THE WOMEN’S PROJECT
A REPORT TO THE STATE
The Women’s Project is an initiative of women advocates in New Jersey to respond to the conditions and challenges of Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

We are grateful to the Commission on Reentry Services for Women, formerly incarcerated women, legislators, physicians, lawyers, and concerned advocates for their research and tenacity in setting forward their objective criticisms and recommendations for improved services for women both “behind the wall,” and during the reentry process.

With the support of Governor Murphy, Senate President Sweeney, and Speaker Coughlin, NJRC has bolstered reentry services for over 400 women across a broad array, but most particularly in providing for nurse navigation services to connect women to OB/GYN, diabetes, hepatitis B and C, mental health, and addiction treatment.

In addition, thank you to Dr. Chris Pernell, Yun Jun (Cathy) Cho, and Gladys Martinez of University Hospital; Dr. Gloria Bachmann of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital; Dr. Noelle Aikman of Hackensack Meridian Health and Jersey Shore University Medical Center; and Helen Archontou of YWCA Northern New Jersey, NJRC Nurse Navigator Aleyja Aguirre facilitated the Circle of Care initiative for women returning from prison.

The Journal of Women and Criminal Justice sponsored by The Women’s Project broke national ground in providing a voice for women in prison. Indeed, the National Conference on Correctional Health Care recognized the contributions of The Women’s Project and the Commission and invited members to present on a broad array of women’s healthcare issues in four (4) distinct panels before a national audience.

Lastly, The Women’s Project continues to publish as to matters of women’s healthcare in nationally recognized journals. On behalf of The Women’s Project, I would also express my gratitude to Chairs Dr. Tanya Pagan Raggio-Ashley and Linda Baraka for their advocacy and leadership.

For further information as to direct women’s reentry services and The Women’s Project’s initiatives, please contact Sofia Lesnewski at slesnewski@njreentry.org.

Best,
First and foremost, it is serving as the link to leaders in the State Legislature, Houses of Worship, nonprofit community, healthcare community, legal community, and beyond, providing women that have been recently released from state prison, county jail, and addiction treatment with those NJRC critically-needed services.

Most importantly is your ability to use us as a conduit, as a bridge, to ensure that women leaving institutions are receiving valued, needed essentials, including legal and medical services, identification, housing referrals, and workforce training and employment.

Again, if any woman needs NJRC services, please contact Sofia Lesnewski at slesnewski@njeentry.org or 201-600-5764.
We have had much success with our Nurse Navigator, who has connected over 400 NJRC women program participants to OB/GYN, diabetes, hepatitis B and C, mental health (depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, etc.), and addiction treatment (detox, residential, Intensive Out-Patient, Medication-Assisted Treatment) services.

In a small support group format, healthcare providers assisted NJRC women program participants with primary care, specialty care (endocrinology, cardiology, pulmonary), sexual and reproductive health, behavioral health, trauma, substance use, depression, anxiety, and resignation, children and family relationships, and intimate relationships.

Although recommended topics were used as a guide while planning, participants were regularly polled, and workshops were ultimately developed based on their current needs and interests. The goal of each workshop was to provide participants with information, equitable access to resources, and support.

In partnership with Dr. Chris Pernell, Yun Jun (Cathy) Cho, and Gladys Martinez of University Hospital; Dr. Gloria Bachmann of Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital; Dr. Noelle Aikman of Hackensack Meridian Health and Jersey Shore University Medical Center; and Helen Archontou of YWCA Northern New Jersey, NJRC Nurse Navigator Aleyja Aguirre facilitated the Circle of Care initiative for 75 NJRC women program participants.

Of these 75 women, 34 identify as African American, 24 as Caucasian, 10 as Hispanic, 5 as Other/Multiracial, and 2 as Asian. 39 of the women have children.

On Thursday, October 28, at 2:00 pm at NJRC’s New Brunswick Site (57 Livingston Avenue), we will celebrate our Middlesex County Circle of Care participants, providing them with new cell phones and one year of free phone service. We invite you, as advocates for justice-involved women, to join.
We are grateful for the leadership of Dr. Gloria Bachmann, who serves as our Editor, the justice-involved women, and advocates who made the first edition of The Journal of Women and Criminal Justice possible. The art and writing, which came from all across the country, were a powerful testament to the need to expand and improve healthcare services for currently and formerly incarcerated women.

We are now launching the second edition of The Journal (please see the flyer below). We highly encourage you to submit your art and writing by December 10, 2021 and to distribute the call for submissions to your network.
Under the leadership of Dr. Gloria Bachmann, the Commission on Reentry Services for Women has been selected to make four major presentations at the National Conference on Correctional Health Care in Chicago in late October/early November. The topics of the presentations are below.


- “Addressing The Needs of Menopausal Incarcerated Women.” Chair J Hutchinson Colas with panelists P Valera, K AlShowaikh, G. Bachmann and J Kothari

- “Prenatal Care for Incarcerated Women: Need for Standardized Templates.” An oral presentation by A Katz.

- “Addressing the Needs of Justice-Involved Women: A Case Study of the New Jersey Commission on Reentry Services for Women.” Oral presentation by Dr. Gloria Bachmann, Sherri Goldberg, and Sofia Lesnewski

We are looking forward to highlighting the work of the Commission at the Conference and to learning from leaders in the criminal justice and reentry space.
The Commission’s research on the needs of formerly and currently incarcerated women is highlighted in several publications, which are linked below in the names of the reports.

The Commission on Reentry Services for Women Report outlines many of the barriers court-involved women face during and after incarceration and proposes concrete policy and practical responses.

In addition, two articles written by Commission members have been published in national and international publications: “Pregnancy in incarcerated women: need for national legislation to standardize care” in Journal of Perinatal Medicine and “Symptomatic menopause: Additional challenges for incarcerated women” in Maturitas.

We are honored to be recognized in these publications and to hopefully contribute to substantive reforms for court-involved women.
We are grateful for the transparency and communication with Tom Eicher, Director, Office of Public Integrity and Accountability, New Jersey Attorney General’s Office, regarding the ongoing investigation into Edna Mahan Correctional Facility for Women.

We applaud the courageous women who have come forward with their stories. If you have any information that could be helpful to the investigation, we encourage you to contact Director Eicher at Thomas.Eicher@njoag.gov.

Again, thank you to Commission Chairs Dr. Tanya Pagán Raggio-Ashley and Linda Baraka for their hard work, follow through, and advocacy; thanks to Leslie McRae, Sharon McGreevey, Jada Fulmore, Pheobie Thomas, and the fellowship of NJRC Ambassadors, who organized the Public Health Emergency “toolkits,” which contained underwear, socks, and feminine hygiene products for women being released from prison; and the wide swath of leaders who advocate for court-involved women every day.

And, we are most grateful for your advocacy, input, and ardent support as we look forward to improving services for women both “behind the wall” as well as upon reentering society.