

# Criminal Legal Systems and Women's HIV Risk Behavior during COVID-19 : *The SHAWN Project*

**Amy B. Smoyer**, Associate Professor, Southern CT State University  
Student Research Assistants, Southern Connecticut University

- ❖ **Jenny Malcein**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Mellody Massaquoi**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Sam Morrison**, SCSU '24, Social Work
- ❖ **Sedona Worth**, SCSU '24, Sociology
- ❖ **Emily Ziemba**, SCSU BSW '23, MSW '25

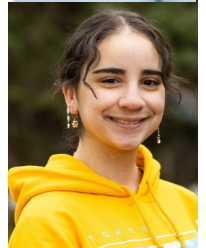
2023 ASC Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA  
Saturday, 11/18/2023 @ 9:30 am



# Fifteen Minutes!



- 0-2: Introduction
- 2-6: Undergraduates in Research
- 6-8: SHAWN Research Question & Methodology
- 8-14: Preliminary Findings
- 15: Closing



SHAWN

Funding  
Acknowledge  
ment

## National Institute of Health/NIDA R15

*The R15 supports small-scale research projects at educational institutions that provide baccalaureate or advanced degrees for a significant number of the Nation's research scientists but that have not been major recipients of NIH support (less than \$6M/year).*

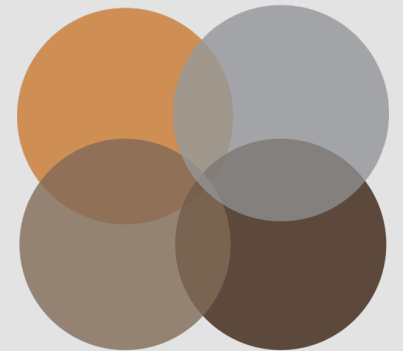
*The goals of the R15 are to:*

- support meritorious research,*
- expose students to research, and*
- strengthen the research environment of the institution.*

**NIDA/NIH 1R15DA056285-01, (PI Smoyer, Amy B.) Project Title: Impact of COVID-19 Criminal-Legal Practices on HIV Risk among Women Who Use Drugs: A Multi-Methods Qualitative Exploration, 05/01/2022 – 04/30/2025**

## GOAL #1:

Provide opportunity for undergraduates to gain significant experience with community engaged research.



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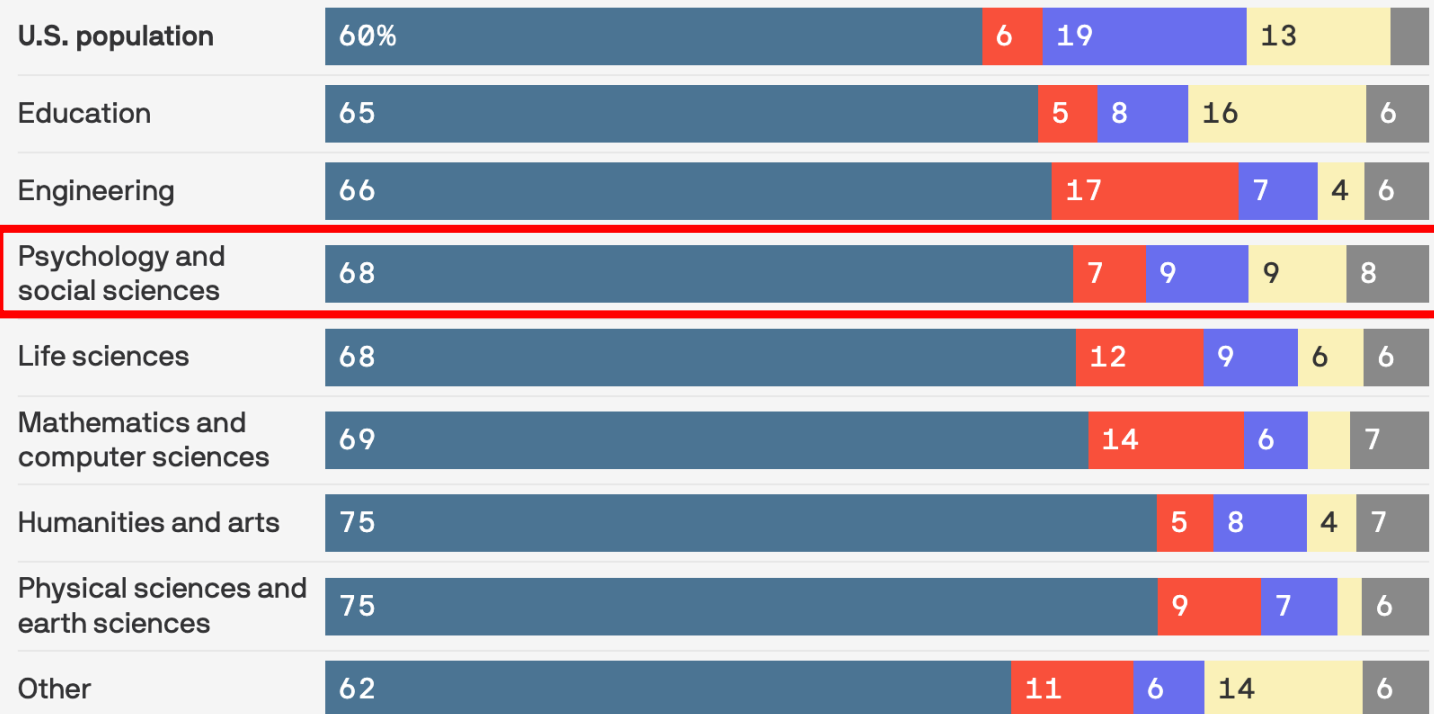
# The PhD Pipeline:

# Challenges & Urgency

## Lack of racial diversity among people with doctoral degrees.

### Doctoral degrees earned by race/ethnicity, 2019

White Asian Hispanic or Latino Black Mixed or other



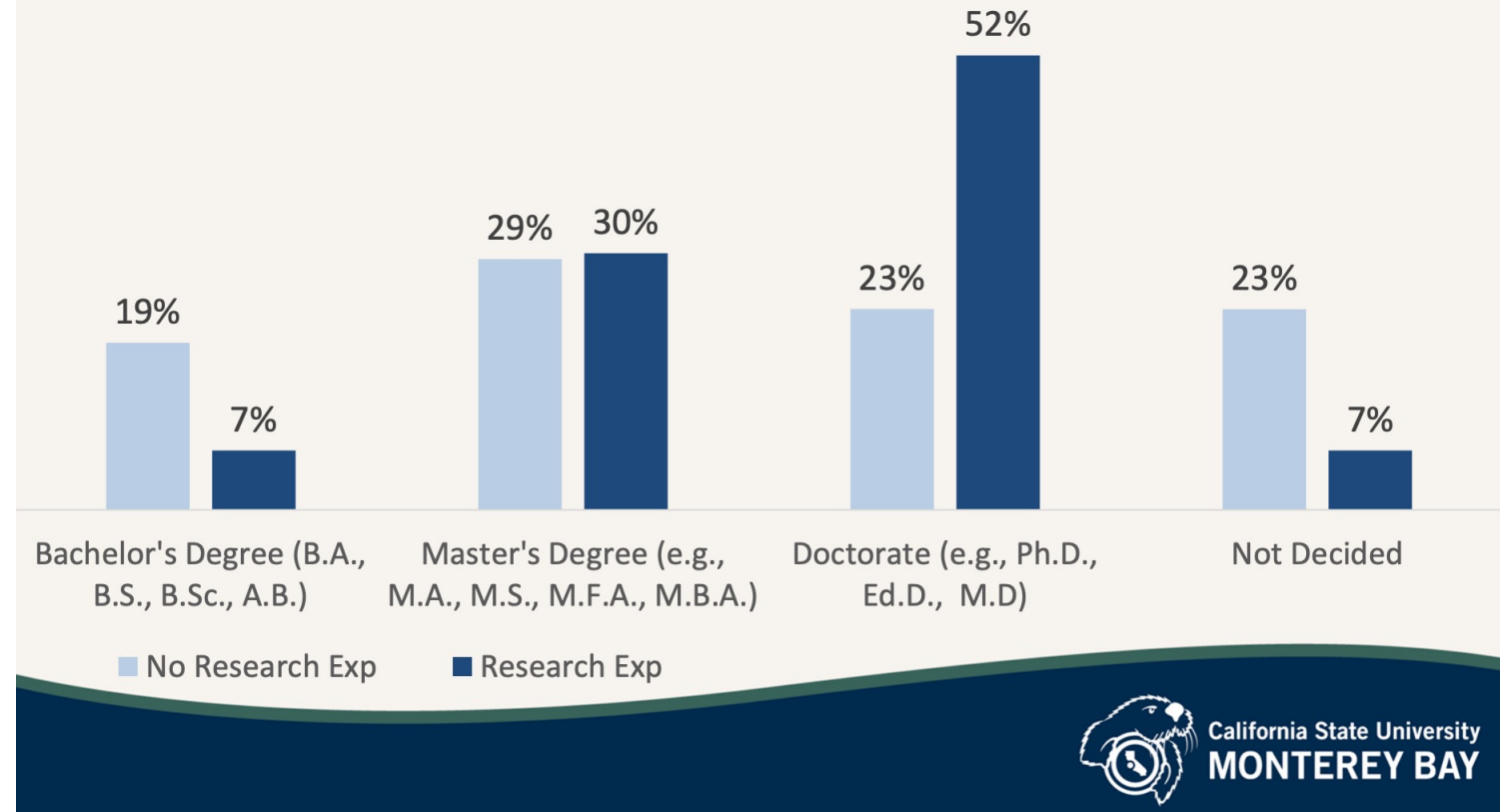
Data: [NSF Survey of Earned Doctorates](#), U.S. Census Bureau; Chart: Connor Rothschild/Axios

## Undergraduates in Research:

*Students who participate in undergrad research are more likely to earn a doctorate.*

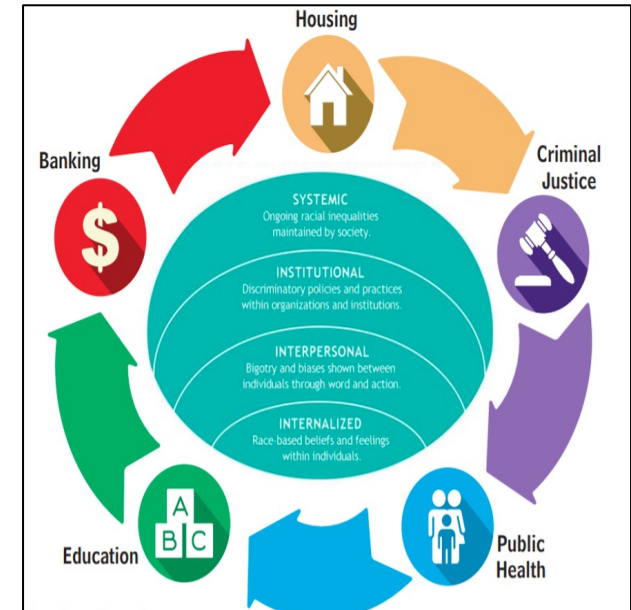
## Educational Aspirations

- Students who have research experience are significantly more likely to aspire to go to graduate school, especially at the doctoral level



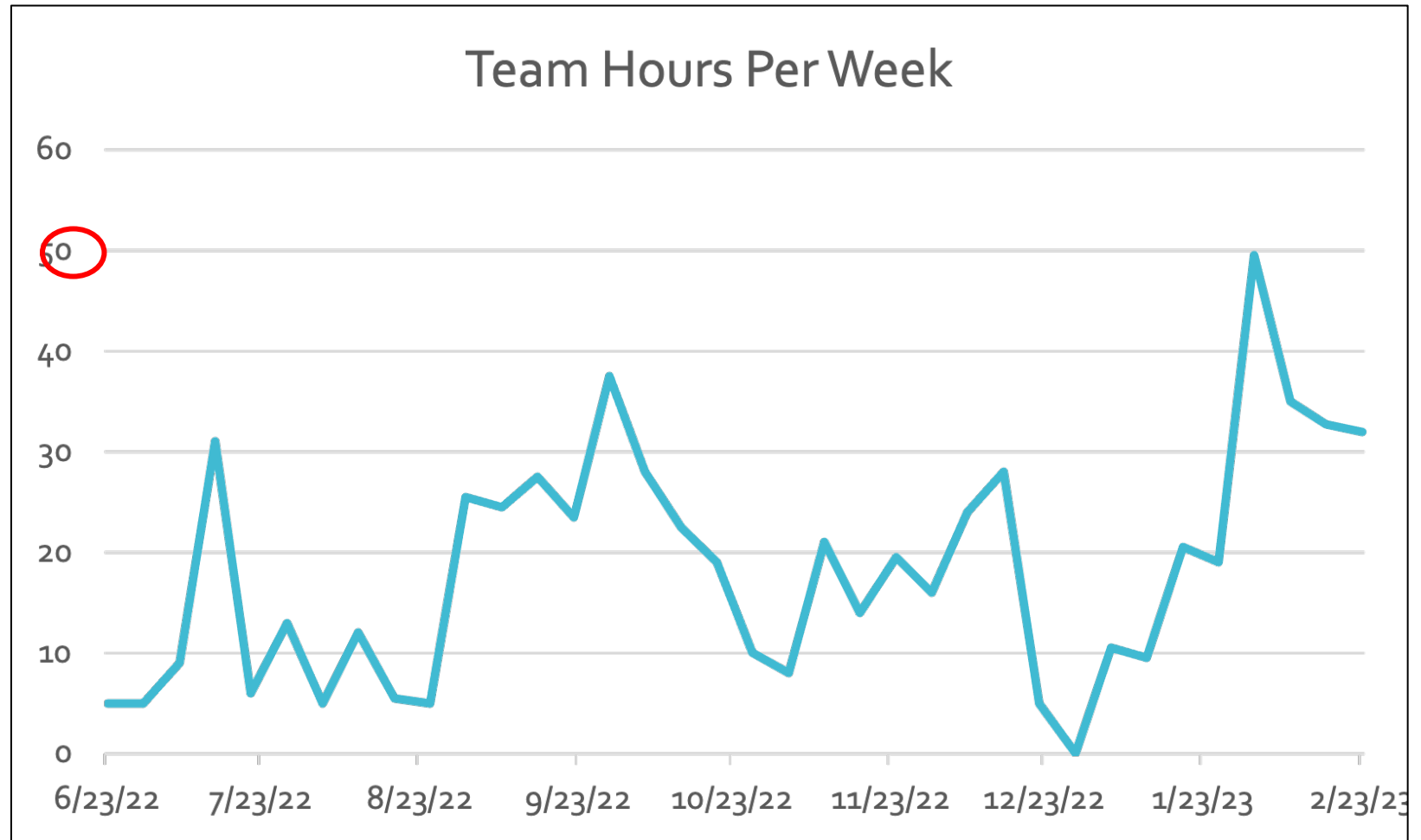
Undergraduates  
in Research:

# Barriers for Students



Undergraduates  
in Research:

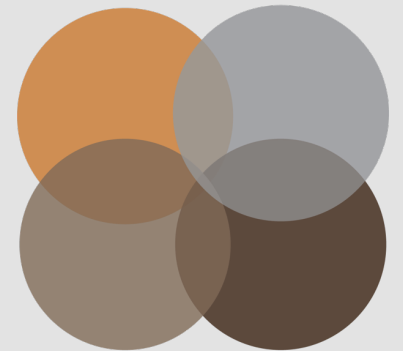
*A Harm  
Reduction  
Framework*





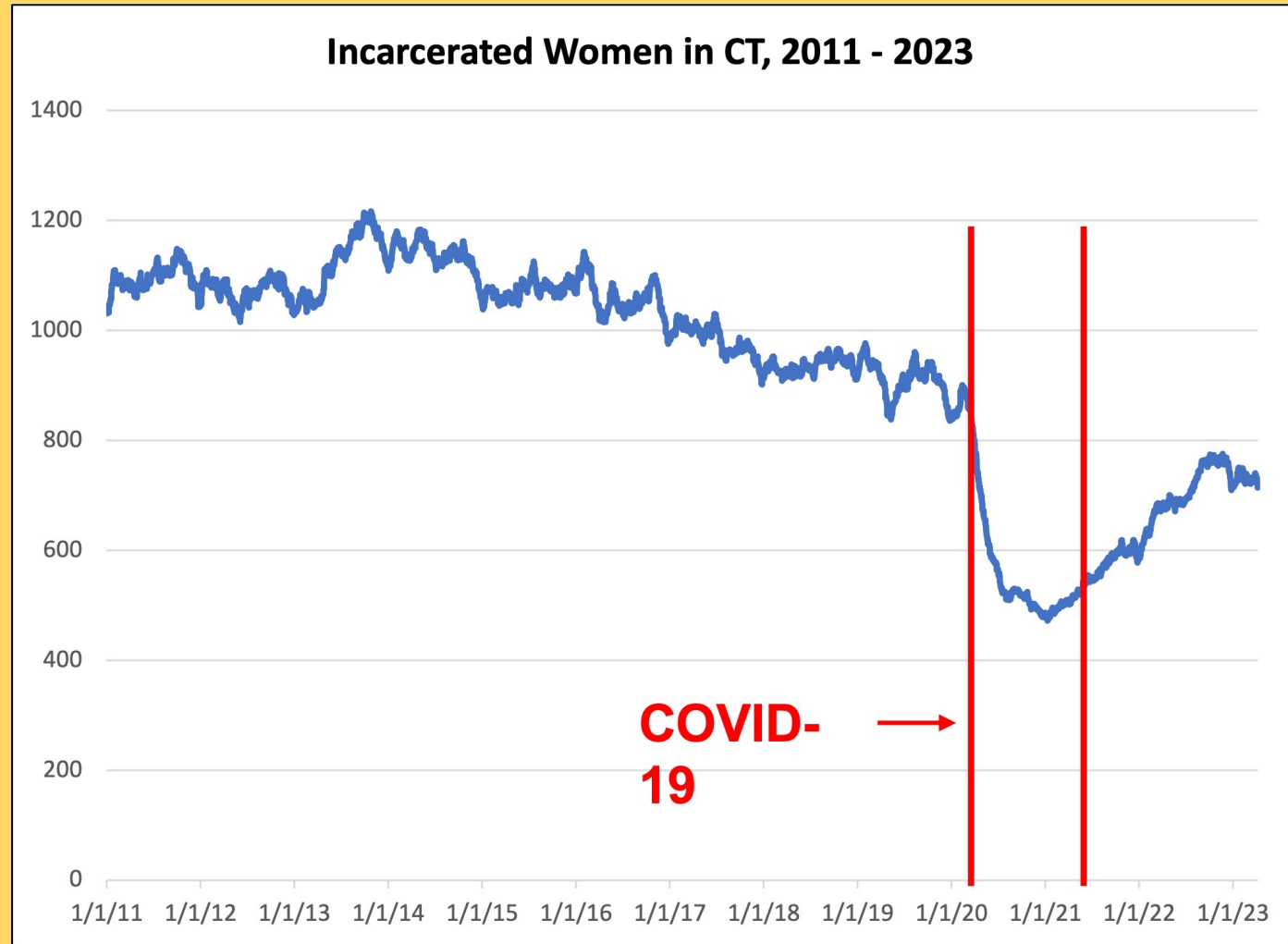
## GOAL #2:

Build knowledge about the impact of criminal-legal changes during COVID on HIV risk among justice-involved women who use drugs.



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The number of women incarcerated in CT dropped by 43% during COVID.



# Research Methodology

## Semi-Structured 30 individual Interviews

- JUSTICE INVOLVED: Incarcerated at York Correctional Institution three or more times prior to March 2020
- DRUG USE: History of drug use (in-patient, out-patient, methadone)

## Data Collection

- Dr Smoyer + 1 Research Assistant
- Three Meetings
  - Informed Consent + Survey (30 min, \$20)
  - Life History Interview (60 min, \$40)
  - COVID Year Interview (60 min, \$40)
- Audio-recorded, transcribed

## Data Analysis

- Rapid Analysis: Blocks of 5
- Thematic Analysis

## Data Collection

### Create Instruments

- Demographic Survey
- Life History Interview
- COVID Calendar Interview

### Develop Recruitment Plan

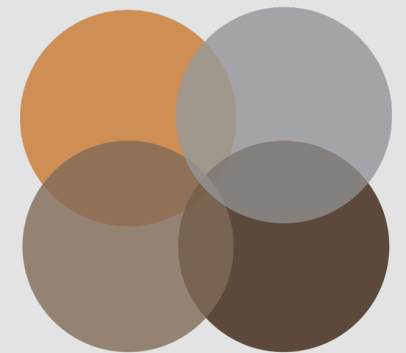
- Logo & Website
- Flyers & Outreach
- IRB Approval



### Conduct Interviews



# Preliminary Findings



**SHAWN**

	Queen	Cathy	Elaine	Jessica	Elle
Age	45	56	37	41	38
Race	Black	Black	Latina	Latina	Latina
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Heterosexual	Bisexual	Bisexual	Bisexual
Drug Use	Alcohol, Cannabis, Hallucinogenic, Opioids	Cocaine	Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Stimulants	Alcohol, Cannabis, Hallucinogenic	Alcohol, Cannabis, Cocaine, Heroin (injection drug use)
Number of Children	2	2	5	2	2
Loss of Child	Death (Cancer)	Death (accident), Incarceration	Termination of Parental Rights	Death, Termination of Parental Rights	Termination of Parental Rights
Sex Work	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
History of Homelessness	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
COVID	Unhoused, using drugs	Working fast food, arrested on warrant	Rent room, sex work, arrested	Unhoused, Substance Use	Living in motel with GF, sex work, IDU

Life During  
COVID:

Criminal Legal  
Supervision

## Cathy

[Warrant for bad check issues from another state] It was so far out when they finally me caught up to it. So I'm thinking everything's fine. Then all of a sudden I have a warrant. They knocked on my door. One morning they got in touch with [local] Police, and that's when they had the warrant. They sent the warrant all the way up to Connecticut for me.

*She was held in CT prison for 14 days then traveled in car with two COs to the other state where she served 90 days in the state prison. When she returned to CT, she was on probation for this charge. A few weeks later, her apartment burned down in electrical fire and she and her husband became homeless.*

Because I was on probation, after I was going to see AIC. So AIC was helping me. My probation officer was helping me. So they were help, was helping me, trying to find somewhere to go.

# Life During COVID:

# Criminal Legal Churn

## Elaine

I had got out from being **INCARCERATED**... What happened was I ended up getting arrested because of the fact that I **VIOLATED PROBATION** because I had a contact with police.

So that's when I went in [to prison] and they were doing the mask and everything, and I probably stayed there then at that time for like three months or so. And then I came out and I got to probation and I called the 211, and then I had got into the [**HOTEL** for unhoused people during COVID]. I was there, and I did okay until I start seeing people. And then I **RELAPSED** again.

I just got to the point where I didn't go back [to the hotel] because I was like, it just doesn't make sense because it's the same thing everywhere I go. But at the same time, I had a place you know, but it's just I felt as though like I can't escape it.

So, I felt I talked to probation about it. I had went there and I was on **PROBATION** and everything. And then after that I had went into a **PROGRAM**. So, I ended up putting myself into the **HOSPITAL** from the hotel. I put myself into the hospital. Then I ended up going back to the **HOTEL** because I went to the hospital, and I told them I relapsed or whatever. And then I still was struggling with trying to avoid people trying to do right in the hotel and stuff like that. So, that didn't work out for me. So, I ended up leaving the hotel. And then I ran for a little while, and I believe I went back after that, or I probably stayed out for a little while and up until now, and then I had got **ARRESTED** again.

## Life During COVID:

## Housing Instability & Homelessness

### Jessica

Since the beginning of November, me and my ex-girlfriend and a couple of us were literally sleeping on the back of the courthouse, they have a ramp going up to the handicapped ramp. We're literally sleeping out there with blankets... if you're driving by, you can't see because the wall's covering a little bit. So that was the safest place. And so it was about 10 or 12 of us sleeping here every night.

And then one time this lady came, she said she was from like 2 1 1 or United Way. I don't even remember where she said she was from, but she was a legit worker. She had a badge on and everything. She had a clipboard and she took a couple people names and this and that. And she said that we were going to be on immediate list...

*Nothing ever came of this interaction. She explained that she did not have a reliable phone at the time, so maybe she missed the call.*



# Life During COVID:

## Sex Work

### Elaine

Slowly but surely the stores start opening up a little bit more. And that gave me time to go out and hustle and get a couple dollars or do whatever it is that I needed to do for the day. And then by curfew because we had a curfew, we would go back in. But it was hard. It was really hard.

But, honestly, me, myself, I don't steal, but like other people would go and like loot and stuff. But I don't do that. I would rather do a sexual favor. You know.

*ABS: Was sex work harder to find during COVID?*

Honestly, it kind of flowed the same a little bit, but you had to have a mask, like but it's weird because you're still revealing yourself. You know what I mean? So, it was kind of scary, really, Actually, really, really scary. You were taking a chance. You were really taking a chance you know. So that part was really scary.

## Life During COVID:

## Drug Use

### Queen

I was working for Holiday Inn Express [during COVID} Yep, we was going to work. We had to wear masks. Yeah, we had to stay, I'm staying clean at all time. There's people that basically that was living in the hotels.... I was in the IOP program.... I started using about three months after I got into Holiday Inn Express, because basically I was a little stressed out. Yeah. Cause live with my brother...I started lying to myself again. Trying to go to work. Trying to go to work and getting high.... doing overnights at Holiday Inn Express

I got arrested at the IOP. Then they helped me get out. Well, they didn't help me get out. The judges allowed me to go back because they were supporting me. .. I spent the weekend I spent the night, yes. I was charged with larceny, breach of peace. Pretty much that was it. Because I like, I got bonded out. I had to do PTAs.

## Life During COVID:

## Sex Work, Drugs & Criminal Legal Limbo

### Elle

I was living in hotel for two years. I was homeless for a while and then we started making money and we just started paying for rooms every day. Me and my ex-girlfriend. Selling drugs, sex work, whatever. I was kind of on the run and I had nothing else to do. I had no choice. It was either that or be on, literally out on the street.

I just stopped going to court because they wanted me to do the I O P... I didn't even get a sentence date yet. It was just getting, continue, continue, continue to keep because of the COVID... There was a time where I almost went up there and they had already changed my day. Luckily, I called her to let her know I was going to be late, and she was like, oh, we already continued you....

One of our old dealers got mad and called the cops and told 'em I had a warrant. So they came at six in the morning to get me at the room. He told them that we had guns in the room or some shit like that. So they came banging on the door and it was over

[I got bonded out]And then it was the same thing. It was getting continued. Continued. And then I ended up going to jail. They ended up giving me time.

# Life During COVID: HIV Risk

## The circumstances of women's lives during COVID elevate HIV risk.

- **Criminal Legal Limbo**
  - Community supervision decreases social network
  - Drug treatment seems futile because belief that they will end up in prison eventually.
  - Rely on survival sex and other hustles because feel they can't get legitimate job due to criminal-legal status and demands of supervision.
- **Housing Insecurity & Homelessness:** Increases drug use and decreases mental health outcomes.
- **Sex Work:** Dual task of managing both HIV and COVID risk, on top of other threats to safety posed by survival sex work.
- **Drug Use:** Anxiety and stress of COVID period increases drug use and decreases access to social service support.

### Next Steps

- More Interviews!
- Digital Storytelling with participants as dissemination tool
- Please watch our website for emerging findings.





## SHAWN Participants

### SHAWN Consultants

- Core Team Consultants: Maribel Oyola; MSW, Nadine Ruff, MSW; Jamie Myers, MD. Pamela Allen
- Community Consultants: Ashley Hampton, LCSW; Monya Saunders; Amber Sutton, LCSW, PhD

