



## Unequal Access: Higher Ed for Women in Prison

*Women are the fastest-growing segment of the population in prison. They have less access to HEP than incarcerated men.*



Photo Credit: Karl Clifton-Soderstrom,  
North Park University



### State's with Highest Population of Women in Prison

1. Idaho
2. Oklahoma
3. Kentucky
4. South Dakota
5. Wyoming
6. Arizona
7. Montana
8. Arkansas
9. West Virginia
10. Texas

Source: The Sentencing Project



### Women in Prison Facts

- ▶ Since 1980, the population of women in prison has increased by 654%. [1]
- ▶ Black women account for a high percentage of women incarcerated today. [1]
- ▶ While the population of incarcerated women in Illinois has started to decline, there are increases in nearly half of the state's counties, particularly in rural areas. [3]
- ▶ As of Jan. 2022, there were over 27,000 incarcerated people in Illinois. Of those, over 1,200 are women, a figure that is expected to double by July 2022. [4]
- ▶ Less than 3% of people incarcerated in Illinois Dept. of Corrections (IDOC) can enroll in HEP programming. [2]
- ▶ The 11 existing HEP programs offer courses in only 11 of the 28 IDOC facilities, with 2 programs expanding recently to serve women, a severely underserved population. [2]
- ▶ Women in prison get nearly 3x more disciplinary tickets for minor infractions than men, resulting in reduced programming opportunities and keeps women in prison longer. [3]

### Quote

"Women in prison are jewels, they are rare. They are beautiful and they are hungry for education. If you invest in women in prison you have invested in an untapped resource in your community that will come out and change your community because of the education you provided—for the good."

**Willette Benford**

Northeastern Illinois University Prison + Neighborhoods Arts/Education Project (PNAP) Learning Fellow





# ILLINOIS COALITION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN PRISON

***IL-CHPEP advocates for greater access to quality higher education opportunities for all people who are incarcerated in Illinois while supporting policies that will abolish our state's and nation's reliance on criminalization and incarceration.***



Photo Credit: Karl Clifton-Soderstrom,  
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## Improved Outcomes Benefits Society

- ✓ Education has proven to be an indisputable tool for crime reduction and public safety. [1]
- ✓ Illinois was the first state to offer in-person HEP instruction to incarcerated scholars and quickly emerged as a national HEP leader in the mid-20th century. [2]
- ✓ HEP reduces reincarceration rates and saves taxpayer money. [1]
- ✓ HEP enables positive management of the prison environment. [1]
- ✓ HEP transforms the lives of students and their children and promotes lasting transitions out of prison. [1]
- ✓ Recidivism studies: Those who receive a college education while in prison are less likely to re-offend, more likely to find employment and become active and productive members of our communities. Some become leaders – professors, CEOs, and even elected officials. [1]

## Solutions for Greater Access Higher Education In Prison (HEP)

- 💡 Expand Federal and State investment in HEP and increase access to students inside of prisons.
- 💡 Advocate for access and parity to expand women's HEP programs.
- 💡 Encourage colleges and universities to invest their talent and resources in HEP to increase the number of college programs in prisons.

## Support HEP initiatives

- 📺 IL-CHPEP aims to build greater access and inclusion as well as robust, engaging programs and practices that best support students inside of prison and upon their release.
- 👥 In July 2018, the nation's first entirely women-led Task Force was launched to build a strategy to end the mass incarceration of women and confront the false narratives that fuel it.

