Women in Jail Interview Notes

Presented by

The Research and Evaluation Unit, CJPPD

April 2019
Women in Jail in CT Report

Published October 2018

- Pretrial Outcomes
- Time to Release
- Prior Admissions to DOC
- Prior Arrest Histories
- Prior Prison Sentences
- DOC Classification Scores
- Case Histories
- Demographics
- Interviews at York
Women in Jail Interview Notes

Published March 2019

- York CI
- 33 Pretrial Women
- May – August 2018
- After 7 days, to detox
- Comparable to York pretrial total
- Consented
- Themes, co-occurring issues

The Connecticut Statistical Analysis Center
March 2019

OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division

Women in Jail Interview Notes

Purpose and Methodology

Between March 1, 2018 and August 31, 2018, the Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division, performed a series of one-on-one, open-ended interviews with 33 incarcerated women who were awaiting adjudication at York Correctional Institution, the state's only prison for women.

These interviews were intended as part of a broader OPM investigation into the dynamics that appeared to be driving the state’s female pre-trial prison population (Women in Jail in CT, 2019). The interviews at York CI provided an in-depth look at the issues and circumstances confronting a large portion of the state’s female pre-trial population. A majority of the women who were interviewed exhibited a complex constellation of issues and concerns that included economics and family instability, drug addiction, violence, abuse, mental and physical health issues, and histories of childhood and sexual trauma.

Access to inmates at York CI was granted by the DOC’s parole department. The women who were interviewed were selected at random by OPM from the DOC’s inmate management system. Staff at York CI were informed of the names of the women to be interviewed in advance and corrections officers accompanied each woman to a private interview room where they were informed about the purpose of the interviews. The woman was then given the opportunity to opt out and return to her housing unit or to sign a consent agreement. In the consent agreement, each interviewee was informed that she was not required to discuss or reveal anything that she did not feel comfortable sharing, and that she could end the interview at any time.

One case that was placed on OPM's radar was a woman who had been admitted to the facility at least one week prior to the date of the interview. However, we were told to ensure that none of the women were undergoing ‘detox’ at the time of the interview. The DOC's parole department was informed in advance of the interview schedule. In the report, women in jail in CT, we discovered that women who were able to be taken out from jail, 70% were able to be evicted within the first week. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the women who were able to leave prison within 7 days of admission have greater access to economic assets and social and family support than the women who remain incarcerated past one week. Given this constraint, we assume that the interview cohort was slightly more likely to be experiencing more difficult circumstances than the average pre-trial inmates.

The following are an attempt to present the information gleaned from the interviews in a general way in the hope that they might be useful to future researchers interested in incarcerated women.

- Kendall Bubuia, Principal Investigator
Major Themes

• **Childhood Trauma**
  • 21% (4 of 19) woman said they did not have enough food to eat as a child

• **Pregnancy**
  • 97% (29 of 30) women reported having had been pregnant
  • The most frequently occurring age for a first pregnancy was age 17 (8 women)

• **Sexual Trauma**
  • 86% (24 of 28) women said they had been sexually assaulted and of those 24 women, 18 were 16 years old or younger

• **Mental Health Issues**
  • 82% (21 of 26) of the women said they had a mental health condition or multiple

• **Drug Abuse**
  • 44% (12 of 27) women said they had used heroine in any form

• **Family and Economic Instability**
  • 64% (16 of 25) said they had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives

• **Violence**
  • 75% (21 of 28) said they were physically abused

• **Health Emergencies**
  • 15 women mentioned they were in a serious car accident and 13 women recalled having a traumatic brain injury, brain surgery or a serious concussion
Constellation of Issues

- Mom was a heroin addict
- Not enough food to eat as a kid
- More than 5 schools as a kid
- Moved around as a kid
- Primary caretaker was grandma
- Dad and brother have been in prison before
- Biological sister is also a heroin addict
- DV in the house as a kid
- Parental Physical Abuse
- DCF Involved

- 2 abortions
- First pregnant at age 14
- Has 3 daughters

- “Brenda”
  New London, CT
  31, White
  FTA, 2nd degree

- At age 22, her mom overdosed and died on Christmas

- Sexually abused by cousins from ages 12-14
Constellation of Issues

- Miscarriage
- 24 at first pregnancy
- 2 Children
- Step-dad beat mom to death and found dead in a pool, ruled a drowning by police
- Husky and husbands private insurance
- Economic
  - Alcoholic
  - Percocet
  - Heroin
  - Prescription drugs
- Drug Use
- Sexual Trauma
  - Sexual abuse ages 7-9 by alcoholic step-dad’s father
- “Sylvia”
  - Plainville, CT
  - 47, White
  - VOP
- Pregnancy
- Violence
  - Domestic violence from husband
- Physical Health
  - Spinal stenosis
  - Back surgery
  - Epilepsy
- Childhood Instability
  - Gran mal epileptic seizures since age 7
  - Physical and Verbal Violence in the house as a kid, by her step-dad
Constellation of Issues

- Raised by DCF, probably 8-9 foster homes
- One foster mom used to lock the refrigerator, “If you’re not home by 8pm you don’t get to eat”
- Runaway as a kid

- Mom died from a drive by shooting in Hartford at age 1

- Unexpected deaths

- "Katherine"
  Hartford, CT
  26, Black
  Larceny 2nd degree

- Lost a child during pregnancy

- Drug Use
  - Alcoholic

- Physical Health
  - 2 serious car accidents

- Violence
  - Boyfriend is in prison for a shooting
  - Witnessed many shootings

- Pregnancy
Next Steps

• Vignettes

Report Link

Overdose Death Mapping

- The Research Unit has been working with the OCME mapping overdose death data since 2014
- Since then, we have gotten Death Registry data from CT DPH
- With this data, we've been able to document a large overlap of overdose deaths and the DOC population
2018 Overdose Deaths Map

Past Features

- Injury Location vs Death Location
- Sex
- Race/Ethnicity
- Age
2018 Overdose Deaths Map

New Features

- Heroin Related
- Fentanyl Related
2018 Overdose Deaths Map

New Features Cont.
• Town Level Data

OPM CJPPD Research Unit

Presented by: Kendall Bobula, Ivan Kuzyk and Kyle Baudoin

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