

TIME FOR CHANGE FOUNDATION:

Centering Relationships for Achieving Successful Outcomes with Formerly Incarcerated Women

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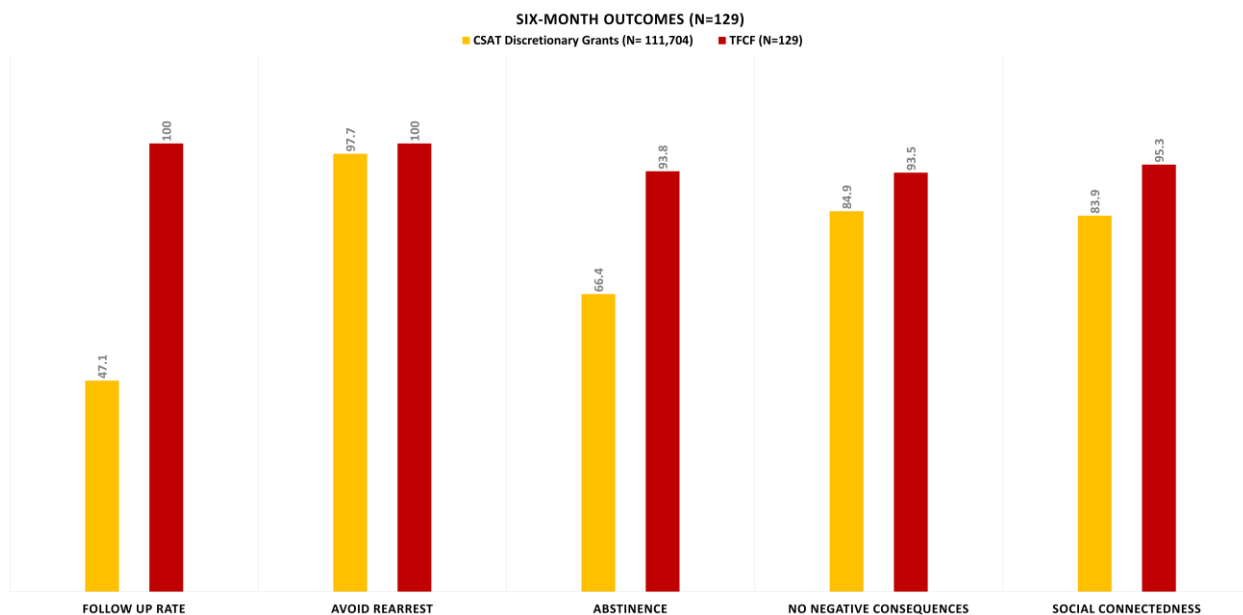
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Project Overview

While California's incarcerated population has decreased over the last decade, recidivism rates remain high. 42.6% of formerly incarcerated women will be rearrested within one year of release. In Time for Change Foundation's programs, the six-month rearrest rate has been 0% for three years. Recidivism is a lost opportunity – for incarcerated women, their children, and our entire society. Time for Change Foundation's evidence-based program ensures women do not lose the opportunity for a better future. Built by a formerly incarcerated woman of color and employing true diversity, equity, and inclusion in its organizational culture and structure, it offers a unique model that:

- Centers building relationships
- Centers Black and brown women's cultures and voices
- Meets women's unique needs as mothers and caregivers
- Teaches self-advocacy

Formerly incarcerated women can succeed in transforming their lives if they are in a supportive program that centers relationships and their own cultural identities. The first step to life-changing outcomes is forming a community that motivates perseverance.



The project employed a mixed methods quasi-experimental design. Statistical data using the GAIN and SAMHSA CSAT GPRA measures (in a six-month pre/post design, N=129) were combined with qualitative data from client surveys (N=129) and focus groups (N=36).

Barrier #1 Lack of Supportive Relationships:

Women are more likely to return to abusive and dysfunctional relationships. Time for Change Foundation's program builds a new community based on healthy relationships through innovative peer mentoring, group housing, and teaching advocacy.

Barrier #2 Poverty:

41% of formerly incarcerated women in the country are homeless. 79% of incarcerated women said their greatest area of need is employment, education, and life skills. Time for Change Foundation's program ensured 90.5% of women were housed and 51.2% of women entered employment or educational programs within six months.

Barrier #3 Trauma:

Intergenerational trauma is a significant factor in women's reentry. Time for Change Foundation's program resulted in a 31.7% decrease in depression, a 39.2% decrease in anxiety, and a 60% decrease in cognitive symptoms. Its innovative group family housing and parenting programs have successfully returned 317 children to their mothers.

Background: The Missed Opportunity of Recidivism

There are approximately 16,000 women in jails and prisons in California; the incarceration of women in jails has increased 210% and in prisons 433% since 1980.¹ Most of these women experienced trauma – often extensive – that led to their incarceration. Most of them are mothers and other primary caretakers, and most are incarcerated for non-violent offenses. After serving their time, too many find themselves re-entering society without any of their basic needs met and without their trauma addressed. It is a sad but unsurprising outcome that a 2019 state audit report found that the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation failed 62% of the people released in 2017-2018², and 73% of recidivists had committed a new crime or violated parole in their first year.³ However, there is hope. When formerly incarcerated women enter programs that provide critical supportive services, they are less likely to recidivate. While female recidivism in California is 35.1% (based on the three-year conviction rate; one-year arrest rate is 42.6%), in the Custody to Community Transitional Reentry Program, there was a mere 3.9% reconviction rate.⁴ While both pre-release and post-release programs have been proven to reduce recidivism rates, there has been lower rehabilitation program funding over time in California. Each woman who returns to jail or prison is a missed opportunity for a transformation that would change not only their own lives,

but those of their families and their communities as a whole. Our entire society loses when these women do not receive the opportunities they need to reach their higher potential.

We present an evidence-based model for serving the needs of formerly incarcerated women, particularly women of color, in order to help them change their lives for the better. In the literature, women have been noted to have unique needs, barriers, and protective factors from men. Women are more relationally oriented in their navigation of choices post-release, with close personal relationships being integral to transforming their lives.⁵ In fact, a higher number of positive social relationships have been linked to a higher degree of responsibility for society among formerly incarcerated women.⁶ This can be accomplished through support networks and friendships with others who share similar backgrounds and motivations for changing their lives.⁷ Support from others includes social and emotional encouragement, serving as a role model, and providing financial and practical support. These social bonds are essential for successful reintegration with society over time.⁸ While men are more likely to acquire such support from their family, women – as the primary caretakers of the family – are less likely to have family and friends to turn to when they are released from incarceration, even as formerly incarcerated women have often emphasized that their greatest need is in having such a support system.⁹ Other significant needs that women have voiced include meeting practical and logistical needs, including acquiring identification documents and housing, and addressing social and emotional needs, particularly in networking with other formerly incarcerated women who can advocate against stigma and discrimination, communicate understanding and non-judgment, and support and celebrate positive self-transformations.¹⁰¹¹ In short, the literature suggests that to effectively support women in transforming their lives and avoiding recidivism, programs must provide for the whole woman – her emotional, social, and practical needs – helping her meet individual and structural barriers she faces in transition back into society with resiliency.¹²

Designed by Formerly Incarcerated Women for Formerly Incarcerated Women

While the literature strongly supports the relationship-centered model of Time for Change Foundation's programs, it is not through literature review that the organization's extremely successful culture and structure were founded. Time for Change Foundation is the result of a formerly incarcerated woman, Kim Carter, "waking up to her purpose" (now the title of her newly released book). As the nonprofit organization founder, she had a unique understanding of the experience of the population she and her organization are serving that informed how she envisioned not only integrated programmatic services to address structural and individual barriers to successful life transformations, but also in how she built Time for Change Foundation's organizational structure and culture. Experiencing what the literature has recently chronicled,

too many programs for formerly incarcerated women function with clinical services but without compassion, having been built and managed without the vision, voice, or vocation of formerly incarcerated women. In fact, formerly incarcerated women too often lack the support of others who have faced similar life experiences (trauma, addiction, incarceration, and mothering through these challenges).¹³ Such research has resulted in suggestions that have been already implemented and woven into the very fabric of Time for Change Foundation's organizational structure due to Carter's insider knowledge – she hires many formerly incarcerated women to work for the organization, which not only provides the non-judgmental, personal, and compassionate supportive environment their clients need, but also offers role models for clients as they transition back into society. This paper outlines the key principles and practices in the Time for Change Foundation relationship-centered model and the evidence supporting its outcomes.

Approach: Humanizing Evidence-Based Practice Research

We had two primary concerns in doing evidence-based practice research on the Time for Change Foundation model: first, that we establish a methodological approach that would consistently and reliably measure outcomes and second, that we humanize such research so that the women who participated in the programs could voice their own measures of barriers they faced and success they experienced. Because of this dual goal, we used a mixed methods convergent research design. While we reviewed and included outcomes from the Positive Futures I Program (funded by The California Wellness Foundation), we primarily relied on data from the first three years of the Positive Futures II Program (funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment). This is because the Positive Futures II Program had a larger sample (N=129) and was evaluated in a quasi-experimental pre/post design using a common instrument (GAIN) across all funded sites, permitting comparison of the Positive Futures II program to a very large national sample of others served through CSAT-funded programs (N=111,704). Data were analyzed using dependent t-tests ($\alpha = 0.05$) for statistically significant change (where applicable). In addition to quantitative research, in keeping with Time for Change Foundation's concern for women to be empowered to describe their own challenges and successes and to advocate for themselves and others, we employed qualitative methods that were collaborative with participants. We analyzed client "success stories" published by Time for Change Foundation and conducted three focus groups (N=36) to better understand women's stories from their own perspectives – what they feel caused healthy and unhealthy behaviors, the challenges they faced, and the ways they defined and reached success. What became evident throughout this process was that while CSAT indicators such as recidivism and abstinence were important measures of success, women frequently spoke of deeper changes that led to these outcomes – building healthy relationships, transforming self-image and self-

efficacy, and breaking intergenerational cycles of poverty and trauma. The foundation of individual change was a supportive, compassionate community that honored the strengths of each woman.

The Time for Change Foundation Evidence-Based Model: Removing Barriers

The Time for Change Foundation model rests on three interdependent foundational qualities that remove both intangible and tangible barriers to women's success:

- **Organizational Structure:** Emphasizes using the experiences and strengths of formerly incarcerated women to lead the organization and deliver services, providing a consistent message of “nothing about us without us.” The organizational structure builds community, self-advocacy, and self-efficacy through centering relationships. This structure removes intangible barriers that are common among formerly incarcerated women who enter re-entry programs, including feeling misunderstood, unsupported, or dismissed by clinical workers who do not relate to or personally care about them.
- **Organizational Culture:** Expresses compassion and forgiveness balanced with high expectations and structured support. By centering Black and Brown cultures, Time for Change Foundation affirms women's cultural identities while providing new ways to express them in healthy relationships. The organizational culture emphasizes mutual respect, positive self-image, and each woman's capacity to define who they are. The organizational culture helps heal root causal factors underlying women's unhealthy behaviors, particularly chronic and severe trauma that has eroded women's senses of worth and efficacy.
- **Integrated Services:** Tangible barriers are addressed through integrated, holistic, individually assessed and assigned services. Services meet needs that formerly incarcerated women have defined for themselves, recognizing that without meeting their expressed and felt needs for shelter, food, and social support, it will be difficult for them to thrive in the process of transformation offered in therapy, support groups, and peer mentoring. Services are delivered in an integrated “one-stop shop” way to minimize tangible barriers, but the services alone would be insufficient to result in the outcomes we describe. Services must be delivered through an organizational structure and culture that centers the experiences, needs, and voices of formerly incarcerated women of color in order for women to have full access to the assistance such services provide. It is through

removing intangible barriers to their success that they can then choose full participation in services that remove tangible barriers. Provision of appropriate integrated clinical services alone can result in low program completion rates.

As an integrated whole, Time for Change Foundation offers a complete approach to providing the factors that facilitate formerly incarcerated women's successful reentry: "safe and affordable housing; a legal source of income; social support; a new environment that minimizes risk factors; and access to gender- and culturally-appropriate social services that addresses addiction, mental illness, victimization, internalized stigma, and reunification with minor children."¹⁴

Organizational Structure and Culture: Removing Intangible Barriers

Time for Change Foundation's organizational structure and culture, including its core principles, are unique compared to many programs offering similar services. These core principles include centering relationships, breaking cycles of intergenerational trauma, centering Black and Brown cultures, and empowering clients for self-advocacy. Time for Change Foundation's organizational culture of understanding and support within the organization, grounded in its strong diversity, equity, and inclusion hiring practices (which hire many formerly incarcerated women of color) helps clients succeed by removing intangible barriers that otherwise would result in clients feeling disconnected and being less likely to complete their program.

Centering Relationships

Relationships with family members, friends, spouses, and others can be a source of support or a source of hindrance from formerly incarcerated women's goals of forging a better life.¹⁵¹⁶ Time for Change Foundation centers relationships in its approach, both in helping women navigate existing relationships in healthy ways and in building new relationships between clients and between clients and staff. Many employees' experiences as formerly incarcerated women give them a deeper understanding of their clients. This common bond leads to affirmations of clients' worth, providing the type of support network that builds positive self-image.¹⁷ Staff make a consistent appearance in their clients' lives, which builds trust. Creating rapport is necessary for clients to feel comfortable with their case managers.¹⁸ Consistent, warm, close relationships build a sense that Time for Change Foundation is a community, not an agency. One woman described this relationship with a staff member:

“[The staff member] has a very calm spirit. She is like a friend, even though she’s a professional. She can read you. She says, ‘How are you doing today?’ and you say, ‘Fine.’ And she’s like, ‘No. Really.’”

Other women in the focus group followed up on this train of thought, explaining how the staff member’s openness about her own situations and responses helped them open up to her in return, leaving them with “a real human, real girl feeling with her.” It is this authentic relationship feeling that allows women to overcome many layers of mistrust and distance toward others and open up to forming healthy relationships within the Time for Change Foundation community.

The relationships built during women’s time in the program continue past their “graduation”; clients and staff often stay in touch and staff continue to support the clients in less formal ways. Such relationships prompt clients to reach out for help post-graduation if they feel at risk for making poor decisions, if they are struggling with discrimination and stigma, and if they need assistance with navigating the complex services and processes of reentry over time. More than one client described the relationships they had with staff and one another as familial:

“I don’t have family out here. I have Kim Carter [the founder of the organization] as my mom, and Vanessa [the Executive Director] as my auntie.”

In addition to the relationship between the client and the staff, Time for Change Foundation also fosters an environment of community between clients. Much of the housing offered by Time for Change Foundation is group housing, meaning women are living together and building relationships with one another. In addition to living together, these women are also supporting each other through sobriety, finding work/education, finding permanent housing, regaining custody of children, and other major life events that take place after incarceration. This sense of community fosters pro-social behavior in clients, who often lacked a strong support system prior to incarceration. By having a community of people going through similar experiences and supporting each other, women are less likely to return to the negative communities they were a part of before incarceration, and therefore are less likely to commit crimes and return to prison. Time for Change Foundation’s programs employ multiple strategies for community-building considered optimal in the literature, including community activities and housing¹⁹ and peer mentoring, which boosts trust, self-esteem, and coping capacity.²⁰ This builds the relationships with prosocial peers that is one of the robust predictors of avoiding recidivism.²¹

Breaking Intergenerational Cycles of Trauma

Time for Change Foundation's approach is grounded in understanding the intergenerational nature of trauma and incarceration. 58% of women in prisons and 80% of women in jails are mothers; the separation of mothers and children has significant traumatic impacts on the children, including mental health problems, lower educational achievement, behavioral health issues, and physical health issues that can continue for years and even into adulthood.²²²³ It is known that incarceration can create generational cycles of poverty and incarceration.²⁴ Family reunification is key to women's successful reentry into society, and to breaking intergenerational cycles that link trauma and loss, poverty, and incarceration.²⁵²⁶ In fact, many women in the justice system have experienced high rates of physical and sexual victimization, trauma, and family dysfunction – which has, in fact, put them at higher risk for incarceration to begin with.²⁷²⁸²⁹ It is, therefore, particularly important to address women's trauma that had led to their incarceration. Too many reentry programs do not build resilience or fully address childhood and family trauma, instead teaching something called “repressive resilience” in the literature, which teaches coping skills in the face of stressors without addressing deeper issues that give rise to the stressors themselves.³⁰ Time for Change Foundation goes beyond conventional strategies of trauma-informed therapy and parenting classes by building a community that models and supports healthy relationships *as they happen in real time, in place*. This includes building more than coping skills – and instead beginning with affirming women's worthiness of a better life, as well as the healthy relationship boundaries necessary to developing one. Likewise, rather than offering parenting classes, Time for Change Foundation offers a model in which mothers learn how to parent through staff and peer guidance *as they mother*. One woman described how Time for Change Foundation supported her in learning how to mother when she did not yet feel capable:

“The social worker [at Department of Child and Family Services] told me I wouldn't be a good mom. My mom had a CPS [Child Protective Services] case. So, they thought history would repeat itself. When I first got my kids back, I never had them, so I didn't know how to be a mom. I took them to a doctor, and it was a mess. They were all running around, and I was crying that I didn't know how to be a mom. Time for Change Foundation gave me the tools to be a better mom and their groups gave me support.”

Mothering and caretaking are key to many women's sense of self-worth.³¹ Yet mothering also comes with significant challenges that are greater than those of formerly incarcerated fathers or women without children, including navigating the stresses of parenting, finding adequate housing, and acquiring employment and child care.³² Mothers often express struggles with negotiating stress, trauma, addiction, and shame.³³ 75% of Time for Change Foundation clients

are mothers. Through group housing of women and their children, combined with practical guidelines for how manage their households, women who are learning how to parent can easily watch more experienced, successful mothers who are farther along in the program navigate the complexities of parenting – and can easily reach out for support and advice. This support is practical and real – one woman described in the focus group how the organization’s Executive Director watched her children overnight once while she was having a difficult time and needed a break to practice self-care.

Time for Change Foundation simultaneously meets their needs for safe and stable housing for mothers and all their children (of all ages) – something often lacking from other reentry programs – and builds community support that helps mothers gain the skills and confidence they need to run their own families and households. Through forming community with other formerly incarcerated mothers, clients can also form a positive self-image – defining their own sense of successful motherhood outside of a good/bad binary that can reinforce internalized stigma.³⁴³⁵ When you help a mother succeed you are also helping her children and any future generations succeed as well. Each of the 317 children reunified with their mothers through Time for Change Foundation’s programs are able to grow up in a safe, secure, and loving environment, which leads to higher success rates for both the children themselves and any future children they may have.

Centering Black and Brown Cultures

Black and Brown people make up a large percentage of the prison population in the United States.³⁶³⁷ However, few programs center their cultures when helping them transition from incarceration. 66% of Time for Change Foundation’s client population in its CSAT-funded program and 88% of the client population in its The California Wellness Foundation-funded program are women of color. Of these women, 42% identify as Hispanic and 22% identify as Black or African American in the CSAT-funded program. Time for Change Foundation works to not only provide culturally competent care, but to go beyond that and center the cultures of Black and Brown people in their organization. All the people on Time for Change Foundation’s board are women and 75% are women of color. The staff of Time for Change Foundation also has a female majority and many women of color work within the organization. This diversity allows for the clients of Time for Change Foundation to see themselves in the women working for the organization and see that it is possible to succeed after incarceration. It also generates the compassion, open-heartedness, and dedication to the clients that have been expressed needs in studies of formerly incarcerated women.³⁸ Women are treated as individuals deserving of compassion and support rather than as cases to which to assign services. This means that at key moments in which women might otherwise leave the program, they are provided individualized care that allows them to stay – thereby successfully completing the program and having improved outcomes:

“I lost my grandma to COVID. They were very supportive here. They were with me every day. My counselor, the Director of Operations, and the case managers called me and helped me through that. My counselor was with me the whole time while she passed away. They got me a hotel to stay at to go to the [funeral] services so I wouldn’t leave [the program]. They helped me stay and close my case in court.”

Black women face specific and significant challenges in their reentry. They are more likely to face reentry without a sizeable positive peer support system on which they can rely.³⁹ Despite Black women having some of the highest rates of abstinence and other indicators of long-term success in Time for Change Foundation’s programs, they face a higher likelihood of permanently losing child custody, most likely to the institutional racism that plagues the foster care and criminal justice systems. At the same time, their own cultural constructions of mothering are often devalued in society.⁴⁰ This can trap them in complex and difficult to navigate institutional interactions between the criminal justice system, drug treatment facilities, the child welfare system, and reentry programs.⁴¹ Despite all these barriers, studies of Black mothers have shown they have a strong sense of parenting esteem and that they are responsive to programs that support them in resuming parenting, including through coparenting arrangements.⁴² Time for Change Foundation’s community-based housing for mothers and their children affirms the value of Black and Brown cultures while helping mothers learn new ways of addressing their own histories of trauma and family dysfunction, coping with the stresses of parenting, and encouraging brighter futures for their children. Indeed, more than one client expressed in focus groups a familial relationship with staff – viewing Carter as a mother and staff as aunts, as well as their peers as sisters. Time for Change Foundation provides healthy familial relationships for many women who have never received love in healthy ways, not only providing practical necessary support – housing, parenting skill-building, and childcare support in crucial moments – but also providing foundational emotional and social support, sometimes as the only loving family some clients have ever known.

Empowerment and Advocacy

One of Time for Change Foundation’s biggest goals is to empower their clients to be confident in their ability to be self-sufficient and to be self-advocates. Time for Change Foundation and its clients advocate for all incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women to help improve their lives. Time for Change Foundation does not treat its clients as “ex-prisoners,” but rather, as literature has supported, as full and equal change-makers confronting oppression – both in their own lives and in the lives of others.⁴³ This gives clients the opportunity to meet psychological needs for feeling they have purpose and meaning and that they are making amends.⁴⁴ This empowerment with support results in clients learning self-sufficiency while also developing a sense of collaborative and communal advancement:

“Even though I have ups and downs in my life, I’d never forget about Time for Change Foundation because they fight with me, no matter what.”

Advocacy in Time for Change Foundation serves two purposes. First, as an organization, it advocates dismantling systemic barriers using a gender-specific and culturally sensitive social ecological framework model. This guides advocacy on a number of different but interrelated issues, including affordable and non-discriminatory housing, non-discriminatory employment practices, and improving the child welfare system to support reunification. Second, Time for Change Foundation offers opportunities to their clients to take part in advocacy directly. Their leadership development program offers clients the option to partake in civil engagement in their community, and builds knowledge and skills related to policy, voting rights, taxes, and community volunteerism. This program transforms the attitudes and behaviors of clients, and empowers them through positive social obligations, demonstrating that their voice matters. In the focus groups, one woman described this transformation:

“This program was designed to help me change myself so I could be more open and not sit in the back seat. I was kind of standoffish and intimidated in the beginning, but I learned that if I needed help, I needed to speak up and I had a voice and needed to be heard.”

Carter and Time for Change Foundation were heavily involved in advocating for the “ban the box” initiative in California, which passed in 2018. This law made it illegal for employers to ask about a person’s felony status on job applications. This gives formerly incarcerated people a better chance at gaining employment, as many employers would simply not consider an applicant if they had a felony. In addition, Time for Change Foundation also works on a local level with employers to educate them on hiring formerly incarcerated women and how to practice gender specific, trauma-informed, and culturally sensitive hiring practices. These actions help all formerly incarcerated people within the community and California at large.

Integrated Services: Removing Tangible Barriers

Carter is fond of saying that a 100% program graduation rate begins at recruitment, emphasizing the role of consistency and continuity of care in helping Time for Change Foundation clients succeed. Services at Time for Change Foundation are designed to consistently engage clients, remove tangible barriers to their successful reentry, and provide an integrated “one-stop” experience in order to make accessing and using services easy. Time for Change Foundation’s ideal recruitment strategy is to begin to meet with women while they are still incarcerated, which is also considered an evidence-based practice.⁴⁵ However, during the pandemic, their capacity to do so was restricted by California regulations on face-to-face

interactions in prisons and jails. Given these restrictions, Time for Change Foundation has successfully employed other personalized recruitment strategies: Zoom conferences with prisons and jails, emails and letters mailed to the jails and prisons to reach out to women prior to release, and meeting women in jail and prison parking lots as they are released (regardless of whether or not they have been in contact with Time for Change Foundation in the past). These strategies have maintained high recruitment rates and have not resulted in lower program completion rates.

Case Management and Building Community

Program services are grounded in the recognition of each woman as a unique individual with specific strengths and needs. Case managers work with peer mentors to build a comprehensive community that provide women with a strong sense of both tangible and intangible supportive and protective factors. At intake, women are assessed using a strengths-based case management model. Strengths-based case management is an evidence-based model that results in improved social connections, enhanced wellbeing, improved retention in aftercare services, reduced drug use and criminal involvement, as well as improved retention in substance abuse programs. The gender responsive strategies used by case managers further benefit clients through the creation of a “safe and nurturing environment that is based on respect, mutuality, and compassion.”⁴⁶ Women described their experience of case management as a nurturing one:

“My case manager is helping me complete my goals. She really listens to me. She really understands where I’m coming from. When I talk to her, she just knows, and she really understands.”

Case managers align women’s needs with a wide range of integrated services, largely provided on-site, that will address key limitations and constraints in their ability to successfully manage reentry. Coordinating care that speaks to the interconnected nature of the challenges that formerly incarcerated women face is key to breaking down barriers to program completion. Depending on the needs of the client, case managers develop an Individual Service Strategy Transition (ISST) plan and/or Individualized Service Plan (ISP).

Plan	What Services Does this Plan Address?
Individual Service Strategy Transition (ISST)	This plan serves formerly incarcerated women who have a substance use disorder. Prior to release a Time for Change Foundation case specialist works with the client and California Department of Corrections staff to develop this plan. ISST plans involve a high level of involvement through each phase of the program. These plans include mental health treatment, family reunification services, substance abuse

	treatment, peer mentoring, and life skills training. Case managers coordinate with parole officers to ensure the plan is followed and all the client's needs are met.
Individualized Service Plans (ISP)	This plan is created by the client and case manager. The plan addresses career goals, what type of training is necessary to meet those goals, who industry leaders are in the field of interest, and actionable steps toward reaching the client's goals. Case managers track progress in weekly face-to-face meetings. They offer constant support and follow up throughout the program.

Along with developing service plans, case managers also assist clients in meeting other needs, such as transportation, expunging records, housing, mental health counseling, childcare, and parenting classes. 94% of clients receive peer mentoring, which is an evidence-based practice that serves multiple purposes: not only building community and providing support for recently released women, but also providing meaningful avenues for women who have been in the program for some time to give back and develop a sense of self-efficacy and purpose. One woman summed up its effects concisely and powerfully:

“Being a peer mentor brought out leadership in me.”

By building a community, Time for Change Foundation helps women actualize healthy relationships that they have not had experience in navigating in their past. Too often, women had experienced abusive and dysfunctional relationships in their families and among friends. At Time for Change Foundation, they learn to prioritize their own and their children's needs first and to recognize their worthiness of respect and dignity. This transforms the ways that they understand their past relationships and the choices they make moving forward:

“People had ransacked and stole and took everything from me. I have two bedrooms and I want to help my friends, but I know better. I can't jeopardize my freedom. I can't have them in my home. I want to take care of everybody, but I got to put me first and my kids first.”

Another woman in the same focus group responded:

“I relate to you. Because I loved my homies. I still struggle with that, saying no. But your friends wouldn't jeopardize you if they're your friends. They'd never ask can I lay my head there when you're on probation or parole. I used to be that person – oh, you can be here, you can bring your bitches, I'll watch your kids. And then when it was me, they're not there. I have to think about me. I got kids. Ain't nothing getting in the way of that. I have five at home. At the end of the day, if they aren't helping you get your kids, I'd just cut them off. My gang is now my kids.”

Removing the Barriers of Poverty: Housing, Employment, and Financial Literacy

Lack of affordable, non-discriminatory housing and the poverty resulting from unemployment are significant barriers for women to succeed as the reenter society. People who have been incarcerated has a disproportionately lower education and low access to stable employment. In fact, their median income prior to incarceration is 41% lower than non-incarcerated people, controlling for age and other demographic factors – essentially, poverty correlates with incarceration.⁴⁷ It is more difficult for women with felonies to procure employment than men, particularly because they are more likely to need “white collar” jobs.⁴⁸ Women experience higher unemployment and homelessness and are less likely than men to have a high school diploma.⁴⁹ In a 2006 study conducted by Time for Change Foundation, they found that 75% of formerly incarcerated women experienced homelessness at some point and 41% are currently homeless.⁵⁰ Poverty is the strongest predictor of recidivism; providing housing reduces the odds of recidivism by 83% for women on probation and parole.⁵¹ One key reason for this is that without housing and employment, women are more likely to return to abusive relationships in an attempt to meet their basic needs.⁵² Because housing and employment are so foundational to a woman succeeding in reentry, they are cornerstones of Time for Change Foundation’s integrated services. As one woman offered:

“I’ve gained self-confidence and better parenting skills. And I’m not so co-dependent. I can depend on myself. I have women supporting me, but I always had a man in the past and now I’m doing it myself.”

There are numerous systemic barriers that impact formerly incarcerated women’s ability to find housing. These women are often deemed not creditworthy and high risk. In addition, the assistance offered to these women varies considerably from institution to institution⁵³. Unattainable stable housing also occurs due to stringent eligibility requirements by federal and subsidized housing such as with the one strike policy and discrimination by landlords based on the applicant’s criminal history record. One woman explained:

“Not too many people will rent to me. I’ve been in many programs. Nine times I leave shelter programs and end up right back in the shelter because there is nowhere to go.”

Scarcity of housing and high rental rates also contribute to women’s inability to find housing. One woman explained that she had been on a waiting list for Section 8 housing for over two years. For this reason, without integrating long-term housing options into a program, women are forced into short-term living options using temporary stays with family members and acquaintances, which can leave them vulnerable to sexual, physical, and psychological abuse or provocations of criminal and risky behaviors. For these reasons, Time for Change Foundation focuses on providing housing to women regardless of their credit and risk level – offering

emergency, transitional, and permanent supportive housing as part of their programs and helping women navigate subsidized housing and the process of eventually procuring their own rental or purchased home.

Time for Change Foundation currently supports ten permanent support housing units in the Inland Empire, California. These shelters are open to women and their children, regardless of how many children they have and the children's ages. These houses offer women a safe and stable place to call home so that women can focus on finding a job, improving their education, maintaining sobriety, and reconnecting with their children, while also building a community with women in a similar position. One woman explained how housing support was instrumental in her capacity to reunify with her children:

"I was homeless. I lost my children. I got them back in the Time for Change Foundation program. I'm a part of Union Square housing with my children and this is the first time I've been in my own place with my children. It's clean and beautiful. It's an amazing program. My children love it. We all love it."

Permanent supportive housing provides long term housing for women while they receive other supportive services, like education and job training. Under this program women and their families are placed into their own apartment and work with a case worker to receive education on financial literacy, career development, and parenting. Giving families these resources help break the cycle of poverty that many of these women were born into. By fostering positive relationships with children through in situ parenting mentoring, these families also break the cycle of trauma that comes with incarceration. Time for Change Foundation has also developed affordable housing for low-income women. This housing allows women to be self-sufficient. The women in these affordable housing units are not obligated to participate in the supportive programs Time for Change Foundation offers. Instead, these women work and pay a reasonable, low-cost rent. By giving women this opportunity, women practice their self-sufficiency while retaining a safety net of affordable housing and options to re-engage with supportive services. This also establishes a rental history and allows women to save toward purchasing or leasing a home independent of Time for Change Foundation.

Time for Change Foundation Housing Program	Housing Details (housing type (long term, emergency, permanent) population served, services offered, housing location)
Sweet Dreams	A 24-month emergency housing located in San Bernardino, CA, where the scope is to provide a nurturing environment for mothers and children. Parents participate in skills workshops designed to develop good parenting skills, trust

	between mother and child, and self-sufficiency. Clients are provided with weekly case management and supportive services.
Mountain View	24-month live-in emergency housing located in San Bernardino, CA providing direct resources such as vocational training, adult education, legal aid, and mental health services to single women rebuilding their lives to become productive members of the community.
Brighter Futures	Emergency housing located in Northern California nestled in Hayward County, where women recovering from homelessness and incarceration can live with their children in a single-family dwelling unit. Mothers are provided with an array of direct services such as on-site case management and life skills education.
Homes of Hope	Ten permanent support housing units located in the Inland Empire place families into their own apartment unit paired with intensive case management. This housing helps chronically homeless women with and without children acquire permanent supportive housing.
The Phoenix Square	The first of its kind, Phoenix Square is an affordable housing development in San Bernardino, CA that helps families transition into stable permanent living. The Phoenix Square project was awarded the “Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design” and the “Crime-Free Multi Housing” certifications by the Inland Empire Region.

Most formerly incarcerated people experience severe financial hardship immediately after incarceration – more than half are unemployed, two-thirds receive public assistance, and many rely on female relatives for support and housing.⁵⁴ Rebuilding a life financially through legal employment is a challenge upon reentry, as employers often have preconceived biases against formerly incarcerated people, which ultimately disqualifies them as potential candidates. Criminal convictions follow formerly incarcerated people seeking to enter the workforce, creating barriers to their economic stability. This is even more so for women – especially women of color, who experience sexism on top of these biases, limiting their employability even more than it does for formerly incarcerated men.⁵⁵ One study found that one-third of women were employed eight to ten months after reentry, while half of men were employed in that same period.⁵⁶ Studies have also found 93% higher employer positive responses for white females than black females, ultimately demonstrating that there are soaring racial divides in job offers and interviews.⁵⁷ Severe chronic material insecurity results in anxiety and feelings of isolation.⁵⁸

Resume gaps and little to no professional networks further exacerbate formerly incarcerated people's inability to find work.⁵⁹ This population also tends to lack the skills and education many employers look for. According to static data from the National Conference of State Legislatures 40% of ex-offenders do not have a high school diploma.⁶⁰ Time for Change Foundation's client population reflects this reality: 38% of its clients lack a high school diploma. The majority of formerly incarcerated women are less educated than the average U.S. population and have fewer opportunities of higher educational attainment. Yet success in finding gainful employment is correlated with navigating parole successfully.⁶¹ Time for Change Foundation employment rates at client intake vary considerably based on the program the client is enrolled in (some are focused on newly released women, 95% of whom are not yet employed, while others are focused on women who have reentered society some time ago, of whom 31% were employed).

To this end, Time for Change Foundation developed their program services for education and employment to address the unique needs of formerly incarcerated women. These programs are culturally competent, strength based, and trauma informed, and take a multi-faceted gendered approach in strategies for workplace development and entrepreneurial choices, pairing job training and career pathway development with advocacy. Along with resume building and interview training, Time for Change Foundation also works directly with local business to educate them about hiring formerly incarcerated people and employing strengths-based and trauma-informed practices in the workplace. This increases employment opportunities, not only for those in Time for Change Foundation programs, but also for all formerly incarcerated people in the service area. Time for Change Foundation also offers financial literacy classes, so once women start earning an income they know how to budget, how to spend their money responsibly, how to manage credit and debt, and how to save. Many formerly incarcerated women grew up in poverty and have never been provided financial literacy. The vast majority report having been under financial stress within the last year. By pairing pathways to employment with financial literacy programming, Time for Change Foundation helps the women become self-sufficient and more financially resilient.

Higher education, too, is fraught with barriers to access. Formerly incarcerated women with felonies do not have the same access to financial aid as the general student population. To assist these women, Time for Change Foundation provides linkages to legal assistance with expungement of criminal records in order to open more opportunities for education, employment, and housing. They also employ both advocacy and legal assistance when clients are discriminated against in their pursuit of higher education. One woman described the support she received to achieve her dream of pursuing her RN degree:

“I went to school wanting to be a psych tech and education was my way out. But I couldn’t get into any community programs because of my felony record. Everyone doesn’t want to help you, and it made me become a recluse and not open up. I became an LVN, and I was a good LVN. I went through RN at West Coast University and then six months before graduating they were going to kick me out because they claimed I wouldn’t be able to work anywhere with my record. I didn’t need the help to get a job. I was already working as an LVN. I got on the phone with Kim Carter, and she got a lawyer from a nonprofit legal organization to implement the law, and that got me back in school. And now I’m getting ready for my tests!”

Finally, Time for Change Foundation also gives clients the option of opening their own small businesses. The Inland Empire Women’s Business Center (IEWBC) offers entrepreneurship classes to women in collaboration with Time for Change Foundation. Formerly incarcerated women starting successful businesses not only helps them become self-sufficient, but also means more job opportunities for future women that are released from prison, as formerly incarcerated women are more likely to hire other formerly incarcerated women. Selecting a pathway to self-sufficiency – higher education, employment, or entrepreneurship – is a personalized strategic choice that is individually determined by every woman with guidance and assistance from her case manager. There is no one-size-fits all pathway to successful reentry. Instead, the process for every woman is a personal one, and as she reaches benchmarks of success – getting a job or graduating an educational program, buying her own car, leasing her own apartment – she is celebrated in the Time for Change Foundation community.

Removing the Barriers Within: Therapeutic Services to Address Substance Use Disorders, Mental Health Challenges, and Trauma

65% of the United States prison population has an active substance use disorder, and an additional 20% do not meet the criteria for a substance use disorder but were intoxicated when they committed their crime – making drugs and alcohol part of the reality for 85% of incarcerated people.⁶² In fact, approximately 28% of incarcerated people were drinking at the time of their offense, and approximately 35% of incarcerated people were using drugs.⁶³ Many people do not receive adequate treatment while incarcerated or upon reentry, and for those who received adequate substance use treatment while incarcerated, there is a need for continuing care post-release.⁶⁴ Relatively few offenders receive treatment while incarcerated.⁶⁵ Substance use is implicated in recidivism. One of the most common causes of recidivism is new drug related charges.⁶⁶ In one study, only 30% of those who recidivated participated in substance abuse treatment immediately after their release and only 20% participated in such treatment two or three months post-release.⁶⁷ Treating substance abuse is vital to reducing

recidivism and improving quality of life for ex-offenders. A common driving factor of both illegal activity and drug and alcohol use is trauma, which is correlated with incarceration.⁶⁸

Nearly 80% of mentally ill female offenders report prior physical or sexual abuse.⁶⁹ In one of the focus groups at Time for Change Foundation, women discussed past abuse, finding that 50% of the women in the focus group were molested before the age of 10 and more than 50% were raped. While men can and do experience abuse, women experience it at much higher rates in both childhood and adulthood.⁷⁰ Further traumatization can occur because of gender, race, poverty, incarceration, and/or sexual orientation, all populations that Time for Change Foundation serves. The prison experience itself is also traumatizing for many women. Custodial misconduct is a known issue in the prison system.⁷¹ This misconduct comes in several forms including sexual assault, rape, verbal derogation, the threat of force, and denying goods and services (including necessities like menstrual products).⁷² Without proper services to address trauma and mental health, women often turn to drugs and alcohol to cope.⁷³ This can affect their ability to care for children and contribute to a cycle of trauma for the next generation. Formerly incarcerated women are likely to have feelings of low self-worth and anti-social behaviors as a result of their trauma. One woman described the relationship between her poor self-image and her substance use:

“This program made me want a life. I was selling drugs, running the streets, motel to motel. I would lock myself up in there and just cry. I hated myself. I was killing myself with drugs. I was in and out of jail. When Time for Change Foundation picked me up and brought me here, they started therapy. The founder told me the first time she met me: ‘I will love you because you haven’t been loved.’ They really kept me pushing through this program. I’m clean and sober today. I can think with a straight mind. I have visits with my kids. I’m not running away from my issues. I’m dealing with them and I’m still sober.”

Most of the women who enter Time for Change Foundation programs have experienced trauma throughout their life, both prior to and during incarceration. The majority of women who enter Time for Change Foundation programs also have a history of one or more mental health or substance use issues. 93% of the clients in the CSAT-funded program were diagnosed with at least one substance use disorder and 39% were diagnosed with at least one mental health disorder (most commonly bipolar disorder or major depressive disorder). The most common substance use disorders were alcohol, cannabis, opioids, cocaine, and other stimulants. Many women report struggling with depression (33%) and anxiety (54%) at their intake (averaging across the two programs under study). In the CSAT-funded study, 81% of women had experienced violence or trauma in their past, and the majority of them had PTSD symptoms as a

result, including nightmares and intrusive thoughts (60%), avoiding situations that reminded them of their trauma (70%), hypervigilance (59%), and dissociative symptoms (59%).

Many women Time for Change Foundation serves lack multiple factors of resiliency, with limited internal resiliency factors (such as positive self-image and self-efficacy) and external resiliency factors (such as supportive relationships). Time for Change Foundation combines conventional evidence-based approaches of trauma-informed and gender-responsive cognitive behavioral therapy and 12-step substance use programs with building community support through peer mentoring and group housing. Through these interventions, women develop a sense of self-worth and learn how to have healthy relationships along with learning coping skills that help them avoid harmful behaviors.

Evidence Based Services	Planned/Proven Outcomes for Substance Abuse Treatment
Strength-Based Case Management	Proven to have positive outcomes for substance abuse issues. Reduces drug use, improves retention for treatment services, improves retention for aftercare services.
Substance Abuse 12 Step Facilitation Therapy	Facilitates early recovery from alcohol and other drug addiction. Decreases drug related crimes. Reduces substance abuse.
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy	Enhances motivation to stop substance abuse. Introduces healthy coping skills for feelings related to drug use, like depression and anxiety. Reduces impulsive behaviors.
Mentoring/ Peer Navigation	Improves interpersonal relationships. Reduces alcohol and illicit drug use.
Seeking Safety Sober Housing	Provides individual and group treatment and support for sober living.
Medication Assisted Treatment	Reduces cravings and other symptoms associated with withdrawal.

Community building is key for the women to improve their mental health. Many of the women that enter Time for Change Foundation programs lack a strong support system. Prior to entering prison, these women often acted as the support to their family and friends, with little

support for themselves. In fact, many women in focus groups talked about former relationships being unhealthy and leading them toward more risky behaviors:

“My mom helped raise my oldest son until he was caught up by DCFS [Department of Child and Family Services]. And then they took my next baby. And I didn’t want that anymore. If I left this program when my mom wanted me to leave, I’d probably be high right now. And instead, I’m not. This program gives me the tools to not be codependent.”

While many women will offer their homes to male family members leaving prison, the same courtesy is not offered to women exiting the prison system. By being able to discuss problems and trauma with others who have gone through the same issues, these women are able to support each other and offer a safe space to work through mental health issues. The stigma around crime and specifically substance abuse deteriorates familial relationships for women, making them less likely to have an established support system post-release.⁷⁴

Sober group housing allows the women in these homes to form relationships with one another and discuss their struggles and recovery with other people that are experiencing the same realities. By doing so, these women can support each other and hold one another accountable in their recovery. Beyond this informal community building, Time for Change Foundation also offers a peer mentoring program. This program offers more structured support for women in the program. This guarantees that all women in the program have a person they are directly accountable to and responsible for helping. Giving women this responsibility helps them become self-sufficient, as they are able to experience working through their issues and helping others.

Bringing Children Home: Family Reunification

Women with children face unique challenges. Family reunification can often be a traumatizing experience for both the mother and child. If given proper support and resources, motherhood can also be a motivator for sobriety and staying crime-free. While in custody, motherhood is often cited as a motivator, but the barriers women face once released can make regaining custody almost impossible, leading to a loss in motivation for remaining crime free.⁷⁵ When women are successful at regaining custody, creating a positive relationship with their children can be difficult.⁷⁶ It is common for children to feel resentful toward their formerly incarcerated parent. Mothers often lack the skills needed to repair this relationship, leading to further animosity. There is a risk that women in both situations will return to substance use as a means of coping with their feelings of hopelessness.⁷⁷ Family reunification is key for women in building a better life.^{78,79}

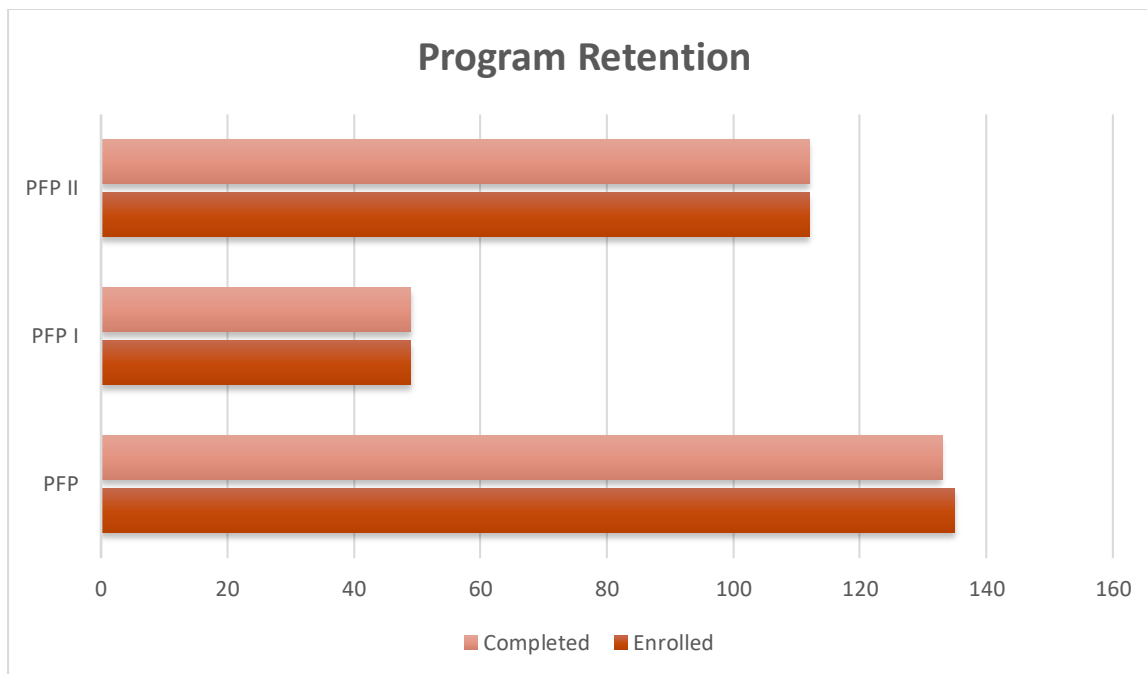
Because so many of the women Time for Change Foundation serves are mothers (approximately 75%), their services are oriented toward mothers' unique needs. This includes both direct parenting support and accommodating children of all ages in housing. Time for Change Foundation's innovative group housing for women with children allows women to receive real-time in situ parenting support and guidance, while simultaneously providing a stable and secure place for reunification. Women are supported in multiple ways by Time for Change Foundation in meeting the requirements the Department of Child and Family Services has for reunification, including procuring housing, employment and income stability, sobriety, and coping skills. By helping women meet requirements for reunification and develop better relationships with their children post-reunification, Time for Change Foundation breaks the intergenerational cycle of trauma.

Outcomes: Defining Success through Addressing Barriers

While funding agencies define success through measurable indicators that are important to local, state, and national agendas, it is helpful to reorient the journey and process of success to the women's definitions they craft for themselves. Recidivism rates are an end-point measurable outcome of many other interim factors that may be more immediately relevant to women's feelings about their own lives. In one study, four themes emerged from formerly incarcerated women's definitions of success: safe and permanent housing; opportunities for caregiving; freedom from oversight; and an environment that supports recovery.⁸⁰ Another study found that women broadly defined success as a "personal transformation" that was "characterized by new values and priorities."⁸¹ Time for Change Foundation recognizes that success is an ongoing journey that must be supported by strong and healthy relationships, building a community for women who have too often been abused, marginalized, and dehumanized.

That journey begins and is sustained through program retention. Compared to its grant cohort with others funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, Time for Change Foundation's retention is more than double the cohort average. Building community and relationships for accountability, as well as a culturally affirming environment, results in women choosing to stay in the program – even under sometimes difficult circumstances. Those who stay in programs are more likely to succeed.

The Positive Futures Program (PFP) was the earliest version of the Positive Futures Series, funded for 2012-2015 by SAMHSA. Program completion for PFP was 98.5%. Program completion for PFP I (funded by The California Wellness Foundation) and PFP II (funded by CSAT) was 100%. These are extraordinary rates of six-month retention, more than double the rate reported by CSAT for all discretionary grants.



Retention is primarily maintained by the organization’s unique culture combined with consistent follow up. Case managers and peer mentors check in with clients frequently, developing friendships with them. Clients learn they can call or text at any time to receive meaningful, compassionate support. This consistency of personal relationship, which offers more than time-limited services from professionals to clients, makes clients *want* to stay in the program. Time for Change Foundation centers relationships because it works – it is a model that produces high rates of retention.

Building Resiliency for Life

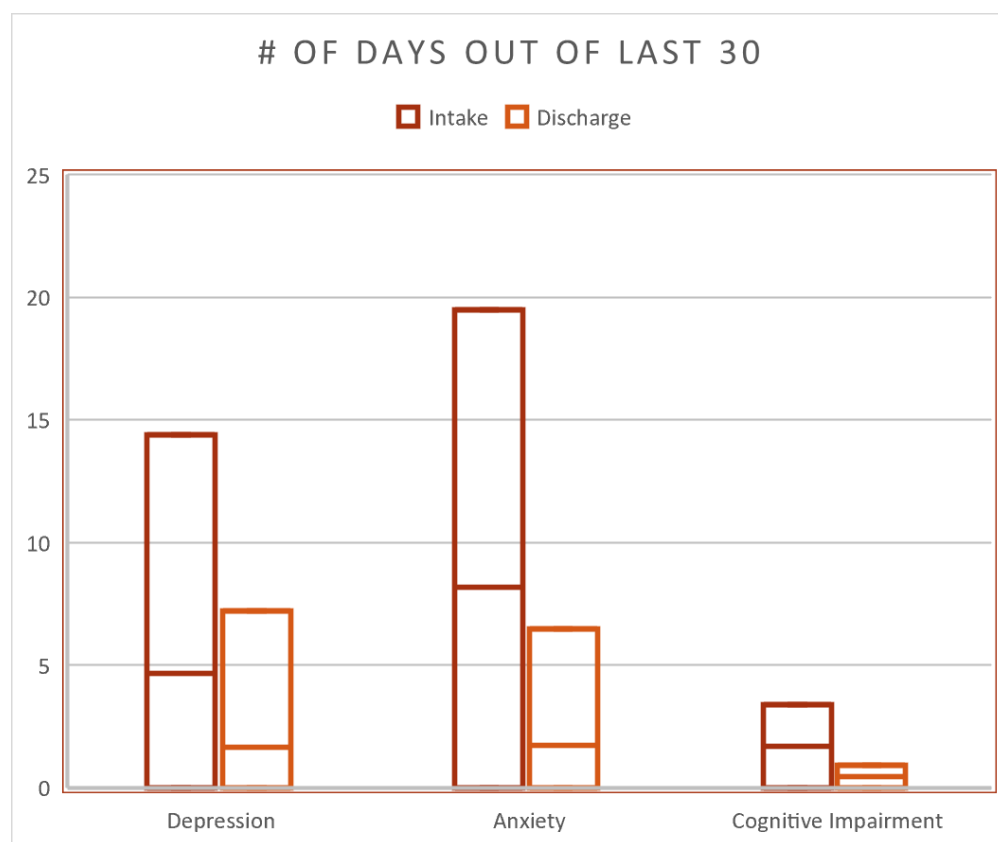
Resiliency allows people to recover from adversity, trauma, and stresses of various kinds, returning to stable emotions and behaviors even during difficult experiences. Overall, people with high resilience are able to mobilize internal and external resources effectively to cope with stressors and return to healthy, normal functioning, which leads to more positive outcomes than their less resilient peers. Women in focus groups described this as an ability to persevere:

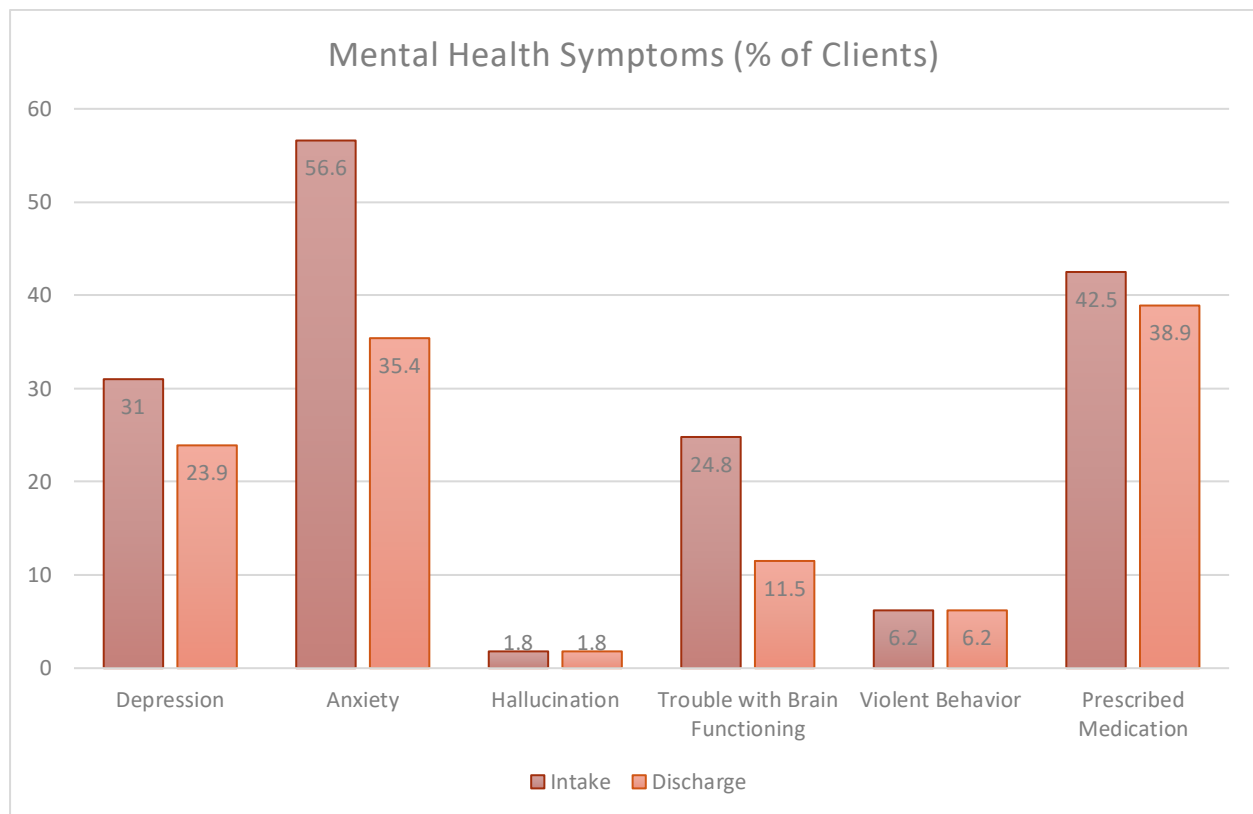
“I learned that it’s OK to fall as long as you get back up. It’s about how you get back up that makes a difference.”

Resilience is dependent on both internal and external protective factors (or resources). External protective factors/resources include the social support system (healthy friendships, family, teachers) and perceptions of access (bonding, trust, safety). Internal protective factors/resources include optimism, perceptions of control, self-efficacy, and coping strategies. Measurements of internal protective factors include assessing competence (reasoning, critical

thinking, studying) and optimism (including a sense of identity and pride/positivity in it, self-esteem, and feelings of control over the future). Time for Change Foundation programs are designed to build both external and internal protective factors, thereby generating higher resilience in the women they serve.

Improved internal protective factors are best measured quantitatively through improvements in mental health, which has been tracked for three years in the CSAT-funded program (N=112). Over the course of six-months (program intake to completion), clients reported a reduction of 75% in anxiety, 60% in depression, and 65% in cognitive impairment. Based on t-test scores, the three most common mental health symptoms all demonstrated statistically significant positive program impacts. The results from the intake ($M= 8.18$, $SD= 11.32$) and discharge ($M= 1.73$, $SD= 4.74$) indicate that the Time for Change Foundation programmatic intervention resulted in an improvement in anxiety, $t(105) = -6.32$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($r= 0.525$). Similarly, there were substantial changes in depression from intake ($M= 4.68$, $SD= 9.70$) to discharge ($M= 1.65$, $SD= 5.58$). The t-test score indicated a small to medium positive effect from the program, $t(105) = -2.82$, $p < .005742$, $r = 0.266$. There was also a significant improvement in cognitive functioning by the end of the program ($M= 0.93$, $SD= 3.94$) compared to intake ($M= 3.40$, $SD= 8.23$), $t(105)= -3.36$, $p < 0.001$, with a medium effect size ($r= 0.311$).





Women spoke of this transformation in their emotional state and way of seeing themselves:

“I learned I’m stronger than I thought I was. I did ten years in prison. When I came into the program, I was terrified. I couldn’t talk in front of people. I couldn’t walk down the street. I couldn’t take a bus on my own. I slowly became able to do these things by myself and have a voice. Having a voice means I can speak up and say what I want to say, and I can be myself.”

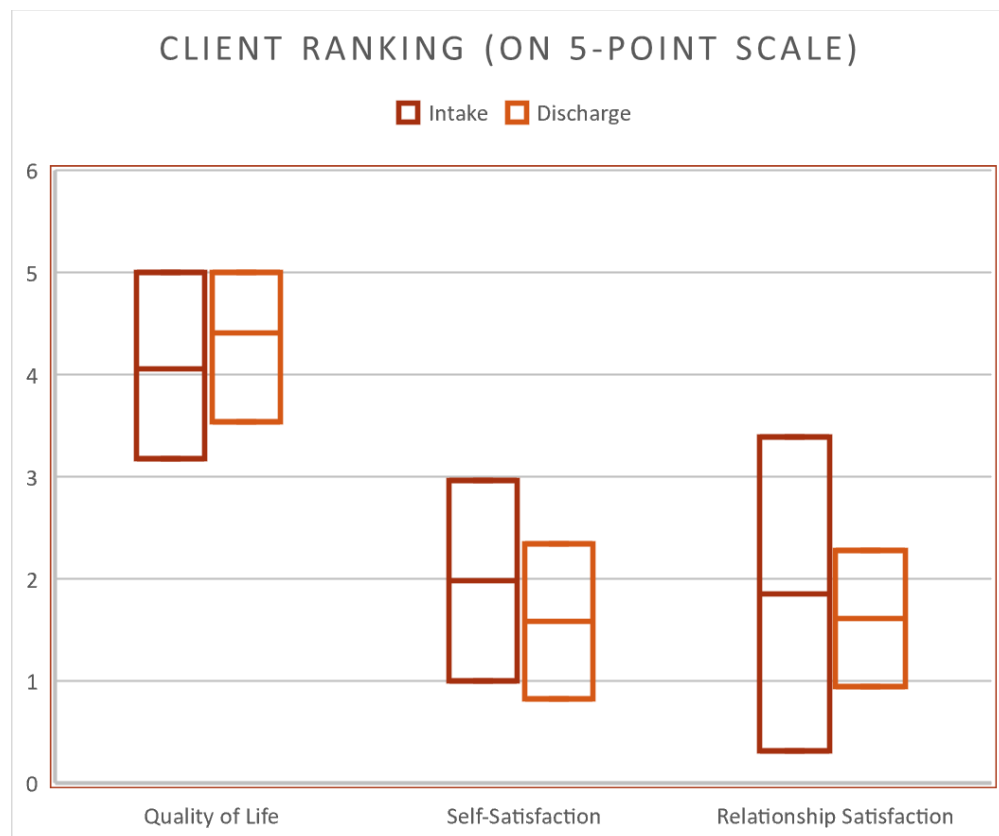
Trauma-related symptoms were also significantly improved intake to discharge. The Trauma Symptoms Checklist (TSC), an auxiliary instrument to measure trauma symptoms in finer detail (39 specific symptoms), was also analyzed using a t-test for aggregated data (pre/post change across all symptoms). The TSC uses a Likert-scaled four-point rating for frequency of experience of symptoms across the prior 30 days: never (0); rarely (1); sometimes (2); and often (3). The results indicated that the Time for Change Foundation programmatic intervention resulted in a significant reduction of trauma related symptoms. Clients at discharge experienced such symptoms far less frequently ($M= 0.24$, $SD= 0.33$) than they did at intake ($M= 0.61$, $SD= 0.44$), $t(89)= -7.86$, $p < 0.001$, with a large effect size ($r= 0.64$).

Finally, based on the GPRA scale of how bothered clients were by mental health symptoms (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 was extremely bothered and 1 was not bothered at all), clients

demonstrated a significant improvement intake to discharge. Clients at discharge were bothered far less ($M= 1.63$, $SD= 0.85$) than they were at intake ($M= 2.38$, $SD= 1.23$), $t(105)= -4.52$, $p < 0.001$, with a large effect size ($r= 0.458$). The overarching trend in mental health symptoms is a decrease in symptoms from intake to discharge. This decrease in mental health symptoms results in fewer unhealthy coping behaviors, linking mental wellness to abstinence from drugs and alcohol:

“I was in depression, so I’d get high. So now I have a future to look forward to. I have things I want to go and do. I’m finishing school. I want my high school diploma, not a GED.”

Clients also reported improved measures of quality of their lives, self-satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction, indicating improvements in both internal and external protective factors for resiliency. Relationship satisfaction improved from an average of 1.85 to an average of 1.61 (on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the best). Quality of life changed significantly from intake ($M= 4.06$, $SD= 0.85$) to discharge ($M= 4.41$, $SD= 0.88$) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is the best, $t(105)= 3.58$, $p < .001$, with a medium effect size ($r= 0.33$). Self-satisfaction also changed significantly from intake ($M= 1.98$, $SD= 0.98$) to discharge ($M= 1.58$, $SD= 0.76$) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the best, $t(105)= -3.88$, $p < .001$, with a medium effect size ($r= 0.35$).



Time for Change Foundation clients were highly active in the recovery community within the organization. 81% attended at least one kind of supportive recovery group and 92% reported having interactions with friends and family who supported their recovery. Despite pandemic conditions throughout 2020 and 2021, 96% of Time for Change Foundation clients reported feeling socially connected when they completed the program. Overall, Time for Change Foundation's program works to build both internal and external protective factors for this highly vulnerable population – helping them not only in an immediate sense with program services, but also significantly improving the way they view themselves and the ways they feel toward and interact with others around them.

Building a Meaningful Life

To avoid recidivism, formerly incarcerated women need both factors for resiliency and a means to build a “positive future” – as Time for Change Foundation's programs are titled. These positive futures not only have intangible inner transformations for women's success, but also key milestones they reach that are important for them to feel their life is meaningful and fulfilled – attaining employment or education, having a sense of purpose and helping others, and acquiring safe permanent housing.

Time for Change Foundation's transitional housing has a remarkably high success rate. In their first grant funded program, Positive Futures Program (PFP), 12% of clients at intake reported being housed while 82% percent had been housed by program completion. In The California Wellness Foundation funded program, Time for Change Foundation succeeded in housing 100% of the clients and in the CSAT-funded program, they successfully housed 91% of clients. In all cases, housing was provided long-term outside of institutions or shelters. Based on data from the CSAT-funded program, client satisfaction with their living conditions significantly increases from intake ($M= 2.29$, $SD= 1.27$) to discharge ($M= 1.58$, $SD= 0.94$) on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is the best, $t(105)= -4.69$, $p < .001$, with a medium-large effect size ($r= 0.42$).

Time for Change Foundation's programs have a significant impact on employment. At program completion in The California Wellness Foundation funded program, 53% of women had acquired a job, 22% had entered a training or education program, and 6% had started a business. In that program, 61% had opened a savings account by the time they completed the program. Financial literacy not only positively affects the women in the program, but is something they can pass on to their children:

“I still save. I still budget. Now I do it to where we have this dry erase board so my kids see where my money goes to, and they know when there are extras that they can ask, and they know when they can't because bills are due.”

In the CSAT-funded program, which focuses on very newly released women (within their first week of exiting incarceration), at six months of programmatic services, 45% were employed and 12% were enrolled in a training program. There was a significant increase in income self-sufficiency in that program: (on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is best) from intake ($M= 1.75$, $SD= 1.12$) to discharge ($M= 3.08$, $SD= 1.59$), $t(105)=8$, $p < 0.001$ with a large effect size ($r= 0.617$).

Employment and housing go hand in hand with family reunification – mothers having their children return to them and knowing that they can be self-sufficient in caring for them:

“I can be a parent on my own. I’ve been doing it! I have three babies under the age of four. It’s a handful, but I do it! Before, I never had a job. I would get a paycheck and quit. Now I have a job, and that’s something new for me. I can buy things on my own now. It feels good!

These client outcomes are paired with impressive advocacy outcomes. Time for Change Foundation worked tirelessly for the successful “Ban the Box” initiative in California, which made it illegal to ask about one’s criminal record until after the interview stage of a job search. As part of The California Wellness Foundation funded program, Time for Change Foundation hosted four employer education workshops, reaching 421 employers in Southern California. By training employers on formerly incarcerated women’s needs and strengths, Time for Change Foundation shifted the ways they are perceived by hiring supervisors. 72% of those surveyed in the workshops indicated they would be willing to hire a formerly incarcerated woman of color. 42% indicated they would implement at least three gender-responsive strategies into their workplace. 31% indicated they would be interested in learning more about gender-responsive strategies and principles related to productivity in the workplace.

Perhaps most importantly, both for the women who are mothers and in breaking intergenerational cycles of trauma, Time for Change Foundation has helped 317 children reunify with their mothers. One woman explained how the program’s integrated services helped her not only reunify with her sons, but also become a better mother:

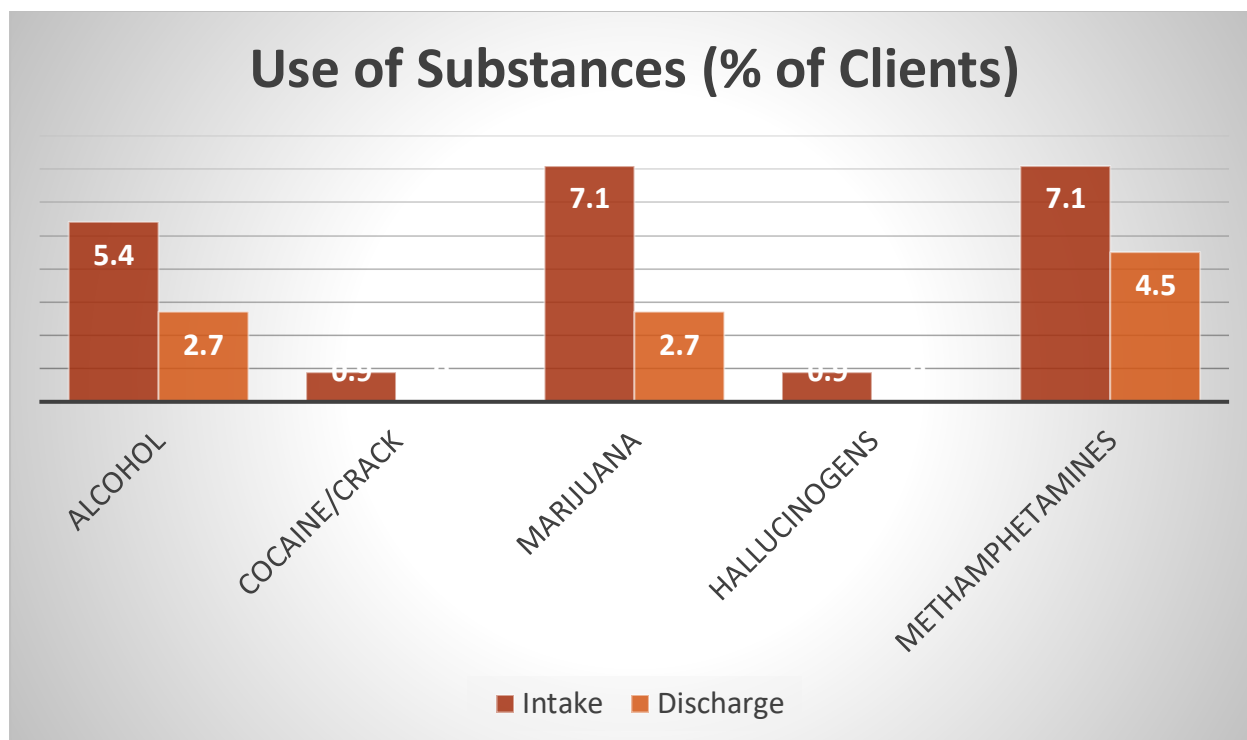
“This program restored my family. I know I’d still be fighting for my son if it weren’t for this program that I’m in. I’m the mother of three boys. My youngest is the one who my alcoholism got taken from me. They were going to adopt him out. Time for Change Foundation saw the fight I was fighting. And they joined and fought it with me. Me and my boys are home. We’re safe. I’m sober. I had to take accountability. First, I was blaming everything – surroundings, children’s fathers – but not me. And that wasn’t true. It was all me. I was attracting what was coming into our life. I was selfish. I learned to

accept myself and clean up my anger. I had an attitude problem. I was aggressive. I had a case of the F-its. I didn't care about nothing and no one. And Time for Change Foundation gave me a routine, food plan, money, all the things. They're still helping me. I been sustaining it myself, but initially my apartment was set up for me. I buy what I need. Money used to burn a hole in my pocket. Now, we have unlimited amounts of food. I prepare our meals and I stick to the chore list. Me and my boys keep a clean house. The program showed me how to manage my life in every aspect."

Employment, education, mothering, and keeping one's own home provide a life worth living – a purposeful and enjoyable life – not just a means to an end. Time for Change Foundation forms a community who celebrates these accomplishments with women and supports women in their time of need – always and forever – not just during the time in which people are provided formal program enrollment in services. Time for Change Foundation models itself on a concept of family and community, not as an agency. This relationship centered care builds the protective factors women need to *believe* they are capable of transforming their lives alongside the *skills* to do so.

Behavioral Reflections of a Meaningful, Resilient Life

Building a life of resiliency and meaning culminates in low rates of recidivism and high rates of abstinence for women that participate in Time for Change Foundation programs. Upon program completion from the CSAT-funded program, 94% of clients were completely abstinent from alcohol and drugs. When comparing substance-specific use changes (intake to discharge), it is apparent that there were reductions in the number of clients using all substances. The percentage of clients using alcohol was reduced by half; the percentage of clients using marijuana was reduced by 60%; and the percentage of clients using methamphetamines was reduced by 40%. Cocaine/crack and hallucinogen users reduced consumption to zero.



*Figure 15: Intake to Discharge Rates in the Use of Specific Substances
(From GPRA Data)*

Women describe how becoming abstinent was linked to their feelings about themselves and their capacity to productively navigate difficult emotions:

“I discovered my anger was actually based on hurt and pain and fear. And I stopped hiding from that pain. I had a 40-year history of cocaine abuse. I was finally able to accept me for who I was. I learned I always loved me. I even liked me. I just didn’t like who I was being. This program has given me the wisdom, anger management tools, emotional sobriety, how to stay balanced, how to ask for help, and even how to walk through anger appropriately.”

100% of Time for Change Foundation clients in the CSAT-funded program avoided recidivism in the first six months post-release and only 6% of clients reported committing any crime. By comparison, according to a report from the County of San Bernadino Reentry Collaborative, 58% of formerly incarcerated individuals in the county recidivated in their first year post-release.⁸² In California, over a four-year period between 2011 and 2015, felony offenders recidivated at a rate of 66%.⁸³ On a national level the rate of recidivism for rearrests is 49% and the recidivism rate for reincarceration is 24.6% over a two year period.⁸⁴ Time for Change Foundation demonstrates extraordinary success in helping formerly incarcerated women avoid recidivism and remain abstinent from drugs and alcohol – but this is because this is not the only focus of the program’s efforts. Instead, by centering women’s relationships, healing from

trauma, affirmation of cultural identity, and capacity to build a purposeful life, Time for Change Foundation helps vulnerable women transform their sense of self and community – building a strong foundation that creates sustainable support for changing behavior and then maintaining those changes over time.

Conclusion

The results Time for Change Foundation achieves are not purely due to the services they offer. Numerous similar organizations across the state and nation also offer comprehensive, wrap-around services but struggle to retain formerly incarcerated women in their programs. While their *services* may be similar to Time for Change Foundation's programs, their *organizational culture and structure* differs. In both the literature and in women's own words in focus groups, it was clear that many programs offer appropriate services but fail to address two absolutely critical needs these vulnerable women have: first, to feel they are seen, heard, understood, *and valued* and second, to build meaningful and consistent healthy relationships with others who are supportive and not judgmental.

"I learned that I believe in myself. I love myself. I have more self-confidence. I can achieve and accomplish things I want to do in life."

These foundational elements built into and centered within Time for Change Foundation as an organization are what make their retention rates and their outcomes along several meaningful variables exceptionally high – in fact, nearly perfect. When women feel a sense of their own worth, when they see models of success in others around them, when both their basic security needs and their needs for belonging and purpose are met – they can and do engage with learning new skills, with persisting through barriers and obstacles, and eventually, succeeding in spite of their pasts and the inequalities that surround them. They learn to resist the negative stereotypes others have of them.

"People treat you totally differently when you are out of jail. And I was like, 'No, I'm a strong mom and a good person. That's not going to define me.'"

While any organization, including Time for Change Foundation, cannot remove the barriers and inequalities society presents these women, they can and do help individual women reach for and attain positive futures and advocate for society as a whole to build a better future for all vulnerable people.

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