



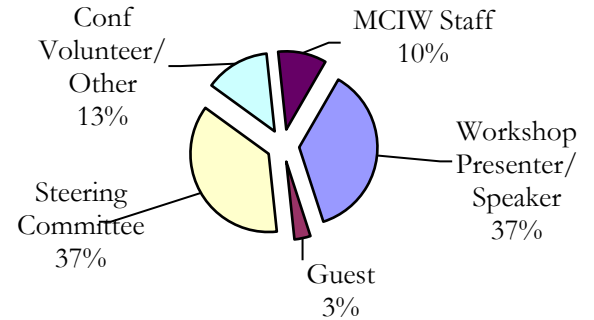
Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2025

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 4, 2025. The evaluation surveyed 100 women from MCIW¹ and 30 non-MCIW attendees, including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, MCIW staff, and conference volunteers.²

Characteristics of MCIW Attendees (N=82¹):

- Age:** 41 years old (ranging from 19 to 77)
- Race:** 56% Black; 4% Hispanic; 0% Asian, 33% White, 7% Other
- Children:** 75% have Children;
Of those with Children: Average 2.61 Children (range 1 to 6)
Of those, 1.2 children (range 0 to 4) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 52% Never Married;
7% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;
14% Married; and 27% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 47%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 14%; Eastern Shore 4%; Western MD 9%, Southern MD 1%, DC Metro Area 14%, Out of State 11%

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role (N=30)



The theme this year was *The Comeback: Stronger than Before*. Conference activities included a morning keynote address by Rodney Mitchell, a moving play from I-WISH Production entitled “I Can Fly” featuring women from MCIW with life or long sentences, and three workshops per attendee individually selected from 6 topics. The conference concluded with two “Walking In My Shoes” speakers sharing their successful transition from prison to home. Evaluation results of these activities are below.

Workshop Topic	N ³	Rank	Scale Score ⁴
<u>Employment</u> : Back in the Game: Winning Strategies for Career Successes. <i>Presenter: LaSharn Hamilton</i>	61	2	4.74
<u>Finances</u> : The Comeback Wallet: Smart Strategies for a Stronger Financial Future. <i>Presenters: Anne Holmes and Annie Weinschenk</i>	51	3	4.73
<u>Re-Entry</u> : The Comeback Journey: Rebuilding Life After Re-entry <i>Presenters: Lamont Carey, Mark Ford, & Jordyn Seide</i>	52	2	4.74
<u>Family Reunification</u> : Home Team Advantage: Reuniting Families <i>Presenters: Shannice Anderson and Shareese Kess-Lewis</i>	31	5	4.70
<u>Mental Health</u> : The Comeback Mindset: Healing, Reframing, and Rising Again <i>Presenters: Dr. Bridgette Chase and Dr. Carmen Johnson</i>	61	1	4.80
<u>Healing Through Journaling</u> : Journaling for Growth and Healing <i>Presenter: Keisha Byam Simmonds</i>	50	4	4.72

Workshop Topics: Workshops were very well received by all conference attendees, as evidenced in the table above. The top three ranking workshops were “Mental Health”, “Employment” and “Reentry” were tied for second, and “Finances” was third. Among the MCIW attendees,⁵ among the 78 who answered this question, 52% stated the workshops/speakers were what they liked best about the conference, while of 59 of attendees who responded to the question of what they liked least, 5% identified the workshops. Suggested future workshop topics were provided by 46 (46%) of MCIW attendees, including substance abuse, entrepreneurship and employment, housing, and trauma and mental health. Of all participants, 36% felt the workshops were not long enough.

Speakers: The keynote, workshop presenters, the I-WISH Production and closing session speakers were also well received. Of the non-MCIW attendees who responded to this question, 100% agreed that the speakers and workshop presenters were prepared and knowledgeable and more than 93% agreed that the morning keynote, I-Wish production and closing keynote speakers, should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW attendees, over 98% were satisfied with the speakers and workshop presenters. Speakers and workshop presenters also provided feedback on their conference experience and 83% agreed there was sufficient time to cover the material, and 100% 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, 100% reported that they felt more confident about returning to their community, 99% were more hopeful about their future, and 99% were ready to develop their re-entry plan of action. The majority (over 96%) also reported that as a result of attending the conference, they learned how to manage money, were more aware of mental health challenges and triggers, agreed that using a journal can help them grow, are more realistic about challenges with reuniting with family, learned useful coping skills to address reentry challenges, and report they are more aware of resources available to them once released.

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

- *“Don’t be ashamed of where you’ve been; it was a stepping stone.”*
- *“Being a convicted felon doesn’t define you.”*
- *“How to manage my credit and finances.”*
- *“Job Reentry - what to expect, how to prepare, how to be successful”*
- *“That it’s ok to go slow with re-entry.”*
- *“Helpful connections to resources once I’m released.”*
- *“Mental health growth and how to handle everyday challenges.”*
- *“Don’t be afraid to admit I need help and ask for it.”*
- *“Journaling helps release stress.”*
- *“Be careful what I speak. Speak positive.”*
- *“Everyone has their own journey.”*

Conference Feedback

Overall, the MCIW attendees were happy with the conference – 99% were satisfied or very satisfied. In addition, 12% of attendees when asked what they liked best about the conference said “Everything” while 13% said the people they met at the conference. The majority (66 of 100) of MCIW attendees didn’t indicate there was anything they disliked about the conference or stated they liked everything. Of the remaining 34 who responded, 47% said they wanted more time, while conversely 9% felt it was too long, and 6% wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area). Additionally, 100% of the MCIW attendees reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

Of all participants:

- 100% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized; and
- 98% said the conference should be held annually.

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

- *“Always reflect back to my handouts and notes.”*
- *“Use the information daily and pass what I’ve learned to others to help them. Just be honest and you can get more help when you open up. Be calm.”*
- *“Everything I heard today is locked away in my mental map so I stay true in my direction and be a greater version of self upon release.”*
- *“Get into some type of therapy; save my money; get a job.”*
- *“Stay focused, stay positive, find work I love so I will have a better chance for success.”*

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- ¹ 94% (100 of 106) of MCIW attendees completed an evaluation form. However, of those 100, only 82 provided demographic information.
- 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.