



Women's Corrections

QUICK FACTS

Women offenders comprise a distinct population. Their numbers are small but their program requirements are unique in terms of gender, criminality, institutional dynamics, and reintegration.

HISTORY

Until the mid-1990s, the Prison for Women in Kingston, Ontario was the only federal facility for women in Canada. Women offenders were incarcerated in a maximum security environment away from their families and home communities, with little programming to address their specific needs.

In 1989, the federal government commissioned a task force to review women's corrections in Canada and chart a new direction. The task force report, entitled *Creating Choices*, was submitted in April 1990. The report made a number of recommendations, including closing the centralized Prison for Women and replacing it with five regional facilities and an Aboriginal Healing Lodge. The Prison for Women officially closed on July 6, 2000.

THE FACILITIES FOR WOMEN

- Fraser Valley Institution – Abbotsford, BC;
- Edmonton Institution for Women – Edmonton, AB;
- Grand Valley Institution for Women – Kitchener, ON;
- Joliette Institution – Joliette, QC;
- Nova Institution for Women – Truro, NS; and
- Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge – Maple Creek, SK.

Women who are classified as minimum- or medium-security live in houses, which include communal living spaces. Here, women are responsible for their own daily living needs.

Women classified as maximum-security are accommodated in secure units where specialized staff provide high-level intervention and supervision.

Structured Living Environment houses accommodate women with significant cognitive limitations or mental health needs. Staff with specialized training provide 24 hour assistance and supervision.

There are also two national treatment and health assessment centres that accommodate women offenders with mental health concerns: the Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon, operated by CSC; and the Institut Philippe-Pinel of Montreal, a provincially based psychiatric hospital.

CORRECTIONAL PROGRAMS

The five guiding principles outlined in the *Creating Choices* report — empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices, respect and dignity, supportive environment, and shared responsibility — guide the development and delivery of interventions for women offenders. These programs are women-centered, which means they reflect the social realities of women and respond to the individual needs of each woman.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you would like more information on women offenders and programs, please visit CSC's Web site at: www.csc-scc.gc.ca.

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