

Annual Report to the NC Legislature

Center for Women Summary Report for FY23

(July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023)

The Center for Community Transitions (CCT) is a Charlotte-based nonprofit that **began in 1974 as ECO, Inc.** and was formed as a result of a Vista grant initiated by the NC Department of Correction with a goal to help men leaving prison find employment and housing. Today, the agency works with current and formerly incarcerated people in four areas:



The Center for Women is a 30 bed contract work release facility for women who are still incarcerated and serving the final years of their state prison sentence. The program helps women successfully transition from prison to their family and the community while upholding the standards of the North Carolina Department of Adult Correction.



Behavioral Health provides trauma-informed individual and group counseling, substance use recovery, peer support, and case management support to Center for Women residents through client-centered and research-informed methods grounded in compassion and personal accountability.



LifeWorks! supportive employment program provides people with criminal records training, tools, and resources to reach their professional and personal goals through employment readiness workshops, job retention skills training, job search and retention support and case management.



Families Doing Time supports children and families who have been impacted by the incarceration or deportation of a parent or close family member, and those who are impacted by incarceration through the community in which they live. The program aims to provide academic and social emotional support, practical information about the criminal justice system and relevant community resources.

The Center for Women opened in 1987 as a contract work release program for state female residents after the closing of the NCDOC Residential Facilities for Women in the early 1980's, no longer making it possible for a woman to complete her prison sentence near her home and her children to promote a positive transition. In 1986, a bill introduced by Representative Jo Graham Foster made the work of the Center for Women possible. The goal of this program is to help women make a successful transition from prison to their family and community while upholding the goals of the NC Department of Adult Correction.

The Center for Women served 20 women when it opened in 1987. In October 2010, the program moved into a newly built 30-bed facility where the program still resides today. The 2.8 acre campus is located in northeast Charlotte, one block from the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS) light rail line that travels from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to Interstate 485 just north of Pineville.

In FY23, the Center for Women served 51 residents from 28 North Carolina counties, at a daily cost per resident of \$76.67¹, saving NC taxpayers \$678,060² for the year. Residents earned \$313,127.20 during FY23. Forty-four (86%) were mothers of 110 children with 39 children under the age of 18. Nineteen of the 48 residents served by CCT during FY 2020-21 were released and 2 were rearrested resulting in 89% successful return to the community. In this report you will find demographic, criminal convictions, employment and earnings details for the women served during fiscal year July 1, 2022 - June 30, 2023.

Behavioral Health - Contract language was added to the agency's 2021-23 MOA with NCDAC to support the formal launch of behavioral health at the Center for Women. The Behavioral Health program continues to grow with the addition of 1 peer support specialist in FY23. Ninety-eight percent of residents benefited from individual counseling sessions and/or individual peer support sessions, and 62% reported achieving at least 1 goal. In addition, 107 children were indirectly affected by the positive work their mothers participated in. In 2022, CCT Behavioral Health was awarded an American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) grant from Mecklenburg County, which funds the LCSW and Peer Support salaries through December 2024. FY23 Behavioral Health expenses totaled \$127,639.

LifeWorks! is the flagship program of the organization. Today, this program provides supportive employment, job retention and soft skills career training, weekly job search networking groups, case management and career planning. The LifeWorks! program joined the [**NC Formerly Incarcerated Transitions**](#) (NCFIT) program network in 2018, adding 2 directly impacted community health workers to CCT staff to connect formerly incarcerated individuals who have a chronic disease, mental illness and/or substance use disorder with appropriate healthcare services and other reentry resources. In addition to individuals recently released from NCDAC facilities, the FIT program at CCT is also offered to DSS Work First and DHHS Food and Nutrition program participants who have criminal records. CCT staff use evidenced-based cognitive behavioral methods³ when working with clients in all settings such as classroom, groups and individual meetings. The approaches match client behavior with their beliefs and

¹ According to the NCDAC 2021-23 MOA, CCT's per diem rate was \$54.28.

² According to the [NCDAC Fiscal Year 2021-22 Annual Statistical Report](#), the daily cost per resident was \$118.26 per day.

³ [Exploring Perceptions of Control Within resident Cognition and Recidivism Paradigms](#)

values such that every interaction introduces new skills that foster different ways of thinking while offering thoughtful inquiry about alternative choices, consequences and rewards, and whether one's choices match what they value and believe as a step toward reducing criminal thinking errors. In FY23, 85% of LifeWorks! graduates found employment and 95% of FY 2021-22 graduates did not recidivate.

Families Doing Time works with children and families dealing with the effects of incarceration, including deportation. Research⁴ suggests maintaining family ties during incarceration facilitates positive post-release functioning. When someone is released from prison, families are often able to provide the basic needs of housing, food, and transportation allowing the now formerly incarcerated family member to focus on finding employment and improving education and work skills. EKWIP (Empowering Kids with Incarcerated Parents) is a school and community based support group for children with incarcerated parents, including deportation. An Enrichment Institute component was added to the program to increase the students' participation in arts and cultural events in the community. During FY23, the FDT program included 10 Charlotte Mecklenburg School (CMS) partnerships; over 15 community partnerships, 36 home visits, and 24 community referrals. In 2023, FDT launched the Justice Impacted Gals & Guys Youth (JIGGY) Group and the Reentry Adjacent Program (RAP) Summer Youth Group, expanding programming to junior high and high school students.

The four programs of the Center for Community Transitions are intersectional and clients often participate in more than one program. Residents at the Center for Women participate in all programs as appropriate for their individualized transition needs.

THE CENTER FOR WOMEN CRITERIA FOR PARTICIPATION

Women housed at NCDAC women's correctional facilities and interested in CCT must express interest to their case manager and complete an application. All applications are jointly reviewed by CCT staff and the Associate Warden of Programs at Western CI before a decision to transfer is made.

The following criteria is considered when reviewing applicants for CCT:

- Must be within one to three years of release
- Have achieved minimum custody level 3 and approved for work release

⁴ [Behind Bars but Connected to Family: Evidence for the Benefits of Family Contact During Incarceration](#)

- No infractions within 1 year
- Medically cleared to be housed at a facility with limited onsite medical
- Behavioral health review

PROGRAM SERVICES

Programs offered at the Center for Women address [*criminogenic factors*](#) to reduce risk of further criminal involvement. There are static and dynamic criminogenic factors. Static factors are those things that cannot be changed such as age at first arrest or a person's current age. Dynamic factors are those things that can be changed such as identifying and managing high risk behaviors; improving self-control and social and emotional skills; identifying thinking errors and matching values and attitudes with behaviors; and increase connections with prosocial people, events and activities. Some of the ways the program helps residents make these changes are through education, parenting skills, work experience, personal associations, family relationships, leisure activities, thinking, problem solving and communicating, counseling, self-management, and involvement in substance use recovery programs.

Work Release- Work release, the primary program at the Center for Women, allows residents to work in the community and gain experience, receive constructive feedback, achieve higher levels of performance, and earn rewards for hard work. Bridging the gap in work due to time spent in prison creates a positive step toward successful reentry and expanded pathways to economic mobility.

Study Release- Equal to work success is educational success. Study release allows residents to participate in academic or vocational training programs unsupervised away from the facility. Research has shown higher education in prison programs reduces recidivism and translates into reductions in crime, savings to taxpayers, and long-term contributions to the safety and well-being of the communities to which formerly incarcerated people return. A Bureau of Justice Statistics report found that there is a 43% reduction in recidivism rates for incarcerated people who participate in prison education programs. The higher the degree, the lower the recidivism rate is: 14% for those who obtain an associate degree, 5.6% for those who obtain a bachelor's degree, and 0% for those who obtain a master's degree. Prior to Pell Grant Restoration in 2023, CCT maintained a small education fund to help cover the cost for interested residents to attend Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) or obtain a credential like Peer Support or Seeking Safety. During FY23, two Center for Women residents began the process to enroll in classes at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC), and 2 residents expressed interest in pursuing bachelor's at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Family Services and Home Leaves- Rebuilding broken relationships is key to restoring and strengthening families. The staff of both the Center for Women and the Families Doing Time

programs work with each resident to find ways to improve family relationships, especially the relationship between the resident and her children. Some of the efforts to build these relationships include preparing for visits, practicing difficult conversations, activities during visitation to build positive experiences, and improving communication with caregivers, teachers and others in the child's life. CCT hosts an annual Family Day event with food and activities to build positive experiences to facilitate a more successful transition. Center for Women residents are also eligible to apply and participate in the home leave program as provided by NCDAC.

Community Volunteer Program- Community volunteers play an important role for residents in the development of positive relationships, access to positive leisure activities and addressing substance abuse and chemical dependency. Volunteer activities with residents often include attending church and Bible study, shopping for toiletry and personal items (CCT does not have a canteen), hobbies, games, budgeting, exercise and health workshops, and cultural or artistic activities.

Life Skills Development- Some of the activities listed under the volunteer program are life skill development activities such as budgeting and hobbies. Examples of life skills are the day-to-day program providing residents opportunities for practicing conflict management; leadership; balancing work, school and home responsibilities; parenting, team work; and communication. Practicing "right" living while incarcerated leads to "right" living when released.

Financial Literacy- Partnership with a local financial literacy program has assisted residents in repairing their credit. [Commonwealth Charlotte](#) provides financial education classes and individual counseling for residents to learn about the effects of their credit report, learning to save and budgeting. Individual sessions allow for each resident to review her credit report and make a financial plan to address negative credit issues. Residents continue to work on paying down old debts and repairing negative credit, a common barrier that many are able to eliminate prior to release.

Case Management- The CCT case manager works with residents to prepare for release. Often this means exploring issues that may come up once released that can deter a successful transition. Residents review their credit reports and driving records and are able to work with creditors and the DMV to pay outstanding bills or charges. Some residents have paid past due tax bills, utility bills, and traffic/driving fines and fees before release, decreasing the burden of collateral consequences before release. The case manager assists with finding resources to address resident concerns about post-release life, including peer support, AA, NA and Alanon meetings. Since the facility is small, contact with the case manager occurs frequently and may include problem

solving, career planning, resolving family issues, correcting behaviors, and brief counseling. The case manager works in partnership with Behavioral Health to use the same cognitive behavioral approaches described in the LifeWorks! section of this report to help clients practice problem solving and self-evaluation techniques.

Transition Services - Residents receive transition support throughout the duration of their stay at CCT; and this support intensifies during the last 6 months before release. Targeted assistance in finding housing, accessing health care upon release, and other activities that will prepare them for a successful transition are the primary focus to ensure a successful transition.

ACCOUNTABILITY

CCT receives NCDAC audits and inspections of the facility, resident trust fund, facility safety/security, and program audits. The Facility Services Division of the Department of Health and Human Services conducts annual health inspections. CCT also conducts an annual financial audit facilitated by an independent auditor. CCT's auditors prepare and submit the agency 990 each year, which is also posted on the website.

CCT follows NCDAC guidelines and procedures for resident accountability and conducts regular drug screens as well as onsite work release, study release, and home leave community checks. Employers and school instructors are aware of the resident's status. CCT has access to OPUS (the resident Population Unified System) and enters case notes, bimonthly reports, semi-annual case reviews, daily activity information, drug screens, visitor applications and visits, release plans, etc. Staff, residents, volunteers, employers, school instructors and all onsite visitors are provided sexual harassment and PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) training as required. Volunteers are provided training in accordance with the approved volunteer guidelines for this facility.

FY23 DATA

In FY23, there were 51 residents assigned to The Center for Women. Eighteen (18) women were released and one (1) was transferred due to a disciplinary infraction. The average length of stay for the 18 women released from CCT was 18 months.

Demographics

The Center for Women served residents from 28 different counties:

Alamance 4	Chatham 1	Johnston 1	Moore 1	Vance 1
Ashe 2	Cleveland 4	Lincolnton 1	New Hanover 1	Wake 3
Beaufort 1	Forsyth 2	McDowell 3	Onslow 2	Wayne 1
Buncombe 3	Gaston 1	Mecklenburg 3	Perquimans 1	Wilkes 1
Burke 2	Guilford 6	Mitchell 1	Randolph 1	
Cabarrus 1	Henderson 1	Montgomery 1	Robeson 1	

- Of the 51 residents, 44 were mothers of 110 children, and 39 were the age of 18.
- Of the 51 residents, 13 were African American, 37 Caucasian, and 1 Native American.
- The age range was 28 to 67, with an average age of 45.

Criminal Charges

In FY23, residents had sentences ranging from 5 to 32 years.

The chart below includes multiple convictions for the residents served during each fiscal reporting period.

Category	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of residents each year	48	47	51
Homicide (1 st and 2 nd degree murder, manslaughter, death by vehicle and conspiracy to commit murder)	14	15	17
Assault/Threat	1	1	1
Robbery, Larceny, Breaking and Entering	4	5	2
Obtaining Property by False Pretense, embezzlement	9	10	6
Weapons	1	1	1
Drug Offenses	14	10	13
Child Abuse-Intent ISBI	0	0	1
Habitual Felon	8	7	8
Cont Criminal Enterprise	0	0	1
Felony B&E	0	0	1
Discharge Firearm-OCC Prop	0	0	1

Employment

All residents participate in the LifeWorks! employment readiness program prior to job placement. At the beginning of a resident's work history at CCT, food service, warehouse, and hotel cleaning staff are most often their first employment. However, they often find higher paying positions in other industries after the initial employment.

Number of residents	Position
1	Admin Assistant
3	Call Center Representative
6	Customer Service Rep
16	Food Service Position/Manager
14	Hotel
2	Admin/Receptionist
8	Maintenance/Technician
1	Warehouse

Resident Earnings

Forty three (43) residents held employment in FY23 and they earned a total of \$534,013.41. The average hourly pay was \$13.96 and hourly pay ranges were between \$9 and \$20. The chart below includes the amount earned and amount paid in restitution and child support.

	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number of residents	48	47	51
Total Net Earned	\$1908.22*	\$534,013.41	\$313,127.20
Number paying restitution	2	5	NCDAC data unavailable
Total Restitution paid	\$785.22	28,124.01	NCDAC data unavailable
Number paying Child Support	1	0	NCDAC data unavailable
Total Child Support Paid, Voluntary and Involuntary	300	0	NCDAC data unavailable

* Due to work release suspension during the pandemic, from March 2020 through July 2021, minimal earnings were incurred.

Cost

CCT's daily cost per resident in FY23 was \$ 76.67 and it was \$73.49 in FY22. NCDAC daily cost at the minimum custody level was \$118.26 and that same number is used to calculate FY23 cost savings. (NCDAC FY23 costs for minimum custody are not yet available).

	FY21	FY22	FY23
NCDAC Daily Cost Per resident in minimum custody	\$120.22 ¹	\$85.11 ²	\$118.26 ³
CCT Daily cost Per resident	\$71.03	\$73.49	\$76.67
Per Diem paid by NCDAC to CCT	\$51.78	\$54.28	\$54.28
Cost savings per day per resident (difference between NCDAC cost per day and per diem paid by NCDAC to CCT)	\$68.44	\$30.83	\$63.98
Number of resident days billed per year	10,111	10,062	10,598
Total Cost Savings per year for North Carolina (NCDAC per day cost minus NCDAC payment to CCT) x # resident days billed)	\$691,996	\$310,211	\$678,060

¹ FY21 calculations are based on [2019-2020 minimum custody cost](#) as reported by NCDAC.

² FY22 calculations are based on [2020-2021 minimum custody cost](#) as reported by NCDAC.

³ FY23 calculations are based on [2021-2022 minimum custody cost](#) as reported by NCDAC.

Recidivism

The Center for Women has shown continuous success in the transition of women from prison to home. Since 1987, CCT has measured the recidivism rate as defined by rearrests during the immediate two years after release. Of the 19 residents released in FY21, 2 were rearrested.

Recidivism	FY21	FY22	FY23
Number released	19	18	22
Number rearrested	2	To Be Determined in FY24	To Be Determined in FY25
% of successful transitions measured at 2 years	89%	100%	100%

