



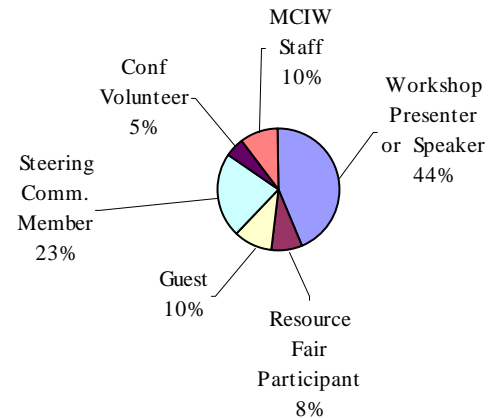
Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2009

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 24, 2009. The evaluation surveyed 121 attendees from MCIW as well as 39 others who attended or participated in the conference including members of the steering committee, presenters and speakers, MCIW staff, resource fair participants, conference volunteers, and guests.¹

Characteristics of MCIW Attendees:

- Age:** 34 years old (ranging from 17 to 58)
- Race:** 61% Black; 2% Hispanic; 35% White, 2% other
- Children:** 80% have Children;
Of those with Children: Average 2.8 Children (range 1 to 10)
Of those, 1.9 children (range 0 to 10) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 46% Never Married;
12% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;
15% Married; and 27% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Sexual Orientation:** 67% Straight, 8% Gay, 24% Bisexual
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 38%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 28%; Eastern Shore 11%; Western MD 8%, Southern MD 4%, DC Metro Area 8%, Out of State 3%

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role



Conferences activities included a motivational speaker, two breakout sessions (for a total of 14 workshop topics), an employment fair, resource fair, business attire fashion show, a dance performance, and a plenary session 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 two top ranking workshops (tied) were Women Raising Sons and Educational Opportunities, followed closely by Healing from Trauma and Power of Positive Thinking. Among the MCIW Attendees² 19% stated the workshops were what they liked best about the conference, while 7% stated they liked workshops least about the conference.

| Workshop Topic – Breakout Session I | N ³ | Rank | Scale Score ⁴ | Workshop Topic – Breakout Session II | N ³ | Rank | Scale Score ⁴ |
|---|----------------|------|--------------------------|--|----------------|------|--------------------------|
| #1 Enhancing Job Retention through Coaching Groups, <i>Ann Hosmer</i> | 16 | 9 | 4.41 | #8 Resources Alcohol, Drugs, & Mental Health Recovery, <i>Karen McNeal</i> | 18 | 6 | 4.58 |
| #2 Continuity of Medical Coverage, <i>Stacey Davis</i> | 19 | 8 | 4.50 | #9 The Power of Positive Thinking <i>Mary Pat Donelan</i> | 22 | 3 | 4.66 |
| #3 Healing from Trauma, <i>Bea Zipperle, Vale Leonard</i> | 24 | 2 | 4.74 | #10 Post-Release Legal Issues in MD, <i>Ronald Chatters, Elise Gelinis</i> | 16 | 12 | 4.23 |
| #4 Enhancing Local Corrections & Reentry, <i>Bernice Tucker</i> | 21 | 4 | 4.62 | #11 Be Money Smart, <i>Joan Lok</i> | 19 | 11 | 4.34 |
| #5 Women Raising Sons, <i>David Miller, Bettye Blaize</i> | 20 | 1 | 4.87 | #12 Family Mediation, <i>Joy Newheart, Tyler Keyworth, Linda Jeming</i> | 19 | 10 | 4.39 |
| #6 Family Reunification and Strengthening, <i>Cynthia Jackson</i> | 19 | 7 | 4.54 | #13 Education Options Basic to Post Sec, <i>Becky Lessey, Gregory McPhee, Kevin Maffey</i> | 17 | 1 | 4.87 |
| #7 Credit Matters, <i>Christine Parker</i> | 18 | 5 | 4.59 | #14 Getting ready for the Outside...While Inside, <i>Mary L. Davis</i> | 15 | 7 | 4.54 |

Of the 121 MCIW Attendees, 42 (or 34%) suggested topics for future conferences to include housing (including transitional and recovery housing), relationships, anger management, childcare, financial assistance, budgeting, sessions for young adults, those without children and/or those without substance abuse problems. Participants also requested to review the workshop descriptions prior to signing up in order to pick the topics most relevant to their experience and interests. Of all participants, 22% felt the workshops were not long enough.

Employment Fair: Forty-Seven MCIW attendees participated in job interviews. Most of the participants agreed or strongly agreed that there was enough time to have a meaningful interview (93%) and they have a better understanding of how to make a good impression during a job interview (95%). Most also agreed that there were enough employers available to talk with (77%) and there were a good variety of employers (86%). Comments made by respondents indicate that 13% would like more employers overall, 9% want employers from other geographical regions, and 17% wanted more time for interviews. Others expressed the desire to talk with or obtain information from more than one employer, and wish that more MCIW attendees could participate in interviews. Of those interviewed², 17% stated the job interviews were what they liked best about the conference.

Fashion Show: The fashion was 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, 97% agreed or strongly agreed that the fashion show should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW women², 14% stated the fashion was what they liked best about the conference. Additional comments suggested the need to slow down the pace of the fashion show in part to ensure that announcer could heard stating each participants name over the applause.

Resource Fair: Virtually all of the MCIW Attendees had the opportunity to attend the resource fair as it was conducted after the second breakout session, but before the plenary session. The 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 all attendees indicated general satisfaction with the resource fair, however a number of individuals expressed a desire for a greater variety of resources (e.g., housing and education) and/or for other geographical regions (e.g., Prince Georges county, Eastern Shore, Southern Maryland, District of Columbia). Of the resource fair vendors, 16 of 21 (or 76%) stated they would be interested in returning next year.

Plenary and Speakers: The motivational speaker and plenary session speakers were also well received. Of the non-MCIW attendees who responded to this question, 89% agreed or strongly agreed that the plenary should be included in future conferences. However, comments included that it was difficult to hear the speakers. Nonetheless, 12% of MCIW attendees² reported this was their favorite conference activity.

Lessons Learned

Overwhelmingly, (99%) of the women 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 being more confident about how 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 attendees² also noted that what they specifically liked best about the conference was the resources and information provided to them (27%) and the people they met at the conference (12%), while 10% liked everything about the conference. Although 51% of MCIW attendees² stated there was nothing they disliked about the conference, others noted they least liked about the conference included 27% who said there was not enough time (e.g., for job interviews and/or wanted to attend additional workshops), 5% wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area), 4% did not like the workshops, several noted the temperature in the facility (4%) while a few (4%) noted other attendees (people and MCIW staff). However, most MCIW attendees (99%) agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

In addition, of all participants -

- 97% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized and should be held annually;
- 97% were satisfied or very satisfied with both the conference overall and the presenters and speakers.

Comments by MCIW Attendees tell the rest of the story ...

“I have a very strong and positive feeling about my release this time”

“I enjoyed myself and to know that us ex-offenders have so many supporters make me more confident in to knowing I can make it”

“Thank you for taking the time and effort to help us make a successful re-entry into society. I know the rest is up to me”

Research Notes:

¹ Non-MCIW Attendees were asked to identify the capacity in which they participated in the conference, and were allowed to select multiple roles if appropriate. While one respondent identified themselves as an employer, they did not complete any of the questions related to the job interview portion of the conference. In addition, they also identified themselves as a resource fair participant, and they did complete the resource fair related questions. As such, this individual was identified as a resource fair participant and not an employer.

² 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. The percentages provided only include those respondents who answered these questions and are not percentages of all 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 contain 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.