



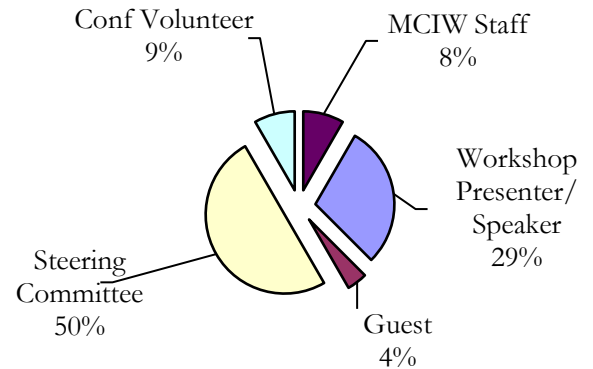
Summary Results of Women Moving Forward Conference 2024

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 5, 2024. The evaluation surveyed 105 women from MCIW<sup>1</sup> and 24 non-MCIW attendees, including members of the steering committee, presenters, speakers, MCIW staff, and conference volunteers.<sup>2</sup>

Characteristics of MCIW Attendees (N=95):

- Age:** 37 years old (ranging from 19 to 58)
- Race:** 45% Black; 4% Hispanic; 1% Asian, 41% White, 8% Other
- Children:** 79% have Children; Of those with Children: Average 2.3 Children (range 1 to 6) Of those, 1.6 children (range 0 to 6) are under 18 years old
- Marital Status:** 62% Never Married; 6% Never Married but Lived with Someone as Married; 7% Married; and 24% Divorced, Separated or Widowed
- Returning to:** Baltimore City 37%; Baltimore & Surrounding Counties 23%; Eastern Shore 13%; Western MD 7%, Southern MD 5%, DC Metro Area 13%, Out of State 1%

Figure 1: Non-MCIW Attendees – Primary Role (N=24)



The theme this year was *Choosing Your Direction: Navigating Your Path Home*. Conference activities included a morning keynote address by Dr. Topeka Sam, a presentation on the steps to successful reentry by Lamont Carey, a lunch plenary session of reentry role play, with MCIW attendees interacting with Donna Rojas, and two workshops in the afternoon (covering a total of 5 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 <sup>3</sup>	Rank	Scale Score <sup>4</sup>
Mindfulness through Journaling <i>Presenter: Keisha Byam-Simmons</i>	36	3	4.60
How to Get & Keep a Job <i>Presenter: Diane Quinn</i>	56	5	4.44
Legal Wellness: Post Judgement Legal Issues <i>Presenters: Aja Mallory and Courtland Merkel</i>	24	2	4.65
Navigating Your Path Home (Reentry Resources) <i>Presenters: Anne Pack and Shannice Anderson</i>	58	4	4.51
Financial Health <i>Presenter: Ann Holmes</i>	20	1	4.71

**Workshop Topics:** Generally speaking, workshops were well received by all conference attendees, as evidenced in the table above. The top three ranking workshops were “Financial Health”, “Legal Wellness” and “Mindfulness through Journaling”. Among the MCIW attendees,<sup>5</sup> among the 78 who answered this question, 56% stated the workshops/speakers were what they liked best about the conference, while of 36 of attendees who responded to the question of what they liked least, 11% identified the workshops. Suggested future workshop topics were provided by 44 (42%) of MCIW attendees, including mental health/trauma; substance abuse, family reunification, entrepreneurship, housing, employment challenges and interview skills. Of all participants, only 4% felt the workshops were not long enough.

**Speakers:** The keynote, steps to success, role play plenary, workshop presenters, 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 90% agreed that the morning keynote, steps to success, closing keynote speakers, and the lunch role-play panel discussion should be included in future conferences. Among the MCIW attendees, over 97% were satisfied with the speakers and workshop presenters.

Speakers and workshop presenters also provided feedback on their conference experience and 100% agreed there was sufficient time to cover the material, and 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 (97%) reported that they felt more confident about returning to their community, 99% were more hopeful about their future, and 97% were ready to develop their re-entry plan of action. The majority (over 97%) also reported that as a result of attending the conference, they learned how to manage money, agreed that using a journal can help them grow, and report they are more aware of resources available to them once released.

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

- *“Be uncomfortable to accomplish more.”*
- *“Being a convict doesn't mean I can't be a successful person.”*
- *“How to take advantage of resources.”*
- *“Journaling is self-care.”*
- *“How to address incarceration when interviewing”*
- *“Financial; help with credit; building credit.”*
- *“Importance of advocating for yourself.”*
- *“Even though I am convicted felon, my life does not end here.”*
- *“How to invest in my future (retirement, unexpected expenses)”*
- *“There are a lot of support groups and we just have to reach out.”*
- *You can do/achieve anything if you better yourself and put in the effort.”*
- *“Actions speak louder than words.”*
- *“We are not alone after release.”*

### **Conference Feedback**

Overall, the MCIW attendees were happy with the conference – 98% were satisfied or very satisfied. In addition, 8% 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 (69 of 105) of MCIW attendees didn't indicate there was anything they disliked about the conference or stated they liked everything. Of the 36 who did respond, 25% said they spent too much time sitting, 17% wanted additional resources that were not available (e.g., by topic or geographic area), and 8% noted they wanted more time. Additionally, 97% of the MCIW attendees reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that people at the conference treated them with respect.

### **Of all participants:**

- 98% agreed or strongly agreed the conference was well organized; and
- 99% said the conference should be held annually.

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

- *“I am making a plan with the information and resources I learned about today including to be more successful.”*
- *“Go to my local library look up my resources.”*
- *“I will take the knowledge and use it to be successful when trying to budget my income and get a car and things I need.”*
- *“By staying in contact with reliable people to use my resources wisely and objectively, make my reentry a better reentry for me.”*
- *“Utilize the tools that has been given to me to build my foundation.”*
- *“I will ask for help. I will go outside my comfort zone, use transferable skills, [and] use the resources that are available to me.”*

---

<sup>1</sup> 94% (105 of 112) 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. This includes MCIW Attendees and Non-MCIW Attendees.

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

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

<sup>5</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.