



WOMEN IN CORRECTIONS

Presented by Jamie Bell and Jodi Glitzenstein



Goal

To educate attendees about the value of women working in corrections and the surrounding issues unique to women working in the field

Objectives

- Attendees will have an understanding of the history of women working in the correctional field
- Attendees will be able to articulate the importance of gender-specific training
- Attendees will understand why women are more vulnerable working in the correctional field
- Attendees will understand the importance of establishing professional boundaries
- Attendees will understand client manipulation techniques
- Attendees will be able to articulate the unique skills and abilities they bring to the field
- Attendees will be able to recognize danger/warning signs of women losing their boundaries
- Attendees will understand what women need to be successful in the field of corrections

Landmark Year - 1973

- Women correctional officers were hired to work at the California Institution for men
- Geri McLaughlin, Shirley McGee, Delphine Williams, and Dorothy Killian
- Initially policy dictated women work First Watch (midnight to 8:00 AM)
- Time progressed → women gradually assigned to nearly every post
- June 21, 1973, proposed moratorium on hiring of female officers in institutions with all male residents



1974 to 1980

- Prison system made a concerted effort to hire, train, and retain females 1974
- Eight female correctional officers at Folsom state prison 1977
- 1980 women facing hostile environments



50% of the population but...

- 1999 to 2007—40% increase of women working in correctional facilities
- 2021 Civilian law enforcement 60.3%
- 2022 Correction officers and jailers 27.6%
- 2024 BOP statistics 29.2%
- Community corrections 54.9%



Have Women Arrived?

- Women continue to make gains in male-dominated criminal justice professions
- Women are more involved in problem solving and improved decision making
- Women still face challenges, inequities, and cultural complications
- There may still be marginalization of female criminal justice professionals



Arrived

Video



Gender Specific Training

- Research supports usefulness of same-gender training
- Women learn more and contribute more to discussions
- Mixed gender groups
 - Males communicate better and learned more
 - Females communicated less and learned less
 - Females tend to be inhibited by the presence of males in mixed gender training
- Strong recommendation for gender coaching/training during pre-service training
- Women come together as a group and discuss issues unique to them



Why Conduct Gender Specific Training?

- Women who model male behavior are successful but negate strengths they bring to the workplace as women
- Women bring characteristics and innate skills that make them more successful in dealing with the shifting demands of the correctional environment and the new workforce
- Female subordinates see traits of women they want to model
- Important to educate males and their supervisors that sometimes there are better ways to accomplish the mission and associated tasks

Why are Women Vulnerable?

- Slighter physical stature
- Society's preconceived notion that women are naturally passive and weak
- Power issues in society where female submission and male dominance are the norms
- Sex-role stereotypes: mother/daughter, peacemaker, rescuer, bleeding heart
- Personal insecurities about intelligence, being liked, appearance and power may override professionalism
- Feeling of being judged based on gender (leads to self-doubt)

Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness.

--BRENÉ BROWN, *DARING GREATLY*

Women Working with Male Clients

- Know that clients will test you
- Establish your sense of authority
- Have a zero tolerance policy
- React to compliments (Do not ignore them)
 - Say they are inappropriate.
 - Explain the “why”
 - Stop manipulation on the part of the client/inmate
 - Document when necessary



Tier Talk Podcast, March 21, 2018

Beware of Client Manipulation

Some clients have misogynist views that all women can be manipulated or cowed into submission.

- Always know policies and procedures exist to protect you
- State expectations for communication and behavior
- Be careful of social media
- Work positively with employees and volunteers
- Watch your stress level
- Do not get numb to clients, their problems, and concerns
- Be alert



Beware of Client Manipulation, cont'd

- Appreciate the skills you will develop
 - Multitasking
 - Flexibility in thinking
 - Resiliency
 - Learn from your mistakes
 - Take constructive criticism in a positive way
 - Flexibility to change
 - Self-control
- Men and women are at equal risk of being manipulated but due to the large number of women in the profession, women have higher likelihood of being manipulated

What Women Bring to the Table

- Enhance normalization of correctional facilities in relation to society
- Multitasking ability
- Keen observation skills
- Collaboration
- Inclusivity
- Skilled with people
 - Empathetic
 - Nurturing
 - Patient



What Women Bring to the Table, cont'd

- Communication
- Desirous of lots of information
- Interest in more intricate relationships
 - People
 - Processes
 - Data



Communication

- Confrontation from clients is often emotionally led
- Men have a relative discomfort dealing with emotions
- Women readily understand that sometimes people just need to be heard
- Communication is the key to survival
 - It is an easy way to compensate for a large physical presence
 - Establish your command presence early on
 - De-escalation—use your ability to read the situation and respond in a way that is calming
 - Being able to understand others makes you more successful
- Clients more likely to discuss medical and educational concerns with women



Problem Solving and Decision Making

Women versus Men

Women

- Collaborative
- Inclusive
- Provides opportunities to develop staff involved in the decision making process, enabling a more creative process that tends to help develop staff

Men

- Reach a decision quicker
- Make it without level of input or collaboration exhibited by women



What Women Need

- Gender specific training
 - Women learn more and contribute more
 - Provide training suited to meet unique needs
 - Positive impact on personal and professional lives of women
 - Helps them become more effective in their roles
- Good supervision
- Role models to serve as inspiration and mentors
- Mentoring programs; formal and informal
- Networking
- Supportive male colleagues



Mentoring and Coaching

- Mentors share experiences and perspectives
- Mentors help the staff they are coaching to consider the big picture
- Mentors have many years of experience
- Mentors ask, “Well you tell me...”
- Mentors’ experience can be drawn upon by staff to ask if similar things have happened in the past and how they dealt with it



Treading on Thin Ice/Slippery Slope

- Staff become more vulnerable when they have a need for approval, reinforcement, and acceptance
- Talk of unhappiness in life, especially with relationship (spouse or significant other) that clients can overhear gives a manipulative client an “in”
- Lack of engagement with team



Danger Signs

- Appearance: sudden change of wardrobe, wearing make up, styling hair, wearing perfume
- Spending extra time with client and/or seeking out client unnecessarily
- Client specifically requesting female to handle his programmatic needs
- Doing favors for clients
- Personal and physical contact
- Failure on part of colleagues to intervene, address inappropriate behaviors, and/or report issues to supervisors



Scenarios

“Problems occur when women are not focused on the process for change.”

“Problems occur when empathy turns into sympathy.”

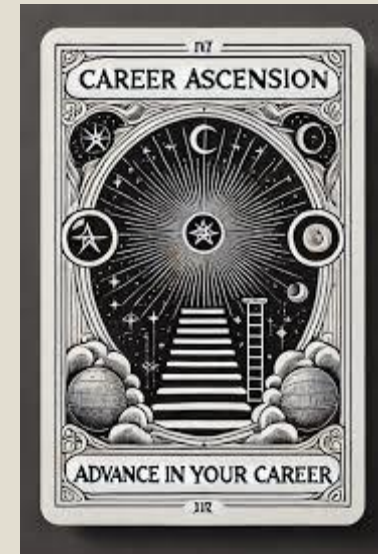
Jamie Bell

Is there a “profile” for women who become involved with male clients?

- Cafeteria example
- Female in client dorm example
- Former clients example

Important for Leadership and Career Ascension

- Professional competency and doing a good job
- Interpersonal skills, including good communication skills and taking care of people
- Being known by your good reputation
- Taking and excelling in command positions
- Timing
- Mentoring



Leadership...one needs to:

- Have integrity
- Have the ability to negotiate, especially when dealing with an ethical dilemma
- Have problem solving skills
- Understand the skills of the 'head' and 'heart' and be able to figure out which are needed to best resolve a situation or challenge
- Have patience
- Be disciplined
- Have the ability to reach out and touch people
- Be able to reduce the ego needs

Harry Lappin, Director of Federal Bureau of Prisons

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