Managing Female Inmates

Issues

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Managing Female Inmates
Issue No. 1: Strategic Planning for Female Inmate Facilities and Programs

DESCRIPTION:

- The growth of the female inmate population within the FDOC has strained the physical plant and program capacity of the units housing female offenders. Lowell CI presently houses over 40 percent of the female offenders housed in the Institution Division of the FDOC.

- The increase in population has resulted in the construction of the Annex at Lowell and renovation of other units to accommodate the growth. It is anticipated that as many as 1,500 more offenders will be housed at Lowell CI in the next two to three years.

- There is currently no apparent master plan or strategic plan on how to manage the impact of this growth on either the physical plant or the programs within the facilities housing female inmates.

- For example, the medical facilities are totally inadequate to provide health care services to the growing population. It is apparent that the growth will significantly impact other areas of the institution in the immediate future: dietary, classification, maintenance, etc.

- The existing idleness due to lack of programming will significantly increase without planning.
Managing Female Inmates
Issue No. 1: Strategic Planning for Female Inmate Facilities and Programs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The Department should initiate a process to develop a strategic plan on the management of the female inmates within the Department. This analysis should include, at a minimum, the following elements:
  - projection of female inmate population growth;
  - capacity needs by classification level;
  - functionality of the facilities and appropriateness to house and manage female inmates;
  - assessment of medical and mental health services and programs;
  - assessment of potential alternatives to prison to manage population growth, i.e. work release, electronic detention, etc.
  - analysis of the staff training needs in view of growth of the female inmate population; and
  - other issues to be identified by the planning team.
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Issue No. 2: Working with Female Inmate Training Programs

DESCRIPTION:

- The Department's pre-service and in-service training programs do not include any modules related to the special issues and management strategies that accompany the incarceration of female inmates. The only exception is the training related to PREA compliance.

- The assessment team observed that there is a need for specialized training for staff at the female offender institutions to better prepare them for dealing with the issues, environment, and challenges that accompany working in a female offender institution. The high turnover of staff, the high incidence of cases involving over-familiarity, cases involving staff/offender sexual relations, etc., are indicators of the need for this program. Also, the assessment team witnessed instances of what many would term unprofessional and demeaning interaction between staff and inmates.
Managing Female Inmates
Issue No. 2: Working with Female Inmate Training Programs

RECOMMENDATIONS:

♦ Many correctional jurisdictions have addressed this concern by developing a training module that focuses on “Working with the Female Inmates.” This training module should be developed, implemented, and required as mandatory training for all staff assigned to female inmates facilities.

♦ Jurisdictions have found that after initiating this training program turnover rates have dropped, critical incidents were reduced, cases of over-familiarity were reduced, etc.

♦ Examples of these programs are available from several other large jurisdictions, outside consultants, and the National Institute of Corrections.
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Issue No. 3: Placement of TEA's on Unsupervised Assignments
Prior to Certification

DESCRIPTION:

- The assessment team found that virtually all new correctional officers at Lowell CI were assigned to regular posts without adequate supervision by a certified officer for a period of up to six months prior to entering pre-service training and obtaining the required FDLE certification.

- Institutional staff reported this was necessary due to the rapid expansion of the institution and the turnover rate of existing correctional officers.

- This was found to a degree at other female inmate facilities reviewed, but not at the level found at Lowell CI.
Managing Female Offenders
Issue No. 3: Placement of TEA’s on Unsupervised Assignments
Prior to Certification

RECOMMENDATIONS:

♦ The expansion of the facility staff combined with the high turnover rate among correctional officers has resulted in a situation that requires review and corrective action by the Bureau of Staff Development, the regional training manager, and the Office of the Deputy Secretary of Institutions.

♦ An acceleration of training for this facility is essential in order to reduce the use of TEA’s assuming regular posts within the institution. This practice contributes to the ongoing high turnover at the facility.
Managing Female Offenders
Issue No. 4: Use of Controlled Medications

DESCRIPTION:
◆ The assessment team found that the delivery of health care and the staff complement within the health care and mental health care functions to be more than adequate for the present population. The facility, however, was required to use contractual and part-time health care staff to maintain a full complement of staff. This was especially noticeable in the staffing of psychiatrists. It was reported that the four allotted psychiatrists were all contractual.
◆ One of the obvious results of this situation was in the use of controlled medications at Lowell. It was reported that over 900 (or 41 percent) women are Psych III which indicates the use of controlled medications. The supervising physicians at Lowell and the Departments medical staff both acknowledge this is excessive.
◆ National experts in correctional health care report they would expect no greater than 20-25 percent of the population of a female offender institution to be on controlled medications.
Managing Female Offenders
Issue No. 4: Use of Controlled Medications

RECOMMENDATIONS:

◆ The Department should engage an independent medical expert with an expertise in correctional psychiatry to review the prescription practices at Lowell and other female inmate facilities.

◆ The Department also should review practices in this area at other facilities within the agency to determine if this situation exists elsewhere and, if so, conduct a review similar to that suggested at Lowell.
Working with Female Inmates
Issue No. 5: Incidents Involving Over-Familiarity/Sexual Relations

DESCRIPTION:

- The assessment team has concerns that the number of cases involving over-familiarity between staff and inmates and cases involving sexual behavior are excessive at Lowell. This concern arose after a review of past and present investigations as provided by the inspector assigned to the institution and through discussions with the supervising inspector for Region III.

- The assessment team believed the culture of the institution did not sufficiently discourage these types of situations. For example, during our tour of the institution there was an apparent lack of concern over the privacy of female inmates while male employees and visitors were within the units. The team observed inappropriate comments directed at inmates by staff. The physical plant, especially H-Dorm, does not lend itself to maintaining the privacy of inmates while balancing the security needs of the institution.
Working with Female Inmates

Issue No. 5: Incidents Involving Over-Familiarity/Sexual Relations

RECOMMENDATIONS:

◆ The leadership of the Department and especially the institution should take immediate steps to reduce the number of situations involving over-familiarity and sexual behavior among staff and inmates. As noted by those interviewed, every case is considered excessive and all efforts should be directed to eliminate this problem.

◆ The Department should engage external experts to conduct a “cultural assessment” of the facility in order to determine the prevailing attitudes of staff and inmates toward this issue and to determine the likely steps necessary to remediate the situation long term. The external experts also should complete a more thorough assessment of the institution as it relates to the management of female offenders.

◆ Inspectors reported that there have been suspected instances of less than full cooperation by institutional staff in reviews of these types of cases. The Department and institutional managers should immediately take steps to correct this problem or the appearance of this problem.
Working with Female Inmates

Issue No. 6: Supervisory and Administrative Staff

DESCRIPTION:

- Multiple sources reported that the supervisory and administrative staff of the institution were not frequently visible or observed within the secure sections of the facility. This absence, if confirmed, erodes the influence that these key administrators have on the culture and tone of the institution while limiting their understanding of the issues facing the institution on a daily basis.
**RECOMMENDATION:**

- The regional director and staff from the Office of Institutions should immediately review this situation and initiate corrective action where appropriate.
Working with Female Inmates

Issue No. 7: Maintenance of Critical Facilities at Lowell

DESCRIPTION:

◆ The assessment team observed that the majority of the facilities at Lowell CI were in excellent condition. The Annex, in particular, is composed of newer structures and was well maintained and clean. However, other critical areas of the facility were in serious disrepair. Of particular concern was H-Dorm and the Medical/Classification building.

◆ The assessment team found H-Dorm unacceptable for the housing of chronically ill and disabled inmates. The team also found the maintenance and sanitation practices in H-Dorm unacceptable.

◆ The Medical/Classification building suffers from serious problems with its roof such that it impacts the health and safety of those who work in the building.
**Recommendations:**

- The FDOC administration should immediately assess the feasibility of using H-Dorm given its present condition and design. The dorm requires major repair and renovation to bring it to acceptable standards for housing chronically ill and disabled offenders.

- The FDOC should initiate steps to permanently repair the roofs of the Medical/Classification building.

- As noted in Issue No. 1, an assessment of the long-term needs of the institution in the area of medical facilities needs to be undertaken.
Working with Female Inmates
Issue No. 8: Elimination of the Boot Camp

DESCRIPTION:

- The boot camp program for youthful female offenders is affiliated with Lowell CI, but is under-utilized given its capacity and staffing.

- During the site visit, the program had two participants. A review of documents indicate that the program has a capacity of 28, but has had only a maximum of four participants during the last year.

- The present roster indicates 13 staff are assigned to the program.
Working with Female Inmates
Issue No. 8: Elimination of the Boot Camp

RECOMMENDATION:

- The Department should eliminate or consolidate with other programs the youthful female offender boot camp at Lowell CI due to its ongoing under-utilization.