

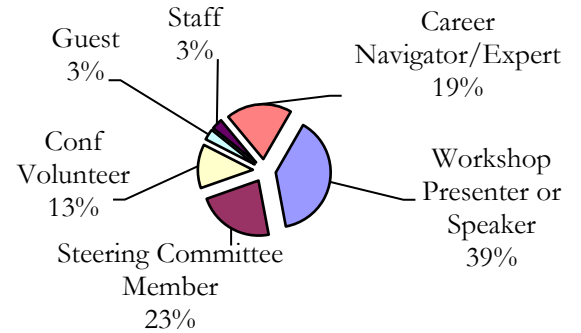
Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2022

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 1, 2022. The evaluation surveyed 85 women from MCIW¹ and 31 non-MCIW attendees, including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, and conference volunteers.²

Characteristics of MCIW Attendees (N=82):

Age: 35 years old (ranging from 21 to 63)
Race: 39% Black; 4% Hispanic; 47% White, 10% Other
Children: 70% have Children;
 Of those with Children: Average 2.5 Children (range 1 to 5)
 Of those, 1.70 children (range 0 to 4) are under 18 years old
Marital Status: 64% Never Married;
 6% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;
 8% Married; and 22% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
Returning to: Baltimore City 37%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 16%; Eastern Shore 12%; Western MD 19%, Southern MD 3%, DC Metro Area 13%, Out of State 0%

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role (N=31)



The theme this year was *Creating Your Plan for Success* and included a plenary panel focused on employment, followed by table sessions facilitated by career navigators and employment readiness experts. During lunch, there were presentations on managing mental health and a yoga demonstration. The afternoon included two breakout workshop sessions covering 5 different topics, repeated twice. The conference concluded with two Keynote speakers sharing their successful transition from prison to home. Evaluation results of these activities are below.

Employment Plenary and Table Session:

The employment plenary panel and small group table sessions facilitated by career navigators and employment experts, attendees learned about the essential components of a resume, tips on successful interviewing, and what to say (and what not to say) when discussing their criminal justice history and discussed a sample letter of explanation. Attendees were also provided advice on employment retention and good work habits, including attitude and appearance. In their evaluations:

- Over 95% of attendees agreed that the presentation topic was useful, and that they learned something that they could use in a real interview and the information would help them prepare a resume.
- Over 85% agreed they learned how to explain their charge and learned what would help them keep a job.
- Overall, 98% of attendees said that they were more confident about their ability to interview for a job, and felt more prepared to keep a job once hired.

Participants expressed interest in receiving handouts including examples of resumes, lists of skill sets, and cover letters.

Workshop Topic	N ³	Rank	Scale Score ⁴
My Healthcare – Overcoming Fear & Doubt <i>Presenter: Dr. Chimene Liburd</i>	27	3	4.596
Social Media Etiquette <i>Presenters: Elizabeth Adams</i>	20	5	4.368
Connections, Connections <i>Presenters: Gavata King-Smith</i>	41	4	4.570
Honey, I'm Home <i>Presenters: Kelli Davis</i>	40	1	4.644
Me & My P.O. (Probation/Parole Officer) <i>Presenters: Shari McCoy, Kaeshawn Stewart, Martha Danner, Juanita Myers</i>	50	2	4.623

Workshop Topics: Generally speaking, workshops were well received by all conference attendees, as evidenced in the table above. The top three ranking workshops were “Honey, I’m Home”, “Me and My PO”, followed by “My Healthcare – Overcoming Fear and Doubt”. Among the MCIW attendees,⁵ 39% stated the workshops/speakers were what they liked best about the conference, while none of the participants identified the workshops/speakers as their least favorite activity. Suggested future workshop topics were provided by 39 (48%) of MCIW attendees, including family, relationships, and parenting; mental health/trauma; transitional housing; reentry programs; and finance/money management related topics. Attendees also mentioned job trades/skills, self-esteem, substance abuse treatment; and small business as possible topics. Of participants, 9% felt the workshops were not long enough.

Speakers: The plenary panel speakers and table experts, workshop presenters, and closing session speaker were also well received. Of the non-MCIW attendees who responded to this question, over 95% agreed that the plenary speakers, employment table experts and workshop speakers were prepared and knowledgeable. 100% agreed that the closing keynote speakers should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW attendees, over 95% were satisfied with the plenary and workshop speakers.

Speakers, workshop presenters and table experts also provided feedback on their conference experience and many (over 66%) agreed there was sufficient time to cover the material. Most (over 88%) said they would like to return and participate in the WMF conference in the next year.

Lessons Learned

Among the MCIW women who completed this section of the survey, most (over 97%) reported that they felt more confident about returning to their community, were more hopeful about their future, and were ready to develop their re-entry plan of action. The majority (over 90%) also reported that, as a result of attending the conference, they were more aware of mental health challenges and triggers, learned useful coping skills, and other resources available to them once released.

When asked what they had learned that day, MCIW attendees stated:

- *“I am responsible for myself and the way I react”*
- *“Better knowledge about my resume/job interviews”*
- *“How to interact with my parole and probation officer”*
- *“Connections help you move forward”*
- *“A lot of helpful health benefits”*
- *“How to re-direct and interview in a direction that is positive and is away from your past”*
- *“Federal Bonding program”*
- *“Good yoga/coping skills to ease anxiety and stress”*
- *“Job search is a process”*
- *“I am not my charge; My charge doesn't define me”*
- *“Resources for Job Centers”*
- *“Things not to do, say, or post on the internet”*
- *“What and where to get the resources needed to succeed”*
- *“We have to find a way to start over”.*

Conference Feedback

Overall, the MCIW attendees were happy with the conference – 97% were satisfied or very satisfied. In addition, 9% of attendees when asked what they liked best about the conference said “Everything” while 24% said the people they met at the conference. The majority (54 of 82) of MCIW attendees didn’t indicate there was anything they disliked about the conference or stated they liked everything. For what they least liked about the conference, of the 28 who did respond, 13% noted that there was not enough time and 2% wanted additional resources that were not available

(e.g., by topic or geographic area). Additionally, 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
- 96% said the conference should be held annually.

MCIW attendees were also asked how they would use the information provided at the conference:

- *“I am not afraid to embrace my job opportunities”.*
- *“I will practice interviewing, stay positive, know that skills learned here at MCIW are transferable.”*
- *“I am setting boundaries and goals. I will be a productive member of society”.*
- *“Understand I can only change myself. When upset or stressed, use breathing techniques.”*
- *“I will try to stay positive and keep positive people around me so I will hopefully stay focused.”*
- *“I will trust it and act on it and use it to forward my career and personal goals. I will be accountable.”*

¹96% (82 of 85) 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. This includes MCIW Attendees and Non-MCIW Attendees.

³“N” is the number of people in attendance at that particular workshop who completed the questions on the evaluation form.

⁴ 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. Scale responses ranged from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), thus higher values indicate a more positive response.

⁵ 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.