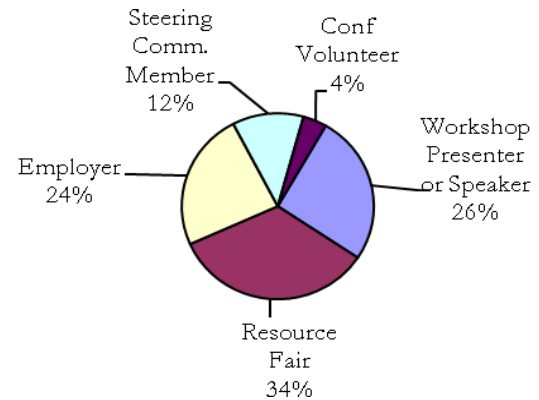




Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2011

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 22, 2011. The evaluation surveyed 102 women from MCIW¹ and 50 non-MCIW attendees, including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, employers, resource fair participants, and conference volunteers.²

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role



Characteristics of MCIW Attendees:

- Age:** 38 years old (ranging from 18 to 66)
- Race:** 53% Black; 2% Hispanic; 43% White, 2% other
- Children:** 79% have Children;
Of those with Children: Average 2.6 Children (range 1 to 6)
Of those, 1.4 children (range 0 to 6) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 56% Never Married;
5% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;
10% Married; and 29% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 41%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 25%; Eastern Shore 6%; Western MD 9%, Southern MD 4%, DC Metro Area 8%, Out of State 7%

Conference activities included: Welcome remarks from Chief Judge Robert Bell, two breakout sessions (covering 14 workshop topics), an employment fair, a resource fair (which included a scavenger hunt, 3 mini-workshops and practice interviews), lunch, a fashion show and motivational dance performance, and a plenary session of formerly incarcerated women sharing their re-entry success stories. Pre-conference activities included practice interview sessions with the women being interviewed on the day of the conference. 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 Re-entry Reality Check, followed closely by Tips to Become a Successful Entrepreneur and Finding a Path Past Addictions. Among the MCIW attendees,³ 27% stated the workshops or speakers were what they liked best about the conference, and none of the participants identified the workshops as their least favorite activity.

Workshop Topic – Breakout Session I	N ⁴	Rank	Scale Score ⁵	Workshop Topic – Breakout Session II	N ⁴	Rank	Scale Score ⁵
#1 Post Secondary Educational Options <i>Cheneda Kane</i>	25	4	4.78	#8 The Power of Positive Thinking <i>Mary Pat Donelan, MD CURE</i>	12	9	4.58
#2 Post-Release Legal Issues <i>Rodney Mitchell, Esq.</i>	14	1	5.00	#9 Is Re-entry Working? Success Stories <i>Mary L. Davis</i>	13	10	4.53
#3 Women Raising Sons <i>Catrice Alphonso</i>	10	1	5.00	#10 Finding a Path Past Addictions <i>Lily Dorsey</i>	12	3	4.79
#4 Enhancing Job Retention <i>Ann Hosmer</i>	13	8	4.61	#11 Re-entry Reality Check <i>Alfreda Robinson-Dankins, NWPP</i>	8	1	5.00
#5 Healing from Trauma <i>Bea Zipperle, LCSW-C</i>	13	5	4.67	#12 Learning to Love Ourselves Through Meditation <i>Mary Aubry</i>	12	11	4.16
#6 Avoiding the Grip of Gangs <i>Tony Avendorph</i>	17	7	4.62	#13 Tips to becoming a Successful Entrepreneur <i>Moneira Hawkins</i>	21	2	4.86
#7 Mediation Tools Prepare Re-entry <i>Tyler Keyworth</i>	12	9	4.58	#14 Looking for Housing Options <i>Vaile Leonard</i>	11	6	4.63

Of the 102 MCIW attendees, 30 (24%) suggested topics for future conferences including: Housing, healthcare, domestic violence, parenting, divorce, and money management. Of all participants, 26% felt the workshops were not long enough.

Employment Fair: Forty-Eight MCIW attendees participated in job interviews. Most of the interviewees (98%) agreed or strongly agreed that there was enough time to have a meaningful interview and 97% stated they have a better understanding of how to make a good impression during a job interview. The majority (97%) also agreed that there were enough employers available to talk with, and 95% felt there were a good variety of employers. Other comments made indicate some of the attendees would like more employers overall, while others wanted employers from other geographical regions. Others expressed that they wished all of the MCIW attendees could attend the interviews.

Twelve employers and training programs, representing a variety of industries, conducted interviews, and they were overwhelmingly positive about their experiences. On average, each employer interviewed 9 women, ranging from 3 to 16 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:

- *"It would be great to offer an information session in another room so people can attend to hear more information"*
- *"If the women could know more about the opportunities before we meet"*
- *"This was a great experience"*
- *"Well organized, women were well prepared"*

Pre-Conference Employment Interview Workshop: One week before the conference, a number of volunteers came to MCIW to conduct an employment interview workshop with the women who were to be interviewed at the conference. Interviewees completed a post-conference workshop evaluation form and reported:

- 100% of the women agreed or strongly agreed felt that they learned something in the mock interview that they could use in a real interview
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed they would be able to use what they learned in a real interview
- 100% agreed or strongly agreed that as a result of their experience on Saturday, they were both more confident about their ability to interview and were better prepared for a real interview.
- Most stated that the mock interviewer offered suggestions on how to improve their interviewing ability and non-verbal aspects.

Additional Comments from the Participants:

- *"I liked every interviewer, they was a big help, can't wait to go on my interview"*
- *"I enjoyed learning how to properly interview"*
- *"My mock interviewer was extremely helpful and I will be using her suggestions in a real interview"*
- *"I think the mock interviewer did a great job in letting me know what I need to work on"*

Fashion Show: The fashion show is always a highlight of the conference for many of the participants. 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, 3% stated the fashion show was what they liked best about the conference.

Resource Fair: MCIW attendees had the opportunity to attend the resource fair. The resource fair was set up so that the women could pick up a variety of resource materials from each table, and talk with representatives from numerous state and local agencies. In addition, this year the resource fair included a scavenger hunt, which was geared toward asking the women to locate resources they would need upon their return home, to engage with the conference visitors and to participate in one of three mini-workshops and/or the practice interview conducted simultaneously in the corners of the gymnasium.

Comments from MCIW attendees indicated general satisfaction, with 96% reporting the resource fair was useful to them, 94% stated there were enough different types of resources at the fair and that scavenger hunt helped them to take advantage of the resource fair. Among the attendees who participated in the mock interviews during the resource fair, 86% said the interview was useful to them, while 94% found the mini-workshop topics interesting. However, a number of individuals, including non-MCIW attendees and 24% of the resource fair vendors, expressed a desire for a greater variety in types of resource information and in the number of resources from other geographical regions (e.g., Washington DC., Western Maryland, Eastern Shore, and Southern Maryland).

Among the non-MCIW attendees who attended the resource fair and completed an evaluation form, more than 80% agreed or strongly agreed that the scavenger hunt and the mini-workshops should be continued at future conferences; 75% believe the mock-interviews should also continue

In addition, 63% of the resource fair vendors agreed with the women that the scavenger hunt helped the women take advantage of the fair, 100% believed there was enough time to talk to the women about the resources, and all stated they would be interested in returning next year. Among the 17 resource providers, 12 provided a handout and 3 provided a gift or promotional items. The vendors did advise it would be helpful to understand more about the rules in terms of contraband so they can know what to bring in the future.

Speakers: The keynote speaker, workshop presenters, and plenary session speakers were also well received. Of the non-MCIW attendees who responded to this question, 100% agreed or strongly agreed that the keynote speaker and 78% felt the plenary should be included in future conferences. All (100%) were satisfied with the conference speakers and presenters. Likewise, 98% 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, all (100%) 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 opportunities, substance abuse and mental health treatment programs, 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 (24%), the people they met at the conference (15%) and 17% liked “everything”. The majority (68 of 102) of MCIW attendees didn’t indicate there was anything they disliked about the conference. For what they least liked about the conference, of the 34 who did respond, 50% noted that there was not enough time and 21% wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area). Additionally, most (99%) of the MCIW attendees reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

Of all participants -

- 99% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized and should be held annually;
- 99% were satisfied or very satisfied with the conference overall.

Comments by the MCIW attendees (from their perspective) ...

- *“This is a blessing to those who want to change their life”*
- *“I will use the tools and information to help me succeed. I just want to thank everyone.”*
- *“I liked the whole conference. Everyone was awesome. Great food, fashion show, workshops, it was all wonderful.”*
- *“I can’t just pinpoint one thing. I loved it all!”*
- *“All the speakers were very encouraging and helpful, really grateful for their time.”*
- *“It was wonderful learning new things about myself.”*
- *“I thought that it was great and made me so excited about going home. I’m confident in my future when I’m released.”*
- *“As long as you continue to have re-entry conference and the women work at what they've been through, they will not be coming back through these doors”*

¹ 68% (102 of 150) 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.