

Involving female offenders in release planning can increase reintegration success

September 22 2014

Women who are about to be released from prison need to be more involved in their discharge planning if they are to successfully reintegrate into their communities and avoid returning to prison, according to a new study.

Almost half of all female prisoners are back behind bars within one year of their release and most have multiple prison terms, mainly for drug-related offenses.

Dr. Flora Matheson, a researcher at St. Michael's Hospital, conducted one-on-one interviews with women who were about to be released or had been recently released from prison to determine what they felt they needed to avoid reoffending.

The study was published online in the *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*.

Dr. Matheson said the transition from prison to the community is a challenging time for women offenders, who often have complex needs such as substance abuse, mental illness, little education, few employment skills and [poor social skills](#).

"Once a woman has left prison, she has to juggle work, appointments for drug testing, employment training, [substance abuse](#) treatment, meetings with the parole officers and parental commitments," said Dr. Matheson, a medical sociologist and research scientist in the hospital's Centre for

Research on Inner City Health. "With few financial resources available, these women often have difficulty meeting such challenges."

Dr. Matheson said one key to reintegration is having a stable and trusting relationship with a parole officer. She said the interviews showed that some women were afraid to ask their parole officers tough questions, such as the repercussions of violating parole, without being put on high alert or judged.

Many women leaving prison need a positive social support network to help them recover from substance use, Dr Matheson said. They also need to avoid areas where drugs are available and relatives and acquaintances who use drugs, yet they often find themselves returning to familiar communities and social circles, she said.

When [women](#) want to change their lives, specifically wanting to be free of drugs and [prison](#), a positive social support network can go a long way toward helping them realize those goals, Dr. Matheson said.

Provided by St. Michael's Hospital

Citation: Involving female offenders in release planning can increase reintegration success (2014, September 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-involving-female-reintegration-success.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--