



## JAIL REFORM TOOLKIT & RESOURCE GUIDE

### EPISODE 4

# Putting Women Already in Jail First

A PODCAST BY



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Foundation

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# Hello!

Thanks for listening to 70 Million. Whether you're a seasoned criminal justice reform advocate, private citizen, educator, public or private sector leader, we appreciate your interest in finding solutions to the incarceration quagmire.

We've assembled this 70 Million Criminal Justice Toolkit for those ready to turn interest into action.

This resource guide draws from practical tactics shared by those who launched the initiatives chronicled in our episodes, including:

- How to access and deploy public and private sector databases and legislative bodies to build reform solutions.

- How to highlight individual stories of the incarcerated in order to drive organizational and grassroots action.

- How to harness citizens' willingness to engage in methodical, trial-and-error pilot efforts in order to build effective reform programs and movements.

Our hope is that this Toolkit can help get you started. Keep in mind that steps do not have to happen strictly chronologically. Use them and the questions to frame and shape change in your community and let us know about it.

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE TOOLKIT

### Using the SMART model

The SMART model of program development and evaluation is an open-sourced method used by public sector, nonprofit and citizen/community groups to organize solutions-oriented projects.

**S**pecific (Steps 1-4)

**M**easurable (Steps 5-6)

**A**chievable (Steps 7-8)

**R**elevant (Steps 9-10)

**T**imebound (Step 11)

## STEP 1

### Identify & Analyze Concerns

# Be specific about what you are trying to achieve

**Case Study -- Episode 4 of 70 Million Podcast:** Women defendants face unique challenges and obstacles that are often overlooked or exacerbated by biases and conditions embedded in US institutions, and in the criminal justice system. In Oklahoma, it's magnified. The state has the highest incarceration rate for women in the country.

[Still She Rises](#), a public defender office in Tulsa, OK, set out to address the interconnected factors, particularly as they drive the incarceration of women, by combating systemic biases and inequitable conditions.



“By tailoring our legal strategies to the unique challenges faced by mothers in the criminal justice system and broadening the scope of our work beyond the criminal case, [we aim] to break the cycle of poverty and instability that so often correlates with the incarceration of a mother.”

**From Still She Rises' mission statement.**

## STEP 2

### Identify and Convene Internal Division Representatives and External Stakeholders

# What is the minimum personnel needed?

- List Must-Have Roles
- List Potential Ideal Individuals to Assume Must-Have Roles

**Example:** The intersectional factors that drive incarceration of women in Oklahoma include racial, economic, and educational inequality. Devising reform efforts to address those interconnecting factors led founders to consult with or recruit board members, and retain staffs with experience in the respective subject-matter areas needed. By following this “holistic defense” model, advocates in Tulsa gathered a range of experts, including attorneys, investigators, social workers, and legal advocates, to shape reform of criminal justice systems through the lens of women, with a special focus on women who have children.



“Holistic defense centers its services around its clients, recognizing that our clients come to us with more than just legal justice involvement.”

**Patrice James, External Affairs Director, Still She Rises.**

## STEP 3

### Itemize Resources, Inputs, and Assets Needed to Achieve Solutions/Outcomes

# What do we want to accomplish?

- Why is this goal important?
- Who should be involved?
- What resources are needed?

**Example:** A public defender's office is usually funded by government budgets and client fees. By locating separate funding sources including the Kaiser Family Foundation, Still She Rises established a resource base that allowed for rapid scale up, and a close focus on holistic client services. It also strives to connect with women defendants as soon as they are arrested or charged.



In Tulsa, “bond amounts are based on what crimes they are charged with, not how much money they are actually able to pay. So, many poor women end up sitting in jail for weeks or months waiting for their case to be resolved.”

**Reporter Nissa Rhee for 70 Million. In the photo: the women's pod at the David L. Moss Criminal Justice Center.**

**STEP 4****Action Planning**

# Develop Framework & Timeline for Achieving Goals

**Example:** The overlapping nature of a holistic criminal justice reform effort requires strategic planning and goals-setting. For Still She Rises, a specific list of goals was established to measure progress against. They include:

- Reduce jail time and increase the number of non-incarceratory sentences that women with children serve.
- Defend mothers involved in the criminal justice system against the painful and unnecessary removal of their children and the potential dissolution of their families.
- Preserve women's hard-earned jobs, maintain stable housing and public benefits, etc.
- Provide individualized social support to families, in addition to connecting them to vital services like substance abuse treatment, counseling, and parenting classes.



A play area for children at Still She Rises.

## STEP 5

### Measuring Progress & Efficacy

- Set evaluation criteria to determine progress & success rate
- Assess Legislative/Funding/Regulatory Barriers & Opportunities

**Example:** The intersectional nature of the holistic reform approach calls for tight coordination and evaluation of disparate but connected efforts, including debt resolution and social services supports.

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## STEP 6

### Support Desired Outcomes with Data and/or Metrics

**Example:** As part of its tactical approach to providing legal assistance, Still She Rises confronts the negative impacts of socioeconomic and racial disparities that drive incarceration rates of women in Tulsa: “In Oklahoma, as in the rest of the country, women of color are disproportionately arrested and imprisoned. African-Americans make up only 7.7% of Oklahoma’s population but represent 20% of incarcerated women. American Indian people of all genders comprise only 9% of the state population, but American Indian women make up 13% of the prison population.” [[Still She Rises website](#)]





## STEP 7

### Achievability Review

- Revisit whether goals are realistic and introduce flexibility in goal-setting
- Operational Oversight Assessment

**Example:** A major goal of Still She Rises is keeping mothers connected to their children as they navigate the criminal justice system, and work to overcome obstacles in housing, education, and income that can be barriers. Evaluating progress toward this goal drives actions within the total matrix of legal advocacy.

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## STEP 8

### Program(s) and Asset Resource Monitoring

**Example:** Interacting with courts, jailers, landlords, probation officers, and prosecutors is a key function of Still She Rises. Maintaining relationships with leaders and functionaries within those institutions requires constant evaluation.



“We try to come in much earlier and that allows us to meet with the client to figure out what’s going on, to figure out where the children are... And figuring out what we need to do immediately to try to stabilize the client as well as figuring out, are there any resources to help them pay bail.”

**Patrice James of Still She Rises.**

## STEP 9

### Relevancy Check-Up

- Examine whether each milestone supports the overall vision
- Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation & Process Updates

**Example:** In the year she's been free [advocates from Still She Rises] helped Linda Meachum get into a 60-day rehabilitation program and prepared her for future court dates. They've also successfully gotten her disability benefits, which give her a small income. And they've connected her with another group of lawyers to be part of a class action lawsuit against the sheriff's office that claims that there were constitutional violations and corruption in the way her and others court-related fees were handled.

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## STEP 10

### Full Program Review

**Example:** The holistic approach of Still She Rises has the overall goal of addressing large, systemic factors that drive incarceration of women.

“One of the ways [Still She Rises] address the failures of the system is by being a loud voice in public discussions about criminal justice reform. Oklahoma laws are some of the harshest in the nation. People convicted of drug possession here serve sentences that are twice as long as the national average.” -- *Reporter Nissa Rhee for 70 Million.*



**Linda Meachum (right) with her client advocate, Catherine O'Neill**

**STEP 11****Ensure Reform Efforts Are Time-bound**

# How long does it take to achieve goals?

→ Are established deadlines realistic?

**Example:** “...I think about everything we do, from the smallest amount of advocacy on behalf of a person, to sitting down at a table with the most powerful stakeholders here, as all having impact. It's all important. It's all moving justice in the right direction, we hope.” -- *Robin Steinberg, Executive Director, Still She Rises.*

## RESOURCES

To get started developing a reform project similar to the public defender model outlined by Still She Rises, these resources can help:

- Learn more about Still She Rises [here](#).
- Learn more about how the [Intersectional theory](#) developed by a Still She Rises board member informs its approach to criminal justice reform.
- View the [state and Federal data](#) on women and incarceration in Oklahoma.
- Learn more about the [Holistic](#) approach to public defender work.

## 70 MILLION TEAM

**Host:** Mitzi Miller

**Editor:** Jen Chien

**Ep. 4 Reporter:**  
Nissa Rhee

**Sound Designer:** Luis M. Gil

**Associate Producer:**  
Oluwakemi Aladesuyi

**Marketing Specialist:**  
Kate Krosschell

**Resource Guide Writer:**  
Amy Alexander

**Design Director:**  
Kenia D. Serrette

**Creator & Executive Producer:**  
Juleyka Lantigua-Williams

70MillionPod.com  
@70MillionPod  
Hello@70Millionpod.com