

Barriers to Employment

The women we interviewed in our focus groups told us that they were struggling financially because of their difficulties finding work.

Motherhood: Being a mother was one of the biggest hurdles, for many reasons. First, young mothers may have been unable to complete high school or a more advanced degree, restricting their earning ability. Second, finding affordable childcare can be almost impossible, meaning that many mothers stay home with their children. Third, inability to find childcare at certain hours may prevent women from working certain shifts.



Lack of Dependable Transportation: Most of the women in our focus groups did not have cars, and had to rely on SunTran to get to work. We heard several stories of buses being late or breaking down, which could make the difference in showing up for an interview or a job on time. Additionally, limits on routes and times mean that women were not able to take some later shifts.

Lack of Training: Women had difficulty obtaining jobs because of a lack of training. We saw this in all age groups, from younger women to seniors. This was usually due to not completing high school or an advanced degree, or commonly for senior women, not having current technology training.

Conviction History: For women who have committed a crime in the past, finding employment is more difficult because of stigma.

Recommendations

Better sex and family planning education If girls and women are able to plan when they have children, they are more able to finish their education and earn enough to be self-sufficient. Comprehensive sex education in Arizona which includes training about contraceptives is crucial.

Affordable child care options If women have access to affordable child care, they are more able to work and to build their careers. This could be done by creating partnerships with local businesses and giving incentives for businesses to provide subsidies.

Increase SunTran reliability Having improved reliability would not only help those for whom SunTran is the only mode of transportation. Improving SunTran's reliability reputation may also attract those who can pay full-fare, and now choose not to take public transit because of its unreliability.

Opportunity to vacate charges We recommend consideration for vacating charges for some individuals. Charges which are drug-related such as possession and in some cases prostitution can carry a lifelong stigma, which can punish without offering a chance at rehabilitation. Offering charge vacation for some charges and after an amount of time without further offenses could help women rebuild their lives.