

## Facilitator Outline

[View the presentation link HERE](#) to review individually, or present to others.

To download the PDF presentation, visit [Period.org](#) and [ThurmanPerryFoundation.Org](#)

Presentation Overview	
PRESENTATION LENGTH	About 40-50 mins <i>total</i> to present   Or ~20 min parts, with discussions
MATERIALS REQUIRED / RECOMMENDED	<a href="#">View Presentation</a>   Internet access + sound for video is recommended, but not required. Or Download PDF presentation from <a href="#">Period.org</a> or <a href="#">ThurmanPerryFoundation.Org</a>
INTENDED AUDIENCE	Students 6th grade and above, adults, public leaders, decision-makers
PRESENTATION SETTING	Virtual, in person, or for individual review

## Workshop Overview

*This workshop is divided into four parts, and includes appendices with additional resources.*

## PERIODS in PRISON

(~Estimated Time to Present)

- **PART 1:** Period Poverty and Correctional Facilities (~10 mins).....Page 2 | SLIDE 7
- **PART 2:** Managing a Period While Incarcerated (~20 mins).....Page 7 | SLIDE 21
- **PART 3:** Menstrual Equity in Correctional Facilities (~15 mins).....Page 13 | SLIDE 50
- **PART 4:** Ways to Take Action (~10 mins).....Page 16 | SLIDE 66

## APPENDICES:

- **A:** Carceral Debt.....Page 18 | SLIDE 73
- **B:** Policy Recommendations.....Page 19 | SLIDE 74
- **C:** References.....Page 20 | SLIDE 76
- **D:** Additional Readings .....Page 21 | SLIDE 81

PERIOD. and the Thurman Perry Foundation invite you to share your feedback, workshop photos and reflections from this workshop [HERE](#).

Thank you!

*PERIOD. and The Thurman Perry Foundation*



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## ABOUT PERIOD.

PERIOD. is a global youth-fueled nonprofit with over 400 youth-led chapters working to eradicate period poverty and stigma through service, education, and advocacy.

PERIOD. annually distributes millions of menstrual products to grassroots organizations serving their communities in need, authors stigma-busting menstrual health curriculum, and equips young leaders to advocate for menstrual equity policies such as the repeal of the tampon tax and mandating period products in public places.

[www.period.org](http://www.period.org) | [@periodmovement](https://twitter.com/periodmovement)



## ABOUT THE THURMAN PERRY FOUNDATION

The Thurman Perry Foundation is an award winning Louisiana-based nonprofit operating nationally with a mission of offering scholarships, essential healthcare resources, and housing relief to at least 10,000 women & girls impacted by incarceration by 2030.

Founded in 2021 by formerly incarcerated woman turned epidemiologist, Gabrielle A. Perry, MPH, The Thurman Perry Foundation is named in memory of Ms. Perry's father, U.S. Army Master Sergeant Thurman Perry Jr.

The Thurman Perry Foundation's Girl Code initiative stands alone nationally as the only public health program for incarcerated women to promote menstrual equity and eliminate period poverty by donating organic, cotton, chlorine-free, dye-free, and fragrance-free menstrual products.

TPF's Girl Code initiative has endorsed federal legislation to mandate the sufficient provision of menstrual products to incarcerated women and girls in state, local, and juvenile correctional facilities, and, in 2 years, has donated almost 200,000 organic menstrual products to 4,435 incarcerated women in correctional facilities throughout Louisiana, Texas, and New York state. By 2026, The Thurman Perry Foundation has pledged to donate 1 million menstrual products to system-impacted women and girls to foster both health and safety for incarcerated women.

[ThurmanPerryFoundation.org](http://ThurmanPerryFoundation.org) | [@ThurmanPerryFoundation](https://twitter.com/ThurmanPerryFoundation)

## Facilitator Notes: You can present each part separately, or consecutively

- **For example:** Some present *PART 1 and 2* in one day, and *PART 3 and 4* on a different day. Others, if they have about an hour or so, present all 4 parts together. Up to you!
- **How long you spend on each reflection question** is also up to your discretion
- **Appendices are designed as additional information**, for facilitator or audience to review independently
- **Footnotes include references** for a quick glance of the source

## SLIDE 5 - INTRODUCTIONS AND OPENING REFLECTIONS

- What do you think it's like to manage a period without any access to period products?
- What do you think it's like to have to manage a period while incarcerated?

*"Women and girls have been the fastest-growing group of incarcerated people in the United States<sup>1</sup>, and the number of women serving sentences of life without parole has grown by 43% since 2008<sup>2</sup>.*

*These women are mothers, sisters, daughters and friends. They are people who deserve dignity."*

- Gabrielle A. Perry

Executive Director, The Thurman Perry Foundation

"Opinion: In prison, having your period can put your life in danger." The Washington Post<sup>3</sup>

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## Slide 7 - PART 1: Period Poverty and Correctional Facilities

### WHAT IS PERIOD POVERTY?

On any given day, 800 million people<sup>4</sup> on the planet are menstruating.

Managing a period requires resources like:

- Period Products
- Menstrual Health Education
- Clean Water & Soap
- Safe Places to Throw Away Waste
- Safe and Private Restrooms

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<sup>1</sup> *Facts about the over-incarceration of women in the United States.* American Civil Liberties Union. (2007, December 12).

<https://www.aclu.org/documents/facts-about-over-incarceration-women-united-states>

<sup>2</sup> Norwood, C. (2021, October 5). *More women are serving life sentences. Experts want to know why.* The 19th. <https://19thnews.org/2021/10/more-women-are-serving-life-sentences-why/>

<sup>3</sup> Perry, G. A. (2022, March 30). *Opinion: In prison, having your period can put your life in danger.* The Washington Post. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/25/prison-period-danger-health-risks-sexual-abuse/>

<sup>4</sup> Hehir, I. (2019, May 27). *Why we need to rethink the way we view periods.* UNICEF Australia.

Yet at least 500 million people don't have the adequate resources to manage their period every month.<sup>5</sup>

- That's more people than everyone living in Canada, U.S. and Mexico *combined*

**PERIOD POVERTY:** The limited or inadequate access to menstrual products or menstrual health education due to financial constraints or negative stigma around menstruation.<sup>6</sup>

## **SLIDE 11 - PERIOD POVERTY IN THE U.S. GENERAL POPULATION**

- **Nearly 1 in 4 students** have struggled to afford period products, or were not able to purchase them at all.<sup>7</sup>
- **More than 2 in 5 people** who menstruate have struggled to purchase period products due to lack of income at some point in their life.<sup>8</sup>
- **Nearly 1 in 10** college students experience period poverty every month, with Black and Latinx students being disproportionately affected compared to white students.<sup>9</sup>

**Period poverty exists at the intersection of economic, gender, and racial inequality.**

## **SLIDE 12 - WHO IS IMPACTED BY PERIOD POVERTY IN U.S. CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?**

**Correctional Facility:** Jail, prison, or other detention facility used to house people who have been arrested, held, or convicted by a criminal justice agency or court.<sup>10</sup>

“Correctional Facilities” will be used throughout this presentation when referring to all facility types that house people who are incarcerated.

## **DID YOU KNOW? FACTS ABOUT WOMEN AND INCARCERATION**

- The United States has the highest incarceration rate of any country in the world with nearly two million people behind bars.<sup>11</sup>
- Women are the fastest growing group of incarcerated people in the United States.<sup>1</sup>
- Between 1980 and 2021, the number of incarcerated women in the United States increased by more than 525%<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> World Bank Group. (2018, June 7). *Menstrual hygiene management enables women and girls to reach their full potential*. World Bank. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2018/05/25/menstrual-hygiene-management>

<sup>6</sup> Rossouw, L., & Ross, H. (2021). Understanding Period Poverty: Socio-Economic Inequalities in Menstrual Hygiene Management in Eight Low-and Middle-Income Countries. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 18(5), 2571. AND Vora, S. (2020). The realities of period poverty: how homelessness shapes women's lived experiences of menstruation. *The Palgrave handbook of critical menstruation studies*, 31-47.

<sup>7</sup> Thinx & PERIOD. (2021). State of the period 2021. <https://period.org/uploads/State-of-the-Period-2021.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> U by Kotex Period Poverty Awareness Week – Survey Results (2021) [https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U\\_by\\_Kotex\\_Period\\_Poverty\\_-\\_PPAW\\_Data\\_Set.pdf](https://allianceforperiodsupplies.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/U_by_Kotex_Period_Poverty_-_PPAW_Data_Set.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Cardoso, L. F., Scolese, A. M., Hamidaddin, A., & Gupta, J. (2021). Period poverty and mental health implications among college-aged women in the United States. *BMC Women's Health*, 21(1), 1-7 <https://bmcwomenshealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12905-020-01149-5>

<sup>10</sup> *Definition: Correctional facility from 34 USC § 10651(l)(1)*. Legal Information Institute. (n.d.). [https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def\\_id=34-USC-1339097894-1337661723&term\\_occur=999&term\\_src=title%3A34%3Asubtitle%3A1%3Achapter%3A101%3Asubchapter%3AXXXIII%3Asection%3A10651#:~:text=\(1\)%20Definitions%20\(A\),justice%20agency%20or%20a%20court](https://www.law.cornell.edu/definitions/uscode.php?width=840&height=800&iframe=true&def_id=34-USC-1339097894-1337661723&term_occur=999&term_src=title%3A34%3Asubtitle%3A1%3Achapter%3A101%3Asubchapter%3AXXXIII%3Asection%3A10651#:~:text=(1)%20Definitions%20(A),justice%20agency%20or%20a%20court)

<sup>11</sup> *United States profile*. United States profile | Prison Policy Initiative. (2023). <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/US.html>

<sup>12</sup> Monazzam, N. (2023, March). *Incarcerated women and girls*. The Sentencing Project. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/app/uploads/2023/05/Incarcerated-Women-and-Girls-1.pdf>

Despite this historic rise, correctional facilities have often failed to consider unique needs of people who menstruate while incarcerated.<sup>13</sup>

## A QUICK NOTE ON LANGUAGE: “WOMEN” AND “MENSTRUATOR”

**It is common for statistics to be coded as data about ‘women.’**

**When referencing data**, the terms used in the *original data source* will be used to accurately reflect the reference.

**When referring to the general needs of people who menstruate**, the term ‘menstruator’ may be used as an inclusive term to include women, girls, and all people who menstruate, to include trans, non-binary, and intersex people who can also menstruate while incarcerated.

Learn more about the term “Menstruator,” along with additional terms used throughout this presentation in PERIOD. and Madami’s [Glossary for the Global Menstrual Movement](#).<sup>41</sup>

## **SLIDE 16 - WHERE ARE WOMEN INCARCERATED IN THE UNITED STATES?**

The United States has created a carceral system that includes multiple forms of incarceration and surveillance.<sup>14</sup>

**\*\*See graph image on SLIDE 16\*\*** >> The majority of incarcerated women are in local jails and state prisons, given the nature of convictions for the majority of women are typically nonviolent.<sup>15</sup>

When considering policies and regulations, it’s important to consider **where people who menstruate are incarcerated**.

### **DETENTION CENTERS:**<sup>16</sup>

- Temporarily house and rehabilitate people who have been accused of breaking a law.
- Sometimes used to hold individuals awaiting trial or sentencing.

### **Examples include:**

- Military Installation Detention
- Tribal Detention
- Juvenile Detention
- Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Detention

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<sup>13</sup> Fetting, A. (n.d.). *View of Menstrual Equity, Organizing and the Struggle for Human Dignity and Gender Equality in Prison: Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*. <https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/cjgl/article/view/8823/4563>

<sup>14</sup> Maranze, M. (2015, February 4). *Pathology of the carceral state*. Los Angeles Review of Books. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/pathology-carceral-state/>

<sup>15</sup> Kajstura, A., & Sawyer, W. (2023, March 1). *Women’s mass incarceration: The whole pie 2023*. Prison Policy Initiative. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2023women.html>

<sup>16</sup> Nelson, C. (2022, December 30). *Jail vs. prison vs. detention center*. University of Phoenix. <https://www.phoenix.edu/blog/jail-vs-prison-vs-detention-center.html>

**LOCAL JAIL:**<sup>17</sup>

- Institutional local facilities governed by the city, local district, or county
- Jails are typically short-term holding facilities for the newly arrested and those awaiting trial or sentencing.
- Individuals sentenced to serve a small amount of time, typically less than a year
- Also referred as “City jail.”
- More than 1 in 6 jail releases in the United States are women.<sup>45</sup>

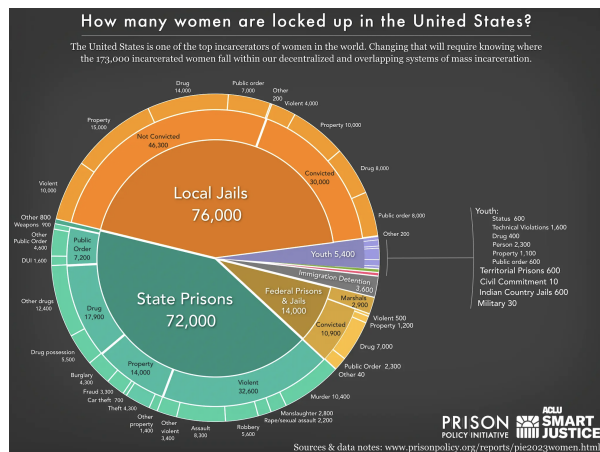
PRISON TYPE <sup>17</sup>	STATE PRISON	FEDERAL PRISON
<b>Institutional facilities governed by:</b>	<b>State Government</b> Decisions made at the state level impact people solely in that state. For example, California, Louisiana, or Texas.	<b>Federal Government</b> The highest level of national governance in the United States. Decisions made at the federal level impact people in the entire country, not just people of the individual state.
<b>Convicted of:</b>	Violating a <b>state law</b>	Violating a <b>federal law</b>
<b>Typical Sentences:</b>	Typically for serving longer sentences, <b>usually 1+ years</b>	Typically for serving longer sentences, <b>usually 1+ years</b>

About 1 in 8 individuals released from U.S. State prisons are women.<sup>45</sup>

**SLIDE 19 - \*\*Image from Prison Policy Initiative\*\* >> “How many women are locked up in the United States?”<sup>15</sup>**

**There are about 173,000 women incarcerated in the United States right now.**

Why and where are they incarcerated?



**REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

- What, if anything, stood out to you from our discussion so far?
- What are some differences between detention centers, local jails and prisons?

<sup>17</sup> FAQ: What is the difference between jail and prison?. Prison Fellowship. (2022, December 5). <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/training-resources/in-prison/faq-jail-prison/>

## SLIDE 21 - Part 2: Managing a Period While Incarcerated

### **GENERAL LIMITATIONS THAT IMPACT INCARCERATED PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE**

*"The carceral system was not developed with women in mind."*

**-Cynthia Roseberry**

*Acting Director, ACLU Justice Division, American Civil Liberties Union<sup>18</sup>*

### **SLIDE 23 - There are multiple LIMITATIONS FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED that impact the experiences of people who menstruate, including:**

- General Security Regulations
- Period Stigma and Shame
- Limited, or no access, to preventive health care
- Limited or no access to quality and sufficient period products

Limitations and regulations vary by correctional facility, and impact people's individual experience differently with managing their period while incarcerated.

### **GENERAL SECURITY REGULATIONS THAT IMPACT INCARCERATED PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE**

#### **No Sharing of Menstrual Products**

- In some cases, sharing menstrual products purchased from the commissary can be considered "bartering"
- Bartering is illegal behind bars and can result in additional time added to a sentence.

#### **No Free Bleeding**

- In some cases, "Free bleeding" onto prison issued clothing repeatedly due to lack of menstrual products can be considered "destruction of prison property."
- Destruction of prison property is illegal behind bars and can result in additional time added onto a sentence.

#### **Showers and Laundry Limitations**

- Certain facilities do not allow incarcerated people to bathe with regularity. Showers are often limited to less than 5 mins
- Limited access to laundry facilities, leading to difficulties in washing period-stained uniforms, bedding, or underwear
- Individuals may be forced to carry period-stained uniforms or underwear in a clear bag, which causes humiliation and shame.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Norwood, C. (2023, March 18). *Comprehensive report shows the Disparities Incarcerated Women Face*. The 19th. <https://19thnews.org/2023/03/prison-policy-report-incarceration-women-disparities/>

<sup>19</sup> Moss, Fenn, Vilches (2023) American Public Health Association. *The Menstruating Body in US Carceral Facilities: What 3 Women in Alabama Reveal about Misdirection in the Menstrual Equity Space*

## **PEOPLE WHO ARE INCARCERATED ALSO EXPERIENCE PERIOD STIGMA AND SHAME**

As with the general population, period stigma and lack of menstrual health education is also pervasive in correctional facilities.

Often raised by former inmates, incarcerated menstruators may pass down outdated old wives tales with limited understanding of how to adequately manage their period.

People, guards, correctional authorities, and elected officials are often embarrassed or ashamed to talk about periods, ignoring the menstrual health needs of incarcerated women, girls, and people who menstruate.

## **CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES HAVE LIMITED, OR NO ACCESS, TO PREVENTATIVE HEALTH CARE**

Incarcerated women are more likely to enter correctional facilities with physical and mental illnesses, factors that shape women's experiences while in custody.<sup>18</sup>

### **Women's correctional facilities typically:**

- Have off-site medical personal, as opposed to men's correctional facilities who are typically on-site
- Have less access to timely and preventative healthcare screenings
- Have insufficient care for pain management, diagnosis and treatment for Heavy Menstrual Bleeding Disorders like Fibroids, PCOs, or Endometriosis
- Do not offer specialized health care for pregnancy and reproductive health<sup>39</sup>

## **INCARCERATED PEOPLE WHO MENSTRUATE HAVE LIMITED, OR NO ACCESS, TO QUALITY AND SUFFICIENT PERIOD PRODUCTS**

### **If period products are available in correctional facilities, they are typically:**

- Not sufficient, allowed only in restricted quantities
- Low-quality
- Limited in size variety, and don't account for the different needs in menstrual flow
- Expensive, incurring additional debt for the incarcerated individual or their families

## **REFLECTION QUESTION**

- How have you, or someone you know, managed a period if no access to period products or pain management were available?

Consider trying to manage a period within the context of the general security regulations in correctional facilities.

With limited access to period products, products might be worn longer than recommended, are reused, or used beyond the expiration date. When necessary, unsafe alternative "substitute" products are used.



## SLIDE 30 - HOW DO INDIVIDUALS MANAGE THEIR PERIOD WHILE INCARCERATED?

*“For women in prison, something as natural and uncontrollable as having your period can put your life in danger.”*

- Gabrielle A. Perry

Executive Director, The Thurman Perry Foundation

“Opinion: In prison, having your period can put your life in danger.” The Washington Post<sup>3</sup>

**MENSTRUAL MITIGATION MEASURES:** Any action a menstruating person performs in order to manage the flow of their menstrual cycle, control their menstrual hygiene, and otherwise maintain their dignity, especially in periods of socioeconomic scarcity, houselessness, homelessness, and/or incarceration.

*A term published and coined by epidemiologist Gabrielle A. Perry, MPH.*

### EXAMPLES OF MENSTRUAL MITIGATION MEASURES USED IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

- Inserting mattress padding from a prison-issued mattress into the vagina
- Using day’s old tampons or sanitary pads beyond their effectiveness or vitality
- Using ripped bed sheets or cutting up old clothes to line in underwear
- Free-bleeding at bedtime
- Stacking multiple, super thin pads
- Creating “tampons” with pads

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What are some examples of Menstrual Mitigation Measures to manage a period?
- How would more access to quality and sufficient period products impact incarcerated menstruators?

Incarcerated people who menstruate are often forced to rely on ingenuity and creativity to manage their period.

## SLIDE 35 - THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENCING PERIOD POVERTY AND USING MENSTRUAL MITIGATION MEASURES

Experiencing period poverty, and using Menstrual Mitigation Measures to manage a period impacts various aspect of people’s overall health, including:

- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Financial Stability
- Self Dignity

### PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Increased risks for reproductive infections, including Toxic Shock Syndrome, Sepsis, Emergency hysterectomy, and can lead to death

- Increased vulnerability for harmful physical and mental outcomes<sup>20</sup>
- Fewer incarcerated women report infections when period products are available

## MENTAL HEALTH

- Lack of access to menstrual products is associated with poor self-esteem, shame, distress and a host of additional physical factors.
- Incarcerated people with periods may experience additional mental health concerns in addition to the psychological distress people already experience while incarcerated, because of period poverty<sup>15</sup>

## FINANCIAL STABILITY

- If the individual does not have sufficient funds to pay for period products while incarcerated, they often incur additional debt for themselves or their families
- Incurring debt to purchase period products while incarcerated adds to the Carceral Debt they may already have incurred before, during, or after incarceration.

It is common for debt to follow people who have been impacted by incarceration.

## **CARCERAL DEBT<sup>21</sup>: Debt incurred from escalating incarceration fines and fees for things like**

- Court appearances, bail and probation costs
- “Room and Board,” and Child support orders<sup>22</sup>
- Mandatory drug tests and Treatment fees
- Pre-trial debt, post-release debt
- Commissary debt from the need to purchase essential items, like menstrual products

*“In Louisiana, incarcerated women might earn anywhere from 4 cents to \$1 per hour. Meanwhile, a pack of 20 cardboard-applicator tampons will cost them approximately \$13 via prison commissary. A woman would need to work between 13 and 325 hours before she could afford a single box of tampons that might last through one period.”*

- Gabrielle Perry

Executive Director, The Thurman Perry Foundation

“Opinion: In prison, having your period can put your life in danger.” The Washington Post<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Rapp, A., & Kilpatrick, S. (2020, February 4). Changing the Cycle: Period Poverty as a Public Health Crisis. University of Michigan School of Public Health. <https://sph.umich.edu/pursuit/2020posts/period-poverty.html>

<sup>21</sup> Carceral Debt. Debt Collective. (2023, September 25).

<https://debtcollective.org/what-we-do/campaigns/carceral-debt/#:~:text=Time%20in%20jail%20and%20prison,we%20call%20E2%80%9Ccarceral%20debt.%E2%80%9D>

<sup>22</sup> Roman, C. G. (2015, February 26). *Child Support, Debt, and Prisoner Reentry: Examining the Influences of Prisoners' Legal and Financial Obligations on Reentry*. Office of the Justice Programs. <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/248906.pdf>

## SELF DIGNITY

- Menstrual health is a matter of health and human rights<sup>23</sup>; yet, human rights among people that are incarcerated are often ignored.
- Lack of access to quality and sufficient menstrual products while incarcerated violates the Eighth Amendment of the US Constitution.<sup>24</sup>
- Denial of basic life necessities can be considered cruel and unusual punishment.

***“Kimberly Haven, a formerly incarcerated woman, had to have an emergency hysterectomy due to toxic shock syndrome after using makeshift tampons in prison. She testified to Maryland legislators in support of a bill to provide menstrual products to incarcerated women and girls.***

*She asked her audience to imagine themselves in the place of those women, who would ‘refuse visits from family, [or] attorneys, because they’re embarrassed at having to ... squat and cough — just to have the visit, and when you squat and cough ... and there’s a bloody pad there and you have to throw it away, you now have to walk back to your pod with nothing there, running the risk of bleeding through your clothes, and you don’t have access to laundry facilities.”*

- **American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

*The Unequal Price of Periods: Menstrual Equity in the United States*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What questions or reflections do you have from this information so far?
- How would providing access to menstrual products impact the quality of life for incarcerated menstruators?

*“All prisoners shall be treated with the respect due to their inherent dignity and value as human beings.”*

- **The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

*Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners*<sup>25</sup>

## SLIDE 43 - PERIOD PRODUCTS IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Only certain period products, and certain types of packaging, are allowed in correctional facilities.

Some period products are prohibited because correctional authorities outlaw any menstrual products or packaging that can be used to smuggle illicit drugs or other materials.

Other period products are just difficult to use while incarcerated, given the general limitations and security regulations in correctional facilities (as discussed in Part 1).

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<sup>23</sup> Babbar, Karan. (2021, October 27). *Menstrual Health is a public health and human rights issue*. The Lancet. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(21\)00212-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(21)00212-7/fulltext)

<sup>24</sup> Fettig, A. (n.d.). *View of Menstrual Equity, Organizing and the Struggle for Human Dignity and Gender Equality in Prison: Columbia Journal of Gender and Law*. <https://journals.library.columbia.edu/index.php/cjgl/article/view/8823/4563>

<sup>25</sup> General Assembly Resolution. (1990, December 14). *Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners*. Universal Instruments. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-treatment-prisoners#:~:text=All%20prisoners%20shall%20be%20reated,property%2C%20birth%20or%20other%20status>.

## TYPICALLY ALLOWED

- Disposable Pads
- Disposable Pantyliners

All sizes are typically welcomed!\*\*

## TYPICALLY NOT ALLOWED

- Tampons\*\*
- Period Underwear
- Menstrual Cups
- Reusable Pads / Pantliners

*\*\*If donating period products, check which products and packaging are allowed with the specific correctional facility.*

## DISPOSABLE PADS / PANTYLINERS

- Multiple sizes are welcome
- Extra disposable pads, and pantyliners can be used to clean and tidy personal space

## TAMPONS\*\*

- Some facilities allow tampons, other facilities don't
- In some cases, Tampon applicators have been used as a makeshift toy for personal pleasure, prohibiting them in some facilities

## TYPICALLY NOT ALLOWED (OR DIFFICULT TO USE)

### MENSTRUAL CUPS

- Menstrual cups are sometimes considered a security threat, or confiscated as contraband, because of the possibility of smuggling illicit drugs or other covered materials in the menstrual cup.
- Keeping menstrual cups sufficiently clean and disinfected to reuse would be incredibly difficult in a prison environment, regardless of what materials they are made of.

### PERIOD UNDERWEAR & REUSABLE PADS / PANTYLINERS

- Sometimes Individuals have been forced to wash underwear in the shower,<sup>19</sup> and wear their wet underwear. Doing this with reusable period underwear, pads or pantyliners, could be unsafe (and uncomfortable).
- Keeping reusable period underwear, pads or pantyliners sufficiently clean and dry to reuse would be incredibly difficult in a prison environment, regardless of what materials they are made of.

**\*\*Policies and regulations for period products vary at each correctional facility.**

If you would like to donate period products to a specific facility, it's important to check which products and packaging are allowed with them directly.

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## SLIDE 50 - PART 3: MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

### PERIOD POLICIES IN PRISONS

**MENSTRUAL EQUITY:** The affordability, accessibility & safety of menstrual products for all people, including laws & policies that acknowledge & consider menstruation<sup>26</sup>

**Colorado State Rep. Leslie Herod (D - CO) speaks on the Colorado State House, March 2019.**

- See the full video here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w\\_zqQTOkCw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4w_zqQTOkCw)

CO HB 1224 was signed into law in April 2019, requiring Colorado jails to provide period products to people in custody at no expense to the inmates.<sup>47</sup>

### MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Period product requirements and enforcement are different at each facility, and depend on multiple factors, including:

- **THE LOCATION:** The specific policies related to the city, county, or state
- **THE FACILITY TYPE:** Jail, Detention Center, State or Federal Prison, etc.
- **THE INDEPENDENT POLICIES:** Each facility has unique policies, regulations, and oversight. There is no central governance for all correctional facilities.

If, when and how period products are distributed in correctional facilities can vary down to the discretion of the warden, and who is in charge of the facility's regulations that day.

*"Adriene Kitcheyan, a woman formerly incarcerated in the Arizona Department of Corrections, testified to the Arizona legislature about her experience menstruating behind bars,*

*'[b]loodstained pants, bartering, and begging for pads and tampons was a regular occurrence."*

- Amy Fetigg

*Menstrual Equity, Organizing, and the Struggle for Human Dignity and Gender Inequality in Prison*  
COLUMBIA JOURNAL OF GENDER AND LAW<sup>13</sup>

### SLIDE 55 - STATES WITH LAWS ENSURING SOME KIND OF ACCESS TO MENSTRUAL PRODUCTS<sup>27</sup>

- **\*\*See The Prison Flow Project's image \***
- *What laws impact incarcerated menstruators in your state?*

*For an up to date list, see The Prison Flow Project's [State Policy Tracker](#)*

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<sup>26</sup> Weiss-Wolf, J. (2017). *Periods gone public: Taking a stand for menstrual equity*. Simon and Schuster

<sup>27</sup> State laws around access. The Prison Flow Project. (2023b, August 18). <https://thepisonflowproject.com/state-laws-around-access/>

## FEDERAL PRISON ACCESS TO PERIOD PRODUCTS

In 2018, Congress passed the bipartisan First Step Act<sup>28</sup>, a comprehensive criminal justice reform bill designed to aid and expand opportunities incarcerated individuals in the federal prison system.<sup>29</sup>

The Prison Flow Project's "[Federal Prison Information](#)" includes a comprehensive a list of Women's Federal Prisons that *explicitly* mention the provision of menstrual products in their handbook.<sup>30</sup>

Under The First Step Act, the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) is required to provide tampons and sanitary napkins that meet industry standards to incarcerated people in federal prisons for free, and in a quantity that meets the healthcare needs of each person.<sup>28</sup>

Although this is a great "first step," the vast majority of incarcerated women do not benefit from this, simply because most are in state and local facilities, not federal prisons.<sup>31</sup>

## REFLECTION QUESTION

- Once period products are required by law in correctional facilities, who is in charge of ensuring incarcerated menstruators receive the products they need?

*"Laws DO NOT necessarily solve the issue of access to menstrual products in prison. State agencies and individual wardens frequently still have final say over what implementation and adherence looks like."*

- The Prison Flow Project  
State Laws Around Menstrual Products in Prisons<sup>27</sup>

## MENSTRUAL EQUITY IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

There are multiple reports of Incarcerated menstruators who subject themselves to sexual abuse, rape, and sexual assault in exchange for menstrual products.<sup>32,33</sup>

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) sued correctional facilities and detention centers around the country to address the threat, violence and sexual assault impacting incarcerated menstruators.<sup>34,43</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> An Overview of the First Step Act. Federal Bureau of Prisons. (n.d.).

<https://www.bop.gov/inmates/fsa/overview.jsp#:~:text=The%20First%20Step%20Act%20requires,needs%20and%20reduce%20this%20risk>

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<sup>34</sup> Ransom, J. (2018, December 14). *She says Rikers Guards raped her, then warned: "this never happened."* The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/14/nyregion/rikers-rape-guards-federal-lawsuit.html>

Example lawsuits include: Michigan<sup>35</sup>, New Jersey<sup>36</sup>, and Oregon<sup>37</sup>.

*“If a woman needs more [period products] that’s been allocated for her, she might be able to buy products from the commissary - if she can afford it.*

*Otherwise, it’s likely up to guards to decide if they want to provide additional supplies, further reinforcing the unequal power structure and raising the risk of abuses.”*

- **Melissa Jetson**

Senior Reporter, The Huffington Post<sup>33</sup>

## **SLIDE 61 - WHY IS MENSTRUAL EQUITY AN ISSUE IN U.S. CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES?**

- Lack of Awareness
- Punishment and Control
- Little to No Budget Allocations
- Little to No Accountability

### **LACK OF AWARENESS**

- The general public has limited to no understanding of policies that impact how incarcerated people exist, particularly the experience of incarcerated women, girls and people who menstruate.
- Being a part of today’s discussion is a great way to learn more!

### **PUNISHMENT AND CONTROL**

- The female body and functions have been used as a method of control, breeding punishment, humiliation and torture for women, girls and people who menstruate both in and outside of correctional facilities.<sup>32, 33</sup>

### **LITTLE TO NO BUDGET ALLOCATIONS**

- There is often little to no funds allocated in a budget for period products in correctional facilities.

### **LITTLE TO NO ACCOUNTABILITY**

- Although laws do exist in some states, there is limited to non-existent accountability for implementation and management of distributing period products in correctional facilities.<sup>27</sup>
- It is often up to staff at each facility to determine the logistics of “when, how, what kind,” and “how many” period products to distribute.

*“In the last few years, states and localities have passed laws to ensure the provision of safe, affordable, or free menstrual products... But we are still at the beginning of this movement for menstrual equity.*

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<sup>35</sup> ACLU of Michigan Sues Muskegon County Over Unconstitutional Policies, Hazardous Conditions at Jail. ACLU of Michigan. (2018, October 31). <https://www.aclumich.org/en/press-releases/aclu-michigan-sues-muskegon-county-over-unconstitutional-policies-hazardous>

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*The United States remains a country where menstruating is a liability for all and a weapon and instrument of control used against many, and where equality of opportunity and dignity for those who bleed is often undermined by law, policy and practice.”*

- Amy Fetigg

Menstrual Equity, Organizing, and the Struggle for Human Dignity and Gender Inequality in Prison  
COLUMBIA JOURNAL OF GENDER AND LAW<sup>13</sup>

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What questions or reflections do you have about Menstrual Equity in Correctional Facilities?
- What, if anything, has stood out the most to you from what we have discussed?

*“The world is full of what seem like intractable problems. Often we let that paralyze us. Instead, let it spur you to action.”*

- Melinda French Gates<sup>42</sup>

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## SLIDE 66 - Part 4: Taking Action and Next Steps

### WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Take Action through: Education, Service, or Advocacy

#### TAKE ACTION THROUGH EDUCATION: TALK ABOUT PERIODS IN PRISONS

- Share this information with your friends, family, colleagues, and network.
- The more we talk about this issue, the less stigmatized this conversation will become.
- This presentation can be shared widely!
- For additional educational resources about period poverty, visit [periodactionday.com/education](http://periodactionday.com/education)

#### TAKE ACTION THROUGH SERVICE: DONATE PERIOD PRODUCTS

Donate to organizations that distribute menstrual products to people impacted by incarceration, like [The Thurman Perry Foundation](#) or [PERIOD.](#)

Contact a local correctional facility to discuss hosting a Period Product drive if they are in need of period products.

#### TAKE ACTION THROUGH ADVOCACY: ADVOCATE FOR SYSTEMIC CHANGE

Know the menstrual equity bills and policies that impact your state’s correctional facilities

- [The Prison Flow Project’s State Tracker](#)



- [The Prison Flow Project's Federal Tracker](#)

Contact your elected representatives and let them know why they should address this issue

- [Find your elected officials](#)

For additional advocacy resources, visit [periodactionday.com/advocacy](http://periodactionday.com/advocacy)

## THE MENSTRUAL EQUITY FOR ALL ACT OF 2023



The Menstrual Equity for all Act of 2023 (ME4ALL), introduced by Congresswoman Grace Meng (D -NY), is a federal bill, comprehensive whole-of-government approach to eradicate period poverty and achieve menstrual equity in the the United States.

If passed, incarcerated individuals and detainees in federal, state, and local facilities around the United States would have access to free menstrual products, *and* includes a requirement for guidance on distribution.

Learn more about the [Menstrual Equity For All Act of 2023](#)

### Closing Reflections

- What are 1-2 facts or statistics that stood out to you from today's discussion?
- What are some ways you can take action through through Education, Service or Advocacy?

**We hope this discussion is the start of a deeper conversation about periods in prisons, not the end.**

**Thank you!**

## SLIDE 72 - CLOSING - STAY CONNECTED WITH US!

**PERIOD.** [www.period.org](http://www.period.org) | [www.periodactionday.com](http://www.periodactionday.com)  
[@Periodmovement](https://twitter.com/Periodmovement)

**The Thurman Perry Foundation** [www.ThurmanPerryFoundation.org](http://www.ThurmanPerryFoundation.org)  
[@ThurmanPerryFoundation](https://twitter.com/ThurmanPerryFoundation)



**APPENDICES: We have a comprehensive reference list and additional readings to learn more!**

- A: Carceral Debt
- B: Policy Recommendations
- C: References
- D: Additional Readings

## APPENDICES

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### APPENDIX A: Carceral Debt

Incarcerated menstruators may incur additional debt to purchase period products while incarcerated, which adds to the Carceral Debt they may already have incurred.

*As discussed in Part 2 of this presentation.*

Women are being incarcerated in local jails at alarming rates around the U.S. because they often cannot afford to pay government fines, fees, and bail. Incarceration is increasing because of the criminalization of poverty at the local level.

Carceral debt is accompanied with incarceration at any level, can be incurred from pre-trial debt, commissary debt, escalating fines and fees, or post-release debt

- **Pre-trial debt** affects women primarily because the majority of women in local jails are legally innocent, and they cannot be sentenced, adding additional costs
- **Carceral Debt** continues to increase from pre-trial diversion programs, required family planning classes, commissary debt, escalating fines and fees, and Pay Day Loans offered to pay for such expenses, only increasing debt, and ranging from hundreds to thousands of dollars.

*Learn more about Carceral Debt from The Debt Collective<sup>21</sup>*

## APPENDIX B: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

### General Security Regulations:

- Consider eliminating legal penalties for free-bleeding or sharing of menstrual products
- Consider the needs of menstruators within the context of how all “security regulations” impact incarcerated people who menstruate

### Product Choice and Access:

- Providing period product choice can become a tool for enhancing women’s agency and can improve menstrual health.
- Consider increasing period product choice, and offering various sizes to address the differences in menstrual flow
- Provide a clear course of action for incarcerated menstruators to report any discrimination, abuse or harassment experienced in exchange for menstrual products

### Menstrual Health and Safety:

- Consider including healthcare professionals on determining which government-issued menstrual products are distributed in correctional facilities, to increase safety and effectiveness.
- Consider increasing access to timely and preventative healthcare screenings, along with pain management, diagnosis and treatment for Heavy Menstrual Bleeding Disorders like Fibroids, PCOs, or Endometriosis

### Increased Access + Accountability:

The state of NY not only requires menstrual products in their correctional facilities, but the NY City Council introduced an amendment that would require the Department of Correction (DOC) to report on its distribution of menstrual products, increasing accountability.

We are hopeful to see similar policies introduced, and passed, in other states around the country.

See [Menstrual Equity: A Legislative Toolkit](#) from the ACLU for Model Legislation (See Page 20)<sup>44</sup>

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