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Cumulative Trauma Exposure, Emotion Regulation, and PTSD among Incarcerated Women

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Women in prison experience high rates of traumatic exposures such as childhood physical and sexual abuse, sexual assault, and partner violence. Not surprisingly, research suggests this population has rates of PTSD that are three to five times that of women in the general population (Karlsson & Zielinski, 2018). While the research literature focused on this group is growing, comparatively few trauma focused treatments have been evaluated for their effectiveness with incarcerated women. Given the limited resources of many corrections facilities, it is critical that we identify strong potential targets of effective treatment for trauma exposed women in prison. In a previous study that assessed incarcerated women's perceptions of their own treatment needs, women in prison identified emotion regulation as one their top five treatment needs (Lynch, Fritch, & Heath, 2012). For this article, we assessed trauma exposure, prevalence of PTSD, and the indirect effect of emotion regulation on the association between cumulative trauma and PTSD in 152 women in prison.