



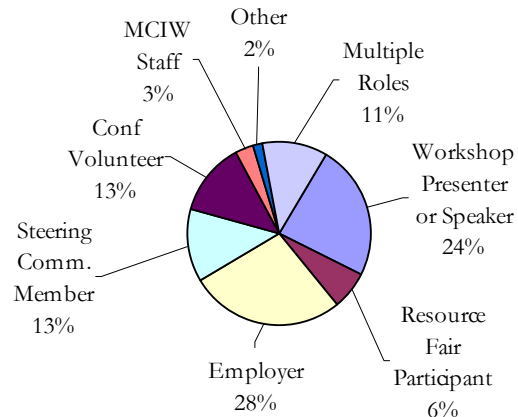
Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2010

Choice Research Associates conducted an evaluation of the Women Moving Forward Pre-Release Conference at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women (MCIW) in Jessup, Maryland on October 2, 2010. The evaluation surveyed 125 women from MCIW¹ and 62 non-MCIW attendees including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, employers, resource fair participants, conference volunteers, MCIW staff, and guests.²

Characteristics of MCIW Attendees:

- Age:** 34 years old (ranging from 19 to 69)
- Race:** 52% Black; 3% Hispanic; 41% White, 4% other
- Children:** 69% have Children;
Of those with Children: Average 2.5 Children (range 1 to 6)
Of those, 1.6 children (range 0 to 6) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 58% Never Married;
2% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;
10% Married; and 30% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 42%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 31%; Eastern Shore 11%; Western MD 9%, Southern MD <1%, DC Metro Area 3%, Out of State 3%

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role



Conferences activities included welcome remarks from Congresswoman Donna Edwards, a motivational speaker, three breakout sessions (covering 15 workshop topics), an employment fair, resource fair, a mother-daughter fashion show in cooperation with Girl Scouts Behind Bars, lunch, a dance performance, and a plenary session of formerly incarcerated women sharing their re-entry success stories. Evaluation results of these activities are below.

Workshop Topics: Generally speaking, workshops were well received by all conference attendees, as evidenced in the table below. The three ranking workshops were Post-Release Legal Issues, Women Raising Sons, and Housing Options, followed closely by Getting Ready for the Outside, and Education Options. Among the MCIW attendees³ 26% stated the workshops were what they liked best about the conference, while 6% stated they liked workshops least about the conference.

Workshop Topic – Breakout Session I	N ^a	Rank	Scale Score ⁵	Workshop Topic – Breakout Session II	N ^a	Rank	Scale Score ⁵
#1 Education Options Basic to Post Secondary, <i>Becky Lessey, Gregory McPhee, Kevin Maffey</i>	21	6	4.62	#9 Mediation Tools Prepare Re-entry <i>Tyler Keyworth, Joy Newheart</i>	16	14	4.22
#2 Post-Release Legal Issues <i>Rodney Mitchell, Esq.</i>	22	1	4.91	#10 Healing from Trauma <i>Bea Zipperle, LCSW-C and Vaile Leonard</i>	19	10	4.39
#3 Women Raising Sons <i>Catrice Alphonso, MM, Betty Blaze</i>	25	2	4.80	#11 Little Things; Avoid Big Problems <i>Tanique Brown, Parole & Probation</i>	19	9	4.50
#4 Enhancing Job Retention <i>Ann Hosmer</i>	25	15	3.67	#12 Getting ready for the Outside... While Inside <i>Mary L. Davis</i>	24	5	4.65
#5 Looking for Housing Options <i>Valie Leonard</i>	24	3	4.73	#13 Finding a Path Past Addictions	19	13	4.30
#6 Avoiding the Grip of Gangs <i>Tony Avendorph</i>	22	12	4.34	#14 Credit Matters <i>Michelle Singletary</i>	26	4	4.67
#7 The Power of Positive Thinking <i>Mary Pat Donelan, MD CURE</i>	22	8	4.50	#15 Re-entry Reality Check <i>Alfreda Robinson-Dawkins, NWPP</i>	36	7	4.53
#8 Family Law <i>Judge Weatherly & Jennifer Muskus, Esq.</i>	17	11	4.35				

Of the 125 MCIW attendees, 30 (24%) suggested topics for future conferences including housing (both transitional and housing obtained on your own), domestic violence, addiction (gambling, substance abuse), mental health, relationships, and child custody issues. Of all participants, 30% felt the workshops were not long enough.

Employment Fair: Forty-Seven MCIW attendees participated in job interviews. All of the interviewees (100%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was enough time to have a meaningful interview and most (98%) stated they have a better understanding of how to make a good impression during a job interview. The majority (more than 90%) also agreed that there were enough employers available to talk with, and there was a good variety of employers. Other comments made indicate that 6% of the attendees would like more employers overall, while 11% want employers from other geographical regions. Others expressed that they wished all of the MCIW attendees, or at least all of those within 30 days of release, could participate in interviews. Of those interviewed, 20% stated the job interviews were what they liked best about the conference.

Eleven employer and training programs representing a variety of industries including hospitals and nursing facilities, food service, grocery/retail, environmental hazard abatement, and construction came to the conference to conduct interviews, and they were overwhelming positive about their experience. On average, each employer interviewed 15 women, ranging from 7 to 25 women interviewed during the 2.5 hour employment fair. In addition, 100% of employers agreed or strongly agreed that:

- There was enough time to have a meaningful interview;
- The women were sufficiently prepared to be interviewed;
- They would be interested in returning to the conference next year to conduct more interviews; and
- As a result of their experience at the conference, they are more willing to hire an ex-offender.

Employer Comments Include:

- *"What an amazing group of women. Well prepared, great questions, wonderful resumes. I am happy to be a part of this job fair and look forward to follow-up with some of these ladies".*
- *"Everyone had resumes except one - this made it very easy. They need access to computers".*
- *"Every person I interviewed today was well prepared, well spoken and eager to start a new path. I enjoyed the interview session and hope to be invited next year. I look forward to reviewing the applications they submit in Dec 2010".*
- *"I was very excited to meet these ladies and they did not disappoint. I hope we can create some opportunities for them in the near future".*

Fashion Show: The fashion show is always a highlight of the conference for many of the participants. This year participants included mothers and daughters from the Girl Scouts Behind Bars program. Among the non-MCIW attendees who attended the fashion show and completed an evaluation form, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the fashion show should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW women, 13% stated the fashion show was what they liked best about the conference.

Resource Fair: All of the MCIW attendees had the opportunity to attend the resource fair as it was conducted in two shifts concurrent to the third breakout session, but before the plenary session. The resource fair was set up so that the women could go table to table to pick up a variety of resource materials, and in some cases, talk with representatives of agencies. Comments from MCIW attendees indicated general satisfaction, with 97% reporting the resource fair was useful to them. However a number of individuals (13%) expressed a desire for a greater variety of resources (particularly employment, social services/benefits, banking, and how to obtain a driver's license upon release) and 10% called for resources from other geographical regions (e.g., Prince Georges, Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland). Of the resource fair vendors, 20 of 21 (or 95%) stated they would be interested in returning next year.

Speakers: The motivational speaker, workshop presenters, and plenary session speakers were also well received. Of the non-MCIW attendees who responded to this question, more than 95% agreed or strongly agreed that both the motivational speaker and the plenary should be included in future conferences and 90% were satisfied with the conference speakers and presenters. Likewise, over 96% of MCIW attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the keynote and plenary speakers, and with the workshop presenters.

Lessons Learned

Among the MCIW women who completed this section of the survey, most (97%) reported that they felt more confident about returning to their community, and were more hopeful about their future as a result of attending the conference. The majority also report that as a result of attending the conference, they were more confident about how to manage money, how to present themselves in business clothes, and know more about educational, substance abuse, mental health, family reunification, and other resources available to them once released.

Conference Feedback

The MCIW attendees also said what they specifically liked best about the conference. They cited the resources and information provided to them (4%), the people they met at the conference (10%) and almost a fifth of the women (19%) liked “everything” about the conference. Although 42% of MCIW attendees stated there was nothing they disliked about the conference, others noted that what they least liked about the conference included 23% who said there was not enough time, 10% who wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area), one person noted the temperature in the facility (1%) and another person (1%) noted issues with other attendees (guests and MCIW staff). However, all (100%) of the MCIW attendees reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

In addition, of all participants -

- 98% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized and should be held annually;
- 98% were satisfied or very satisfied with the conference overall.

From their perspective -- comments by the MCIW attendees ...

- *“It gave me a more positive look on things. Just because I made a mistake doesn’t mean I can use it as a crutch. I can still move forward with a positive attitude.”*
- Three women responded to the question: “what I liked about the conference best is ...”:
 - *“[It was] a day to feel normal again.”*
 - *“The feeling of being a real person with a future.”*
 - *“Learning about the most important things in life to stay on right path.”*
- *“This was the best thing that could have happened to me through this journey.”*

¹ 84% (125 of 149) of MCIW attendees completed an evaluation form.

² Percentages provided throughout only include those respondents who answered the questions and are thus not necessarily percentages of all attendees.

³ Questions concerning what MCIW attendees liked best and liked least about the conference were open ended questions to allow for maximum feedback. Of those who completed these questions, the data were recoded so that one activity was selected for each respondent. In many cases this was the first activity listed, or the respondent included a qualifying statement that made it clear which was the most liked/least liked aspect of the conference.

⁴“N” is the number of people in attendance at that particular workshop who completed the questions on the evaluation form.

⁵ Workshop Topic scale scores are the average scores of two scales. The first scale contained responses by MCIW attendees and combined the average score for two questions: 1) the workshop topic was useful and 2) future conferences should include this topic. The second scale contained responses from non-MCIW attendees and averaged three questions: 1) the workshop presented was accurately described, 2) the instructor was prepared and knowledgeable, and 3) the subject matter was communicated successfully.