

INCARCERATED AND PREGNANT:

A Convening to Ensure Human Rights for Pregnant Incarcerated People

There are about 219,000 women who are behind bars on any given day in the U.S. This number has been growing for the last 4 decades, as a result of many intersecting social, political, and economic forces. Mass incarceration has disproportionately affected women of color and their families; the reasons that these women are trapped in the criminal legal system have less to do with crime and more to do with structural and racial inequalities in housing, employment, mental health care and addiction treatment, policing, trauma histories and other non-criminal factors. Most of these women are of childbearing age, and some of them will enter jail or prison pregnant.

But we do not know how many women that is, or what the outcomes of these pregnancies are. This absence of data is reflective of the broader neglect of women's gender-specific health care and family needs in the criminal legal system.

On December 10, 2017, the Pregnancy in Prison Statistics (PIPS) Project team hosted a convening in Santa Clara, California to discuss the health and human rights of incarcerated pregnant people and their families. The purpose of the day was to center the voices of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people as we brought together a diverse group of stakeholders to identify key problems and strategies to promote the health and well-being of pregnant incarcerated people and their families. The Convening was a great success, with people of different professional and personal backgrounds in conversation around core issues and practical solutions. Activities and conversations from the convening led to a number of suggested action items to continue the momentum generated at the Convening. Though the first of its kind, based on the eagerness of participants and their desire to collaborate, it most certainly will not be the last.

Highlights:

- ❖ People from all around the country who care about incarcerated pregnant people networked and exchanged ideas.
- ❖ Keynote speakers Miyhosi Benton and Kayla Moye movingly described their experiences of being pregnant and incarcerated. Ms. Benton discussed, among other things, the indignity of being shackled in childbirth, and Ms. Moye discussed how her repeated requests to obtain an abortion were denied.
- ❖ A PIPS "Data Gallery Walk." We created infographic posters of preliminary data from the PIPS study—a national data collection of pregnancy outcomes in prisons and jails—and people walked around with sticky notes to provide their thoughts on action steps, dissemination, and messaging strategies based on these data. Infographics highlighted things such as the number of births, miscarriages, and abortions in 1 year in prisons; rates of

Attendees at a glance:

72 people attended
From 16 states and the District of Columbia
14 formerly incarcerated women
14 custody administrators/staff
10 health care professionals
15 advocates from community organizations
11 researchers
15 other community members and partners



opioid use disorder among pregnant incarcerated people; breastfeeding policies and prevalence; where infants born to incarcerated mothers get placed; and many others.

- ❖ An update from Legal Services for Prisoners with Children and the National Council on Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls about the Pregnant Incarcerated Person's Bill of Rights they drafted and their national legislative toolkit to end shackling of pregnant incarcerated people.
- ❖ A nuanced panel discussion about doula and breastfeeding support programs for pregnant and postpartum people in custody. In addition to descriptions of such programs at several prisons/jails, the discussion included the challenges of working as a support person and advocate in these settings.
- ❖ Breakout groups to strategize about action items and interventions for pregnant incarcerated people in: health care standards; anti-shackling legislation; mental health care and addiction; child custody issues; PIPS data and further research; breastfeeding and doula programs; abortion and family planning access.
- ❖ A moving original poetry performance by a previously incarcerated woman.



Keynote Speaker Kayla Moye



Keynote Speaker Miyhosi Benton

Additional Research Needed:

During the Convening on Pregnancy in Correctional Setting a number of additional avenues of inquiry were brainstormed by the group. This is a list of what the group identified as information we still need to know to protect and promote the constitutional and human rights of pregnant incarcerated people.

- Identify the successful campaigns that lead to increased support for incarcerated parents seeking reunification
 - What systems within the prisons/jails are necessary to ensure parents have access to counseling about their rights
 - What are the Child Protective Services Guidelines in each state and which ones need to be changed
- Identify the proximity of the abortion clinics to prisons and jails
- Identify all of the birthing centers where pregnant women in jails and prisons deliver in the United States
- Identify which states have programs and services that work well to support pregnant incarcerated people
- Identify who in each state is responsible for monitoring conditions within prisons and jails
- Explore why women in prisons and jails might choose to be sterilized.
 - ◆ Does the institution also offer full spectrum birth control access
 - ◆ What is said during counseling?



- Develop intercept models for where in the pipeline pregnant people can be diverted from institutions of incarceration
- Develop an analysis on the financial cost of incarcerating pregnant people

Funding made it possible to . . .

- ❖ Provide scholarships for 4 formerly incarcerated women who experienced pregnancy while incarcerated with the total cost of their plane flights, hotel room, and ground transportation to the Convening.
- ❖ Be well-fed.
- ❖ Hire a videographer to record the day's proceedings (coming soon!).
- ❖ Collaborate with a consultant with expertise in reproductive justice, incarceration, and movement building.
- ❖ Develop high quality resources for participants to interact with and learn from



Dr. Carolyn Sufrin introducing the PIPS data



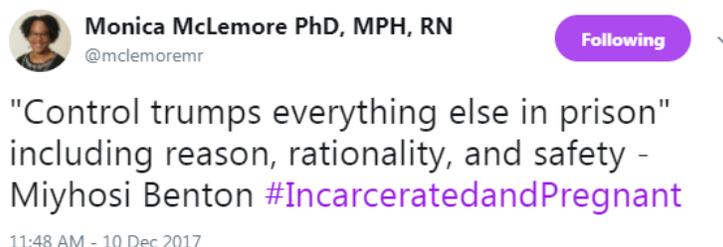
Attendees interacting with the PIPS data



Attendees wrote questions and reactions to the data on sticky notes that other attendees could then read and respond to.

Social media reach

The conversations held were amplified across three social media platforms, involving over 24 different accounts and at least 60 unique posts. Posts included quotes from presenters such as:



11:48 AM - 10 Dec 2017



A well as the emotional resonance of the day:



Nearly all of attendees (96%) who completed a post-convening survey said the event was “very good or “excellent.” A majority said they were “extremely motivated” (74%) to create change for pregnant incarcerated people after the event, 17% reported that they were “motivated” to create change. This positive feedback has encouraged us and participants to keep up the momentum by:

“Helping to create a clearing house of resources available throughout the country”

“Work to begin collecting consistent, common data on this topic across facilities and jurisdictions”

“Being more intentional about including the voices of previously incarcerated people into my work everywhere I can.”

“Promote partnerships among prisons/jails and Healthy Start”

“Working on finding out what information I can get from my local jail and collaborating with others to develop data infrastructure; more formal evaluation of our own jail programs”



Formerly incarcerated people, physicians, advocates, and many others attended.





Formerly incarcerated people and custody administrators gathered together to discuss and strategize about some of the more difficult topics in the care of pregnant incarcerated people.

Next steps!

We have a lot of information, suggestions, and collaborative potential that was generated during the Convening. Next steps and action ideas—including additional research questions, network building, and developing fact sheets for legislative and policy advocacy—were all discussed and developed and the work to continue the momentum from the convening is already occurring. For our part, the PIPS team is compiling solutions generated and plans to publish them alongside the results of our forthcoming study. Strong cross-discipline partnerships between activists, academics, and service providers were developed. With the momentum generated from the Convening, we hope to continue supporting the connections among this never-before assembled group of people and grow this inter-disciplinary collection of individuals with diverse experiences.

The presentations during the Convening must be heard by more people. That's why we are placing videos on our social media accounts, website, and YouTube. We hope these resources will help shed light on these issues particularly through the voices of the women who so bravely shared their experiences. Through the summer we will also be developing a method of storing and sharing important written resources. Once the PIPS data have been finalized and published, we will be sharing these publically through multiple venues.

We must all work to amplify the voices of and ensure the health and human rights of pregnant incarcerated people. We are grateful to have you as a partner in this work and welcome your collaboration and input in this ongoing work.

Best,

Carolyn Sufirin and Lauren Beal

