

THE STATE OF PLAY

Each month, we examine how the mental health conversation in the media is evolving, with a focus on youth, women, and the justice system. Last month, we looked at the connections between trauma and women's mental health. This month, in the third issue of our three-part series on trauma, we investigate how the theme of trauma is discussed in relation to the justice system.

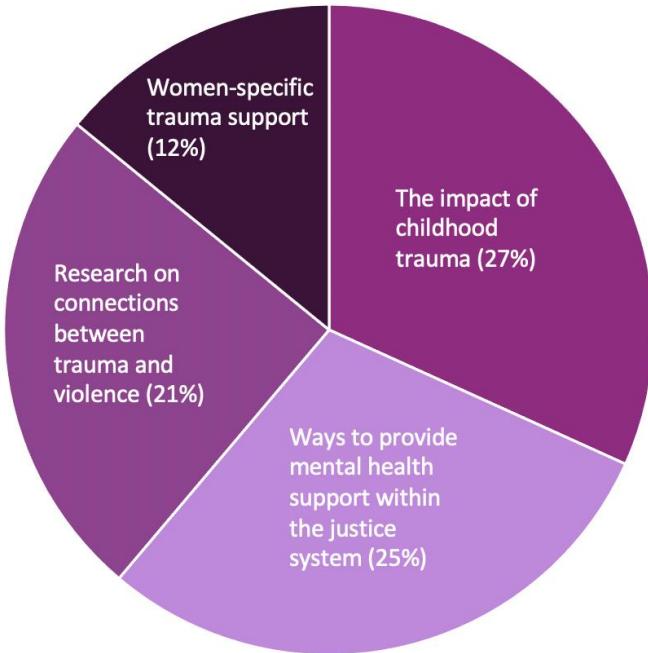
Trauma and the Justice System

August to October 2020

The diagram on the right illustrates the conversation around trauma and the justice system. Assessing 128 news articles from August to October 2020, it identifies four key topics that emerged in the discussion that are strongly connected to the NEXUS pillars of women, youth and the justice system. Key stories include:

The criminogenic nature of trauma

There is a growing body of research that examines how and why traumatic experiences often lead to criminal behavior. Further, research also points to the **vicarious trauma** that *doing* such research can cause. Outside of academic journals, **local studies** that measure children's ACEs score (Adverse Childhood Experiences) show just how many kids, even in a small community, have experienced domestic violence, emotional abuse or substance abuse at home. This research is helping to generate solutions to help prevent youth from channeling their trauma into crime. In **Harlem**, for example, years of research by the office of Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance Jr. has led to funding of the Center for Trauma Innovation focused on at-risk youth, families with members caught up in the system, and individuals returning home from prison.



Women, trauma, and incarceration

The Urban Institute has released "Addressing Trauma and Victimization in Women's Prisons," a **report** that explores the unique trauma that women experience in prison and how it mirrors the abuse and neglect that most experienced before incarceration. The report discusses various methods that institutions are employing to treat trauma, but two challenges stand in the way: "(1): [the] undermining of the validity of incarcerated women's personhood and victimization experiences and (2) staff violence against women." Recent coverage of forced sterilizations in **California prisons** as well as **ICE detention centers** illustrates the types of trauma experienced by women in prison.

THOUGHT STARTERS

A roundup of thought-provoking pieces on mental health for youth, women, and the justice system.



Youth Mental Health: Policies to End Intergenerational Trauma

On October 8th, Congresswomen Carolyn B. Maloney (D-NY) – the Chairwoman of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform – and Ayanna Pressley (D-MA) **announced** two new bills to address the growing crisis of childhood trauma. The legislation carries on the legacy of the late Committee Chairman Elijah E. Cummings who held the first-ever **Congressional hearing** on childhood trauma in July 2019. According to the office of Congresswoman Pressley, the STRONG Support for Children Act intends to better equip young people – especially BIPOC youth – to cope with compounding trauma:

"The STRONG Support for Children Act will support communities in addressing the root causes of childhood trauma through reparative, healing-centered, neighborhood based, gender responsive, culturally specific, and trauma informed approaches that recognize the role that systemic racism and inequities have played in traumatizing children for generations."



Women's Mental Health: The Pain and Promise of Women's Mental Health in COVID-19

Each month, we learn more about the disproportionate mental health consequences women experience because of COVID-19. Recently, international humanitarian organization **CARE** published a "Rapid Gender Analysis on COVID-19" that illustrates how women have suffered income loss, food insecurity and poor mental health. But the report stands out as it turns these findings into recommendations for how women can and must be empowered to lead through the crisis:

"COVID-19 coordination and planning platforms are most effective when they are diverse and gender-balanced. All COVID-19 leadership committees and task forces should include at least 50% women and prioritize partnering with women's rights organizations. Actors should also work to engage men and boys in supporting women, women's rights, and gender-equitable responses."



The Justice System and Mental Illness: The Future is Now

Last year, the **State Justice Institute** awarded a three-year grant to the **National Center for State Courts** to develop and identify best practices, resources and tools for courts. The first-year report, "**The Future is Now**," summarizes the work so far and how COVID-19 will shape solutions:

"During the COVID-19 pandemic and thereafter, the Co-Chair of the National Initiative urges the use of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM) and diversion to treatment and recovery; the expanded use of telemedicine and virtual meetings; and assisted outpatient treatment (AOT) as safer alternatives to reduce the use of jails and hospitals."

The **Sequential Intercept Model** was developed by SAMHSA and identifies five intercepts where different agencies can work together to divert individuals with mental and substance abuse disorders into treatment. **AOT** is court-ordered treatment (including medication) for individuals with severe mental illness.

THE PUNCHLIST



3 ways to take action on this month.

1

Read:

Climate anxiety is real – and it's heating up, especially for people with anxiety disorders, like OCD. **This op-ed** from *Scientific American* dives into the rising waters.

2

Watch:

The latest episode in *British Vogue*'s "Speaking Up Series," which focuses on elevating women's stories, features two mental health experts and two well-known artists and mental health advocates. Their **conversation** covers everything from sobriety and medication to the importance of connection and community. It offers an encouraging reminder to everyone – not just women – to be committed to your own mental health.

3

Listen:

Fall brings many things – including shorter, darker days that can bring on the mood changes and fatigue that define Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). This **4-minute podcast** by a Johns Hopkins professor explains the science behind the sadness.

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