

# Women At Risk Program

## Press Release

*Women At Risk Program Has 90% Average Success Rate at Keeping Graduates Out of Prison; Analysis Shows Average Daily Cost Savings of \$3200 – \$4200 to State*

(Dec. 1, 2001) For immediate release -- Western Carolinians for Criminal Justice, Inc. (WCCJ) today announced that an average of 90 % of graduates of WCCJ's Women At Risk Program, a community-based treatment alternative for women at risk of going to jail or prison, complete probation and stay out of prison. The average is based on the number of graduates over the past three fiscal years. Women At Risk operates in the 28th Judicial District (Buncombe County) and in the 25th Judicial District (Burke, Catawba and Caldwell Counties) in conjunction with Repay, Inc.

Over the past three years, an average of 38 women per year have successfully completed the Women At Risk program, a 16 week community-based treatment program serving female offenders as a special condition of regular or intensive probation. In addition, approximately 57 more clients are progressing successfully in the program, for an actual total of 95 women who are not in prison, and who are not contributing to overcrowding and correctional costs.

Economically, Women at Risk shows an average daily cost savings of \$34 - \$44 per day, per client, based on Women At Risk costs + probation costs vs. daily State Correctional Costs. Thus, the average 95 successful clients per year may save the state anywhere from \$3200 - \$4200 daily.

“Every day, women are being placed in prisons because society doesn't know what else to do with them,” said Ellen Clarke, Executive Director of WCCJ. “We do. We are giving women the tools to succeed, and they are using them.”

Women At Risk assists women to remain out of custody, to succeed on probation and to overcome self-destructive and abusive behaviors which brought them to the court's attention and places them at risk of imprisonment. Successful clients are also women who stay in drug and alcohol treatment, find meaningful work and a safe place to live and often become reunited with their families.

Women At Risk services include weekly two-hour intensive group sessions, intensive individual case management and court advocacy. Staff monitors the attendance and participation of each client and provides individual written reports to probation, the court and other referral sources, including attorneys and public defenders, the District Attorney's Office, Helpmate and a growing number of self-referrals.

“As long as our clients are proceeding successfully in our program, they are not in jail, costing the state additional dollars and contributing to prison overcrowding,” said Clarke.

Comparatively, women who do not complete the Program, or “terminations”, have an average 33% risk of probation revocation. A case is terminated due to lack of contact with a client, non-compliance with requirements, sentencing, or referral to another program.

“Our success rates give current clients more incentive to stick with our program,” said Clarke. “They know that hard work and determination now can mean all the difference in the world to their families and their futures.”

*“Thanks for the validation when I felt unrecognized; for the encouragement when I felt unaccomplished; for the support when I felt like I might fall; for the comfort when I felt small; for the reminders that little steps still get you where you want to go.” -*  
Women At Risk Graduate