women. Such guidelines are essential to building trust among group participants and with facilitators.

Within a jail or prison setting, however, it's important to keep in mind the unique legal and emotional risks that prisoners face when disclosing facts about their cases, and to build in practices designed to minimize those risks as much as possible – namely, avoiding talking about the details of the incident that led to their arrest and conviction.

From a legal perspective, it's important to remember that any group – whether meeting in a jail or prison or not – technically is not a confidential space. As you probably know, once a third party is present (unless that third-party is an official interpreter), no confidentiality exists, and that third party could serve as a witness in a criminal or other legal proceeding.

Thus, anything incarcerated women say about the facts of the incident that led to their arrest or incarceration – even in a group with a shared agreement about maintaining confidentiality – could be used against them, now or in the near or distant future. If there are any inconsistencies between statements said before, during, or after trial (or at parole hearings or evidentiary hearings in court about their case), those inconsistencies could be exploited in ways that could harm her legal defense or block the woman's release from prison. This is one reason why group facilitators should discourage women from talking about the facts of their case or from writing down anything relating to their case. Even when shared with the best of intentions (e.g., for the purpose of supporting survivors' healing), such statements can come back to haunt incarcerated women in painful ways.

What we mean when we say “the facts of someone's case” are the details surrounding the incident itself (i.e., what happened, how it happened, where it happened, when it happened, who was involved, etc.). It's often difficult to know how much information would be included or excluded in that definition, particularly in terms of the timeframe.

A general guideline is for facilitators to consistently remind group members to avoid saying details of their case that could be used against them, and mention that you may interrupt them during group if you feel that they are getting into details that they should not discuss in public. What they *can* talk about, however, is their experiences of being abused and the effects of the abuse on their lives.

It's important to keep in mind that even though people who are incarcerated in state or federal prison already have been convicted of a crime, that doesn't necessarily mean that they do not have any open legal issues. For example, they may be able to challenge their conviction on appeal or through state or federal *habeas* petitions. They may seek to be released on parole or to have their sentence commuted. In each of these situations, the women's cases – and lives – often are put under a microscope and, as stated above, statements perceived to be inconsistent could be used against incarcerated women.

If you decide to facilitate an arts-based group in jail or prison, or anytime you incorporate writing exercises into your group, it is important to be mindful of the possible legal implications for group participants when they discuss details of their case. Particularly when there is a written record, women's disclosures about the facts of their cases sometimes can have negative consequences. In an ideal world, every woman would have access to an experienced criminal defense attorney (and for women who've been convicted, ideally one who specializes in post-conviction relief) who could review any written statements – particularly ones that might someday be made public, such as in an exhibit, book, online forum, etc. – in order to advise their client about the possible risks of that statement.

Unfortunately, as we all know, we do not live in an ideal world; few women in prison are represented by attorneys, and those in jail who have attorneys often are represented by people with excessive caseloads. If you are working with women who do not have legal representation and you plan to publish anything (even informally and/or on the internet) written by incarcerated women, you may want to ask a criminal defense attorney to review the writings with an eye toward protecting incarcerated women's legal interests. For women who do have legal representation, encourage them to run their writing past their attorney before publication.

Fortunately, in most cases it's not necessary for facilitators to know the details of what led to women's incarceration. As Moon & Bennett (1987) explain:

The type of crime committed is not relevant to group admission and facilitators make no effort to obtain that information. The individual group members make the choice of whether and when to share that information. Women who have participated in the...[g]roup are incarcerated for a wide variety of crimes. It is essential that group facilitators relate positively toward the women regardless of the kind of crime committed (p. 2).

Such an approach illustrates general advocacy goals: supporting domestic violence survivors' healing and connecting survivors with resources that ideally will help expand their options for maintaining safety.

Another reason to discourage group participants from talking about details of their cases or sentences is because it can lead to tensions among group members serving disparate sentences for seemingly similar crimes. As Bauschard (1988) described, "...very often, there are great differences in the amount of time given for the same offense, and this sets up barriers between women who otherwise have much in common" (p. 3.1). The differences in sentences may stem

from many factors, including different circumstances in the facts of the cases, different jurisdictions (i.e., some prosecutors or counties are more likely to pursue the death penalty or indeterminate life sentences than others), and/or institutional biases (such as racism, classism, and homophobia), among other factors.

Also, incarcerated women themselves have many reasons for not wanting to disclose information about their cases to group facilitators or other members (including that a conviction for some crimes, such as those involving the death or injury of a child, can put women at greater risk of harm from staff or other prisoners). It's common for women in prison to not know the details of other incarcerated women's stories; in fact, there are many women who have developed deep and enduring friendships with other incarcerated women over decades who do not know the details of the incident that led to their friend's incarceration, beyond a few simple details.

In sum, for these reasons – and many others – advocates should avoid asking women to disclose what they were convicted of or what sentence they are serving. Also, it would be helpful for facilitators to regularly remind women not to go into details about the facts of their case because such disclosures could be used against them.

If you have any questions about confidentiality issues, or would like to run your group confidentiality guidelines past someone from the National Clearinghouse, please do not hesitate to contact us at (800) 903-0111 ext. 3.

- *Issues of power, privilege & oppression within groups*

Many prisons for women incarcerate a diverse group of people (with a few exceptions, such as Vermont or West Virginia, where the demographics of the state are more homogenous), particularly in terms racial/ethnic identities. As discussed above, however, people of color and people from other marginalized communities tend to be over-represented in prisons for a variety of reasons (often having to do with how oppression functions in U.S. society).

Every prison will have its own dynamics and demographics, of course, just like every group – even different groups within the same prison – will have its own dynamics and demographics. In some prisons, for example, you might observe more support and solidarity among incarcerated women from different backgrounds than you have observed among women in community-based settings. Because they must live in such close proximity with other women 24/7 (sometimes for decades), many incarcerated women develop close relationships with women of other races, ages, religions, or sexual orientations that they might not otherwise have formed, or at least learn to live amicably with people who are very different from themselves.

At the same time, even in prisons where strong interracial support and solidarity exists among women prisoners, oppressive dynamics persist, both within groups as well as within the institution overall. Sometimes what this means is that within facilitated groups or peer-run organizations, the people whose voices are prioritized – who gets the most “air time” – most often are people with privilege (i.e., usually white women, often older, who may have had more access to formal education before entering prison).

As a group facilitator, it's important to be mindful of how such dynamics of power and privilege play out within the group, and to do what you can to minimize reinforcing oppressive patterns. For white people who are facilitating multi-racial groups in particular, it might be helpful to review some resources around challenging racism, both in terms of addressing one's own actions and beliefs, as well as attending to dynamics within the group. It may even be helpful to bring some of these resources to the group. Some helpful resources include:

→ The Catalyst Project (see, for example, their resources on Leadership Development & Collective Liberation)

[collectiveliberation.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=98](http://collectiveliberation.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=73&Itemid=98)

→ Challenging White Supremacy Workshop (see, for example, the listings under Creating an Anti-Racist Agenda at [www.csworkshop.org/resources/ARAgenda.html](http://www.csworkshop.org/resources/ARAgenda.html))

→ Dismantling Racism Works (see resources at [dismantlingracism.org/resources.html](http://dismantlingracism.org/resources.html))

→ The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond ([www.pisab.org/](http://www.pisab.org/))

In addition, it's important to incorporate some group agreements or guiding principles that invite the group to collectively create and sustain group dynamics that challenge various forms of oppression. We encourage you to come up with such agreements together with group members.

For an example, the California Coalition for Women Prisoners uses the following principles for their community-based meetings, many of which could be adapted for work with women in prison:

- Speak from your heart and experiences – use “I” statements
- Listen to the wisdom everyone brings to the group
- Practice “active listening” (i.e., attending to the speaker fully, rather than thinking about what you want to say next; if necessary, it involves repeating what the speaker said in the listener's own words to make sure the listener understood)
- Respect the person, challenge the behavior
- We're not here to judge each other, put each other down, or compete
- Prioritize the voices and leadership of people of color
- Give each other time and space to speak – raise hands
- Be on time
- Step up/step back (i.e., if you tend to be quiet, challenge yourself to speak up. If you tend to take up a lot of space, challenge yourself to be quiet)
- Focus on the agenda
- Ask clarifying questions – don't assume
- Don't disrespect or make light of other people's cultures, religions, etc.
- Be aware of language that replicates oppression and stereotypes
- Take care of yourself

Because the need for confidentiality in group is so great, we encourage you to include additional guidelines addressing it such as:

- Avoid discussing details of your case; facilitators may interrupt you if they feel you're getting into details that you should not discuss with anyone but your attorney
- What is said in the group stays in the group (i.e., do not repeat anything that other group members disclose in group to anyone else outside of group. Violations of confidentiality may result in you being asked to leave the group)

You may want to include the guidelines about confidentiality and not talking about the facts of one's case at the top of your list of principles and/or guidelines.

### **Certificates and letters of support**

#### ▪ *Giving certificates and or writing support letters*

As with groups you or your colleagues may facilitate in a community-based setting, you may receive requests from group members for a certificate of participation in the group, or for a letter of support based on their involvement in the group.

For women in jail, having a certificate of attendance for a group about domestic violence or community resources may be helpful during plea negotiations, at trial, sentencing, in terms of probation or parole, or in trying to access other community resources upon release, particularly if it is used to show that she is availing herself of available resources to improve her situation. Similarly, many women in prison – particularly those whose release must be approved by the parole board – request such documentation for their prison files in order to show to the parole board or others that they have taken advantage of available programming. For women who have attended groups of a longer duration, a support letter may go beyond mere documentation to describe the letter-writer's relationship with the prisoner, explain why the prisoner should be released (or have her sentence be mitigated or be eligible for services, etc.), and pledge additional support for her once she is released back to the community.

Whether or not you decide to provide certificates and/or to write support letters for group participants, you can reasonably assume that you will be asked to do so. Therefore, it is important to anticipate this reality and to develop an organizational policy explaining what you will (or will not) do when asked for a certificate or letter of support. You also might want to get feedback from group members to help form your policy or guidelines. Then be transparent with group members about your decision, let group members know your policy when they join the group, and be consistent in its implementation. Uniformity and consistency are important in order to avoid sending the message to incarcerated women that you're unfairly privileging one woman (or group of women) over others, which would negatively affect your and your organization's credibility as well as erode trust among group members. Uniformity and consistency also are important in terms of helping people in the system who are reading the letter or seeing the certificate (e.g., the judge, parole board, department of corrections) understand the purpose and parameters of the group so they have a general sense of what it means for someone to be a group member, and thus can more fairly evaluate what the letter or certificate means.

When developing the policy or guidelines, consider the possible unintended consequences of providing certificates or writing support letters, and develop your policy in order to minimize those consequences. For example:

- Will you only provide certificates of participation to group members who attend a certain number of sessions? If so, then does that require you to take attendance at the group? If yes, then how will that affect the group dynamics?
- What might the potential consequences be for survivors who are *not* able to access your group but who want to participate in the group, in terms of how they are evaluated by the parole board (i.e., people who are on the waiting list; women who speak languages other than English where groups are only offered in English; people who are not being released soon and thus may not be prioritized for participation in the group)?

In some states, for example, the parole board penalizes survivors who have not participated in a domestic violence group in prison, without realizing that groups are not offered at all of the women's prisons (or are only offered sometimes), that there is a waiting list, and/or that usually they are only offered in English. This is an example where transparency with group members and system players, as well as consistent application of your policy, may be helpful in avoiding negative outcomes.

- If you are asked to write a support letter for a group member and decide to do so, will you only write letters for people who ask for them, or for everyone who is in group? Again, what might the consequences be for people who don't have access to the group, or who don't know to ask for a letter?

Again, it may be helpful to regularly remind group members about your policy about providing letters or certificates, so that group members know when and how to ask for a letter. You may also want to consider having a generic form letter available for people who are not yet in the group to share with the parole board or department of corrections to remind people in those systems about the ways that access to your group is limited (e.g., that the group has a waiting list, is only offered quarterly, is for people being released within the next six months, etc.).

- If you decide to write letters, will you personalize the letters? If so, will you review any additional documentation (i.e., court records, prison records) about the woman's case or her conduct in jail or prison to inform your letter? If yes, what if you find conflicting information between the official record and information you have from the woman? Or, what if you are not able to access such information for everyone?

In California, for example, advocates at a statewide organization that worked with domestic violence survivors in state prison stopped referencing details about the facts



of women's cases or histories of abuse in their support letters because they found that the parole board often would use this information against the women. In certain cases, particularly when the women previously had mentioned their experiences of abuse and the parole board subsequently conducted an investigation into the abuse, if the investigators did not find evidence of the abuse, then the investigation findings and any future references to the abuse became especially harmful to the woman (i.e., to argue that she was making excuses and/or not taking responsibility for her behavior and therefore lacked insight into the crime).

These are just a few of some of the potential consequences of giving certificates or writing support letters for group members. We don't mean to imply that you shouldn't engage in such advocacy, but rather we encourage you to carefully weigh the implications of your decision for all incarcerated survivors as you decide how to proceed.

If you are trying to figure out your policy about providing certificates or letters of support, please feel free to give us a call to discuss this further. We are happy to review or share sample policies if that would be helpful.

### **Jail or prison administration, staff, and rules**

- *Relationships with administration and staff*

Every jail and prison will have a different approach to working with facilitators from the outside. Some will require you to go through an official volunteer orientation before you are able to enter the prison, and may have clearly articulated rules that govern what you can and cannot do as a volunteer. Some prisons will be far less structured in their approach to working with non-staff. Most jails and prisons will require you to submit to a criminal background check before you are "cleared" to enter the facility, and you also may need to get finger-printed. Regardless of how managed your contact with prison administrators and other staff is, your experience of interacting with staff in particular may vary from visit to visit, depending on the whims of the correctional officers or others with whom you come into contact.

If you haven't worked in a jail or prison setting before, it may be helpful to talk with other people who visit or run groups for incarcerated people in your area to get a sense of what to expect. The policies and institutional culture can vary tremendously from one jail or prison to another, even in the same region or state. If you don't know anyone in your area who goes into the jail or prison where you would like to run your group, contact the National Clearinghouse and we will try to help you strategize about people to contact.

With some institutions, you may need to develop ongoing relationships with the sheriff, warden, deputy warden, director of programming, director of volunteer services, chaplain, education department, visiting lieutenant, or other staff in order to gain access as an outside facilitator. They may require you to submit information in writing about the group, such as a written copy of your curriculum, and to gain approval for your plans from people higher up the chain of command within the department of corrections. In other systems, you may feel as if no one knows who you

are or why you are there, even after you've been showing up every week for months or even years.

It can be unnerving to attempt to navigate this new system and to assess how best to achieve your goals, especially when you're aware that making the wrong decision about who to talk to or what you say about the work you're trying to do could result in you being denied access to people at the jail or prison. Fears, frustrations, and/or confusion about how to work within the jail or prison most effectively – in a way that is not viewed as too controversial by the administrators or staff, nor as too compromised by group participants or other incarcerated women – are to be expected.

Keep in mind that your experiences of dealing with the staff and administrators are echoes of the constant assessments women inside must make about how best to manage their relationships with guards, non-custodial staff, and other prisoners, in a context in which their decision-making power is extremely limited and the institution exerts significant control over their lives.

- *Jail or prison staff and confidentiality*

In some jails and prisons, one of the conditions that the administrators may try to impose on group facilitators is that a correctional officer or other non-custodial staff member be present during group meetings or information sessions.

It probably goes without saying, but it's generally not a good idea for facilitators to agree to facilitate a group with correctional officers present. Given the institutional power assigned to correctional officers (i.e., guards or "cops"), and the opportunities that exist for that power to be abused and exploited, the presence of a correctional officer – even one who seems like a "good"/sympathetic one, or one who receives the endorsement of some group participants – would most likely damage the group and limit participants' willingness to share their experiences.

It may be difficult to avoid having a correctional officer stationed outside the meeting room, however, or depending on the institution, within the general vicinity where the group takes place (i.e., a large room where social visiting takes place, with groups being held in the furthest corner from the guards). If such situations are unavoidable, it might be helpful to discreetly discuss the situation with group members to see if they have ideas for how to minimize the harms of the officer's presence on the group dynamics (i.e., advocating for a different meeting space or agreeing to keep voices low to avoid being overheard).

Also, it will be difficult to avoid at least some correctional officers having information about who is a group participant – and thus, on some level, about participants' experiences of being battered – since participants have to get permission to leave their jobs or their housing units to attend the group session, and prisoners' location within the institution is tracked from moment-to-moment. This lack of confidentiality and privacy is a daily, lived reality for incarcerated women. As a facilitator, it's important to be aware of such ongoing erosions of confidentiality. It's also imperative that facilitators avoid sharing information about individual women or the group with

correctional officers, even if you have reason to believe that correctional officers already know the information.

In some situations, prison administrators may require a non-custodial staff (i.e., “civilian” or civil service staff from the education department, psychiatry department, or chaplaincy) to be present within the groups, or to serve as the group’s staff sponsor. In such situations, the non-custodial staff’s presence may be the only way that the group will be allowed to meet. While not ideal, this condition may be less problematic in terms of confidentiality than having correctional officers present, as non-custodial staff’s role and function within the institution is quite different (i.e., although they have considerable power in relation to incarcerated women, non-custodial staff generally do not have the same kind of monitoring or enforcement role regarding incarcerated women’s housing assignments or access to medical care, nor do they generally have access to women’s housing units or institutional files).

If this is the case, then again, if possible (and as discreetly as you can), try to check in with group members to gauge how comfortable they are with the presence of the particular staff person and to get ideas for possible strategies for minimizing the impact of the staff member. In most cases, incarcerated women are incredibly skilled at navigating the constraints and complications of working with jail or prison staff – no matter how supportive and well-intentioned those staff may be.

▪ *Jail or prison rules*

Beyond navigating relationships with administrators and staff, outside facilitators also need to contend with institutional rules that may affect how you facilitate the group. Things to try to find out before you begin facilitating the group include:

- Are facilitators from the outside permitted to touch women (i.e., to give hugs, or touch their arms or backs)? Can women in the group hug or touch each other?
- Are women subjected to strip searches before and/or after groups facilitated by outside facilitators?
- What items are contraband (i.e., chewing gum, paper clips, rubber bands, staples, binder clips, prescription drugs, cell phones, umbrellas, wallets, jewelry)?
- What items can you bring in to use in group, or mail in to group members (i.e., art supplies, pens, paper, stamps, hardcover books, paper handouts, photos, legal papers, recording devices, etc.)?
- What’s the dress code (i.e., can you wear open-toed shoes? Underwire bras? Hooded shirts or sweatshirts? Shirts or dresses with straps or that are strapless? Are particular colors prohibited?)?

- Can you bring in outside food or drinks (i.e., one group’s facilitators would bring in dinner each month for the group. When that became prohibited, they were allowed to eat with the women in the prison cafeteria before group and to bring in coffee, hot chocolate, and popcorn for during the group. Moon & Bennett, 1987)?
- Can you show videos or DVDs in group? If so, must someone from the prison review the content before showing it?
- Are there restrictions about what time you can enter the jail or prison, when you must leave, or how long you can stay? Also, are there any recommendations about when *not* to come, such as during shift changes, meals, “count” time, holidays, or weekends?
- Is there someone at the jail or prison who you can call if there is a problem and you’re not able to attend? If your group is after regular business hours, is there someone who will answer their phone if there is a problem and you need to get a message to group members?

While some of these rules and regulations may seem arbitrary (and may, in fact, be arbitrarily enforced), it’s important to know what behavior is expected of you, particularly given that your entry into the jail or prison can be denied or suspended at any time if you do not follow the rules.

▪ *A special note about institutional practices in response to suicide*

It’s possible that the jail or prison administration will require any “outside” facilitators who work with women in a group setting to report to jail or prison staff any disclosures by group members that they are feeling suicidal (often, there also are mandates to report any credible threats to harm others and any plans to escape or riot).

In your work on “the outside,” you probably have struggled with the difficulties and complications that arise when trying to develop a trusting and confidential relationship with a woman you are working with while also being a mandated reporter (about child abuse, for example), especially when bad things end up happening to the woman as a result of your report. Unfortunately, when working in jails and prisons, reporting possible suicidal behavior to the administration often creates terrible consequences for the (possibly) suicidal woman. Instead of being helped, women deemed to be suicidal are often further harmed. The institutional response will likely be organized around avoiding or minimizing liability, and concern for the individual’s mental health and well being may not be the biggest priority.

Given these realities, we believe it is extremely important to understand the parameters of your reporting requirements, have some information about and/or training in doing assessments for suicidality, and have some additional information and guidance about the institution’s response to prisoners who are suicidal in order to help guide your response. We are not suggesting that you should never report possible suicide threats. Rather, we are encouraging to learn all you can about what actually happens to suicidal/potentially suicidal

people at the jail or prison. And we are asking you to understand and weigh these realities as you assess if you are facing a situation that actually requires a report.

If possible before your group begins, try to get information in writing from the jail or prison about their official procedures for responding to prisoners who indicate that they are feeling suicidal. This will give you information about what the institutional response *should* be, if such a situation were to arise. In addition, please review your organizational policies about responding to women seeking services (e.g., hotline callers, women seeking therapy, group members, shelter residents) who disclose feeling suicidal so that you're aware of your own organization's guidelines and obligations. Hopefully, these sources of information will give you sufficient information to go forward if suicide comes up in your group.

As with any mandatory reporting requirement, it is important to clearly and regularly communicate the parameters of your reporting requirement to the women with whom you're working. For example, you might want to include a statement in the group guidelines that begin each session that you are mandated to report any disclosures of suicidality to the institution's administration.

In addition, once the group is underway and you find participants sharing information about what really goes on at the jail or prison, you also may want to get further information about what happens in practice at the institution when staff believe that an incarcerated woman is suicidal. The purpose of gathering additional information is so that, in the event that someone in group were to say that she wants to kill herself, you have a better understanding of the likely consequences for the woman if you were to report her suicidal ideation to administrators.

Ideally, knowing about the institution's official and unofficial responses will help guide what questions you ask in doing a thorough assessment of the woman's suicidality and your obligation to report the disclosure to jail or prison staff (i.e., Is this someone who is casually expressing feelings of despair about being incarcerated but who is not actually actively suicidal, and for whom aspects of the institution's intervention may amplify those feelings of despair? Or is this someone who has a plan for how she will kill herself, has the means to implement the plan, and is at risk of carrying it out? What is the facility's own criterion for accessing someone who is suicidal? For instance, will they automatic assign someone to suicide watch if staff determine that she is in "emotional distress" or crying, even if she does not express suicidal ideation?).

Incarcerated women will probably be the best source of information about the typical response to women who are suicidal. You may also want to check in with a prisoner rights organization in your area, if one exists, to see if they have any suggestions or guidelines on how respond to a suicidal prisoner at the jail or prison where you are running your group. Things to try to find out (casually – this doesn't have to be a topic for group discussion) include: when the jail or prison learns that a woman is feeling suicidal, does she then have quick, confidential access to a psychiatrist or other mental health professional? Will she receive follow-up care and support from a mental health professional? Or, will she be stripped of all clothing and put into 5-point

restraints on suicide watch? Will she be transported to the county hospital? Will she receive a disciplinary write-up? Will she be required to pay out of pocket for any appointments with a mental health professional?

Ideally, having this additional information about what the institutional response to expressions of suicidality in practice will give you more of a framework for thoughtfully weighing whether or not a woman's statements or behavior in group rise to the level of requiring a mandatory report to staff. Clearly, each situation needs to be carefully assessed, and there is no general guideline that we can offer in advance about what to do. Again, such situations are exceedingly rare, and we don't want to generate undue alarm or anxiety about this issue. Rather, we want to support you in feeling confident that, if you were to ever talk with a woman who expresses feeling suicidal, you would feel prepared, informed, and ready to trust your instincts about how to respond.

### **Group topics**

Advocates often ask for copies of curricula for groups with women in jail or prison. We are happy to share what we have (which is limited). If you have developed curricula that you would be willing to share with others, please let us know.

As previously stated, for practical and legal reasons, it probably doesn't make sense to facilitate a traditional support group for women in jail, unless they have been convicted and are serving out their sentence. Thus, the discussion that follows refers primarily to groups in state or federal prison, although it also would apply, most likely, to groups with sentenced women in county or regional jails.

In certain ways, the content of groups with women in prison will be the same as the content of groups you or your colleagues may have been facilitating in the community with women who are not incarcerated. There are several areas, however, where the context of the prison may warrant a different approach. Below are several key topic areas or approaches to consider incorporating into your work:

- *Healing tools and strategies*

One thing that it's important to keep in mind is that prison is not an environment where healing is supported or encouraged. Regardless of how supportive of "rehabilitation" the prison administration may appear to be, prisons are designed as places of social control, where the safety of "the public" (and of prison staff) generally gets prioritized over the safety and healing of incarcerated women. Thus, there often are many explicit and implicit rules in place that strictly govern and control how women interact with other people in the prison, including how women process their emotions.

Because of the controlled environment of prison, incarcerated women often talk about how the conditions within the prison replicate the abusive conditions that they experienced with their partners. As incarcerated survivor Ellen Kathleen Richardson (2004) writes in "It's Just Another Prison":

In prison you are told when to sleep, when to get up, when to eat, what you will eat and how much you may eat, when to go to work and which way you will walk to get there, what clothes you must wear and when to return home. If all these activities are not done exactly as ordered, you will be punished. Remember that most of the correctional officers that work in a women's prison are men, so even the gender is familiar to us...

In an abusive home all the rules above apply. The one difference is that most of the punishment is physical abuse, where in prisons most of the punishment is verbal abuse. Of course I do not feel that there is much difference between the two, one just heals faster than the other.

Thus, not only are incarcerated survivors continuing to live in environments where they are being subjected to coercive control, but – similar to many women's experiences of living with their abusive partner – the way survivors cope with that ongoing abuse is itself managed, monitored, and limited by other people.

When advocates come into the prison from the outside once a week, or a few times a month, and ask incarcerated survivors to talk about painful experiences within conditions where survivors do not have access to the kind of ongoing support that people outside of prison ideally have *and* where their living conditions replicate the kind of trauma you are inviting them to explore, it may require a different approach and or pacing.

What this might mean is that rather than starting a closed group cycle with a review of "what is domestic violence," you may want to consider using initial group sessions to review the effects of trauma, identify participants' emotional "triggers," discuss what healing looks (or feels) like to group members, and explore survivors' own self-care and coping strategies. Creating a shared foundation of coping skills and healing strategies on which group participants can draw and continue to build when going deeper into their healing work may be a helpful approach. Most likely, group members will find ample opportunities to practice these skills and strategies outside the group as well, given how re-traumatizing prisons are on a daily basis for many abuse survivors.

When considering tools for self-care and healing, it's important to be mindful of imprisoned women's experiences. While incarcerated women generally have lots of practice translating materials created for the "free world" to make them applicable to their own context, it would be great if as a facilitator, you could do some of that labor yourself (and/or in consultation with group members or formerly incarcerated women) by reviewing your handouts and adjusting examples for the prison context. References to "taking a long, hot bath," for example, are generally inappropriate self-care strategies since most incarcerated women don't have access to bathtubs. Some women in prison do talk about the shower being the one safe place for them to cry, however, so making a reference to that might be a suitable substitute.

Also, keeping a journal can be risky for incarcerated women, even if they are careful to avoid talking about any details of their criminal case. Women in prison have little control over the space

in which they live; what little property they are allowed to keep generally cannot be locked away in a private place, and their cells are subject to random (and sometimes incredibly invasive and destructive) searches by prison staff. Thus, having a journal that could be discovered and read by staff or by other prisoners puts incarcerated women in a vulnerable position. Some women who find writing to be helpful for their healing process, however, address this lack of privacy by writing down their feelings and then making a point to tear up the paper, turning the exercise into a cathartic healing ritual.

Another context for facilitators to keep in mind is the possibility that (depending on the prison) there may be significant emotional, psychological, and possibly even physical risks associated with displaying signs of emotional vulnerability within the group context. While the healing process often involves taking big emotional risks, such risks may have different meanings in the prison context. On an individual level, depending on the person, it may be especially hard for a survivor to open up emotionally in group when she knows that she does not have a private place to cry later, cannot call a friend or crisis hotline in the middle of the night if she's having nightmares or flashbacks, may be harassed by a supervisor when she returns to work, anticipates being yelled at by correctional officers on her way back to her housing unit, has experienced or witnessed other prisoners or staff using displays of emotional vulnerability against her or other incarcerated women, and/or for myriad other reasons.

In short, prisons generally are not emotionally or physically safe environments. Overt displays of emotion (i.e., grief, rage, fear, joy) may be seen as threatening to staff or other prisoners and often are punished, either directly or indirectly. Facilitators in Louisiana found that, "The prison forbids emotional outbursts and any kind of touching between inmates, even those designed to give comfort...It's very difficult for the women to have emotions without being punished" (Davidson & del Rio, 1988, p. 5).

All of that said, however, many incarcerated women find that groups are one of the few places where they are willing to express themselves and/or be vulnerable. The possibility of creating a transformative healing environment certainly exists.

Given the realities of the prison context, what can facilitators do? For one, it may be helpful to share self-care strategies, exercises, and coping skills that involve imagery, meditation, breathing exercises, and other mind- and body-centered practices that can be done anywhere.

For ideas of some exercises, please see the list of *Curricula and workbooks addressing abuse and other forms of trauma* at the end of this document.

Also, invite women to share some of their self-care tools and strategies for healing during the group (while recognizing that for some women, keeping such strategies private may be an important display of self-determination), and build a collective list that grows over time – and then please share that list with the National Clearinghouse so we can share it with other group facilitators.



Further, it might be validating to group members when you simply acknowledge that you're aware that expressing feelings or displaying vulnerability often involves considerable risk for incarcerated women; that topic itself might be a subject for discussion. Also, as when facilitating any group, keep in mind that group members who are quiet or who appear less engaged with the group process may actually be getting a lot out of the group. It probably goes without saying, but simply affirming everyone's presence in the group and refraining from making assumptions about group members' inner processes can be helpful for everyone.

Also, consider ending each group session – regardless of the focus of your group – with time for group members to identify at least one concrete thing that they each can do to take care of themselves for the rest of the day (i.e., listening to the radio, reading a book, writing a letter to a friend or loved one, meditating, making a list of personal affirmations, etc.), and or what they will do the next time they feel emotionally triggered. Then consider starting a future group with time for women to voluntarily share an example of what they did to take care of themselves and what it felt like to practice the strategies and skills discussed in a previous session.

Finally, given the depth of emotions that can be opened up within group, and the ways in which jails and prisons often limit incarcerated women's ability to safely express a range of emotions, you also might want to end each session with an activity that helps the participants "zip up" their emotion prior to going back to their pod or cells. Some facilitators use soothing music or comedic clips from films (if they have are able to utilize audio/visual equipment), relaxation exercises and visualizations, and similar strategies to help participants contain their emotions and prepare to transition back to the facility. Such exercises or activities can be done in conjunction with having group members identify something concrete that they will do to take care of themselves the rest of the day.

- *Domestic violence within the prison*<sup>5</sup>

As advocates working with incarcerated women, it's important to be aware that many women form intimate relationships with other women in jail or prison, even if they don't necessarily identify as lesbian, bisexual, or queer while incarcerated or on the outside.

While the realities of people's experiences within prison mean that advocates can assume that intimate partner battering *is* happening within the prison, it's also important to remember that this does not mean that all intimate relationships between women prisoners are abusive. As Christina Wilson (2003) writes, "Women loving women inside prison are creating opportunities for self-growth, mutual support, intimacy and trust with incredible hope and intention." There are many examples of relationships built on love, support, and solidarity among women in prison.

Nevertheless, the potential exists for women and transgender/gender non-conforming people in women's prisons to be abused, either by another prisoner or by staff. Most people develop

---

<sup>5</sup> This section addresses abuse in relationships between incarcerated women. See end of the section on "Domestic violence within the prison" for resources about abuse by correctional officers or other prison staff.

skills and strategies for protecting themselves while in prison, and advocates both can learn a lot from the creative strategies that incarcerated survivors employ and help support people's efforts to protect themselves and their friends inside.

→ For a comprehensive overview of violence experienced by people in jails and prisons for women, and the safety strategies they develop, see Owen, Barbara, Wells, James, Pollock, Joycelyn, & Muscat, Bernadette. (2008). *Gendered violence and safety: A contextual approach to improving security in women's facilities*. NCJ 225338. Available online (441 pages) at [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225338.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225338.pdf)

Most jails and prisons prohibit sexual activity of any sort, and for this reason alone, women in intimate relationships with other incarcerated women may be reluctant to talk openly in the group about their relationships – regardless of whether the relationship is an abusive one or a healthy one. In addition, despite the prevalence of same-sex relationships in prison, homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia<sup>6</sup> are common among staff, administrators, and women prisoners themselves, making it scary for some women to discuss their relationships in a group setting.

Group members' own internalized homophobia also may be a barrier to talking openly about current relationships within the group. Further, group members may be unsure where you as a facilitator land in terms of your level of acceptance or affirmation of same-sex relationships, and may choose not to discuss their relationship within the group or individually with you unless they have some indication about how comfortable you are with same-sex relationships.

Given these realities, it may be (or at least seem) easier for group members – and facilitators – to focus on the abuse that group members experienced before entering prison. For one, there are many reasons why group members would be reluctant to talk about current abuse. Beyond the institutional and/or internalized homophobia described above, group members also may be afraid of being judged for being victimized again (or for being perceived or identified as being the abusive one), especially if they are viewed as a leader within the prison and/or are known as someone who was battered before entering prison. They may be concerned that one of their main sources of support will disappear (or will disappoint them or even endanger them) if they disclose what currently is happening, especially if they are a survivor who is not in a position to end the relationship, or if they are the abusive one.

In addition, current survivors may fear that if they disclose what is happening, word will get back to their abusive partner (even unintentionally) and they'll experience more harm if their partner hears that she was discussing their relationship in the group. Survivors or abusive partners may be

---

<sup>6</sup> Transphobia is defined by the Transgender, Gender-Variant, and Intersex Justice Project as “discrimination against a person because they have a gender expression or identity not conforming to the gender binary system. Transphobia can take the form of having only male or female bathrooms available, government bureaucracies not recognizing any form of gender other than ‘male’ or ‘female’ as legitimate, outright violence against transgender people, casual dismissal of concerns of transgender activists by other social justice organizations, or, most often, as mockery of those who do not conform to the gender binary system.”

afraid that disclosure in group will somehow trigger an undesirable response from prison administrators (i.e., being moved to a different housing unit, to protective custody, to segregation, or to another prison; being disciplined for being in an intimate relationship or for causing harm).

Despite the myriad challenges that surround addressing intimate partner battering within the prisons, it may be possible – and indeed, incredibly important and transformative – to figure out ways of engaging with group members about abuse that currently is happening. Once you have a pretty good handle on the experiences of the incarcerated women who attend your group and the institutional culture, strategies for addressing intimate partner violence within the prison or jail might include:

- Incorporating hypotheticals into your exercises that address battering within the prison, thereby not relying on anyone to disclose their experiences of being abused (or abusive) while in prison, while simultaneously conveying to the group that you are aware that it happens and are willing to talk about it and to strategize about ways to stop it or to minimize its effects.
- Assume that everyone in the group has been a bystander to intimate partner battering within the prison. Such bystander experiences provide the group with a rich – and challenging – opportunity to engage in violence prevention efforts (see list of bystander/prevention resources at the end of this document). Within this context, talk with the group about possible strategies they can use to try to shift the culture within someone’s relationship, within people’s cell, within housing units, or within their workplaces. Ground this conversation in the reality that within prisons overall, incarcerated people have little power over the conditions of confinement – and potentially face considerable retaliation by staff and/or administrators for trying to change the institutional culture or practices. Therefore, it might be helpful to begin by having the group identify the things they do have control over (i.e., their own responses), and in what circumstances.
- Consider exploring with the women the potential risks and benefits of inviting other incarcerated women to intervene when they witness acts of violence or abuse, or otherwise support the abusive partner in stopping her abuse. At the same time, keep in mind that bystanders – including other survivors of battering – come with a range of experiences and attitudes about battering and (like people outside of prison) may respond in ways that further blame, shame, isolate, or endanger the victim, so talk about ways to help bystanders respond in affirming, non-judgmental ways.
- Along those same lines, facilitate a discussion where group members share specific examples (while being careful to maintain people’s confidentiality) of times within the prison when an intervention to stop intimate partner battering and/or to enhance survivors’ safety worked – and examples of when it didn’t. Spend time really dissecting the situations: what made the response “successful” or

“unsuccessful” (realizing that one example could be both, in different ways – i.e., was someone’s safety enhanced or compromised? Was coercive control interrupted or condoned? Was an abusive partner challenged to act in different ways and offered support for doing so, or was she given the message that her behavior will be tolerated, excused, or ignored)? For whom was the situation successful or unsuccessful (i.e., for the survivor, for the abusive partner, for loved ones/bystanders, for the prison)? What were the factors that contributed to the success and/or limitations? What might people have done differently to try to have a better outcome? What other lessons can be learned from the situation?

- Identify possible activities you or other outside organizations can do to support survivors, bystanders, and abusive partners who are in prison (i.e., are there things women inside want you or your organization to do? Are those activities things you can realistically do? Examples may include individual advocacy for particular people, training for staff and/or administrators, or working with administrators and imprisoned women to change institutional policies).
- Consider documenting your discussions and brainstorms to share with the National Clearinghouse and other group facilitators.

If you do decide to explicitly address intimate partner battering that is happening within the prison, it’s important to be mindful of how prison staff and/or administrators might respond. Because intimate relationships within the prison are prohibited conduct, the prison administrators may not be happy about this topic being addressed within the group. Administrators tend to be very aware of how particular situations within the prison may be perceived by the public and/or by staff higher up in the Department of Corrections hierarchy; if word got out that a group was addressing battering that is happening among women prisoners, administrators may worry that it would appear that the prison was condoning intimate relationships among prisoners, and/or that they cannot sufficiently control the people incarcerated in their institution.

The National Clearinghouse is aware of one group that was held at a prison in Virginia in the 1990s/early 2000s that explicitly addressed battering among women prisoners:

The group originally was formed with the permission of the warden, after the facilitator proposed it with the idea that it would help increase prisoners’ safety, since most of the fights between prisoners could be attributed to fights between couples. The group was only allowed to meet for one group cycle, however.

The group was open to women who were currently in an abusive relationship with another woman or who had a history of being in an abusive same-sex relationship. Much of the content was the same as for the group for battered women in heterosexual relationships, but was modified to fit the context of same-sex relationships.

The facilitator found that many of the women expressed confusion about which partner was the batterer and which partner was the victim, especially if both had used violence, so much of the discussion focused on describing what battering is and addressing myths about it. Also of note is that, because some of the women currently were being abused, the facilitator informed the group members that she had a duty to report to the prison administration if someone was in immediate danger.

Please contact the National Clearinghouse for more details about this group, and/or for resources around helping to contextualize women's use of violence against an intimate partner.

Also, as previously discussed, the safety considerations for women who are being battered by a partner in prison are different in a lot of ways from the safety considerations for battered women in the community. Because women in prison do not have control over most of the basic elements of their daily lives — such as when and where they sleep, eat, go to work, or otherwise spend their time — it is particularly difficult for them to seek safety when another woman in custody is abusing them.

Particularly if the prison is a small institution, the only option for “getting away” from the abusive partner may involve asking to be placed in “protective custody,” which usually means segregation or solitary confinement. In addition to being subjected to conditions of deprivation and isolation, protective custody also may carry a stigma in some prisons that can increase prisoners' vulnerability. Being put into protective custody also may mean that women lose their work assignments, which can affect their access to the limited sources of income that some women prisoners have. Further, if the abusive partner is put into administrative segregation (or whatever the “jail” within the prison is called) and/or loses her job assignment because the woman being abused spoke up about the abuse, the abusive partner may retaliate against her.

If the prison is larger, a woman who is being abused might be able to ask for a transfer to another cell or housing unit, if her abusive partner lives in her cell or housing unit. But taking this step is not so simple, since where she lives is not within her control; moving requires asking a correctional officer for permission. Such a request might be denied unless the woman gives a valid reason (and even in that case, it still may be denied). If the survivor does disclose to the correctional officer that she's in danger, she may be at risk of retaliation by her partner. This is especially true if she identifies her abusive partner, which she most likely will be required to do.

The survivor may be at risk for disciplinary action by the guards or other prison staff if intimate relationships between imprisoned women are prohibited. Although it may seem hard to imagine, sometimes prison staff either explicitly ignore abuse that they learn about or observe or punish women who are being battered because they are engaging in “prohibited conduct” just by being in a relationship.

If someone discloses to you, as an advocate, that another woman at the facility is abusing her, here are some possible options to consider for trying to increase her safety:

- Explore with the survivor whether there are any other women in her housing unit whom she trusts. While she may experience homophobia from some women inside the prison, others may be key allies in her efforts to stay safer or reduce the harm directed at her (including, hopefully, some of the women in the group). Depending on the rules of the facility and how much free time or autonomy the women have during the course of the day, the survivor might be able to talk with potential allies and engage in safety planning. Maybe she can ask one or two of the women she trusts most to help reduce the times that she is alone with her abusive partner (acknowledging that this may not be possible if she shares a two-person cell with her partner).
- If a woman shares a cell with an abusive partner, maybe she can arrange for another woman to request a room change with her. That might allow her to move to another cell without looking like she's the one asking to move.
- In some situations of same-sex battering in prison, correctional officers or staff (such as social workers or job supervisors) may be a helpful resource. In some cases, they are aware of what is happening and may have good relationships with the survivor, which may make them helpful allies in safety planning. Even the most sympathetic staff, however, may feel limited by institutional rules and institutional homophobia that prevents acknowledging relationships between women in custody.
- As with any other battered woman, you can be creative and work in partnership with the survivor to help her identify the best strategies to help her feel safer, given the limitations of her environment.

Finally, keep in mind that group members may have had the experience of being raped or otherwise assaulted by staff while incarcerated (in juvenile detention, in jail, and/or in prison), which may affect how they experience or process trauma stemming from other forms of interpersonal violence. These experiences may have been a long time ago or may be ongoing. Women may – or may not – choose to share this information with you or others in the group.

If you are working with someone who discloses sexual abuse by correctional officer(s) or other prison staff, we encourage you to contact Just Detention International (formerly Stop Prisoner Rape) for further guidance, particularly regarding strategies and guidelines about reporting abuse and minimizing the risk of retaliation by jail or prison staff. They can be reached at (213) 384-1400, by email at [info@justdetention.org](mailto:info@justdetention.org), or visit their website at [www.justdetention.org](http://www.justdetention.org).

Incarcerated people can correspond with Just Detention International via legal mail (which ostensibly should not be opened by jail or prison staff) by writing to: Ms. Melissa Rothstein, Esq., 3325 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 340, Los Angeles, CA 90010.

You also may want to review the following publications:

→ *Hope for Healing: Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault in Detention* by Just Detention International ([www.justdetention.org/pdf/HopeforHealingweb.pdf](http://www.justdetention.org/pdf/HopeforHealingweb.pdf)) and the companion piece, *Resource Guide for Survivors of Sexual Abuse Behind Bars* ([www.justdetention.org/en/resourceguides.aspx](http://www.justdetention.org/en/resourceguides.aspx))

→ *An End to Silence: Prisoners' Handbook on Identifying and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* by Brenda V. Smith, American University, Washington College of Law ([www.wcl.american.edu/nic/Pubs/An\\_End\\_To\\_Silence\\_Second\\_Edition.pdf?rd=1](http://www.wcl.american.edu/nic/Pubs/An_End_To_Silence_Second_Edition.pdf?rd=1))

→ *Preventing and Responding to Corrections-Based Sexual Abuse: A Guide for Community Corrections Professionals* by Carrie E. Abner with Jane Browning and John Clark for the American Probation and Parole Association, December 2009 ([www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf](http://www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf)).

→ Also of note is that in 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) became law. For more information about PREA, including standards for prisons, jails, and other correctional institutions from the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission for eliminating sexual misconduct within prisons, visit [www.wcl.american.edu/nic/prea.cfm](http://www.wcl.american.edu/nic/prea.cfm)

#### ▪ *Grief and guilt*

While survivors of battering and sexual assault who you work with in community-based groups no doubt do their own share of grieving, the depth of the grieving that incarcerated women do is profound (Ferszt, 2002). For battered women incarcerated for having killed their abusive partner, they often are grieving the loss of their partner, despite their partner's abuse. Others may be grieving the death of a child or other loved one who was killed or harmed by the abusive partner, or by the incarcerated woman.

These women and others also may be grieving about the abuse they experienced from their partners (and/or previous partners or family members), as well as grieving about not having had the relationship(s), childhood, or life that they had imagined or wished they had had. They may be grieving about being separated from their children and other loved ones due to their incarceration, either for the short-term or for years or decades. They may be grieving about the way that they were treated by the court system; many survivors feel that no one listened to them from the moment they were arrested until they got to prison and beyond.

Woven into these layers of grief are deep feelings of guilt for many, if not most, incarcerated survivors. Despite advocates' assessments about how justifiable some women's actions were that led to their arrests and convictions (i.e., "She had no choice; she was defending herself and never should have been convicted"), most women charged with crimes feel tremendous guilt about their actions. Even those who acted in ways that many people (if not the courts) understand as justifiable may still struggle to reconcile their own feelings about how justifiable their actions were. Messages they may hear from others about how they were justified, given the context, may not

match up with how bad they feel about what happened, or with messages they hear from the courts and parole board about their culpability.

For group members for whom the incident that led to their incarceration is more “complicated” (e.g., the death of a child or a stranger, charges of sexual abuse), their feelings of guilt and shame may be different from those whose cases may appear more “straightforward” or immediately sympathetic. As advocates, we might find such abuse survivors’ actions similarly understandable if we knew all of the details of their cases and of their lives leading up to the incident – but we rarely have access to all of that information. Even when we do have access to such information, our own personal experiences or biases may come into play, or the connection between the survivor’s history of abuse and the crime for which she was convicted may appear less clear, understandable, or justifiable as compared to what we may know about other survivors’ experiences (e.g., survivors who killed an abusive partner in self-defense). In such situations, it may be difficult to remember that all survivors of abuse deserve support and access to tools for healing and transformation.

As advocates and group facilitators, it’s important to be mindful of your role and the goals and purpose of the group when discussions of grief and guilt come up. Some facilitators may be inclined to respond to a group member’s expressions of either grief or guilt with a comment that suggests the facilitator’s own assessment about their culpability or out of a desire to fix things, in a way that can end up dismissing the group member’s feelings (i.e., “You did the best you could given the circumstances.” “You were fighting for your life.”).

If that’s your inclination, remember that it’s not your role to assign guilt, assess group members’ culpability, determine how justifiable their actions were, or judge how unjust their incarceration is. Nor is your role to challenge incarcerated women to take responsibility or be accountable for their actions. Rather (we would suggest), your role as a facilitator is to support group members in their healing and to meet them where they are. That can involve asking questions that help women identify and express their feelings, offering group members information and tools to help them in their grieving process, listening without judgment, and affirming without giving an assessment.

Some final caveats about the risks associated with advocates putting their assessments of survivors’ culpability out there in the group. The courts and the parole board often have a very different view of survivors’ culpability than do advocates. They may have more information about the details leading up to the incident than we do, but often they are not viewing that information through the lens of understanding battering and its effects or the cumulative effects of various kinds of trauma. Often, the parole board in particular is interested in hearing prisoners take responsibility for their actions, express remorse, and demonstrate how they have changed and why they no longer pose a risk to public safety. They are operating from the assumption that the conviction was valid.

As advocates, when we give feedback to some survivors that we think they never should have been convicted or that their actions were justifiable, that perspective is in direct conflict with the messages of the courts and the parole board. If advocates are not in a position to carefully strategize with each survivor who may be going before the parole board (and few of us are – and



such strategizing may best be left to an attorney) about how she might want to talk about her experiences before and during the incident for which she was arrested, as well as her time in prison, then survivors may be set up for failure.

For example, what if the survivor goes before the parole board and says, “I’ve been going to a domestic violence support group, where I’ve learned that my actions were justified and I never should have been convicted in the first place”? How might the parole board react to such an assertion? It’s possible, but highly unlikely, that they may take the opportunity to review her case to see if there has been some sort of injustice. On the other hand, parole board members may say that she is not taking responsibility for her actions and lacks insight into the crime, and therefore still poses a risk to public safety. They may even begin to ask questions about the group, suspecting that the group is overstepping its boundaries by making assessments that are “better left to the courts” or the parole board.

Further, what do messages to certain survivors say to others who have different experiences – especially those whose actions are more difficult to justify, but who nevertheless are survivors of (often extreme) abuse and trauma? When certain survivors’ actions are singled out or held out to the group as justifiable, other survivors (including those who are not yet in the group but who may nevertheless hear something about the group) may make assumptions about who the group is for (i.e., anyone but them). Depending on the decisions you’ve made about the criteria for group membership and the group’s goal and purpose, it may be true that they may not be eligible for the group. But if your goal is to support all survivors of battering (and/or sexual abuse), then the message that you want people to hear – including those who are not yet in the group – is that there’s a place for them in the group, and, especially, that they deserve support as well.

→ For further information, see the article by Marilyn Smith & Amy Wehrle (2010). Homicide of an intimate male partner: The impact on the woman. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 31:21-27 for findings from interviews with two women who had killed their abusive partners (keeping in mind that the article only describes two women’s experiences, and not every woman who has killed an abusive partner feels the same way).

→ See also Ginette G. Ferszt’s (2002) “Grief experiences of women in prison following the death of a loved one” and Chris Hendry’s (2009) “Incarceration and the tasks of grief: A narrative review.” Although neither article specifically addresses the feelings of grief experienced by battered women in prison, they both provide a helpful context about how the process of grieving is generally interrupted by incarceration in myriad ways.

→ Also, for an account of an incarcerated woman grieving being separated from her child, see the book by Jody Raphael (2007). *Freeing Tammy: Women, drugs, and incarceration*. Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law. Also, see the book by Nell Bernstein (2005). *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*. New Press.

→ For tips and tools to assist group members dealing with grief, see John W. James & Russell Friedman (1998). *The Grief Recovery Handbook, Revised: A Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Devastating Losses*. HarperCollins.

▪ *Supporting survivors who are about to be released*

Another potential topic or focus of group work with incarcerated battered women is helping those who soon will be released prepare for their life after jail or prison. While this is a relevant topic for prisoner facing release, it's especially important for incarcerated domestic violence survivors to engage in release planning in conjunction with advocates who bring skills, strategies, and resources around safety planning. This is true of survivors being released from jail or prison.

Keep in mind that survivors' experiences after they are released will vary dramatically depending on a variety of factors including:

- whether they're being released from jail on bail, because their charges or were dismissed, or following a conviction
- whether they're released from prison after serving a short-term sentence or a longer-term sentence
- whether they've been incarcerated and released before, or this is their first time
- whether they remain under state control (i.e., probation or parole) and if so, what the conditions of release are
- whether their abusive partner is still alive, and if so, whether or not he was a codefendant in the case, is in jail or prison, will be alerted of her release, has moved away, etc.
- whether they have minor children, and if so, the current status of their parental rights (i.e., whether they will have full or partial custody, visitation, or no contact with their children)
- whether they have any serious health concerns (i.e., HIV, Hepatitis C, diabetes)
- whether they are in recovery from drug or alcohol abuse
- whether they have supportive family (or other friends/supporters) in their life
- whether they are a member of a marginalized community (i.e., woman of color, immigrant, LGBT/gender non-conforming)
- whether they have serious mental health concerns
- what resources exist for formerly incarcerated women/people in the county to which they are being released.

Over time – and especially if you are able to maintain contact with women after they are released – you most likely will learn much more about some of the challenges that formerly incarcerated battered women face and how survivors learn how to navigate these challenges, so that you can help currently incarcerated women best prepare for their release.

There are a number of practical things that it probably would be helpful for advocates to be able to help incarcerated survivors figure out before being released. These activities include sharing information about where to go for support, who to talk to at an organization or institution (especially names of specific people who you may have a relationship with who

might be particularly helpful), how the different factors listed above affect their ongoing sense of safety and well-being, and how to take care of themselves as they encounter individual and systemic barriers. Some concrete issues to address include:

- The practical details of release (i.e., what time of day they will be released, who can pick them up, what property they can take with them, how much money – if any – they receive upon release, what public transportation options are available)
- Where women can find housing (as you no doubt know, housing is key to maintaining an ongoing sense of safety)
- How women can get IDs (i.e., can they get them before they leave prison? IDs are key to employment, transportation, travel, etc., and thus affect survivors' options and access to resources)
- The rules that people on probation or parole are supposed to follow and what the probation or parole system is supposed to offer (there are many opportunities for advocates and formerly incarcerated survivors to work with individual probation or parole officers to ensure they understand the risks the survivor is living with, as well as how certain conditions of supervision may limit her options/safety. Additionally, if you discover that many women are facing the same obstacles or barriers that impede them successfully transitioning back into the community, you may consider broader systems' advocacy to create increased options for women to succeed).
- Where and how people can access health care services if they don't have insurance, including helping survivors enroll in SSI or for other benefits (i.e., there often are disparate health impacts of incarceration, and a survivor's health care needs can affect her choices and options for managing and increasing her safety)
- How to get people (free) cell phones, since they can be helpful for keeping women connected to advocates, to potential employers, and to loved ones, etc.
- How to help women reunite with their kids (in cases where that's an option)
- How to help women identify employment opportunities (i.e., identifying companies that hire formerly incarcerated people or at least do not do criminal background checks, and finding job training programs) and strategize about effective ways for people with criminal records to answer questions about their criminal history on employment applications.

In addressing each of these issues, it might be helpful to engage in role plays to help group members practice engaging with services providers (or others they will come into contact with) in order to more effectively get their needs met when they are released.

- *Unique safety issues facing formerly incarcerated battered women*

Navigating safety issues is another topic to discuss in the group with those who are preparing for release. While providing incarcerated women with a list of community resources is an important start, keep in mind that not only will they likely face tremendous barriers given their criminal records (i.e., they may be ineligible to receive certain services or resources), but also few service providers understand the ways in which the safety of formerly incarcerated battered women may be seriously compromised by their life circumstances. People in our communities tend to be conditioned to view formerly incarcerated people as a threat to public safety, not as someone who may be vulnerable to additional abuse or exploitation because of their status as a formerly incarcerated person, someone on probation or parole, and/or as a domestic violence victim/survivor.

Therefore, beyond the essential work of helping survivors meet their basic needs upon release, it also might be helpful to engage in some more in-depth conversations designed to help them strategize about ways to maintain their physical, sexual, emotional, and economic health and well-being. Such discussion topics might include:

- Navigating intimate relationships
- Maintaining sexual health (i.e., HIV/STI/pregnancy prevention)
- Safety planning (i.e., strategizing about ways to try to minimize risk of harm; who to call and where to go if they want to get away from someone or need support; what to do if or when they feel unsafe. For example, would calling the police be a realistic option if they must report to their probation or parole officer any contact with law enforcement, even if they were not at fault?)
- Navigating extended family relationships (i.e., understanding and dealing with children or adult family members' own experiences of their loved one's incarceration; legacies of abuse within the family; how to maintain boundaries when family members turn to formerly incarcerated women for support during crises)
- Navigating what it means to be back in the community (i.e., what does it mean to drive past the apartment where you shot & killed your abusive partner? How do friends/people in the community understand your experience of incarceration? How do you talk to new people about where you've been for the past 3, 5, 15, 25 years?)
- Whether or how to disclose/how to discuss an arrest or conviction with potential employers
- Resources and strategies for healing from the effects of trauma and engaging in grieving (i.e., including grieving the loss of contact with loved ones in prison after release)

- Self-care or harm reduction strategies if they want to use drugs or alcohol, especially given the stresses of encountering systemic barriers facing formerly incarcerated people, which they may not fully understand until their release
- Financial advocacy/support (i.e., i.e., establishing credit if they've been incarcerated for decades, or repairing credit if that's an issue; identifying forms of financial support during times when they are not working)

Keep in mind that many incarcerated people (particularly those who have been incarcerated for decades) often spend a lot of time imagining what their life will be like once they are released. The reality often is remarkably different from what they imagined. For some women, they especially want or need support a few months after they have been released – once the initial high of being released wears off and they have a better understanding of the challenges they face. This often corresponds with the time when other people in formerly incarcerated women's lives start to assume that that things are ok and thus they become less available to provide support.

Also, some formerly incarcerated survivors have described feeling isolated after being accustomed to living with other people 24 hours a day; feeling alienated from their family members because they don't understand their experiences or what adjustments they have to make to life after jail or prison; missing their loved ones who still are inside; being overwhelmed by the bureaucracies they must navigate; and feeling confused, hurt, or frustrated by people's general unwillingness to help make things easier.

For some formerly incarcerated survivors, their former partner – or a new partner – may be their main emotional support, their source of housing, their connection to their children, the person who provides them with hot meals and a place to do their laundry, and/or their source of transportation to essential medical appointments or their job, among other things. When that person also is abusive, it can be difficult for formerly incarcerated women to separate themselves from their partner, especially when they feel that they have no other options or resources to turn to. Helping women realistically anticipate the challenges they will face and identify resources they can turn to and strategies they can try that will help them maintain a sense of self-sufficiency and safety can be incredibly helpful.

Despite the many barriers that formerly incarcerated battered women face, as well as the ways they may be vulnerable to further harm, it's important to remember that survivors are incredibly resilient and resourceful. There are many incredible examples of formerly incarcerated women doing well, finding joy, and building satisfying lives after returning to the community, even if those satisfying lives are also full of challenges and struggles. It may be helpful to arrange for some of those women to come in to talk with group members and other incarcerated women about how they manage their lives after prison or jail. Such testimonies can be incredibly inspiring and can help sustain people's belief that they can make it.

Also, before group members are released, let them know whether you will be available to talk with them once they have been released (even if they are released to a different county other than the one your organization serves). Even if your funding is restricted to only serving victims in your county or service area, we hope you will be able to maintain some contact with women after they've been released, even if it's just talking with them once to help connect them directly with a local advocate (preferably someone who also understands the realities and challenges facing formerly incarcerated survivors).

There are a growing number of resources available to assist women who are returning to the community after a period of incarceration. Some helpful resources are listed below and in the "additional resources" section at the end of this document. Also, if you have questions about advocacy issues for battered women who are returning to the community, please feel free to contact the National Clearinghouse.

→ For information to help formerly incarcerated women navigate disclosure of a criminal record to a potential employer, see: Legal Momentum. (2005). Know your rights: Answering questions from employers about criminal records or arrests. Available at: [www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/answeringcrquestions.pdf](http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/answeringcrquestions.pdf)?

→ For an example of a resource for women who've been released from prison, see Coalition for Women Prisoners. (2008). *My sister's keeper: A book for women returning home from prison or jail*. New York: The Correctional Association of New York. Available online at [www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/MySistersKeeper\\_Re-EntryGuide.pdf](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/MySistersKeeper_Re-EntryGuide.pdf)

→ The National H.I.R.E Network ([www.hirenetwork.org/](http://www.hirenetwork.org/)) works to increase the number and quality of job opportunities available to people with criminal records by changing public policies, employment practices, and public opinion. They also provide training and technical assistance to agencies working to improve the employment prospects of people with criminal records. They are part of the NY-based Legal Action Center ([www.lac.org/](http://www.lac.org/)).

### **Other possible forms of advocacy or support**

If your organization does not (yet) have the capacity to provide ongoing groups for incarcerated battered women, there may be other ways for you to build relationships with and provide support to incarcerated battered women:

- *Training women in prison to serve as their own group facilitators or as peer educators*  
One advocacy program in Missouri trained women at a prison that was five hours away from their program to become facilitators so they could meet without the organization's staff (Bauschard, 1988). The center provided Certificates of Completion to those who attended all sessions and provided books and videos to support their efforts. Program staff also visited the prison periodically to meet with group members.

Another program trained women at Valley State Prison for Women in California to become volunteer Peer Educators who provide educational presentations about domestic violence to different classes and groups within the prison. Peer Educators also are available on an “on-call” basis for support if another prisoner needs to talk with someone regarding their history of abuse or current experiences of being battered by another prisoner. Several years after this program was established, the Peer Educators received additional support from a trained clinician with expertise in responding to trauma in order to support them in addressing the ways that their own experiences of trauma were sometimes triggered when supporting other survivors.

- *Newsletters*

If your organization publishes a regular newsletter, consider adding incarcerated battered women to your mailing list to keep them informed about your organization’s efforts. You might even consider inviting incarcerated survivors to contribute articles for inclusion in the newsletter (as long as such articles do not include facts of any individual prisoner’s case).

- *Support or help organize once-a-year domestic violence awareness (or other) events*

If you aren’t able to go to the prison on a frequent basis, consider whether it would be possible to connect with incarcerated battered women to help organize an annual event that would raise awareness among incarcerated women, staff, and administrators about the effects of domestic violence, and build bridges between women inside and supporters outside prison. The Peer Educators at Valley State Prison for Women in California organize an annual Domestic Violence Awareness Day event where they invite speakers from outside and inside the prison (including prison staff) to speak. Combining dance, poetry, music, skits, and personal testimonies, the event is an incredibly powerful way to build solidarity.

In a different example, the *Working Group to Enhance Services to Incarcerated Women* in Philadelphia is a broad coalition of community-based organizations that join together to provide information and support to women incarcerated in the Philadelphia county jail. The *Working Group* also engages in policy reform efforts to challenge harmful policies in the jail (such as the practice of shackling pregnant women during labor). The *Working Group* organizes an annual resource fair at the jail, which includes representatives from several community-based anti-domestic violence and sexual assault organizations.

- *Meet with established groups or classes on a quarterly basis*

Depending on the prison, there may be existing groups at the prison (i.e., a Long-Termers’ Organization, Women’s Advisory Council, classes offered through the education department, groups offered through the chaplaincy) that you could visit occasionally as a guest speaker to share information and resources with incarcerated domestic violence survivors.

- *Individual/collective advocacy (i.e., pre-trial advocacy, parole support, clemency)*

Engaging in individual or collective advocacy to try to secure incarcerated battered women’s release from prison is important work, and engaging in other efforts to support incarcerated

survivors' healing, is beyond the scope of this paper. If you are interested in engaging in such efforts in your community, please contact the National Clearinghouse for further information and to connect with other advocates doing similar work.

## **Conclusion**

Although this document has addressed many issues surrounding doing group work with incarcerated domestic violence survivors, there are plenty of issues that have not been addressed here. We would love to hear from you about the work that you're doing with incarcerated women.

Further, we have noted many instances throughout this document when you may want to call the National Clearinghouse to request additional information, strategize about an issue you're struggling with, or to share resources and successes. For example, please call us at (800) 903-0111 ext. 3 regarding the following issues:

- If you have questions about the risks associated with participatory/process-oriented groups when working with women in jail.
- If you would like to connect with other group facilitators who are working with incarcerated women.
- If you would like sample evaluation forms, would like to share your evaluation results, and/or would like to connect with a researcher who might help you think about how to structure your evaluation process.
- If you have any questions about confidentiality issues, or would like to run your group confidentiality guidelines past someone from the National Clearinghouse.
- If you are trying to figure out a policy about providing certificates or letters of support for group members, or would like the National Clearinghouse to review or share sample policies.
- If you don't know anyone in your area who goes into the jail or prison where you would like to run your group – we will try to help you identify someone to contact.
- If you would like to talk through your plan for assessing and responding to incarcerated women's disclosures of suicidality, or if you would like to debrief about a situation in which you had to implement your plan.
- If you have developed a curriculum for working with women in jail or prison that you're willing to share with other advocates.
- If you have collected a list of incarcerated women's self-care tools and strategies for healing that you're willing to share with us.
- If you have documented your discussions and brainstorming with incarcerated women about responding to battering that occurs inside the prison and would like to share it with us and other facilitators.
- If you would like more information about the group for incarcerated women who are or were in abusive same-sex relationships, and/or would like resource around helping to contextualize women's use of violence against an intimate partner.
- If you have questions about advocacy issues for battered women who are returning to the community after incarceration.



- If you are interested in engaging in such individual or collective efforts to secure the release of survivors from prison.

We look forward to hearing from you!

### **Additional resources**

The following resources are just a sample of some of the resources that are available from the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. We maintain a comprehensive database of articles and other resources relating to battered women charged with crimes.

The articles cited below are available from the National Clearinghouse, although books, curricula, and videos are not. If you would like additional information on any of the topics listed below, please contact the National Clearinghouse at (800) 903-0111 ext. 3. When a resource is available electronically, we have done our best to include the web address.

#### ▪ ***References cited***

Abner, Carrie E., Browning, Jane, & Clark, John. (2009). *Preventing and Responding to Corrections-Based Sexual Abuse: A Guide for Community Corrections Professionals*. American Probation and Parole Association. [www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf](http://www.appa-net.org/eweb/docs/APPA/pubs/PRCBSA.pdf)

Avalon, Stephanie. (1997). *Advocates and Victim/Witness Specialists: Differing Roles to Achieve Common Goals*. Minneapolis, MN: Battered Women's Justice Project. [www.bwjp.org/files/bwjp/articles/Advocacy and Victim Witness Specialists Differing Roles to Achieve Common Goals.pdf](http://www.bwjp.org/files/bwjp/articles/Advocacy_and_Victim_Witness_Specialists_Differing_Roles_to_Achieve_Common_Goals.pdf)

Bass, Ellen & Davis, Laura. (2008). *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. New York: HarperCollins.

Bauschard, Louise. (1988). *Working with Battered Women in Prison*.

Bernstein, Nell. (2005). *All Alone in the World: Children of the Incarcerated*. New York: The New Press.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners. *The Fire Inside*. Quarterly newsletter. San Francisco, CA. For subscription information, call (415) 255-7036 x 4 or view archives online at [www.womenprisoners.org/fire/](http://www.womenprisoners.org/fire/)

Davidson, Barbara & del Rio, Carmen. (1988). Working with imprisoned battered women: Providing support and advocacy within the correctional system poses challenge to shelter staff. *Exchange: A Forum on Domestic Violence*, 2(2).

Davies, Jill, Eleanor Lyon & Diane Monti-Catania. (1998). *Safety Planning with Battered Women: Complex Lives, Difficult Choices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davis, Laura. (1990). *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. New York: Harper & Row.

DeHart, Dana D. (2004). *Pathways to Prison: Impact of Victimization in the Lives of Incarcerated Women*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. NCJ 208383.  
[www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208383.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208383.pdf)

DeHart, Dana D. (2010). Cognitive restructuring through dreams and imagery: Descriptive analysis of a women's prison-based program. *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 49: 23-38.

Ferszt, Ginette G. (2002). Grief experiences of women in prison following the death of a loved one. *Illness, Crisis and Loss*, 10(3): 242-254.

Green, B. L., Miranda, J., Daroowalla, A., & Siddique, J. (2005). Trauma exposure, mental health functioning, and program needs of women in jail. *Crime & Delinquency*, 51, 133-151.

Greenfeld, Lawrence A. & Snell, Tracy L. (1999). *Women Offenders*. Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report. Washington DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs.

Hendry, Chris. (2009). Incarceration and the tasks of grief: A narrative review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 65(2).

James, John W. & Friedman, Russell. (1998). *The Grief Recovery Handbook, Revised: A Program for Moving Beyond Death, Divorce, and Other Devastating Losses*. HarperCollins.

Just Detention International. (2009). *Hope for Healing: Information for Survivors of Sexual Assault in Detention*. [www.justdetention.org/pdf/HopeforHealingweb.pdf](http://www.justdetention.org/pdf/HopeforHealingweb.pdf)

Kearney, Gavin. (2003). *Structural Racism in the Criminal Justice System*. Minneapolis, MN: Battered Women's Justice Project.  
[www.bwjp.org/files/bwjp/articles/Structural Racism in the Criminal Justice System.pdf](http://www.bwjp.org/files/bwjp/articles/Structural_Racism_in_the_Criminal_Justice_System.pdf)

Legal Momentum. (2005). *Know Your Rights: Answering Questions from Employers About Criminal Records or Arrests*. [www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/answeringcrquestions.pdf?](http://www.legalmomentum.org/assets/pdfs/answeringcrquestions.pdf?)

Messina, Nena P., Grella, Christine E., & Cartier, Jerry. (in review). A Randomized Experimental Study of Gender-Responsive Substance Abuse Treatment for Women in Prison.

Minton, Todd D., & Sabol, William J. (2009). *Jail Inmates at Mid-Year 2008 – Statistical Tables*. Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics. NCJ-225709.  
[bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim08st.pdf](http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/content/pub/pdf/jim08st.pdf)

Moon, Dreama & Bennett, Regina. (1987). Battered women in prison. *NCADV Voice*.

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. (2009). *Working with Battered Women in Jail: A Manual for Community-Based Battered Women's Advocates*. Philadelphia, PA: National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women.

Owen, Barbara, Wells, James, Pollock, Joycelyn, & Muscat, Bernadette. (2008). *Gendered Violence and Safety: A Contextual Approach to Improving Security in Women's Facilities*. NCJ 225338. [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225338.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/225338.pdf)

Pence, Ellen. (2001). Advocacy on behalf of battered women. In Claire M. Renzetti, Jeffrey L. Edleson and Raquel Kennedy Bergen (Eds.), *Sourcebook on Violence Against Women*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. pp. 329-343.

Prison Activist Resource Center. (2009). *2009 Prisoner Support Directory*. Oakland, CA. [www.prisonactivist.org/sites/all/files/prisonersupportdirectory\\_June2009.pdf](http://www.prisonactivist.org/sites/all/files/prisonersupportdirectory_June2009.pdf)

Richardson, Ellen Kathleen. (2004). It's just another prison. *Our Voices Within: Our Journey*. San Francisco, CA: Free Battered Women.

Richie, Beth. (2005). Queering anti-prison work: African American lesbians in the juvenile justice system. In Julia Sudbury (Ed.), *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex*. Taylor & Francis, Inc.

Smith, Brenda V. (2002). *An End to Silence: Prisoners' Handbook on Identifying and Addressing Sexual Misconduct, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Washington, DC: American University, Washington College of Law [www.wcl.american.edu/nic/Pubs/An\\_End\\_To\\_Silence\\_Second\\_Edition.pdf?rd=1](http://www.wcl.american.edu/nic/Pubs/An_End_To_Silence_Second_Edition.pdf?rd=1)

Smith, Marilyn & Wehrle, Amy. (2010). Homicide of an intimate male partner: The impact on the woman. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 31:21-27

Sudbury, Julia. (2002). Celling black bodies: Black women in the global prison industrial complex. *Feminist Review*, 70: 57-74.

Sudbury, Julia. (forthcoming). Feminism and the (trans)gender entrapment of gender nonconforming prisoners. *UCLA Women's Law Journal*.

Sudbury, Julia. (2011). From women prisoners to people in women's prisons: Challenging the gender binary in antiprison work. In Jodie Lawston (ed.), *Razor Wire Women*. New York: SUNY Press.

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2006). *Circle of Hope: A Guide for Conducting Psychoeducational Support Groups*. [www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf](http://www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf)

Wilson, Christina. (2003). Loving in the war years: Black women loving women in the War on Drugs. *Arise Magazine*. [www.womenprisoners.org/news/000102.html](http://www.womenprisoners.org/news/000102.html)

▪ **Resources specific to incarcerated women's histories of abuse**

Cook, Sarah L., Smith, Sharon G., Tusher, Chantal Poister, Raiford, Jerris. (2005). Self-reports of traumatic events in a random sample of incarcerated women. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 16: 107-126.

DeHart, Dana D. (2004). *Pathways to Prison: Impact of Victimization in the Lives of Incarcerated Women*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. NCJ 208383. [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208383.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/208383.pdf)

Leonard, Elizabeth Dermody. (2002). *Convicted Survivors: The Imprisonment of Battered Women Who Kill*. State University of New York Press.

McDaniels, Cathy & Belknap, Joanne. (2008). The extensive sexual violation and sexual abuse histories of incarcerated women. *Violence Against Women*, 14: 1090-1127.

Raphael, Jody. (2007). *Freeing Tammy: Women, Drugs, and Incarceration*. Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law.

Richie, Beth. (1995). *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Battered, Black Women*. Taylor & Francis, Inc.

Richie, Beth E. (2002). *Understanding the Links Between Violence Against Women and Women's Participation in Illegal Activity*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. NCJ-199370. [www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/199370.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/199370.pdf)

Tusher, Chantal Poister & Cook, Sarah L. (Feb 2010). Comparing revictimization in two groups of marginalized women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

Zust, Barbara L. (2009). Partner violence, depression, and recidivism: The case of incarcerated women and why we need programs designed for them. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 30: 246-251.

▪ **General information about incarcerated women & mass incarceration**

Johnson, Paula C. (2003). *Inner Lives: Voices of African American Women in Prison*. NYU Press.

King, Rachel & Bellin, Judy. (2004). *The Forgotten Population: A Look at Death Row in the United States Through the Experiences of Women*. Prepared by the American Civil Liberties Union's Capital Punishment Project, Women's Rights Project and National Prison Project, with the National Criminal Justice Program of the American Friends Service Committee and the

National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. Available online at:  
[www.aclu.org/files/FilesPDFs/womenondeathrow.pdf](http://www.aclu.org/files/FilesPDFs/womenondeathrow.pdf)

Law, Victoria. (2009). *Resistance Behind Bars: The Struggles of Incarcerated Women*. PM Press.

Solinger, Rickie, Johnson, Paula C., Raimon, Martha L., Reynolds, Tina, & Tapia, Ruby C. (2010). *Interrupted Life: Experiences of Incarcerated Women in the United States*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sudbury, Julia (ed.). (2005). *Global Lockdown: Race, Gender, and the Prison-Industrial Complex*. Taylor & Francis, Inc.

Talvi, Silja J.A. (2007). *Women Behind Bars: The Crisis of Women in the U.S. Prison System*. Seal Press.

▪ **Information about women's experiences of returning to the community after prison**

Coalition for Women Prisoners. (2008). *My Sister's Keeper: A Book for Women Returning Home from Prison or Jail*. New York: The Correctional Association of New York. Available online at [www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/MySistersKeeper\\_Re-EntryGuide.pdf](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/MySistersKeeper_Re-EntryGuide.pdf)

Cobbina, Jennifer E. (2009). *From Prison to Home: Women's Pathways In and Out of Crime*. Rockville, MD: National Institute of Justice. NCJ 226812.  
[www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/226812.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/226812.pdf)

Gonnerman, Jennifer. (2004). *Life on the Outside: The Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett*. Picador USA.

Munn, Melissa & Bruckert, Chris. 2009. *Getting Out. Staying Out. Words of Wisdom from Successful Former Long-Term Prisoners*. Request copies for \$10 from Melissa Munn, 235 – 29<sup>th</sup> Ave NW, Calgary, Alberta, T2M 2M2, Canada. [Note: this resource currently is focused on men's experiences, but they are working on a version for women]

O'Brien, Patricia. (2001). *Making It in the Free World: Women in Transition from Prison (SUNY series on Women, Crime & Criminology)*. SUNY Press.

Opsal, Tara D. (2009). Women on parole: Understanding the impact of surveillance. *Women & Criminal Justice*, 19(4): 306-328.

Raphael, Jody. (2007). *Freeing Tammy: Women, Drugs, and Incarceration*. Northeastern Series on Gender, Crime, and Law.

- **Information about prison-based arts groups & collections of writings by incarcerated women**

The Prison Arts Coalition is a national network of those creating art in and around the criminal legal system. Share information and resources, and learn from others:

[theprisonartscoalition.wordpress.com/resources/](http://theprisonartscoalition.wordpress.com/resources/)

Lamb, Wally (Ed.). (2004). *Couldn't Keep It to Myself: Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters*. New York: Reagan Books/Harper Collins.

Lamb, Wally (Ed.). (2007). *I'll Fly Away: Further Testimonies from the Women of York Prison*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Sweeney, Megan. (2010). *Reading Is My Window: Books and the Art of Reading in Women's Prisons*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

- **Curricula and workbooks addressing abuse & other forms of trauma**

Note: Inclusion on this list does not constitute an endorsement by the National Clearinghouse, nor have all of these resources been reviewed to determine their suitability for use with domestic violence survivors in jail or prison. They are included here for informational purposes only as possible resources for exercises, etc.

Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault. (2005). *Getting Safe and Sober: Real Tools You Can Use. An Advocacy Teaching Kit for Working with Women Coping with Substance Abuse and Interpersonal Violence*. Juneau, AK: Alaska Network on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault.

Bass, Ellen & Davis, Laura. (2003). *Beginning to Heal: A First Book for Men and Women Who Were Sexually Abused as Children*. New York: Collins.

Bass, Ellen & Davis, Laura. (2008). *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse: 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*. New York: HarperCollins.

Brown, Brené. (2009). *Connections Curriculum*. Center City, MN: Hazelden.

[www.brenebrown.com/books-more](http://www.brenebrown.com/books-more) and

[www.hazelden.org/OA\\_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=14068&sitex=10020:22372:US](http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=14068&sitex=10020:22372:US)

Copeland, Mary Ellen & Harris, Maxine. (2000). *Healing the Trauma of Abuse: A Women's Workbook*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Covington, Stephanie. *Beyond Trauma: A Healing Journey for Women*. Center City, MN:

Hazelden. [www.stephaniecovington.com/b\\_beyond.asp](http://www.stephaniecovington.com/b_beyond.asp) and

[www.hazelden.org/OA\\_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=4404&sitex=10020:22372:US](http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=4404&sitex=10020:22372:US).

Davis, Laura. (1990). *The Courage to Heal Workbook: For Women and Men Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*. New York: Harper & Row.

Fearday, Fred & Clark, Colleen. (2001). *Triad Women's Project Group Facilitator's Manual*. University of South Florida Louis de la Parte Mental Health Institute and Tri-County Human Services, Inc.

Gordon, Verona C. (1981, 1986. Revisions 1988, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1998, 1999, 2002). *Insight: A Cognitive Enhancement Program for Women*. Chaska, MN. [www.insightforwomen.com](http://www.insightforwomen.com)

Kubany, Edward S., McCaig, Mari A., & Laconsay, Janet R. (2004). *Healing the Trauma of Domestic Violence: A Workbook for Women*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications.

Najavits, L.M. (2002). *Seeking Safety: A Treatment Manual for PTSD and Substance Abuse*. New York, NY: Guilford Press. [www.seekingsafety.org/](http://www.seekingsafety.org/)

Orbis Partners, Inc. (2010). *Moving On: A Program for At-Risk Women*. Center City, MN: Hazelden. [www.hazelden.org/OA\\_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=11528&sitex=10020:22372:US](http://www.hazelden.org/OA_HTML/ibeCCTpltmDspRte.jsp?item=11528&sitex=10020:22372:US)

VAWnet. *Online Learning Tools on Violence Against Women*. Special collection. Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence.

[new.vawnet.org/category/index\\_pages.php?category\\_id=867#871](http://new.vawnet.org/category/index_pages.php?category_id=867#871).

*Note: This selection of resources includes self-guided, interactive course modules that utilize various formats for presenting information (case studies, literature review, lecture, etc.) followed by some type of assessment tool that allows the user to gauge his/her understanding of the material presented. Most include suggested resources for further study and many provide a completion certificate based on evaluation scores. This link is included here to give facilitators additional tools and ideas for exercises, evaluation questions, topics, etc., to include in group content.*

Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs. (2006). *Circle of Hope: A Guide for Conducting Psychoeducational Support Groups*. [www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf](http://www.wcsap.org/pdf/CIRCLEOFHOPE09.pdf)

▪ **Resources for preventing and responding to incidents of abuse**

Tabachnick, Joan. (2008). *Engaging Bystanders in Sexual Violence Prevention*. National Sexual Violence Resource Center. [www.nsvrc.org/cms/fileUpload/Projects/Engaging\\_Bystanders.pdf](http://www.nsvrc.org/cms/fileUpload/Projects/Engaging_Bystanders.pdf)

VAWnet. *Prevention Resources*. Harrisburg, PA: National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. [new.vawnet.org/category/index\\_pages?category\\_id=131#934](http://new.vawnet.org/category/index_pages?category_id=131#934)

Creative Interventions. *StoryTelling & Organizing Project (STOP)*. Oakland, CA: Creative Interventions. [www.stopviolenceeveryday.org](http://www.stopviolenceeveryday.org) and [www.creative-interventions.org](http://www.creative-interventions.org)

*Note: The STOP project is a community project collecting and sharing stories of everyday people collectively intervening to end violence in ways that do not include law enforcement. The website includes audio clips and transcripts of people's experiences, and is listed as a resource here to give facilitators additional ideas for collectively responding to battering that is happening within jails or prisons in ways that do not necessarily involve corrections staff.*

▪ **Documentaries about incarcerated battered women**

The following list of films is provided for your information. Please note that inclusion on this list does not constitute an endorsement of the film by the National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women. Films are listed in chronological order, from most recent distribution date:

*Crime After Crime* (2011) ([www.crimeaftercrime.com](http://www.crimeaftercrime.com))

Produced and directed by Yoav Potash. 94 minutes.

Ordering information to follow at [www.crimeaftercrime.com](http://www.crimeaftercrime.com)

- This documentary tells the story of Deborah Peagler, sentenced to 25-years-to-life in prison for her connection to the death of her abusive boyfriend, and the two young attorneys who work to secure her release 20 years later under a new California law that allows domestic violence survivors like Deborah to challenge their convictions in court.

*Sin by Silence* (2009) ([www.sinbysilence.com](http://www.sinbysilence.com))

Produced and directed by Olivia Klaus. 49 minutes.

\$49 for anti-domestic violence organizations; includes additional educational footage. Visit [www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c759.shtml](http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/pages/c759.shtml) to order the educational version and access a study guide ([www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/study/SinBySilence.pdf](http://www.wmm.com/filmcatalog/study/SinBySilence.pdf)).

- This film features members of Convicted Women Against Abuse (CWAA) at the California Institution for Women. CWAA is the oldest and longest-running peer-run support group for incarcerated domestic violence victims in the country. The film highlights several individual women's stories, along the collective efforts of CWAA members to raise public awareness about domestic violence and to change public policies to ensure that imprisoned battered women's histories of abuse are taken into account when deciding whether to release them.
- Note: *Sin by Silence* director/producer Olivia Klaus and CWAA founder Brenda Clubine (who was released from prison in October 2008 and is featured in the film), have limited funding (as of 2011) to travel around the country to screen the film. They are interested in partnering with local anti-domestic violence organizations to organize community screenings of the film that can be used as fundraisers and public education events. For more information about this unique opportunity, contact Olivia Klaus at [olivia@quietlittleplace.com](mailto:olivia@quietlittleplace.com).

*Every F---ing Day of My Life* (2009) ([www.hbo.com/documentaries/every-f-ing-day-of-my-life/index.html](http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/every-f-ing-day-of-my-life/index.html))



Directed by Tommy Davis. 70 minutes.

Note: Previously released in a 83 minute version in 2007 as *One Minute to Nine* \$19.98. (Order online at <http://store.hbo.com/detail.php?p=266074&v=hbo> or at by phone at 1.866.316-4814).

- This documentary follows Wendy Maldonado and her eldest son Randy in the days before they pled guilty to manslaughter for the death of Wendy's abusive husband and were sentenced to 10 years in prison.

*Strength of a Woman* (2009) ([www.correctionalassociation.org/WIPP/index.htm](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/WIPP/index.htm))

Produced by the Women in Prison Project of the Correctional Association of New York

\$15 (order from

[www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/CWP\\_Materials\\_Order\\_Form\\_FINAL\\_04\\_09.pdf](http://www.correctionalassociation.org/publications/download/wipp/CWP_Materials_Order_Form_FINAL_04_09.pdf))

- This documentary features interviews with three formerly incarcerated battered women, who share about their experiences before and after prison.

*Our Voices Within: Out of the Shadows* (2007)

Produced by Free Battered Women ([www.freebatteredwomen.org](http://www.freebatteredwomen.org)). 34 minutes.

\$15 (to order, contact Free Battered Women, 1540 Market Street, Suite 490,

San Francisco, CA 94102, Tel: 415.255.7036 x. 304, Fax: 415.552.3150, Email:

[info@freebatteredwomen.org](mailto:info@freebatteredwomen.org))

- This film features interviews with six formerly incarcerated domestic violence victims, five of whom served over 15 years in California state prisons. The women talk about their experiences before, during, and after prison. Also included is footage from Free Battered Women's 2006 community event celebrating these and other survivors' freedom.

*Abused* (2006) ([www.abuseddocumentary.com/](http://www.abuseddocumentary.com/))

Produced and directed by Chuck Braverman.

\$75 + \$10 shipping & handling in the U.S. (discounts may be available for community-based anti-domestic violence organizations) (order from [www.abuseddocumentary.com/order.html](http://www.abuseddocumentary.com/order.html) or by calling 310.264.4184)

- This documentary features courtroom footage of an evidentiary hearing held in 2005 for the case of Susan Greenberg who, in 1987 at age 19, pled guilty of 1<sup>st</sup> degree murder and was sentenced to 25-to-life in order to avoid the death penalty for having killed the man who held her hostage and abused her. The film includes rare testimony from lay and expert witnesses regarding domestic violence, as well as compelling testimony from Susan herself.

*Charisse Shumate: Fighting for Our Lives* (2005) (<http://freedomarchives.org/Charisse.html>)

Produced by the California Coalition for Women Prisoners ([www.womenprisoners.org](http://www.womenprisoners.org)) and the Freedom Archives ([www.freedomarchives.org](http://www.freedomarchives.org)). 37 minutes.

\$20 (to order, go to <https://co.clickandpledge.com/advanced/default.aspx?wid=20633> or contact the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, 1540 Market Street, Suite 490, San

Francisco, CA 94102, Tel: 415.255.7036 x. 314, Fax: 415.552.3150, Email: [info@womenprisoners.org](mailto:info@womenprisoners.org))

- This film focuses on the life of Charisse Shumate, who was sentenced to 15-years-to-life for killing her abusive partner. She died of complications from sickle cell anemia, cancer, and hepatitis C. Before her death, Charisse was the lead plaintiff and prisoner spokesperson in a class action lawsuit challenging the medical neglect and abuse of women prisoners in California (aptly named *Shumate v. Wilson*). Charisse also was a founding member of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners. The film features rare interviews with currently imprisoned women as well as footage from State Senate hearings on conditions for women in the California State Prison system. There is a 51-page popular education guide that the CA Coalition for Women Prisoners created to accompany the film, with exercises that include challenging myths about prisons, organizing strategies, and connections between state violence and domestic violence (available electronically).
- Note: View the entire film online for free at: [sunsite.berkeley.edu/videdir/asx2/d8457.asx](http://sunsite.berkeley.edu/videdir/asx2/d8457.asx)

*What I Want My Words to Do to You* (2003) ([www.pbs.org/pov/whatiwant/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/whatiwant/))

Produced by Eve Ensler. Filmmakers: Madelein Gavin, Judith Katz, and Gary Sunshine. 80 min. \$19.99 for personal home use. \$44.95 for educational use. (To order, visit links at [www.pbs.org/pov/whatiwant/](http://www.pbs.org/pov/whatiwant/))

- The film features footage from a writing workshop led by Eve Ensler with 15 women incarcerated at NY's Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. Ultimately, the women's stories are performed at the prison by actors such as Mary Alice, Glenn Close, Hazelle Goodman, Rosie Perez, and Marisa Tomei. The website includes ordering information (\$19.99 for personal home use; \$44.95 for educational use) as well as a discussion guide, lesson plan, and a reading list. 80 minutes.

*Defending Our Lives* (1992) (<http://www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/defending.html>)

Produced by Battered Women Fighting Back! and distributed by Cambridge Documentary Films <http://www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/order.html>

Two versions of the film are available: 30 min & 44 min

Available in VHS or DVD, and in English and Spanish

\$60, \$160, or \$175 (to order, contact Cambridge Documentary Films, PO Box 390385, Cambridge MA 02139, Tel: 617/484-3993, Fax 617/484-0754, Email:

[orders@cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org](mailto:orders@cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org), or order online at:

[www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/orderform.html](http://www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/orderform.html))

- This film won the Academy Award for best documentary short in 1993 and features interviews with four women imprisoned for killing their abusive partners. Each of these women tells her story of being beaten, raped, and tortured by her partner and of the failure of the legal system to protect her. The women were a part of the "Framingham 8" who sought clemency from Massachusetts Governor William Weld, and also were members of Battered Women Fighting Back!, a grassroots organization dedicated to exposing domestic violence as a critical human rights

violation. Also features former battered woman and prosecutor Sarah Buel. A 59-page discussion guide (created in the 1990s) is available to download at:  
[www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/media/guides/defendingstudyguide.PDF](http://www.cambridgedocumentaryfilms.org/media/guides/defendingstudyguide.PDF)