



Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity

JB Pritzker, Governor

MEMORANDUM

TO: Governor JB Pritzker & Members of the Illinois General Assembly

FROM: Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity

DATE: December 12, 2024

SUBJECT: 2024 Report; Illinois Task Force on Opportunities for At-Risk Women

This report fulfills the statutory requirement that the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) provide the Governor and the Members of the General Assembly an annual report on the Task Force on Opportunities for At-Risk Women. The Opportunities for At-Risk Women Act (20 ILCS 5075/Article 5) requires that a Task Force is created within DCEO. The duties of the Task Force on Opportunities for At-Risk Women, as stated in statute (20 ILCS 5075/Article 10), are to strategize and design a plan for DCEO to partner with State and local governmental agencies, companies, and organizations that aid in helping at-risk women and their families become successful productive citizens.

Program Model

DCEO, through its Office of Economic Equity & Empowerment (OE3), which was formerly known as OMEE, is providing administrative support and technical assistance to the Task Force on Opportunities for At-Risk Women. The Task Force seeks to gather governmental agencies and organizations that assist at-risk Women and their families to seek policy improvements that will increase social and economic security for these women and their families. By working together, the Task Force examines how housing assistance, educational advancement, potential career pathways and job training, financial literacy, and mental health resources can be better accessed and directly serve the needs of this community.

As outlined in statute, "at-risk women" means women who are at increased risk of incarceration because of poverty, abuse, addiction, financial challenges, illiteracy, or other causes. The term "at-risk women" may include, but shall not be limited to, women who have previously been incarcerated.

Program Status

The Task Force met in calendar year 2024 three times; in Q2 on April 24, Q3 on August 28, and Q4 on November 25. The Q4 meeting on November 25th was the only meeting that had a quorum.

At the Q4 2024 meeting, the appointed members approved to form a Subcommittee of Research so that the entire Task Force and members of the public are aware and educated about the work which is being done in different ecosystems throughout Illinois State government, and setting a situation where the Task Force and DCEO is most efficiently

utilizing available resources not “recreating the wheel” when developing a plan and resources for at-risk women. Engaging in research, including asset mapping, will also allow the Task Force to identify potential collaborations and being a connector among the different ecosystems that may not be aware of each other’s work for at-risk women. The different ecosystems that the Task Force Subcommittee of Research will analyze include:

- Existing [state of Illinois boards/commissions/councils/task forces](#), as well as state of Illinois initiatives/programs involved in supporting at-risk women such as the [Illinois Council on Women and Girls](#), [Higher Education in Prison Task Force](#), [Healing-Centered Illinois Task Force](#), [Restore, Reinvest, Review \(R3\)](#) program, [Justice, Equity, and Opportunity](#) (JEO) initiative, [WE Thrive](#) initiative, etc.
- Additional statewide councils such as the [Illinois Reentry Council](#) and regional councils such as [Community Support Advisory Councils](#) (CSACs) which are managed by the [Illinois Department of Corrections](#) (IDOC), and [McLean County Reentry Council](#)
- All state agencies and their offices who are involved in helping at-risk women, especially the ones who are not part of this Task Force such as the [Illinois Housing Development Authority](#) (IHDA), the [Illinois Department of Human Services](#) (IDHS), and the [Illinois Dept. of Corrections](#) (IDOC) who oversee 3 women facilities: [Decatur Correctional Center](#), [Fox Valley Adult Transition Center](#), and [Logan Correctional Center](#).
- Federal and local Illinois governments’ offices who are involved with helping at-risk women through their task forces or programs like [Cook County Reconnect](#) and/or who manage their municipality’s corrections and jail facilities
- Organizations including non-profits, civic groups, and faith-based organizations who are involved with supporting at-risk women such as [Breakthrough’s Women’s Center](#) (Chicago), [First Followers](#) (Champaign-Urbana), [Safer Foundation](#) (Chicago), [Saint Leonard’s Ministries](#) (Chicago), etc.
- Colleges and universities involved with supporting at-risk women through their academic research, initiatives, and programs such as the [University of Illinois Chicago’s Jane Addams College of Social Work](#), the [Education Justice Project](#) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Richland Community College’s [EnRich Program](#) (Decatur), etc.
- Additional cross-sector organizations’ resources

At the Q4 2024 meeting, State Representative Mary E. Flowers was elected Chair and State Senator Terri Bryant was elected Vice Chair. Next year, at the Q1 2025 meeting, the Task Force will elect a Secretary if the nominated candidates are present and if there is quorum of members in attendance.

Please feel free to contact DCEO with any questions regarding this Task Force status.