



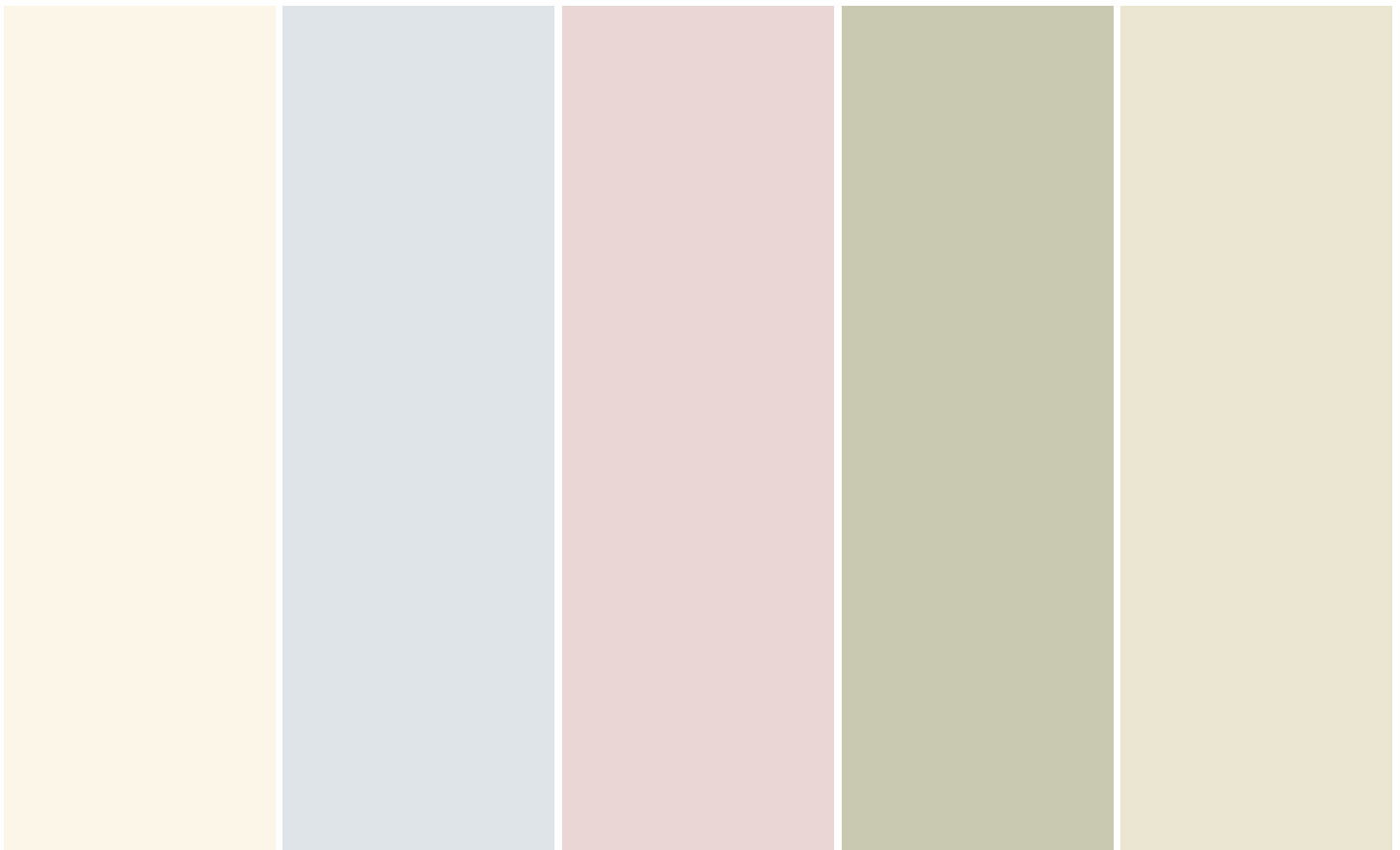
FIVE INTERCEPT POINTS:

These communities are looking for opportunities to help women recognize the impact trauma has had in their lives and get the support they need to heal. They seek to release individuals from the burden of carrying the effects of trauma with them throughout their lives. They also want to ease the financial burden on communities caused by repeated arrests, court appearances, ineffective treatment, and confinements, as well as the costs associated with caring for the children of incarcerated women.

Five intercept points where trauma survivors can encounter the criminal justice system – beginning or continuing their involvement in the system – also offer opportunities to help them find a different path. Of course, the earlier the system identifies these women and offers help, the greater the chance of success – both for assisting the women themselves and for relieving the long-term strain on community resources.

It is important to remember that, although the subject is beyond the scope of this short guide, traumatic experiences that occur in childhood can cause problems throughout adult life, and abused children may themselves become abusers. As communities address the consequences of trauma for women involved with the criminal justice system, it is also a good time to improve parenting efforts, strengthening the community's ability to prevent and address trauma in the lives of children.

Each of these five intercept points gives communities an opportunity to offer trauma survivors involved with the



INTERCEPT 1:

I was seriously tripping [having a flashback] when I got arrested. The officer put his hands on me, and I went

And I fought like hell....Ever since I've been here, I can't trust anyone. If someone moves towards me too fast, I'll just go off. And then I have

– 21-year old woman
detained in urban jail⁴

[for individuals eligible for diversion to behavioral health services at diversion]

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INTERCEPT 2:

tell the officers to be supportive – not,

– Honorable Jo Ann Ferdinand, Judge,
Brooklyn Treatment Court

Despite prearrest diversion programs, women with trauma histories will be arrested. In fact, most women involved with the criminal justice system do have histories of trauma. Postarrest diversion programs provide a second opportunity to address the underlying issue of trauma by providing behavioral health treatment.

Communities that use this option typically have professionals screen women for trauma and mental health and/or substance abuse issues prior to the initial hearing. This may occur in the jail, an intake or holding center, or in a specialty court. Discussing traumatic events requires trust and may be accompanied by strong emotions, so special training in asking questions about “what happened to you?” is essential.

Based on the recommendations of the behavioral health professionals and the nature of the crime, which are presented at the hearing, the judge may choose to refer the woman for mandated treatment. Treatment may be a condition of deferred prosecution, deferred sentencing, or probation.

Continued on next page.

INTERCEPT 3:

“All it took to begin my recovery

– Tonier Cane, trauma survivor and
Team Lead for the National Center
for Trauma-Informed Care

When a woman who has experienced trauma enters jail or prison, she often encounters daily reminders of what she has been through (sometimes called “triggers”). Strip searches, room searches that inevitably involve inspecting personal items, cuffs or restraints, isolation, sudden room changes, yelling and insults – these experiences keep old wounds open, prevent healing and change, and may invoke old patterns of self-protective responses (including violent outbursts) that only make things worse.

Whether or not they offer therapeutic interventions to help women recover, many jails and prisons have discovered the benefits of “universal precautions” that minimize the likelihood of retraumatizing the woman. Examples include telling her in advance what will happen in a strip search so she has a sense of control, avoiding the use of restraints or seclusion whenever possible, and learning to “ground” a frightened and potentially violent woman by speaking her name calmly and firmly. Warden Carole Dwyer of the Rhode Island Department of Corrections reports that such changes have resulted in a decrease in physical violence within Rhode Island’s women’s prisons.

INTERCEPT 3:

(Continued from page 4)

When correctional officers were

Officers need to know that some inmate behavior is an adaptation that stems

They actually understand this better than the psychologists. They don't

– Carol Dwyer, Warden, Rhode Island Department of Corrections

Many special programs and interventions are available within correctional systems. A few programs, designed for trauma survivors with young children, help women parent their children and avoid losing them to foster care. Correctional systems may also offer education and therapy to help women recognize the impact of trauma in their lives and choose different strategies to cope with its effects.

Communities can take a number of steps to address trauma among incarcerated women. **For example:**

- Consider establishing a special docket court to review cases of women with behavioral health issues, including trauma;
- Train personnel who work in jails or prisons to understand trauma and avoid unnecessary retraumatization;
- Ensure that persons who provide therapeutic interventions are trained on best practices in trauma screening and treatment;
- Offer women opportunities to learn about the effects of trauma and choose alternative behaviors.

INTERCEPT 4:

When prisons and jails release women who have experienced trauma back into the community – women who often have trauma-related mental health and substance abuse issues – it is the rare facility that offers them a safe bridge back to community life. Few have plans in place that connect

INTERCEPT 5:

When women are released on parole or on probation, they face choices daily that can either help to establish a healthier life or signal a return to familiar, and potentially destructive, routines. Parole and probation officers represent the interests of the community, balancing their legal and surveillance roles with their roles as problem solvers. A strong and positive relationship with an officer who can reinforce faltering connections with stabilizing forces in the community can make a difference. This is only likely if the officer is able to empathize with each individual's potential pitfalls, identify new options when planned resources fail to deliver, and firmly befriend the spirit of hope in each trauma survivor.

Parole or probation officers can play an important role in ensuring that women can and do access the services they need to reestablish their lives in the community. However, many of them are unaware of the role trauma can play in women's lives, and most have such high case loads that they cannot spend the time needed to step in and address barriers