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SAFETY, RESPECT
AND DIGNITY
FOR ALL

LA SÉCURITÉ,
LA DIGNITÉ
ET LE RESPECT
POUR TOUS

Response and Action Plan for Inspection of Nova and Grand Valley Institution by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

**CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA
RESPONSE AND ACTION PLAN**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM INSPECTION REPORT ON NOVA INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN AND
GRAND VALLEY INSTITUTION FOR WOMEN BY
HER MAJESTY'S INSPECTORATE OF PRISONS FOR ENGLAND AND WALES (JUNE 2006)**

- 1. There should be specific first night and orientation support, initially in separate accommodation, so that newly arrived women have access to objective and full information about the institutions and are prepared to move on to the houses.**

CURRENT STATUS:

Practices and procedures are in place at the women offender institutions to assist new admissions in familiarizing themselves with the institutional environment, including an orientation session and a comprehensive inmate handbook. During their first day/night at the institution, staff on duty are accessible to a woman to address questions or concerns, including during patrols of the living units.

ACTION

- A national working group was established within Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to strengthen the admission process, including policy and operational issues; this will include a review of the need to have separate accommodation for newly-admitted offenders. The group is comprised of representatives from the women's institutions, regional and national headquarters, and will include discussion with women offenders. The working group is scheduled to complete its review by the end of March 2007.
- Based on the inspection's findings, various practices were implemented at Nova Institution for Women (Nova) and Grand Valley Institution for Women (GVIW), as well as the other women's institutions, to address areas of immediate concern. For example, at both institutions, each woman is now provided with a meal regardless of her arrival time at the institution.

- 2. The role of primary workers should be reviewed and reinforced, with a view to ensuring that properly trained staff have sufficient skills and time to carry out both the role of supportive role-models envisaged in *Creating Choices*, and the task of providing timely and high-quality parole reports.**

CURRENT STATUS

Primary Workers (PW's) undergo extensive initial and refresher women-centred training toward skills development to effectively perform their duties. The role of the PW's is crucial as they are CSC's front line staff who have daily direct interactions with the women offenders in the institutions.

Over the past decade, there have been more stringent security requirements and procedures required in all CSC institutions, including the women's institutions to address, among other related issues, the introduction of contraband, especially drugs, into institutions. This is an issue which was not a significant concern at the time of *Creating Choices* but which is now a critical contributing factor affecting the safe operation of our institutions. With additional security duties and the need to dedicate considerable time to the completion of case management reports, there was a direct impact on the amount of time available for direct interaction between PW's and women offenders.

Prior to the inspection at Nova and GVIW, the role of PW's was in the process of being reviewed as part of operational reviews and discussions with staff and union representatives. As a result of these reviews and discussions, the preparation of case management reports and the presentation of recommendations to the National Parole Board (NPB) was reassigned from PW's to Institutional Parole Officers in June 2006. This will allow PW's to spend more time in areas where they are visible to the women offenders and can interact with the women in a variety of environments such as in the houses, program areas and yard. As well, a more balanced approach is achieved between the completion of case management responsibilities and the ongoing requirement for dynamic and static security. Although NPB casework will no longer be the responsibility of PW's, they will continue to be actively involved in the case management and reintegration process. They will retain a caseload of women offenders and will be responsible for certain reintegration reports and activities.

The findings of the inspection supported the findings of the initiatives already underway regarding the role of PW's.

ACTION

- The modifications to the Correctional Officer Training Program (CTP) that are in progress will further address training and skill development needs of Primary Workers, as they will include an increased focus on communication, problem solving and effective interaction with offenders. The eight-day women-centred training component is being revised to include increased attention on practical skills and intervention techniques that are reflective of women-centred training theories and principles. The new version of CTP is anticipated by April 2007.

3. Each institution should have a local anti-muscling policy and strategy to identify and prevent intimidation and assaults. It should include interventions for bullies and support for victims. Staff should receive training in this so that they are vigilant in identifying bullies and actively intervene to challenge them. The policy should be publicized and promoted to women inmates.

CURRENT STATUS

CSC achieved a major objective in establishing a more equitable and appropriate correctional regime for women in Canada with the opening of five regional women's institutions and an Aboriginal Healing Lodge commencing in 1995. The design and structure of the new institutions was based on an independent living model of stand alone houses that is intended to promote a healthy environment conducive to change where women can make meaningful and responsible choices in their daily lives. The absence of staff in the houses on a full time basis, with the exception of the Structured Living Environment houses and Secure Units, is

reflective of a correctional model that empowers women and promotes shared responsibility. However, one of the unintended results of this model is an increased opportunity for bullying among the women including such behaviour as intimidation and muscling. While assaults also fall within the definition of bullying, identification and intervention in such instances is easier as there is usually physical evidence such as bruises. In these cases, immediate action is taken to protect the safety of all concerned.

Given the impact of bullying on safe operations, CSC's Business Plan identifies five strategic priorities for the next three years including the "safety and security of staff and offenders" in institutions. This strategic priority will form the basis for the action plan to address this recommendation.

ACTION

- As a result of the inspection at Nova and GVIW, CSC is developing a national Anti-Bullying Strategy for all women offender institutions, the objective of which is to ensure safe, healthy and respectful environments by addressing more subtle and psychological bullying in addition to the more overt physical bullying. The Anti-Bullying Strategy is expected to be completed by the end of June 2007.
- In the interim, given the concerns specifically identified at the inspection sites, Nova and GVIW have initiated proactive strategies aimed at addressing bullying behaviour. The focus of these strategies is to educate staff and offenders on identifying bullying behaviours and implementing strategies towards eliminating these activities within the institutions. For example, Nova has provided training sessions to offenders and staff on the issue. GVIW has addressed the issue with the inmate committee and is preparing to hold education sessions. An insert on this issue will be placed in their inmate handbook. Finally, a discussion on this topic is held with women who are new to the institution prior to their move into general population. Best practices will be shared with the other women's institutions.
- The Correctional Officer Training Program will be revised to include a new module specific to bullying and prison subculture in order to assist staff in the prevention, early identification and effective interventions for this type of behaviour. Revisions are expected to be complete by April 2007.

4. Implementation of the CHRC recommendations in relation to gender and culturally specific classification and assessment tools and programs should proceed swiftly, informed by expert advice. In particular, tools and interventions that recognize the specific needs of Aboriginal women should be developed as a matter of urgency, and pathways to the Healing Lodge and out of maximum secure accommodation developed.

CURRENT STATUS

It is critical that offenders are assessed and then assigned a security classification based on an integrated intake assessment process that uses actuarial tools combined with the judgement of experienced and specialized staff, rather than relying on one method of assessment. Research has also confirmed the importance of having *gender-informed* classification tools and programs for women offenders. In recent years, various stakeholders and external reports (in particular, the Public Accounts Committee, in November 2003 and the Canadian Human Rights Report of January 2004) have made recommendations to CSC in support of improved tools and programs in this regard. To this end, a number of tools and programs have been developed:

Tools

The gender-informed Security Reclassification Scale for Women (SRSW) was reviewed by an external expert committee and implemented nationally in September 2005. The three-year field test indicated that the SRSW is valid and reliable for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. All reclassification reviews now use the application of the SRSW as part of that process.

CSC has contracted with external experts to develop a specific *initial* classification instrument for women offenders. This is a multi-year project due to the complexity of instrument development and the need for lengthy field testing to gather sufficient data, given the relatively few women admitted each year. The tool will be designed to ensure it is valid for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women offenders.

Action

- The Research Branch has developed an evaluation framework for the re-validation of the **Security Reclassification Scale for Women**. The evaluation will provide further information regarding the reliability and validity of the classification instrument for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women. Results are anticipated in 2007.
- The development and implementation of the **initial security classification instrument** developed specifically for women offenders, including Aboriginal offenders, is a priority of the Women Offender Sector and CSC. Field testing is expected to commence by December 2006.
- Pending completion of the new instrument, the existing Custody Rating Scale (CRS), which has been validated for women, is used as part of the process to determine a woman offender's initial classification. The security classification of each offender is reviewed regularly throughout the sentence using the SRSW, every six months for maximum security women offenders.

Programs

As outlined in the *Program Strategy for Women Offenders* (2004), programs for women offenders are developed and updated based on gender-informed research, criminogenic needs and women-centred principles.

In March 2005, CSC established a National Committee on Programs for Aboriginal Women to provide direction in the development and implementation of programs to address the specific needs of Aboriginal women.

Development of numerous programs and initiatives for intervention with women offenders involve national working groups which include representation from advocates and operational staff to ensure the needs of women offenders are met.

The *Aboriginal Pathways* program is offered at Fraser Valley Institution in the Pacific Region, where approximately 45% of the incarcerated population is Aboriginal. The Pathways program was also recently implemented at Edmonton Institution for Women, where Aboriginal women represent 55% of the inmate population. An environment is provided where Aboriginal women may access services in a culturally appropriate manner through a continuum of Aboriginal specific programs, activities and spiritual ceremonies from Intake Assessment to community release and finally to warrant expiry.

For Aboriginal women classified at the maximum security level, CSC has implemented a *Healing Readiness Commitment Process*. The process is driven by Aboriginal staff and Elders who work individually with the women to develop a culturally relevant plan to address the specific needs and areas of concern of Aboriginal women, with the goal of reducing their security level in support of an eventual transfer to Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge.

Given the numbers of Aboriginal women with maximum security classification at EIFW, a dedicated space has been set up to afford them the opportunity to participate in spiritual activities on the Secure Unit.

Action

Several new programs are currently under development or in the implementation phase, including:

- Structured Assistance for Women Serving Long Sentences (10+ years) is being developed to better prepare offenders serving long sentences for their adaptation to long-term incarceration. Implementation is planned for October 2007.
- A National Advisory Committee has been established to oversee the development of a Violence Prevention Program for Women Offenders. This program will be designed to meet the needs of women who present patterns of violent behaviour. Implementation is planned for March 2008.
- A Maintenance Program for Aboriginal Women is currently being developed by an Aboriginal organization to offer Aboriginal women post program support in the institution and once they are on release in the community. Implementation is planned for September 2007.
- Plans are under way to revise the current *Spirit of a Warrior Program* which targets violent behaviour, to include substance abuse and gang membership as treatment targets. The Program would thus become a unique holistic spiritually based intervention to better meet the needs of Aboriginal women offenders. Implementation is planned for September 2007.
- A national pre-release program for women offenders entitled *Social Integration Program* (SIP) has been developed and staff training is scheduled for September 2006. This Program will assist women offenders so they can focus on practical issues for early stabilization upon arrival in the community. The Program is designed to include and be responsive to Aboriginal and ethno-cultural women. Full implementation is planned for January 2007.

5. Race and ethnic monitoring of all key areas of prison life within each institution should be established. This should include access to programs and facilities, and all disciplinary measures and classification decisions. Results should be published and any disproportionate patterns investigated.

CURRENT STATUS

Although formal corporate analysis and monitoring of trends generally occurs at the regional and national levels, there are established practices at the women's institutions that assist in identifying concerns and patterns pertaining to race and ethnicity issues. For example, in institutions where women have formed a particular race/ethnic group, e.g., Black Inmates and Friends Association (BIFA), group representatives

attend meetings with the Warden as part of the Inmate Committee, providing a formal forum for raising their specific concerns so that appropriate modifications to institutional practices can be made. As well, the smaller offender population within the women's institutions provides an environment that allows staff to interact with the women and gain insight into concerns and patterns regarding race/ethnic issues.

The number of visible minority women in the women's institutions has historically been low and few race-based concerns have been noted; concerns have generally focused on specific needs around language, diet and appropriate hygiene products. A number of measures are in place to address concerns, including the use of translators and ensuring that requested cultural food/specialty items are made available.

ACTION

- A trend analysis of key areas of institutional life such as program assignments, classification, segregation, releases and revocations, by race/ethnicity, will be conducted within the Women Offender Sector to augment the existing analyses that are undertaken for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offender women populations. Commencing immediately, this information will now be analyzed by race and ethnicity and shared with the local sites for appropriate action.
- An analysis of complaints and grievances is done annually. As of 2006, this information will include a specific analysis on issues raised by visible minority women.
- Issues will continue to be discussed and resolved at the local level.

6. There should be a comprehensive review of the management of difficult or disruptive women, with a view to ensuring that

- **the number of women in maximum security units is reduced, and the criteria for allocating women to those units reviewed to ensure that they are used only for women whose behaviour poses exceptional risks to others, and when other, less restrictive, interventions have failed;**
- **a multi-disciplinary strategy, including mental health support, is devised to provide individual support and case management of women who require additional supervision and intervention outside maximum security conditions;**
- **an expert Advisory Committee is set up to receive and comment on reports on the use of, and conditions for women in, maximum secure and segregation units, including those held under the Management Protocol.**

CURRENT STATUS

Maximum Security

The security classification process is a crucial one for many reasons, including potentially impacting on physical environment, privileges and reintegration potential. Understanding and differentiating offenders based on the risk that they pose to others is essential for both the safety of staff and offenders and for the

operation of the institution. Since the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act and Regulations* came into effect in 1992, CSC is required to assign a security classification of minimum, medium, or maximum to each offender. As outlined in legislation, the security classification is based on an assessment of the offender's escape risk, risk to public safety in the event of an escape and institutional adjustment. This assessment directs the Warden to place a woman within the security environment that provides the appropriate regime of control, supervision, programs and services consistent with her assigned security classification and establishes a plan to assist the woman in reducing her security classification where appropriate and prepare herself for safe release to the community. Within the women's institutions, CSC's policy is to place women with maximum security classification in the Secure Units.

While offenders are required to have their security classifications reviewed annually it should be noted that the security classification reviews of women offenders at the maximum security level are more closely monitored – security classification reviews for these women are conducted every six months in order to assess each woman's level of change and potential for reclassification.

Action

- CSC will continue to review the security classification of women offenders classified at the maximum security level every six months with a view to return them to an open living environment as soon as it is safely possible.
- CSC will continue to reinforce the importance of clearly specifying the changes and progress that each offender must make in order to achieve a reduction in security level and ensuring that the expectations are clearly set out in steps that are manageable, realistic and time-framed.

Multi-Disciplinary Strategy, including Mental Health Support

The women's institutions, with the exception of Okimaw Ohci Healing Lodge, each have a Structured Living Environment House (SLE) that accommodates offenders classified as minimum and medium security who have significant cognitive limitations or mental health concerns. The multidisciplinary mental health treatment team that works in the SLE is responsible for the overall management of each woman's case and works closely with other areas of the institution.

In addition, a multi-disciplinary team exists within each Secure Unit that is responsible for the overall management of the women offenders they accommodate. This team ensures that mental health, program, reintegration and security issues are addressed within the unit and for communicating relevant information to staff in other areas of the institution.

Action

- Each institution will formalize a multi-disciplinary committee, which will include representatives from case management, Health Care, Psychology and Security, to promote the sharing of information and discussion between disciplines on women offenders with mental health concerns. The objective of the committee will be to provide additional assistance and support to the women so that they may maintain or reduce their security level. This is expected to be completed at all sites by Fall 2006.

Expert Advisory Committee

In terms of reviewing conditions for women in segregation, including those on the Management Protocol, CSC has recently established a two-year pilot Segregation Advisory Committee at Edmonton Institution for Women in response to Recommendation 6(b) of the Canadian Human Rights Commission report. This Committee reviews the cases of women in segregation over 30 consecutive days, and all women whose cumulative stay in segregation exceeds 60 days over a one-year period. The review of cases includes women on the Management Protocol. The purpose of the Committee is to identify possible reasonable alternatives to both short- and long-term segregation that are in the context of acceptable risk management.

Membership includes one CSC staff member and two external members with knowledge of, and experience working with, Aboriginal women offenders and knowledge of mental health issues. Two reviews have taken place and an evaluation framework has been developed.

Action

- The Segregation Advisory Committee pilot underway at Edmonton Institution for Women will be reviewed in 2008-09 for its effectiveness and its impact on placement decisions, consideration of alternatives and fairness. As we gain experience with this approach, measures in other institutions may be expanded if it is concluded that value would be added.
- CSC will continue to closely monitor the classifications of maximum security women.

7. Minimum security women should have the opportunity to have increased access to the community.

CURRENT STATUS

As multi-level institutions, minimum and medium security women are accommodated together in a community-living environment. Therefore, CSC faces the challenge of ensuring that there is a differentiation in the management of minimum security women and in terms of community access.

The women's institutions explore potential opportunities with local businesses in their communities to increase the utilization of Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTA's) and Work Releases. From 2004-05 to 2005-06, there was a significant increase in the number of Work Releases for women offenders, and UTA's for program purposes represent the vast majority of all UTA's.

ACTION

- A review of institutional (living) conditions for minimum security women is underway with a focus on providing a living environment that offers increased privileges within the institution in accordance with the law. The review will be completed by the end of December 2006.

- The women's institutions will continue to explore opportunities with local businesses and community representatives to increase women offenders' access to the community through ETA's, UTA's and Work Release Programs in accordance with the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*.

8. Leg irons should not be used on women inmates.

CURRENT STATUS

CSC has a comprehensive policy with respect to the use of restraint equipment, including both hard and soft restraints, within and outside the institutional setting. The policy objective is to ensure the safety of staff, inmates and the public through the appropriate use of restraint equipment as a temporary control measure.

CSC's policy provides for the use of leg irons within very specific parameters including the requirement for an individualized risk assessment that considers the need to ensure the least restrictive measures are utilized taking into account the protection of the public, staff members and offenders. In addition, Primary Workers are trained both in the application of restraints and the need to ensure a woman-centred approach is used while applying restraints.

ACTION

- CSC has commenced a review on the use of leg irons across all women's institutions. The review will be completed by March 2007.

9. The Correctional Service of Canada, together with CORCAN, should draw up a strategy for education and skills training and employment for federally sentenced women, with a view to enhancing employability. Such training should form part of correctional plans.

CURRENT STATUS

In response to recommendations from external reviews, CSC has focused increased attention in the area of employment and employability for women offenders. CSC's Research Branch completed an employment needs survey for both incarcerated women and women on conditional release. The information derived from this survey served as the basis for CSC's development of a draft National Employment Strategy for Women Offenders. The objective of the Employment Strategy is to increase viable and meaningful employment opportunities for women offenders both in the institution and upon release to contribute to their successful reintegration.

ACTION

- Consultation with key stakeholders and CSC staff on the National Employment Strategy is currently underway. Implementation of the strategy is expected by January 2007.

- 10. More efforts should be made to encourage and support family ties. A social worker should be appointed in each institution to act as a family liaison/link worker to support and promote the maintenance of family ties and help with child custody matters. Financial support should be provided to help families on low incomes visit women in CSC institutions.**

CURRENT STATUS

CSC recognizes the value of family and community relationships and that the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships will assist offenders in their reintegration as law-abiding citizens.

CSC has demonstrated strong support for families through a number of initiatives beginning at intake and continuing into the community, including:

- Visiting and Correspondence Programs, including Private Family Visits,
- Temporary Absences for family contact, personal development and compassionate reasons
- The Mother-Child Program for women offenders
- Parenting Skills Program to foster the development or re-development of positive attachments between offenders and their children.

CSC also provides contribution funding to various voluntary sector organizations throughout Canada each year in support of their work to address the needs of families of offenders, in areas such as:

- Transportation of families of offenders to visit institutions
- Counselling to offenders and their families to assist them to understand how institutions function and alleviate the impact of incarceration on family members
- Development of a family-based reintegration tool kit
- Training of volunteers in accompaniment and support approach
- Development of resource material and community networking
- Training of volunteer adults to work with children of incarcerated parents
- Matching of trained adult volunteer mentors with children (grades 2-5) who have one or two parents incarcerated

ACTION

- To better support and assist women offenders in preparing for their return to the community, CSC is exploring the possibility of having a community support worker in each of the women's institutions.

11. The CSC should consult with stakeholders to examine the monitoring mechanisms that currently exist, to determine whether and how they need to be strengthened to provide a national preventive mechanism, as set out in the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture.

CURRENT STATUS

Recommendations related to monitoring mechanisms for the correctional system have been made in various contexts over the past few years, including by the Canadian Human Rights Commission and the Correctional Investigator. As such, these issues have been the subject of discussion between CSC and stakeholders, notably on issues of the segregation review process, the grievance process and an external redress body for federally sentenced offenders.

At this time, CSC will not be pursuing the establishment of further monitoring mechanisms. Our focus will be to continue to strengthen existing mechanisms within the correctional system that are consistent with the principles of a national preventive mechanism, as set out in the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture:

- Correctional Investigator (CI) – He is the Ombudsman for federally sentenced offenders and is independent of CSC. In this role, he serves an important oversight function which examines the treatment of inmates and gives CSC insight into its own performance.
- Citizens' Advisory Committees (CAC's) – These committees consist of community volunteers who provide advice to CSC on correctional operations, act as impartial observers of the day-to-day activities and operations of the Service and liaise with staff and offenders and their representatives, other organizations including criminal justice and advocacy groups and the community to address correctional issues.
- Segregation Advisory Committee – CSC has established this as a pilot at Edmonton Institution for Women to review the cases of women in segregation over 30 consecutive days or 60 cumulative days. Membership includes two external members with experience working with Aboriginal women offenders and knowledge of mental health issues.
- Boards of Investigation – All CSC national Boards of Investigations include a community member from outside CSC who fully participates in both the investigation itself and the Board of Investigation's report.
- External reviews – CSC has demonstrated its openness and accountability through independent reviews of its institutions and operations.

ACTION

Given existing monitoring mechanisms and based on the above, no further action will be pursued at this time.