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Women and Girls in the Criminal Justice System: Offenders and Victims

WASHINGTON, D.C.—The Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA) along with cosponsors the American Sociological Association (ASA) and the Institute for the Advancement of Social Work Research (IASWR) will conduct a Capitol Hill briefing on the state of women and girls in the criminal justice system..

The briefing will be held Friday, May 19th from 8:30 A.M. - 10:30 A.M., E.S.T. in Room B338 of the Rayburn House Office Building, and is open to the public. Positive RSVPs to cossa@cossa.org or 202-842-3525.

The American Criminal Justice system has focused its efforts on the major offenders and victims – men and boys. However, as crime rates have fallen in the past few years a disturbing trend has been the increase in women and girls as offenders. According to Bureau of Justice Statistics data, the number of female prisoners rose more than twice as much as the increase among men in 2004. Since 1995, the total number of male prisoners has grown nearly 32 percent; the number of female prisoners by 53 percent. Texas, the Federal System, and California held more than a third of all female inmates, but Oklahoma, Mississippi, and Louisiana had the highest incarceration rates, and North Dakota, Montana, and West Virginia had the largest average annual increases between 1995 and 2004. Why is this happening?

Women's needs in the criminal justice system are often quite different than men. They worry about their children on the outside, they sometimes are pregnant when they encounter the criminal justice system, and they are more likely to be substance abusers than men. In addition, they are often victims of abuse. Furthermore, they continue to be victims of crimes that impact their lives throughout the life cycle. The results of research on all of these issues will be presented and discussed by three distinguished social scientists:

Margaret Zahn, Ph.D., RTI International and North Carolina State University
“Delinquent Girls: Trends, Causes, and Interventions”

Candace Kruttschnitt, Ph.D., University of Minnesota
“The Violent Victimization of Women: A Life Course Perspective”

Sheryl Pimlott Kubiak, Ph.D., Wayne State University
“Service and Treatment Needs of Women Across the Criminal Justice Continuum”

The **Consortium of Social Science Associations** (COSSA) is an advocacy organization supported by more than 100 professional associations, scientific societies, universities and research institutions. It serves as a bridge between the academic research community and the Washington policymaking community.