



UNEQUAL ACCESS: HIGHER ED FOR WOMEN IN PRISON

Women are the fastest-growing segment of the population in prison. They have less access to Higher Education in Prison (HEP) than incarcerated men.



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 recently 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 prisons. Of those, more than 1,200 are women, a figure that was 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 two 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 in prison, which results in reduced programming opportunities and keeps women in prison longer.³



Improved Outcomes Benefit 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 transforms the lives of students and their children and promotes lasting transitions out of prison.¹
- ▶ HEP reduces reincarceration rates and saves taxpayer money.¹
- ▶ HEP enables positive management of the prison environment.¹
- ▶ Recidivism studies: People who receive a college education while in prison are less likely to reoffend, more likely to find employment and to become active and productive members of our communities. Some become leaders — professors, CEOs, and even elected officials.¹

Solutions for Greater Access to 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.
- ▶ IL-CHEP, formed in 2016, aims to work with educational institutions, employers, prisons, and jails 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.

Support HEP Initiatives

- ▶ IL-CHEP 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.
- ▶ 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.



States with Highest Population of Women in Prison

- ▶ Idaho
- ▶ Oklahoma
- ▶ Kentucky
- ▶ South Dakota
- ▶ Wyoming
- ▶ Arizona
- ▶ Montana
- ▶ Arkansas
- ▶ West Virginia
- ▶ Texas

¹ [Changing Minds: The Impact of College in a Maximum-Security Prison](#). Effects on Women in Prison, the Prison Environment, Reincarceration Rates and Post-Release Outcomes)

² [BPI: HEP: Understanding its Power and Fulfilling its Promise in Illinois](#)

³ [Redefining the Narrative](#), Women's Justice Institute

⁴ [State of Illinois Quarterly Reports 10 Things: Prison Facts](#)

⁵ [The Sentencing Project: Fact Sheet Incarcerated Women and Girls](#)

Working to bring opportunities and hope to people who are incarcerated.

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