



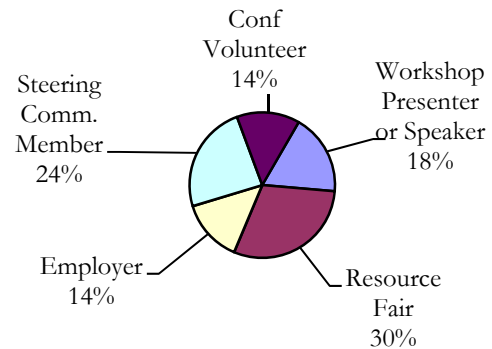
**Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2012**

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 27, 2012. The evaluation surveyed 134 women from MCIW<sup>1</sup> and 51 non-MCIW attendees, including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, employers, resource fair participants, and conference volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

**Characteristics of MCIW Attendees (N=134):**

- Age:** 38 years old (ranging from 20 to 65)
- Race:** 44% Black; 3% Hispanic; 38% White, 15% other
- Children:** 79% have Children;  
Of those with Children: Average 2.7 Children (range 1 to 12)  
Of those, 1.7 children (range 0 to 12) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 66% Never Married;  
4% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married;  
6% Married; and 24% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 37%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 28%; Eastern Shore 14%; Western MD 8%, Southern MD 1%, DC Metro Area 8%, Out of State 4%

**Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role (N=51)**



Conference activities included: Welcome remarks from Attorney Rodney Mitchell, two breakout sessions (covering 16 workshop topics), an employment fair, a resource fair (which included a scavenger hunt, 4 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 “Is Re-entry Working -- Success Stores”; “Power of Positive Thinking”, and “Being Money \$mart”, followed closely by “Housing and Recovery” and “A Business Plan for Life”. Among the MCIW attendees,<sup>3</sup> 13% stated the workshops/speakers were what they liked best about the conference, while 5% of the participants identified the workshops as their least favorite activity.

Workshop Topic – Breakout Session I	N <sup>4</sup>	Rank	Scale Score <sup>5</sup>	Workshop Topic – Breakout Session II	N <sup>4</sup>	Rank	Scale Score <sup>5</sup>
#1 Being Money \$mart <i>Presenter: Mark Matthews, Clean Slate</i>	19	3	4.76	#1 Healing from Trauma <i>Presenters: Bea Zipperle &amp; Melinda Weidmann</i>	13	12	4.46
#2 Educational Opportunities <i>Presenter: Cheneda Kane, MD Educ. Opp.</i>	20	7	4.68	#2 Social Media – Reconnecting Online <i>Presenter: Heather Pruger, Saul Ewing LLP</i>	12	15	3.71
#3 Enhancing Job Retention <i>Presenter: Ann Hosmer</i>	13	14	4.34	#3 Anger is Never a Primary Emotion <i>Presenter: Carol Deel, Carol A. Deel &amp; Assoc.</i>	17	8	4.64
#4 Avoiding the Grip of Gangs <i>Presenter: Tony Avendorph</i>	16	13	4.43	#4 Becoming a Successful Entrepreneur <i>Presenter: Cindy Taviab, Diva by Cindy</i>	17	6	4.70
#5 The Power of Positive Thinking <i>Presenter: Mary Pat Donelan, MD CURE</i>	21	2	4.81	#5 Diplomas, Certificates and Degrees <i>Presenter: Kimberly Bohnet, Howard CC</i>	12	16	3.33
#6 Finding a Path Past Addiction <i>Presenter: Nancy K. &amp; Chuck T.</i>	17	9	4.55	#6 A Business Plan for Life <i>Presenter: Lori Evans, Evans Comm. Group</i>	14	5	4.71
#7 Housing and Recovery <i>Presenter: Valie Leonard, The Light of Truth</i>	20	4	4.72	#7 No More Drama Mama! <i>Presenter: Roseanna Vogt, Teresa Vogt</i>	17	11	4.51
#8 Transformed for Life – Family Reunification <i>Presenter: Marla Moore</i>	13	10	4.53	#8 Is Re-entry Working? Success Stories <i>Moderator: Mary L. Davis</i>	20	1	4.90

Suggested future workshop topics were provided by 39 (29%) of MCIW attendees, including child welfare, childcare, instant credit reports, Section 8 housing, domestic violence, rape and sexual assault survivors, legal issues, mental health, including both Narcotics Anonymous and Alcoholics Anonymous in the substance abuse workshop; living with chronic illness (HIV and Hepatitis C) including education to prevent others from contracting these diseases and cancer awareness. Of all participants, 18% felt the workshops were not long enough.

**Employment Fair:** Forty-Two MCIW attendees participated in job interviews. All of the interviewees (100%) 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 (65%) also agreed that there were enough employers available to talk with and there were a good variety of employers. Other comments indicate some of the attendees would like more employers overall. Others expressed that they wished more MCIW attendees could attend the interviews.

Seven employers and training programs, representing a variety of industries, conducted interviews, and the employers were very positive about their experiences. On average, each employer interviewed 16 women, ranging from 1 to 25 women during the 2.5 hour employment fair. Employers agreed or strongly agreed that:

- 100% believed there was enough time to have a meaningful interview;
- 100% believed the women were sufficiently prepared to be interviewed;
- 100% would be interested in returning to the conference next year to conduct more interviews; and
- 86% stated that as a result of their experience at the conference, they are more willing to hire an ex-offender.

**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 the majority agreed:

- They learned something in the mock interview that they could use in a real interview
- They would be able to use what they learned in a real interview
- 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.

**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% strongly agreed that the fashion show should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW women, 12% 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, 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 or more of four mini-workshops and/or the practice interview conducted simultaneously in the corners of the gymnasium. When asked, 17% of MCIW attendees stated the resource fair, resources and/or information provided were what they liked best about the conference.

Comments from MCIW attendees indicated general satisfaction with the resource fair, with 96% reporting the resource fair was useful to them, 91% stated there were enough different types of resources at the fair and 90% said 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, 89% said the interview was useful to them, while 98% found the mini-workshop topics interesting. However, a number of MCIW attendees expressed a desire for a greater variety in types of resource information and in the number of resources from other geographical regions (e.g., Baltimore City, Washington DC., Western Maryland, Eastern Shore, and Southern Maryland).

Among the non-MCIW attendees who attended the resource fair and completed an evaluation form, 79% agreed the scavenger hunt should continue as an activity in future conferences, while 85% felt the same about the mini-workshops and 92% affirmed future inclusion of mock-interviews in the conference.

In addition, 83% 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 15 resource providers who completed the survey, 14 provided a handout and 6 provided a gift or promotional items. Comments and suggestions from vendors included a desire for more information about what to expect – especially for first time attendees; an advance copy of the program so that they could have the option to participate in other conference activities such as the luncheon and fashion show; and identified a gap in the fair, noting a need to have HIV resources. Finally, one vendor noted that if social workers and transitional workers could also be present at the resource fair, this would facilitate a smooth transition to service engagement upon release.

**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 97% felt the plenary should be included in future conferences. Most (95%) were satisfied with the conference speakers and presenters. Likewise, over 95% of MCIW attendees were satisfied or very satisfied with the keynote and plenary speakers, and with the workshop presenters. Finally, 20% of the MCIW attendees stated the keynote, plenary and/or workshop presenters were their favorite part of the conference.

### **Lessons Learned**

Among the MCIW women who completed this section of the survey, most (97%) reported that they felt more confident about returning to their community, and 98% were more hopeful about their future as a result of attending the conference. The majority (over 95%) 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.

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

- *“Even though I’m a felon, people will hire me”*
- *“I learned about resources I didn’t know were available”*
- *“I need to put me first”*
- *“Others have been where we are, we can do it”*
- *“Gang affiliation starts with who you are”*
- *“Identifying and controlling anger”*
- *“Think realistically”*
- *“If you fail, get back up and keep trying; even if a door shuts another one will open; help somebody else”*

### **Conference Feedback**

Overall, the MCIW attendees were happy with the conference – 98% were satisfied or very satisfied. In addition, 20% of attendees when asked what they liked best about the conference said “Everything” while 17% said the people they met at the conference. The majority (74 of 134) of MCIW attendees didn’t indicate there was anything they disliked about the conference. For what they least liked about the conference, of the 60 who did respond, 23% noted that there was not enough time and 16% wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area). Additionally, all of the MCIW attendees reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

### **Of all participants -**

- 96% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized; and
- 99% said the conference should be held annually.

Final comments from the MCIW attendees...

- *“Keep coming back - the information was very helpful”*; and
- *“The conference helps you see your future”*.

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<sup>1</sup> 89% (134 of 150) of MCIW attendees completed an evaluation form.

<sup>2</sup> Percentages provided throughout only include those respondents who answered the questions and are thus not necessarily percentages of all attendees.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup>“N” is the number of people in attendance at that particular workshop who completed the questions on the evaluation form.

<sup>5</sup> 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.