

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/a-new-path-to-justice-getting-women-off-rikers-island>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

New York City has expressed a strong commitment to criminal justice reform including consensus among policymakers to close the notorious Rikers Island jail and cut the number of people involved in the system by half within a decade. Yet even as the number of people incarcerated in New York City has declined significantly in recent years, this decline has impacted almost exclusively men, and not women.

This report, released by the New York Womens Foundation in partnership with the Vera Institute of Justice, seeks to identify gender-informed strategies for getting New York City women disentangled from the criminal justice system. The policy and practical recommendations provided serve as a blueprint for ensuring that women are not overlooked in the fight to end mass incarceration in the city.

This report is a blueprint of aspirational first principles, programmatic considerations, and practical solutions to keep women out of the criminal justice system and off Rikers Island.

Nationally, women are the fastest growing segment of the incarcerated population, in part because so little attention has been paid to the unique pathways that result in the arrest, prosecution, and increasingly the incarceration of women.

Research on women in New York Citys criminal justice system suggests that they end up in custody for different reasons than men and boys, and traditional criminal justice options such as existing diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration are not tailored to meet their needs.

This report offers recommendations for how New York City can embrace a different approach at three critical junctures in the criminal justice system: 1) at arrest; 2) at arraignment; and 3) when women are held at Rikers.

PUBLICATION

NEWS

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