

Power Inside

About our program:

Formed in May 2001, Power Inside is a community-based organization committed to building self-sufficiency, improving quality of life and preventing incarceration among women and families in Baltimore. We are currently funded by the Baltimore City Health Department Homeless Services, the Open Society Institute, the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Baltimore Community Foundation, the Abell Foundation and other organizations. While still small, Power Inside has demonstrated the organizational capacity to carry out quality programming. Our four program staff members reach more than 300 women annually. Staff expertise ranges from clinical social work to peer-based knowledge, and all staff are trained AIDS Administration HIV Counselor/Testers. Our host organization, Fusion Partnerships, Inc., a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, provides administrative and fiscal support and contract management. To enhance our funded programs, we utilize strong partnerships, in-kind resources, and volunteers. An ETO/Social Solutions database is used to store and analyze client data, and we will have the results of a program evaluation in late spring 2007.

Our current service strategy has four components: (a) street-based community health outreach to women involved in prostitution (b) group and individual interventions with incarcerated women (c) daytime drop-in resources for high-risk women, and (d) research, public education and advocacy to expand community-wide access to health and treatment services. Power Inside is frequently called upon to provide technical assistance to city, state, and nonprofit entities on service provision because of our innovative approach and highly specialized knowledge in working with women cycling through the criminal justice system and women in prostitution.

About our clients:

As a result of our collaboration and coordination with the Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health we completed a comprehensive needs assessment of our client population. Our findings indicated that almost half of the women had no stable housing where they could stay for more than 30 days. Women reported high amounts of mental illness and recent daily heroin and cocaine use. Most women did not have insurance or a legal income prior to arrest and reported high rates of chronic diseases. Five percent of respondents reported being infected with HIV; however this is probably an underestimate due both to self-report. Of the women we interviewed one-third had traded sex for money, drugs or a place to stay. A significant number of female detainees were injection drug users in the 30 days prior to arrest. Most of women who had recently injected drugs reported high-risk behaviors such as needle and other injection equipment sharing.