

Little Hoover Commission
Women and Parole
April 22, 2004

Introductory Remarks
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I am pleased to come before you to discuss women's programs in the California Department of Corrections. And I applaud this Commission for taking on the issue of women's programming needs and its relationship to maintaining positive family ties and reducing re-incarceration for female offenders.

CDC agrees with Dr. Bloom's summary regarding why gender matters. We recognize the differences between male and female inmates in our operation of gender specific programming for female inmates and parolees.

While we may not have everything we need, we have achieved a great deal with limited resources. For example:

- We are the national leader in women and children's programs for inmates and parolees with substance abuse issues.
 - Our Forever Free Program for example, has a successful track record with 74.3 percent of those who graduate from the program holding down a job, once they are out on parole,
 - But most importantly only 20.4 percent of those who graduate from Forever Free are re-incarcerated.
 - The Community Prisoner Mother Program allows the department to house women inmates who have children in facilities that are more conducive to developing a strong relationship outside of a prison setting.
- We have Case Management Specialists on site at each prison to provide family related services to inmates and referrals for their families.
- We operate Visitor Centers at each prison to facilitate visiting.
 - These centers are designed to help the families and friends of female inmates visit them at the remote locations.

- **At CCWF and VSPW, we operate a Joint Venture employment program.**

This gives the women an opportunity to work in the institutions and learn marketable job skills.

We have educational opportunities available to inmates as well, including:

- **Basic English and English as a Second Language programs**
- **General Education programs that lead to a GED.**

Are we doing enough? No.

Are we doing what we can do within the resources we have available - Absolutely.

Can we do more in the future? Most assuredly.

Even with these extreme fiscal deficits, California Department of Corrections has not proposed cuts to any of the women's programs. We have deactivated one women's prison, NCWF, (in part due to the drug treatment programs this department and the state has implemented in recent years) yet we haven't cut any of the program opportunities for women.

CDC currently houses approximately 9500 female inmates in 4 prisons, 1 conservation camp, and 5 mother/child community treatment facilities, and supervises approximately 12,000 female parolees.

The management of the female population differs significantly from the male population in terms of their needs while incarcerated, and upon their release to the community on parole.

- **Female inmates and parolees generally have a lower rate of commitment to prison for violent offenses,**
- **Exhibit significantly less violent behavior in prison than males.**
- **They tend to suffer more from depression and isolation.**
- **They have greater medical needs**

These are all identifiable differences that we as a state must address. And we will.

While I have only been director for less than two months I have already begun the process to reorganize the management of this department so that we are not so “silo-ed” in geographic and branch operations. I am reorganizing this department to be more mission focused and program oriented. As part of that reorganization I intend to assign a person at the assistant director’s level in my office whose primary focus is women inmates and the programs they need.

As I mentioned before several gender specific programs already exist for female inmates and parolees and you should have already gotten the background information from my department on those programs. Those programs provide opportunities for female inmates and parolees to address issues such as:

- Substance abuse treatment,**
- Effective parenting,**
- Anger management,**
- Health care, AIDS/HIV,**
- Recovery from physical, sexual, and emotional abuse,**

How successful we are in providing these types of programs to female inmates will determine how successful they will be as they reintegrate into their families and our communities.

If we want to be effective in preventing crime and preserving public safety, the best thing we can do is ensure that offenders, both female and male, who leave our prisons have the tools they need to successfully reintegrate into society and not victimize another person.

With the help of experts, I will use best practices to develop a plan with specific programs, goals, and objectives, to better address the specific needs of providing effective tools for female inmates and parolees. This plan will be completed within the next 12 months.

As we develop those programs we will consult with the experts in the field such as Stephanie Covington, Barbara Bloom and Barbara Owens and as well as our colleagues in local government and other states. We don’t have all the answers, yet, but we are beginning to move in the right direction and I thank you for bringing focus to this issue.