

# Panel on Justice-Involved Women



Annual Report

December 2024

# Table of Contents

I.	Acknowledgements.....	3
II.	Current Panel on Justice-Involved Women Members .....	4
III.	Introduction.....	5
IV.	Status of Justice-Involved Women in the Commonwealth.....	6
	Graph 1: Justice Involved Women in the Commonwealth: Two Year Comparison.....	7
	Graph 2: Justice Involved Women in MA Percentage .....	7
V.	Family Connectedness While Incarcerated: .....	8
	A. Focus Group Process .....	8
	B. General Themes.....	9
	<i>Visits</i> .....	9
	<i>Other Connections (phone, email, programs)</i> .....	12
	<i>Other areas discussed</i> .....	13
VI.	Recommendation(s).....	13
VII.	Conclusion .....	14
VIII.	References.....	15
IX.	Appendix I.....	16

## I. Acknowledgements

The Panel on Justice-Involved Women (“Panel”) would like to acknowledge the work, collaboration, and cooperation of many individuals that have helped us carry out our mission. Our achievements this year would not have been possible without the assistance of the professionals who accommodated our site visits and participated in our focus groups. Thank you to all at the Department of Correction (“DOC”), Hampden County Sheriff’s Office, and Bristol County Sheriff’s Office for assisting us with coordinating our visits and your willingness to provide the time and space to meet with your staff and those in your care. For all the staff who participated in our focus groups, we are especially grateful for your time, openness to answering our questions, and helping us understand your work. To the justice-involved participants, we thank you for your willingness to meet with us, share your experiences, and help us understand what areas you see as opportunities for improvement.

We would also like to thank the Essex County Sheriff’s Office. While the Panel needed to reschedule their site visit and focus group, the staff were extremely accommodating to our requests and responsive to our needs. Thank you to the Massachusetts Parole Board and Massachusetts Probation Service for providing us with the data needed to better understand the justice-involved clients who you serve. Our continued work would not be possible without the assistance of the Executive Office of Public Safety (“EOPSS”) for their support and guidance. We would like to acknowledge and thank all of the subject matter experts who took their time to present to this Panel and answer our questions to better understand the system.

Lastly, we extend our gratitude to the current and past Panelists. None of this could be accomplished without your efforts. To all of those that have served and influenced this work, we are grateful.

II. Current Panel on Justice-Involved Women Members

Seat	Member
Chair, Commissioner of the Dept of Correction (or designee)	Kyle Pelletier, Director of Special Programs
Commissioner of the Dept of Children and Families (or designee)	Rebecca Brink, Assistant Commissioner
Commissioner of the Dept of Mental Health (or designee)	Nancy Connolly, Psy.D., Assistant Commissioner of Forensic Services
Commissioner of the Department of Public Health (or designee)	Sarah Ruiz, MSW, Deputy Director for Strategy and Community Health, Bureau of Substance Addiction Services
Commissioner of the Office of Probation (or designee)	Corinn Crowninshield, Statewide Manager of Victim Services Dianne Fasano, First Deputy
Member of the House of Representatives	Representative Chynah Tyler
Member of the Senate	Senator Liz Miranda
Member of the Massachusetts Sheriffs’ Association	Colleen Stocks Assistant Superintendent, Western MA Regional Women’s Correctional Center, Hampden County
Persons representing justice-involved women	Daisy Hernandez, MSW, LCSW, C4 Innovations
Persons representing re-entry programs	Katherine Moran, Victim Service Unit, Director, Parole  Meghan Winston, Chief of Transitional Services, Parole
Persons representing domestic violence prevention <sup>1</sup>	Vacant.
One person who has been incarcerated <sup>2</sup>	Please see footnote

<sup>1</sup> Hema Sarang-Sieminski, Deputy Director of Jane Doe, Inc. took on a new role at Jane Doe, Inc. in 2024 requiring her to step down from her position on the Panel. Her service on the Panel in years prior is noted and greatly appreciated.

<sup>2</sup> The invaluable insight of a someone who has previously been incarcerated in Massachusetts is represented on the Panel from one of our members, who is serving in a dual capacity and fulfilling this statutory requirement.

### III. Introduction

Pursuant to Section 223 of Chapter 69 of the Acts of 2018, An Act Relative to Criminal Justice Reform (hereinafter “The Criminal Justice Reform Act”), the Panel on Justice-Involved Women was established “to review and report on the impact of this act and other criminal laws on women and make recommendations on gender-responsive and trauma-informed approaches to address the pre-trial, incarceration, and rehabilitation needs of justice involved women.” Further, the Panel is tasked with “review[ing] and consider[ing] improvements including, but not limited to, family visitation policies, available reproductive healthcare, gender specific, pretrial services, and programming offered within the correctional institutions and post release transitional assistance and supports for women.”

The Panel is committed to the work prescribed in the Criminal Justice Reform Act. As with years’ past, the Panel has struggled to obtain a quorum and hold regular meetings. The Panel has worked on changing when the meetings are held, surveying member’s availability prior to meetings, and reducing the frequency of meeting to work on getting consistent quorum to meet as scheduled. While these challenges have not yet fully been resolved, the Panel continues to work in this way to encourage consistent attendance at scheduled meetings so it can make progress in this important work. This year certainly saw an improvement in participation likely due, in large part, to the site visits that were planned, as discussed below. These were smaller meetings that garnered interest from Panel members and helped them progress in their work. The Panel will continue to work to improve its participation in the coming year.

Understanding the vastness of this mandate, the Panel decided to narrow its scope of review this year to a specific group of justice-involved women: those in custodial settings.<sup>3</sup> To further streamline the Panel’s efforts, the members decided on one area of focus: opportunities for family connectedness while in custody. Using this narrow task as a guide, the Panel completed three (3) facility visits where they hosted focus groups. Typically, the Panel held one (1) with those who are incarcerated and another with staff representatives from security, treatment, program, and clinical disciplines. These conversations allowed for a better understanding of areas that are working well to foster connections during incarceration, as well as possible areas of improvement across the system to increase these opportunities.

Understanding the scope of women who are justice-involved throughout the state is imperative for the Panel’s work. This year, the Panel collected data similar to that in last year’s report to advise the reader of any observable changes and to better inform the Panel’s work in the next year. It is critical to broaden our understanding of the ways in which women are involved in the

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<sup>3</sup> The Panel recognizes that not all individuals housed in facilities whose primary mission is the care and custody of women identify as female. As such, the terms justice-involved women, women’s facility, incarcerated individual, or justice-involved may be used throughout this report to describe those individuals who are in the care and custody at these types of facilities, but these terms are in no way a reflection of all individuals in custody of these facilities based on how they identify. Our observations and recommendations are limited to custodial settings that are primarily designed for adult women and should not be considered any more broadly than that.

justice system, as it goes well beyond incarceration. There was a significant decrease in the total number of justice involved women reported this year due to a sharp decrease in reported number of women under probation supervision. This is attributed primarily to an update in types of cases being reported this year, and is not an indication of a true decline. The Panel will continue to review the various ways women are justice-involved, including those on pre-trial supervision or detainment, post-conviction supervision through probation, incarceration in both county jails and state prison, and post release supervision through probation and/or parole to inform its work. It has been a priority of this Panel to understand women who are justice-involved in diverse ways, as well as to gain knowledge on the various ways the system impacts their lives.

This report contains an overview of the work the Panel has completed this year, as well as recommendation for systems to consider as it relates to women who are justice-involved. In the next year, the Panel hopes to continue its work in studying other aspects of those who are justice-involved by focusing on the largest group of justice-involved women: those involved with probation. This focus will hopefully expand the Panel's understanding and provide additional recommendations for progress in the system.

#### IV. Status of Justice-Involved Women in the Commonwealth

The term “justice-involved women” covers a broad range of individuals involved in the criminal justice system. There are various levels of supervision that are included in this term. It remains true that national statistics do little to help us understand the reality of justice-involved women in Massachusetts. The Panel continues to work to understand the local reality to best address the needs and challenges of the justice-involved women in the Commonwealth, which are distinct from the national context.<sup>4</sup>

The Panel reviewed official data available on Mass.gov and data provided by agencies to inform the understanding of justice-involved women in the Commonwealth. During this review, the Panel saw very similar trends to 2023, where the majority of those women who are justice-involved were under probation supervision, which includes pre-trial and post-conviction cases.

As set forth in Graph 1 below, there was a slight increase of approximately 140 women in county custody compared to last year's 474<sup>5</sup> and those under DOC and parole supervision remained approximately the same: 198 under DOC supervision in 2024 and in 2023 and 97 under Parole supervision versus 94 in 2023. Additionally, probation updated their reporting practices to include only cases that have officer supervision<sup>6</sup>.

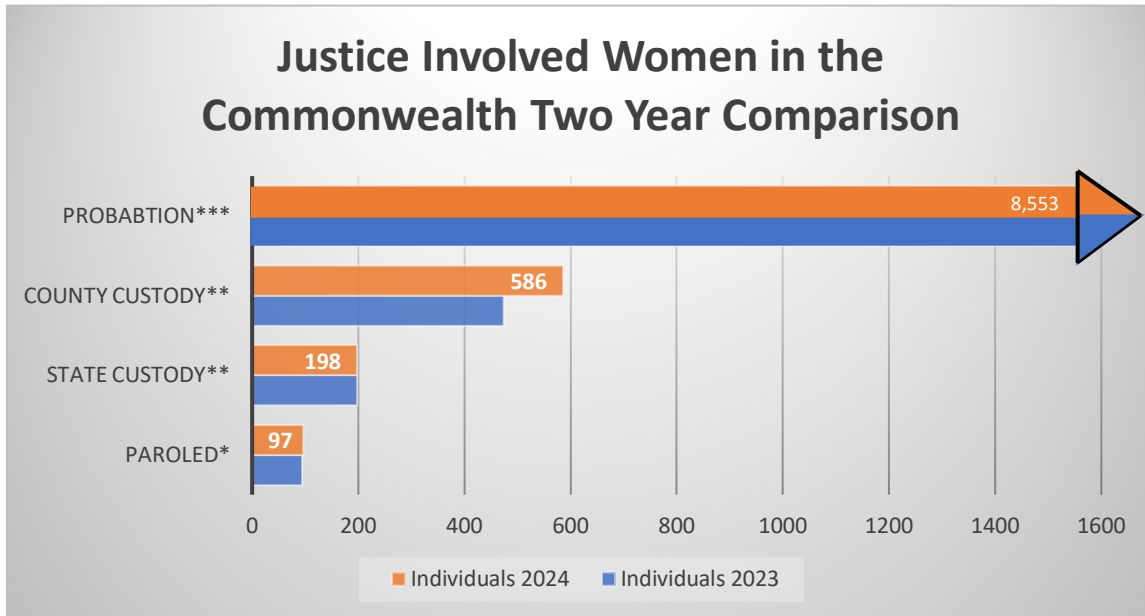
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<sup>4</sup><https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>

<sup>5</sup> This change can be attributed to the dates the information was gathered, the way in which the information was gathered, and/or a true increase in the number of women at county facilities. This was not investigated further during the reporting period.

<sup>6</sup> Probation did not report on the PTCOR-A or PTP A cases this year as these cases are not managed or supervised by an officer and are administrative in function. This accounts for the difference from last year's report.

Graph 1: Justice Involved Women in the Commonwealth: Two Year Comparison

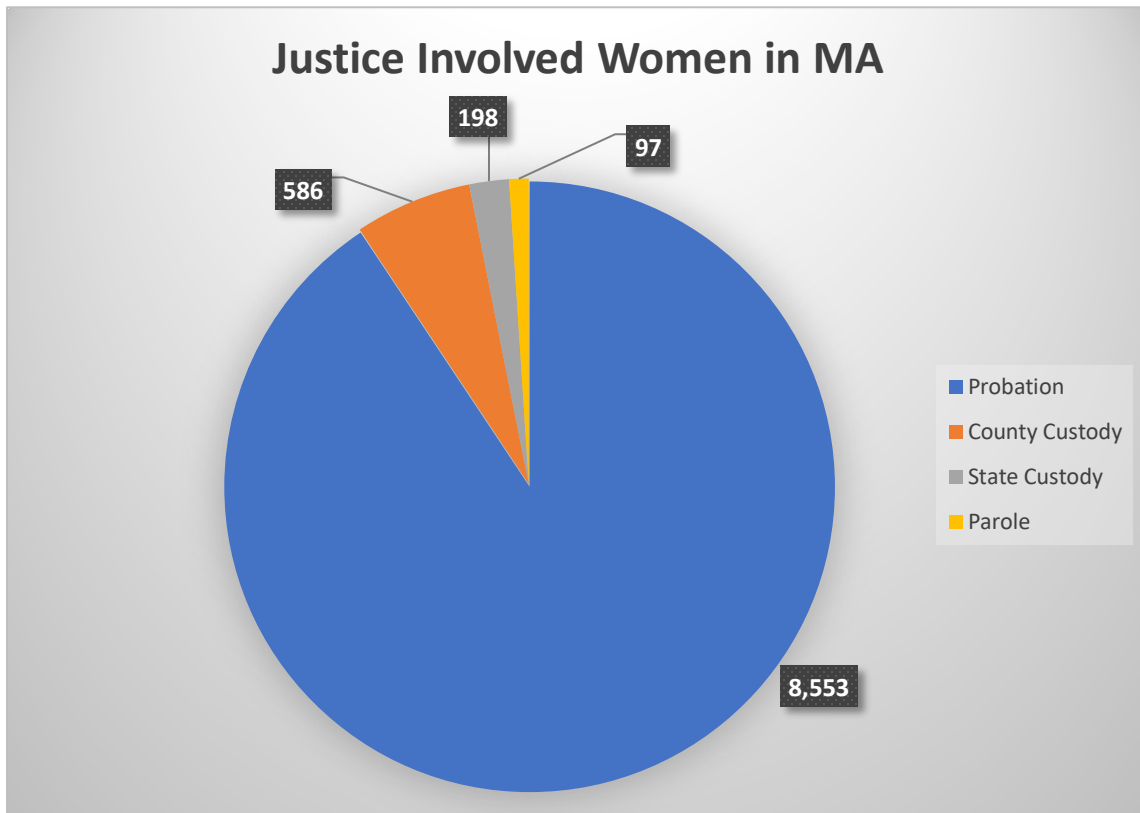


\*Data provided by Parole on October 31, 2023, compared to July 1, 2024

\*\* County and State Custody data provided from agencies on October 9, 2023 compared to data pulled from Mass.gov on July 1, 2024 from [Cross Tracking State & County Correctional Populations | Mass.gov](#)

\*\*\*Data extracted from MassCourts on 2/12/2023 with 13,822 women, compared to August 26, 2024 data

Graph 2: Justice Involved Women in MA Percentage



With the lowest state imprisonment rate in the nation<sup>7</sup>, one goal of this Panel is to better understand the experience of the majority of women who are justice involved, not just those incarcerated. As seen in Graph 2, the percentage of women on probation is higher compared to any other level of supervision. This also remains proportionally higher than national data from 2022<sup>8</sup>, which is likely attributable to our well below average incarceration rates.

While this is excellent news for the Commonwealth, there is still work to be done. The review of this data provides us with a better understanding of our system and can guide the Panel's attention and direction to ensure that the needs of all women that are justice-involved are understood and included in our future recommendations. The Panel seeks to make a concerted effort to understand the needs of those women who are justice-involved within the community.

## V. Family Connectedness While Incarcerated:

The Panel agreed to narrow this year's work to a singular issue of high interest: family connectedness while incarcerated. The Panel defined family connectedness as the individual's ability to remain engaged with their family (or anyone they consider family) while incarcerated. Opportunities for such included, but were not limited to, in-person visits, special events with family as guests, video visits, telephone, e-mail, and phone calls. To understand this fully, the Panel collected official policies and handbooks from facilities, as well as conducted focus groups with staff and separately with those who are incarcerated.

### A. Focus Group Process

The Panel scheduled visits at MCI Framingham, Hampden County, and Bristol County to facilitate small focus groups to learn from the women and custody staff about family connectedness. Topics focused on family access, interest in visits, areas that worked well and areas where they believed improvement could be made. To ensure the groups received similar questions for better comparison of information during Panel meetings, these small focus groups were guided by a set of standard discussion questions (Appendix I). While these questions were a guide, each conversation evolved organically based on the participants' priorities. In most instances, there was one distinct focus group with incarcerated persons and another with a variety of staff from treatment, clinical, program, security, and administration roles. Each focus group was well attended, with at least five (5) incarcerated individuals participating and a diverse group of staff members answering our questions.

The Panel asked each facility to allow the women to decide on their participation and that the group be limited to no more than ten individuals. This was typically accomplished with a flyer made available for posting. Each participant was notified that the information provided may be used to inform the Panel's work, provided a disclosure form to sign, and reminded

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.sentencingproject.org/fact-sheet/incarcerated-women-and-girls/>



that participation was voluntary, and they should disclose only as much information as they felt comfortable.

The Panel asked each facility to identify or allow staff to self-select from a variety of disciplines to ensure that we could have representation from security, administration, treatment, clinical, and program staff where applicable. The goal of this diverse group was to get a well-rounded understanding of why policies, procedures, and/or practices are designed and how they work. Further, the Panel sought to gain an understanding of how this group of staff view family connectedness and areas they felt could be improved upon.

Having two distinct focus groups allowed the Panel to obtain information from the different perspective to better understand processes as it relates to family connectedness.

## B. General Themes

All focus groups agreed that family connectedness is important for the women, their children, and extended family. Both the women and staff spoke about the benefits of maintaining family connections while in custody. One staff participant stated that family connections are not only important but “it is the antidote to so many things they are working on.”

It was generally observed that both the women and staff were familiar with the policies and procedures that provided access to family connectedness and that there were no specific complaints of those policies not being followed. Both the staff and women expressed that there were opportunities outside of the existing policies and procedures to obtain accommodation for special visits.

### *Visits*

All facilities had access to some level of in-person visitation that was clearly delineated in policy and further explained in the available facility handbooks, though the conditions of these visits ranged at each facility. There were variations in number of days available to schedule visits, physical space (such as an interactive children’s room), to non-contact visits only. The incarcerated participants discussed their hesitation to allow their child to visit in person, with some participants sharing they did not want to “put their child through that,” to one woman stating that her children/grandchildren believed she was in the hospital because it was easier than explaining to them where she really was.

Staff confirmed that the facility generally has the space/time to accommodate additional visits but there did not appear to be a demand at this time.

The women commented on some welcomed practices at each of the facilities that they enjoyed and felt were beneficial.

At Hampden County, the women appreciated the opportunity to have hour-long virtual visits with their family. They stated that in some instances it was too much for their aging parents or child to visit in person and this opportunity allowed them the flexibility to remain connected. Virtual visits also helped their child’s caregiver, as they did not have to drive to the facility to accommodate the visit. Further, they stated that children seemed

excited to show their mom, grandmother, or aunt an item they had at home that was important to them (their room, a work assignment from school, a book they were reading etc.), which would not have been possible if they were to visit in person. Staff also commented that they have had limited issues with the virtual visits and saw them as a value-added opportunity for the women.

At MCI Framingham, the women commented on how they appreciated the work of volunteers, such as those overseen by the chaplains, that planned for family and friend worship days or programs the facility provided that allowed for family picnic days (“Mom and Me” event), especially as it had been done “pre-pandemic”<sup>9</sup>. They also noted that programs like “Read to Me Mommy”<sup>10</sup> allowed them to feel connected to their child in an alternative way. They also stated that the children’s visiting room was great for younger visitors.

In Bristol County, the women discussed a program they found very helpful, “True Course”<sup>11</sup>. This program allowed them to review different topics relevant to them, such as trauma, co-parenting, and social media. After completing all four (4) sessions they gained access to a 15-minute video visit with their child. This group also spoke at length on how they appreciated a former clinical staff person who assisted them in remaining connected to their families but reported that position had been removed. This group also noted the ease of entering and exiting the visiting room for them and their visitors and further noted that staff are very accommodating to ensure scheduled visits occur.

The incarcerated participants also identified areas of growth for each system. In general, all wanted more opportunities for contact visits. As stated by one participant at a facility where there was a lack of contact visits, “sometimes a hug is a pretty big deal.” Visit opportunities

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<sup>9</sup> **Family Renunciation event** - Held 3 to 4 times per year. This is for parents and grandparents to have time with their children and participate in activities, and during the holidays gifts are provided. (Provided by MCI Framingham)

**Mom and Me** – This event, which occurs annually in August, allows parents and grandparents to spend the day at the facility. There are activities, a barbeque for families to share a meal, and all children leave with a backpack and school supplies to be prepared for the new school year. (Provided at MCI Framingham)

**Family and Friends Worship** - Chaplains at Framingham plan events during the holidays and during the year for the women to engage in worship time with their friends and family. (Provided at MCI Framingham)

<sup>10</sup>**Read To Me Mommy** – This program unifies incarcerated mothers with their children through the power of reading. The incarcerated are given the opportunity to be recorded while reading an age-appropriate book that speaks to their child’s interests. The video and the book are then mailed to the child. (Provided at MCI Framingham)

<sup>11</sup> **True Course Incarcerated Parent Program** is a holistic approach to building bridges between parents, families, and children of incarcerated individuals. Incarcerated parents can receive services such as:

- Weekly Parent Forum Meetings (topic focused, open dialog support group)
  - The potential to earn Zoom visits with youth (every 4 sessions attended)
  - Referrals for support family and/or youth for community services
  - Therapeutic options prior to re-entry to assist with integration back to community
  - Continued services to support and engage parents once in the community
- (information via BCSO Program Description Booklet)

ranged from regular access to contact visits, to those that only had non-contact in person options.

MCI Framingham appeared to have the most generous access to contact visits, which is likely due to it being a state correctional facility. However, the ease of entering the facility for visits was noted as a challenge for families. The women did not comment specifically on the search procedures, but focused more on the strict dress codes for visitors that they felt were unreasonable for some of their children. One woman shared a story that her pre-teen daughter was turned away due to “too many pockets on her pants,” even though the daughter had worn the pants at a prior visit and was allowed in. She stated her daughter was embarrassed and no longer wanted to come visit. Another participant in this group noted that she found it hard for her teenage daughter to find appropriate pants since jeans, leggings, and sweatpants were not allowed, which comprised most of her wardrobe. Another woman was unsure how her child with special needs would be accommodated when she turned eighteen and shared concerns that her daughter would be counted toward the maximum number of adults allowed at a visit, even though she was not independent.

In contrast, the participants at Bristol County noted that the procedures for visitors entering the facility and for the justice-involved women themselves were much easier due to it being a non-contact site (less extensive search procedures), but noted they would prefer to have some contact visits available.

The participants at Hampden County reported they did not readily use the in-person visiting opportunities and noted that the lack of a children’s room, strict rules for entering, and the lack of contact played some role in that decision.

At all sites visited, there was a range of access to virtual visits. Hampden County had the most generous process, which considered video visits like in-person visits, in that they followed the same duration and were conducted in the visiting room. Staff noted very few issues or challenges with this process except for some family members being unable to figure out the technology. MCI Framingham participants also had access to video visits. These were described as available on the housing units, about 20 minutes in duration, but the quality of the visit was “subpar” according to one participant. Bristol County did not yet have access to video visits, other than as part of the program already mentioned, but the incarcerated participants and staff were interested in this possibility.

The Panel inquired about extended-stay visits with children, distinct from special events. Each group expressed interest in this option, but some of the participants could not even imagine this as they did not currently have contact visits. One participant stated that she “can’t wrap [her] head around it.” When speaking with staff, it seemed as though extended visits were an option at MCI Framingham in the past decade but were no longer available due to physical plant limitations. Staff who had experience with this program noted that it was a great program, even if there was limited participation. They stated it was not difficult to

facilitate, even if it required changes in operations to accommodate. None of the women we spoke with had participated in this, or similar programs, when they were available.

*Other Connections (phone, email, programs)*

All participants noted they enjoyed the ease of email and phone calls, which are free. Additionally, MCI Framingham participants reported they can now make phone calls on their tablets. Those in Bristol County stated there was a challenge in having access to tablets in the period after admission, as they had to wait up to thirty days for one to be issued, which impacted their ability to communicate by email. All participants stated there was a delay in receiving emails, but they understood this to be due to review of the content for security reasons, which was affirmed by staff. Bristol County participants stated they did not have a virtual option, and the women felt they would be more inclined to engage in visiting if that was an option available to them.

Staff at all facilities felt there were many opportunities available for the women to remain engaged with family. This ranged from structured programs on parenting skills (which seemed to be available at all facilities), special family engagement activities (quarterly at MCI Framingham, and held in the past at Hampden County), and access to phone calls, emails and video visits<sup>12</sup> free of charge. It was noted, however, that the opportunities are not always accepted or well attended, which can lead to volunteers or programs not continuing. This was true at both Hampden County and MCI Framingham but there was a mixed understanding of why this occurred. It was also noted that longer sentences at MCI Framingham may provide a different or unique opportunity for more activities related to engagement with family. Staff felt that the approach to programming for “lifers” is very different than those awaiting trial or serving short sentences.

Through a review of handbooks and program booklets from each facility, it is clear there are many options for engagement in a variety of programs, with several that specifically relate to family connections or parenting skill development. However, there was a notable disconnect between what the facilities offer and what the participants in the focus groups were aware of. This was evident at all facility visits, and even led to some disagreements between the participants, as some appeared to have different information than others. Through the staff focus group discussions, it was clear there was a plethora of opportunities available but in discussions with the women they were either not aware of these opportunities, were not interested in them, or found them inaccessible due to scheduling conflicts with work or other activities. This left the Panel members with the impression that there is a challenge with accessibility or knowledge of opportunities that already exist, rather than availability of resources. Further, the types of activities available may not be meeting the needs of the participants, as many stated they would be interested in having programs geared toward children of varying ages and abilities, and that grandchildren should be considered the same as children in all aspects (programming, visits, events etc.).

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<sup>12</sup> Bristol County participants and staff noted that they did not have video visits robustly available, apart from the True Course Program.

### *Other areas discussed*

Staff expressed a desire to develop methods to better inform families of what is available to their loved ones while in custody, as well as general information on the criminal justice system. The Hampden County group discussed experience with a “Civilian Academy,” which was helpful to engage families. This program provided staff with the ability to connect with family and an avenue for families to ask questions and be informed about processes they may be unfamiliar with. Staff agreed this was important in fostering family connections for the justice-involved women and empowering families with information.

## VI. Recommendation(s)

The Panel’s observations and discussions with staff and justice involved women allowed the Panel to ascertain some common need areas and develop the following broad recommendations, with the understanding that not all recommendations are appropriate for all custody settings: <sup>13</sup>.

1. Video visitation should be available, in some form, for all custody levels of supervision. Approaching video visits like in-person visits (i.e., taking place in the visiting room with the same duration and schedule of all other visits) seems to be best practice. Regardless, having any access to video visit opportunities appears to significantly enhance the justice involved individual’s ability to remain engaged with her family in a unique and important way, and is also generally supported by staff.
2. Tablet based phone calls were not available at all the facilities the Panel visited and would greatly improve accessibility to opportunities for family connections. As tablets become more widely available, it would be best practice to provide access to phone calls and email on tablets. It is recommended tablet based phone calls be in addition to the current phone call and email access, rather than replace it.
3. Facilities should develop a clearer understanding of the low participation rates for family engagement activities (visits, special events, programming etc.), as it was not the impression of the Panel that this is due to a lack of interest. Having town hall meetings or focus groups, at least annually, with those in their facilities could better assist staff in understanding interests, needs, and accessibility barriers that may exist for incarcerated individuals.
4. We recommend that facilities make changes to their dress code and entrance procedures to ensure children who come to visit with their loved ones are not turned away. This should include child friendly dress code guidelines developed for children 17 and younger that accommodate the current styles and access to

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<sup>13</sup> The Panel recognizes that not all individuals housed in facilities whose primary mission is the care and custody of women identify as female. As such, the terms justice-involved women, women’s facility, incarcerated individual, or justice involved may be used throughout this report to describe those individuals who are in the care and custody at these types of facilities, but these terms are in no way a reflection of all individuals in custody of these facilities based on how they identify. Our observations and recommendations are limited to custodial settings that are primarily designed for adult women and should not be considered any more broadly than that.

clothing options and the ability for a supervisor to authorize a child's entry for the visit.

5. Improvements should be made to make waiting areas more welcoming and accommodating to the needs of families. Facilities should review where visitors wait prior to the visit and ensure there is an up to date, safe, and clean space to change diapers, have access to food, and the ability to entertain children while they wait.

## VII. Conclusion

The work completed this year revealed some impressive practices throughout the Commonwealth aimed at fostering family connectedness while justice-involved women are incarcerated. Each system that was reviewed had a practice or program that was valued by the staff and those in custody. However, the available opportunities varied among facilities. In the Panel's discussions, all staff and those incarcerated agreed that the availability of phone calls, emails, and video visitation (where available) at no cost to the loved one has aided them in remaining connected with family. The recommendations made in this report seek to guide those who oversee facilities who house incarcerated women to consider increasing access to family engagement opportunities and building from current practices.

The Panel recognizes the Commonwealth has the lowest female incarceration rate in the country. As such, the Panel seeks to expand its understanding of the scope of those affected by other aspects of the justice system. This will be critical to further understanding how women may be impacted by established processes and ensure their needs are recognized and addressed. There have been many accomplishments in the Commonwealth, and the Panel hopes to understand those more fully and continue to make recommendations to improve upon the unique needs of justice-involved women.

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## IX. Appendix I

### Site visit questions and observation checklist

**Opener:** We are part of the Panel on Justice Involved women, and we are focusing our attention this year on family engagement and connectiveness for those who are currently incarcerated. We have several questions we want to discuss with you about your experience, to better understand what you see as important in this area, and areas of improvement as you see it. Please be aware that your answers may be used to inform the Panel to make recommendations. Thank you for your participation.

<b><u>General questions (For those incarcerated)</u></b>	<b>Feedback</b>
<b><u>General questions</u></b>	
Are there any programs or counseling that you are aware of at the facility that support family connectiveness (ie parenting classes, support groups, family mediation, family counseling etc...)	
If yes, have you utilized them? If not why not? if yes what was your experience with them (did you find them helpful, easy to access, easy to understand, and get the results you were looking for?)	
Do you have suggestions for improvement in this area? Have you experienced any challenges related to family connections? If so please describe.	
What types of family connections do you have (for example in person visits, video visits, phone calls, letters, emails, special events etc...?)	



Which ones do you prefer and why?	
Are there any reasons these opportunities for connection might be taken away?	
If so, what would be the reasons they would not be available?	
<b><u>Virtual (video) Visits</u></b>	
Do you and your family use virtual or video visits? If not, why not?	
Describe how the virtual or video visits work (think of how long they are, how easy they are to use, their cost, where they are located etc...)	
<b><u>In Person Visits Do you have access to in person visits? (if no skip these questions)</u></b>	
Do you participate in in person visits? If not, what are some of the reasons for that?	
Do the visiting periods available typically work for your family and/or child?	
If/when you do have in person visits how would you describe your family's experience with getting the information about when visits are and the process? How do they typically get this information?	
If/when you do have in person visits how would you describe your family's experience with the security measures to enter the facility? (may ask follow up questions about the security process, prohibited items, clothing challenges etc...)	
How would you describe your family's experience once in the visiting room? How would describe the staff presence in the visiting room?	
Do you have access to things your family needs such as rocking chairs, diaper changing stations, small tables and chairs etc to have a comfortable visit?	
How would you describe the vending machine options?	

<p>What is the process to have children be able to visit? Can more than one caregiver bring a child in at the same or separate times?</p>	
<p>If you or someone you know has a child that has DCF involvement, how does that impact their ability to visit with their child?</p>	
<p>How would you describe the space allocated for children to visit? Do they have activities that meet the interests and needs of the children visitors? If not what is your understanding of why these things are not available? If yes, are you able to access them throughout the visit?</p>	
<p>What would you change about the in person visit process or space?</p>	

<b><u>Extended visits:</u></b>	
Have you ever had the opportunity to participate in an extended visit with your child or family member (ie not in the visiting room, and can include overnight)? If so can you describe your experience with that?	
If you had the opportunity but did not participate why not? (ie Framingham had these visiting trailers 2016 and prior, and SMCC had overnights up until it closed in 2020)	
Would extended visits be something you would be interested in participating in? Why and why not?	
Final comments or observations:	

**Opener:** We are part of the Panel on Justice Involved women, and we are focusing our attention this year on family engagement and connectiveness for those who are currently incarcerated. We have several questions we want to discuss with you about your experience, to better understand what you see as important in this area, and areas of improvement as you see it. Please be aware that your answers may be used to inform the Panel to make recommendations. Thank you for your participation.

<b><u>General questions (For Staff of the facility)</u></b>	<b>Feedback</b>
Are there any programs or counseling that you are aware of at the facility that support family connectiveness (ie parenting classes, support groups, family mediation, family counseling etc...) If yes can you describe what you know about them?	
If yes, what is your impression of these services? Are they helpful? Are they utilized?	
Do you have suggestions for improvement in this area?	
What types of family connections do the incarcerated have (for example in person visits, video visits, phone calls, letters, emails, special events etc...?)	
Which ones do you believe they prefer? Why do you think that is?	
Are there any reasons these opportunities for connection might be taken away?	
If so what would be the reasons they would not be available?	
<b><u>Virtual (video) Visits</u></b>	
Does your facility offer virtual visits? If not why not?	
Describe how the virtual or video visits work (think of how long they are, how easy they are to use, their cost, where they are located etc...)	
Are there any challenges to these visits from your perspective? If so what?	
<b><u>In Person Visits</u></b>	
Does the facility provide access to in person visitation? (if no skip these questions)	
What types of in person visitation exist (contact, non contact, extended visits, family)?	

How are visiting periods decided?	
How would a family member access information on visits for your facility?	
How would you describe the visiting room?	
Are DCF visits allowed? Are there any special considerations for these visit that you are aware of? Are there any limitations to these visits that you are aware of?	
Do you have a space dedicated to children? If not what are the reasons for that? If yes how would you describe the space allocated for children to visit?	
What types of activities, and furniture do you provide in the family visiting space should you have one?	
How would you describe the vending machine options?	
What would you change about the in person visit process or space?	
<b><u>Extended visits:</u></b>	
Has your facility ever provided extended or overnight visits? If yes can you describe the process and participation in your experience?	
If no what are the challenges to offering that at this facility?	
Would extended visits be something you would be interested in providing in the future? Why and why not?	
Final comments or observations:	

**Panel's Observations Lobby/Waiting Area**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
The lobby/waiting area is brightly painted and welcoming			
The area has toys, games, books and other things to keep children busy			
The area has access to a bathroom with a changing table			
The area has access to a water fountain and vending machine			
There are staff available to answer questions			

**Visiting Space**

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Notes</b>
There are activities for children of all ages (toys, games, crafts, books)			
Room has things families may need such as rocking chairs, diaper changing stations, small tables and chairs etc.			