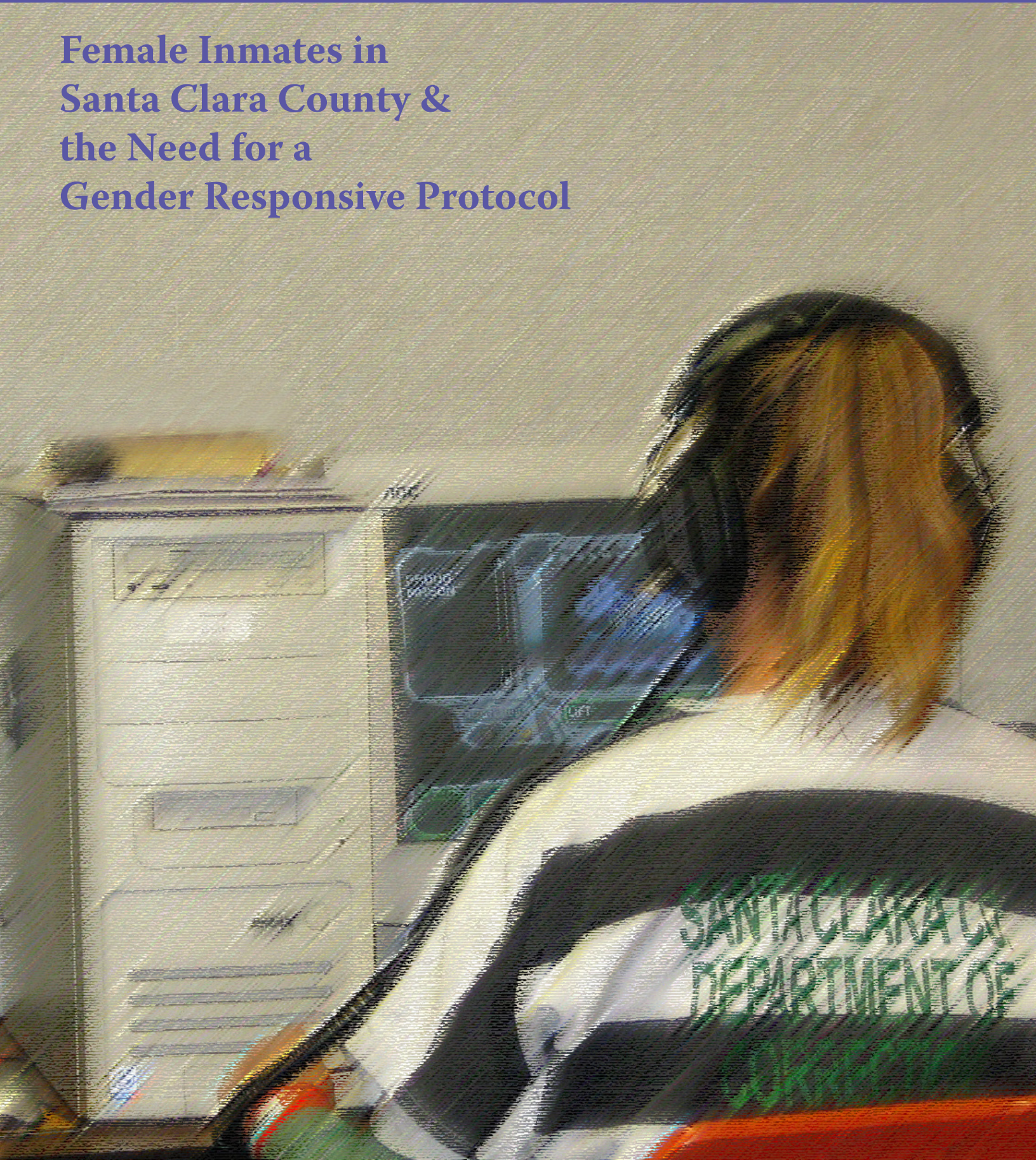


SCC COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

REPORT BY WOMEN'S JAIL MONITORS

**Female Inmates in
Santa Clara County &
the Need for a
Gender Responsive Protocol**



ABOUT CSW, DOC AND OWP

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established in 1973 and is the official advisory body to the Board of Supervisors on all issues relating to women and girls. As official jail monitors for female inmates, CSW commits all monitors to complete the OWP Monitoring Training, write summaries of observations, participate in annual monitoring review with OWP and DOC, and collaborate with OWP in the preparation of an Annual Report and presentation.

The Department of Correction (DOC) oversees the 5th largest jail system in California and is among the 20 largest systems in the United States. The DOC mission is to serve and protect the citizens of Santa Clara County and the State of California by detaining the people under its supervision in a safe and secure environment while providing for their humane care, custody, and control. To support the monitoring of female inmates the DOC commits to provide a DOC Liaison to OWP and CSW, to approve clearance for all monitors, facilitate observation tours, provide data to OWP and CSW, participate in the Annual Monitoring Review and provide feedback on the annual report and presentation.

The Office of Women's Policy (OWP) was developed in 1988 in the spirit of collaboration between County and the community and is a leading voice in Silicon Valley on the needs of women and girls, serving as a catalyst for awareness and action on current and emerging issues that impact women's health, safety, and security. Through analysis, research, and strategic collaboration, OWP works to ensure that programs, services, systems, and policy support women's leadership, full equality and advancement in the home, at work, and in the community. As partners to ensure successful monitoring of female inmates, OWP commits to providing training for all monitors, facilitates security clearance for monitors, maintains a database of all monitoring, hosts annual monitoring reviews, and prepares the final and report and presentation with CSW.

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“In the last 25 years, the number of women and girls caught in the criminal justice system has skyrocketed; many have been swept up in the “war on drugs” and subject to increasingly punitive sentencing policies for non-violent offenders. There are now more than 200,000 women behind bars and more than one million on probation and parole. Many of these women struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and histories of physical and sexual abuse. Few get the services they need. The toll on women, girls, and their families is devastating.”

*- American Civil Liberties Union,
Women & the Criminal Justice System*

The following report summarizes the efforts to date and findings of the Jail Monitors. The MOU that established monitoring was designed with the intent to document the needs of female inmates by using a gender-responsive lens. While other monitoring efforts exist they are often complaint-based or fail in other ways to recognize all the pieces that must come together to successfully operate the 5th largest county jail system in California. Monitoring for female inmates is also not about individuals (good or bad) but allows for a deeper understanding of the systems, policies and practices. It is based on a collaborative effort to support good governance and the efficient use of public funds. Further, it is structured to support gender-responsive, trauma-informed, recovery-oriented systems analysis.

The National Institute of Corrections affirms that strategies guided by gender-responsive, culturally competent, trauma-informed and recovery-minded programs, environments, and staff training are the best practices for treating and working with female inmates. Research shows that when implemented, these gender-responsive strategies will not only improve working conditions for staff and living conditions for inmates, but they will also increase the likelihood that women will successfully re-enter their community.

In 2005, the Board of Supervisors approved funding for the first gender analysis of a county jail anywhere in the country. The award winning initiative and the 2008 final report titled “Breaking Cycles, Rebuilding Lives” provided key recommendations to the Supervisors for improving programs and services for female offenders, including information about their re-entry needs. While some changes initially occurred, there has been limited progress on implementing key recommendations.

Two major policy changes occurred since the release of the initial report that impacted the momentum for a focus on women at Elmwood. In 2011 oversight of the jail facility was returned to the Office of the Sheriff and a significant amount of transition time was required for this major shift. Additionally in 2011, Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. signed Assembly Bill (AB) 109 and AB 117—historic legislation to help reduce the numbers of low-level inmates cycling in and out of state prisons. A considerable amount of planning, funding and staffing has been allocated for the implementation of these efforts.

Since this time, the Office of Women’s Policy and the Commission on the Status of Women have continued to develop and implement initiatives to help address the

women's in-custody and re-entry needs. This includes several in-custody programs and services: including support groups; GED materials; a nursing chair privacy screen, breast pumps and other supplies for nursing inmates, a television with videos and materials for higher security level women to access programs; the children's book recording project; on-going meditation classes and funding for an environmental chaplain to teach sustainable gardening and meditation for both the men and women. In FY 2012, the Office of Women's Policy implemented the "Skills to Succeed" Pilot program which was a \$400,000 workforce initiative that placed 57 women in non-traditional jobs, full and part-time employment, and enrollment in community college. This effort confirmed that when given access to vocational programs and job training, women are interested and will successfully pursue careers in non-traditional sectors. Further, despite positive feedback and outcomes, these pilots have been limited one-time efforts.

In 2012, concerned about the overall lack of focus and the minimal progress to address and improve programs, services and conditions for women offenders at Elmwood, the Commission on the Status of Women began discussion with the Department of Correction to revisit the original recommendations from the "Breaking Cycles" report. In 2013, the Department of Correction, Commission on the Status of Women and the Office of Women's Policy established an MOU for what is believed to be the first County Jail Monitoring Program in California for a Women's Facility in order to maintain a consistent focus on the needs of female offenders and for the development of an annual report on the progress being made. The Office of Women's Policy provides the initial training for jail monitors and coordinates this effort which to date has trained 18 Commissioners and community volunteers to conduct "observation tours," focus groups and interviews with staff and female inmates.

Through this work the Jail Monitors have achieved greater understanding of the issues experienced by and impacting women at the Elmwood facility. Subsequently, the Jail Monitors have formulated solutions that can help alleviate the needs and support the rehabilitation of incarcerated women as they prepare to reenter their communities, and for a majority of them, reunify with their children.

Guiding by an overarching goal to adopt a system-wide gender-responsive protocol, Jail Monitors envision an environment that fuels cultural competence and respect between inmates and staff, increases safety, and enhances successful re-entry into the community.

Recommendations based on the first analysis of monitoring include implementation of the following:

1. Explore the feasibility of staffing the women's section as an autonomous facility
2. Develop and implement a department-wide gender-responsive protocol
3. Gender-responsive training for all staff beginning at the Academy level
4. Gender-responsive, trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, culturally appropriate programming and services for inmates
5. Implement a classification system validated by gender
6. Ensure that all inmates leave the facility with an exit plan that includes preparation and orientation about support programs for re-entry

The most urgent recommendation is that the DOC considers reorganizing the Women's facility at Elmwood to allow it to operate as its own entity focused on creating gender-specific structures, protocols and programs for women inmates. It is worth noting that although the MOU was signed in September of 2013, it wasn't until a female lieutenant was assigned to the women's facility with greater scope of authority in January of 2014 that monitors began to make headway with the Jail Monitoring Program. The role of the lieutenant must be strengthened and given increased authority over correctional staff in order to implement changes that will improve conditions and outcomes for women at Elmwood.

The following highlights the efforts to date and summarizes the findings of the Jail Monitors.

Background: Gender Matters

An enduring question remains that should be central to all planning and programming for correctional systems: "How will this decision impact women?" It is an often overlooked question but one that should be applied to virtually every aspect of incarceration: from booking, to classification, to programming and finally, to exit planning. This question must be applied to even the most basic details, from uniform design to the number of feminine hygiene products offered to women. The information in this first annual report which includes the input of the women themselves, highlights the importance of this question to the effective management of the correctional and rehabilitative systems.

Who are the Women at Elmwood?

A Demographics Snapshot

A snapshot of Elmwood women's population affirms gender-responsive theory that says that women's paths to criminality are different from men's, that women are relational, and that much of women's incarceration is largely a result of the criminalization of addiction and untreated complex trauma. While AB109 has affected the population, the women at Elmwood still reflect a low-

level, non-violent profile. The average length of stay has increased from 110 to 150 days and monitors are more likely to meet women with sentences measured in years, not months. Regardless of their charges, many of these women have histories of domestic violence and childhood abuse. Many are mothers and most mothers are the custodial parent.

*"I miss my kids. I just really miss them."
- Inmate to Monitor*

The daily census for female inmates through the years has fluctuated but in general has remained between 500 and 600 inmates. Between 2007 and 2010, the female population decreased by 15%, but the number of female inmates is on the rise again and last stood at 531 inmates in 2013. As the DOC has stated repeatedly and the latest Jail Needs Assessment notes, the facilities at Elmwood are not large enough to adequately accommodate the increased numbers of offenders, including the women.

The ethnic breakdown of inmates through the years has remained similar in that the numbers of Hispanic and Caucasian inmates have been the most prevalent numbers. As demonstrated in Table B, the population numbers in terms of race and ethnic background reflect that Hispanic and African American inmates are disproportionately represented as compared to the proportion of these groups in the Santa Clara County population.

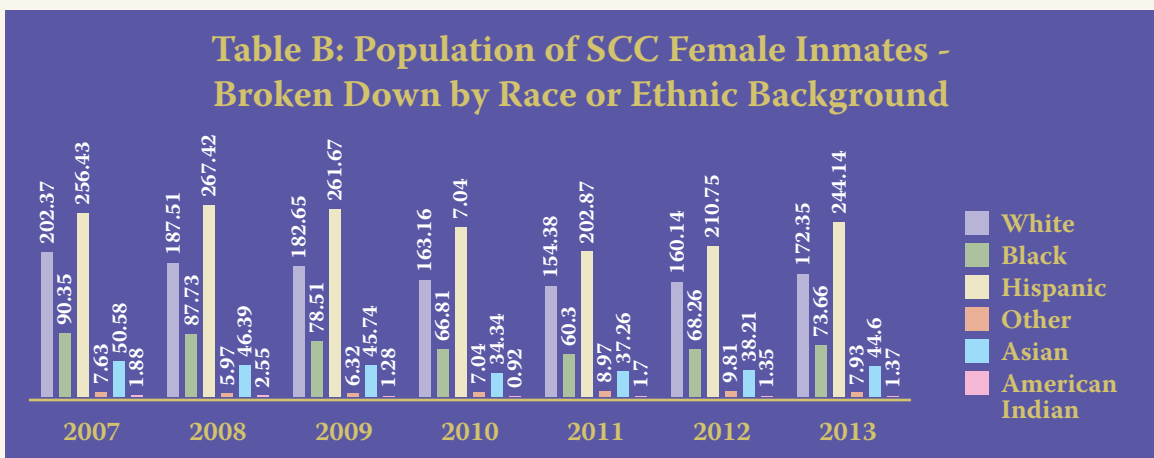
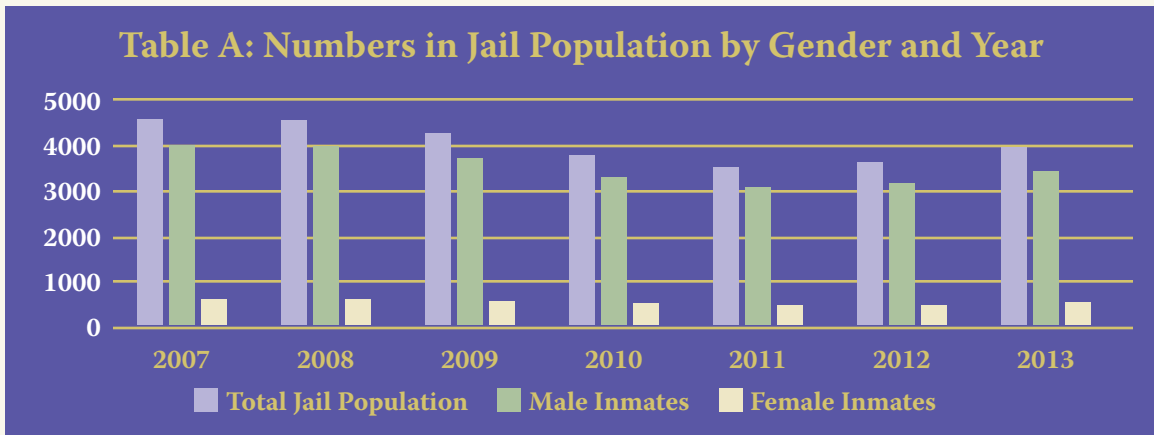


Table C illustrates that most inmates have been between the ages of 25-34, followed by women between the ages of 35-44. This drives home the finding from the “Breaking Cycles” report that female inmates are more likely to be custodial parents and the impact to the whole family is both profound and different when a mother is incarcerated. Effective programming that addresses the relational needs and realities of women should include family reunification best practices.

Another troubling trend in the age distribution of inmates is that there have been increases in the population of inmates who are 55 and older. This may have something to do with the influx of AB 109 inmates, but may also suggest that there may be conditions that are increasing the number of older women in the community who are being incarcerated. Addressing the needs of our aging population demands further study.

Programming

“I have gone through the same Re-Entry Correction Program curriculum three times, even though I am not learning new information, it is better than sleeping all day.”
- Inmate to Monitor at Monthly Monitor Visit

DOC provided all programming data reviewed by monitors. Overall, for both genders, the majority of the inmate population are not receiving any kind of programming. Only a stark

19% of all inmates are participating in programs. According to Table D, out of the total population of inmates, of both genders who are participating in programs, females are sorely underrepresented at only 13%. However, 2014 data provided by DOC Programming indicates a 6% increase with 19% of women participating in programs.

“I had forgotten about the beauty. About the goodness of people. Tonight I felt the beauty. Thank you, thank you for coming and sharing this (program) with us.”
- Inmate Participant in Meditation Pilot at Elmwood, June 2014

Issues of Equity: Programming

As a percentage of the total female population at Elmwood, female inmates receiving programming in 2013 were less than 20%, and this percentage has varied only slightly since 2007 as seen in Table E. One might expect that with the realignment funding from AB 109 there might be an increase in the proportion of inmates who are receiving programming, but the numbers actually show the opposite. The percentage of female inmates who are in programs has decreased since 2007.

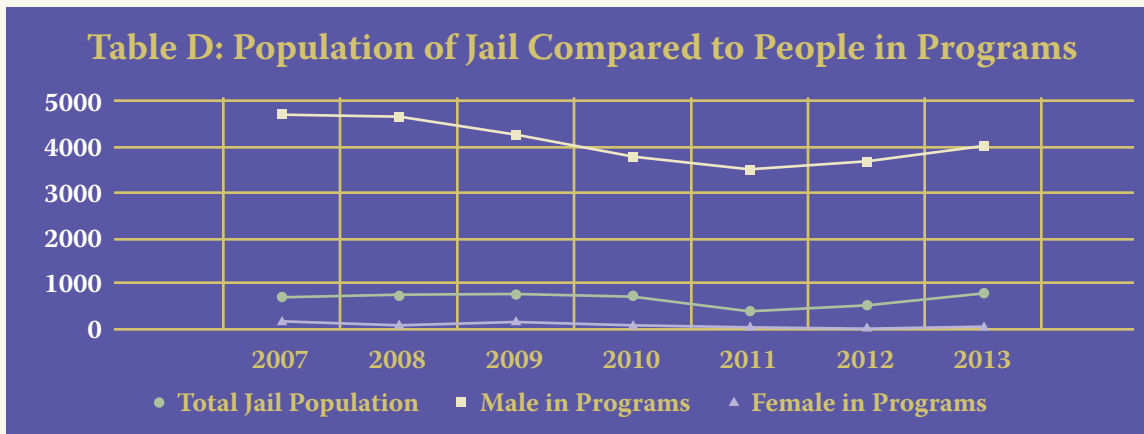
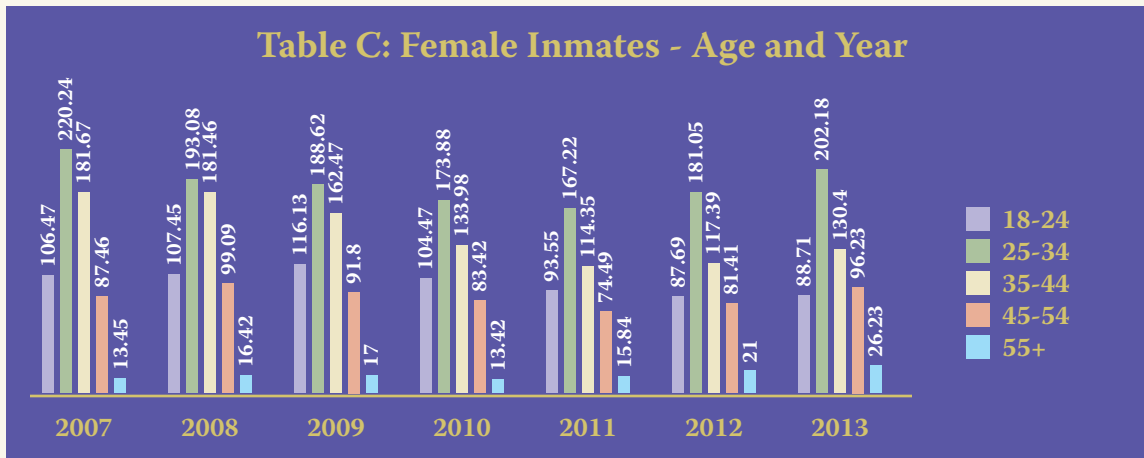
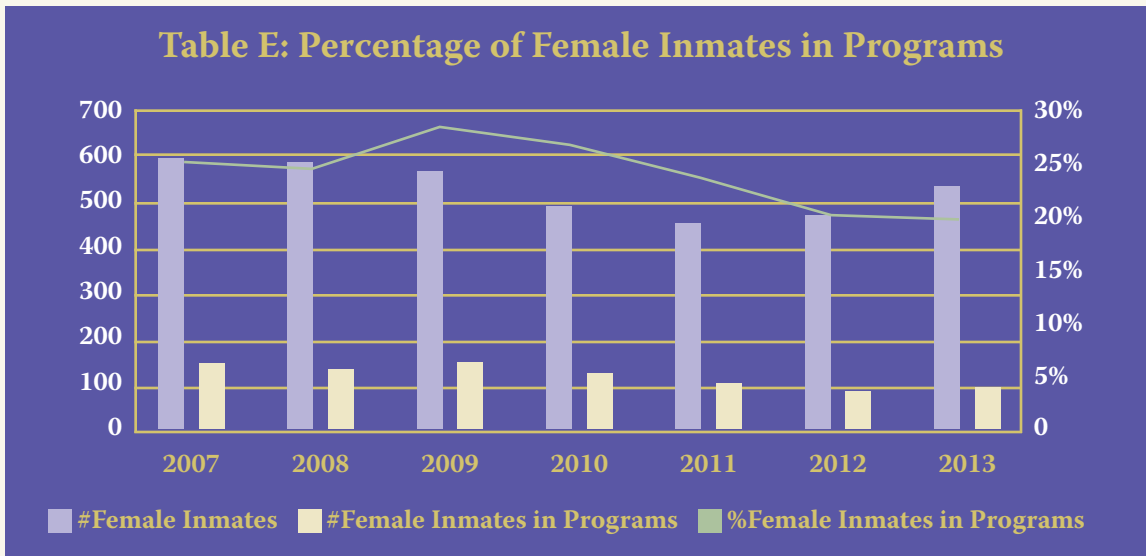


Table E: Percentage of Female Inmates in Programs



Through an examination of women’s programs, there is often confusion between the notion that women are receiving “equal” access to programs and services versus giving women “equitable” programs and services. It is true that both men and women at Elmwood have access to programs but through our observation, what is offered to men is typically both higher in quantity and quality. One example of this comes out of the highly regarded Sustainability Program at Elmwood. Men and women have equal access to the program but monitors observed the outcome brought significant improvements on the men’s side to “Candlestick” which included an improved sports field, refurbished exercise equipment and landscaping. The women’s side received landscaping improvements and a new flower bed around the “Flag Pole.” This program is a good example of the importance of innovative collaboration but must go one step further to ensure that women have equal benefit in addition to equal access. Some of this could be addressed in FY16 with the development of the women’s “Healing Garden” which will include a labyrinth and meditation area to further support the success of the ongoing medication classes, too.

Other examples of this inequity are evident in vocational programming which for the men includes such offerings as automotive repairs and wood and metal work, while the vocational program frequently highlighted for the women is the Embroidery Program which includes digital screening, sewing machines and the development of business plans.

It should be expected that any programs allowing the women to leave their confined sleeping quarters will be well-received. However, more attention should be placed on whether programs meet the specific needs of women, especially vocational programs that can put women on a path to better paying jobs and economic security after release.

“I have done their classes. TWICE. I need something different.”

“Ni siquiera hay nada para leer en español. Nada. Si pudiéramos tener incluso algunos libros, algo que leer para pasar algo de tiempo...”
 (“There’s not even anything to read in Spanish. Nothing. If we could have even some books, something to read to pass some time...”)
 -Inmates to Monitors during Monthly Monitor Visits

Table E demonstrates similar trends regarding female inmates’ underrepresentation with less than 20% receiving programming in 2013. What is surprising, however, is that despite 2011 realignment funding from AB109, the percentage of women receiving programming from 2011 to 2013 decreased slightly.

According to data provided by DOC Programming, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014, Elmwood offered a total of 29 programs, of which 27 were available to men, 12 to women, and 10 overlapped for both groups, of that, a total of 802 were served in programs.

While conversing with the women at Elmwood and through an assessment of the current program offerings, monitors learned that the majority of programs offered to the women do not address their specific needs. Travis (1998) notes the distinct differences for female offenders, including victimization from sexual and physical abuse, primary responsibility for children, and women offenders are more likely than men to have become addicted to drugs, have mental illnesses, and unemployment prior to incarceration. Programming must shift from a one-size fits all model to establish a criteria for services that take into account women’s current needs and life circumstances.

Issues of Equity: Classification & Programming

The women at Elmwood are divided into different security levels, ranging from minimum, medium, to maximum security and Protective Custody. Program accessibility ranges and is based on the security level the Classification Department assigns to each inmate. Their classification system has never been validated by gender and is a complex analysis including two key factors: the crime committed and behavior while at Elmwood. Much analysis shows that programming has better recidivism outcomes when applied to higher risk and higher security inmates yet minimum security women have more accessibility to programs compared to medium security women. Maximum security women are allowed only one (1) hour of recreational time every other day and it is common for the women to refer to this time as “programming”. Monitors learned that “programming” does not necessarily mean to engage in an actual rehabilitation program; rather, it can mean a variety of activities allowed to an inmate such as a shower, a phone call, or spending time out of her jail cell.

Protective Custody women have access to two programs: Roadmap to Recovery, a self-led journaling program and occasional classes offered by the Chaplain. One highly regarded program is the PACT program, which includes an extended contact visit between parent and child. Unfortunately, PACT is not available to women in Protective Custody. This was interesting to learn, especially since research shows that approximately 78% of incarcerated women are the primary custodial parent.

A recurring theme heard from the women at Elmwood was the need for programs specifically tailored to their needs. Just as important was the need to provide programs that are aligned to their sentencing. During one visit monitors spoke with a woman in minimum security who was serving a two-year sentence and preparing to reunify with her daughter. She indicated that she had gone through the same Re-Entry Correction Program three times. Rather than spend her time watching TV or sleeping, she opted to go through the same program multiple times.

Aside from a lack of programs that are conducive to their needs, many women explained that they also do not have a clear exit plan once they are released from jail. This is a critical area that must be addressed. For example, it is especially important that a victim of domestic violence receive a proper exit plan, including safety planning and clear steps to move to greater self-sufficiency. Without this, women may have little choice but to return to an abusive situation. Effective support can better ensure the wellbeing of the inmate, her family, and of the community as a whole.

As the pilot efforts for programs led by OWP and CSW have demonstrated, providing programs and services with a gender-responsive framework provides the foundation for a new model that takes into account the realities of women, creating programs that do support their realities and better prepare women for life on the outside.

According to the 2012 Recidivism Study of the Santa Clara County Department of Corrections by Husky & Associates, there is a sense of urgency for the County to invest in inmate programs that reduce recidivism to make the community a safer place to live and work. The report further highlights that individuals who participated in treatment were significantly less likely to be rearrested or reconvicted at 6, 12, and 24 months compared to similar individuals who did not participate in treatment. Therefore, as the investment in programs is developed and implemented it is imperative that a gender-responsive framework is used.

“I want to get my GED but we cannot in here (protective custody). We do not have NA or AA or anything. I have been here for 2 years already. I should be taking college classes and I cannot even get my GED.”

*-Inmates to Monitors
during Monthly Monitor Visits*

Issues of Equity: An Aging Facility

The women’s facility was established in 1964 and during observation tours the monitors take into account the state of the facility, ensuring that it is clean and well maintained. For the most part, the facility is kept fairly clean. There have been instances where certain cells in the medium and high security area need extra attention. Issues that monitors bring to the attention of the Lieutenant following tours are quickly addressed and monitors are able to see results at their next visit. In addition to the maintenance of the facility, monitors also check if resources for crisis and community services, including grievance procedures, are visibly displayed and accessible to the women. Monitors have seen some posters during visits, but this is an area that can be improved.

The facility was never designed to accommodate the populations it now must house. The before-mentioned examples (page 6) demonstrate how facility inequities manifest themselves in stark differences for the men and women: sustainability projects that look like candlestick v. a flagpole; exercise equipment that is new or old; vocational training in a training warehouse or an embroidery class in a refurbished dining hall. Still another example of inequity is the library system. For men this includes a well-stocked, open-spaced library with daily hours of

operation. For women it is another repurposed storage room with limited weekly access.

There is even greater consequence when it comes to the facility and meeting the mental health needs of the women. Consider data that staff shared from a three-week assessment of mental health referrals noted 109 requests from women and 27 from men.

There is currently one inpatient psychiatric unit to house both male and female inmates. It is called 8A and located at the Main Jail. Staff consensus is that the 8A unit has increased significantly, trending upwards of 45 patients, when in the past it has been as low as 15 to 20. Monitors are concerned that this could mean that both our male and female mentally ill inmates are getting released from intensive care sooner than they should. Monitors learned from staff that the trickle-down effect of that is when women are discharged to special management (mental health) housing from 8A and are not as stable as they could be they have only two places to go to at Elmwood: W4C2 and W4A. Most of our very ill go to W4C2 because they have committed violent crimes, have tried to assault an officer or done something similar to be labeled as a “problem.” These are the level 4 inmates so they have the highest classification. The comparison of this type of placement would be sending a man from 8A directly to 4A, 4B, or 4C at main jail who has severe mental illness. (Staff noted it happens but less frequently as they have ensured there are no overflows anymore. Since this change incidents have dramatically declined.) If you compare these two populations they are horribly unequal but are housed in almost the same exact way. Men at main jail also have 8B to go to which is like a step down unit similar to W4A and 8C which, although not explicitly labeled as a mental health unit, houses the mentally ill. However, men also have dorm-style mental health housing. In this housing Level 2 Special Management inmates live in dorm-style settings. **There is nothing like this for the women and this must be addressed with any new facility design.** Women under mental health special management are only housed in W4C2 or W4A. Monitors encountered at least three older women who appeared to have Parkinson’s and Dementia and they are housed in mental health housing but without special attention to address dementia type illnesses. Another relevant note in terms of housing is that dementing and older male inmates are typically housed in the infirmary or in a dorm-style setting in the south jail. At main jail they essentially have an “old man’s dorm.” Nothing like that exists for the women and many of the women with mental health issues are essentially set up for failure simply because there is no space available to be down-classed.

While space to down-class is an issue, there are other options. Reconsidering treatment that could be done in small groups (perhaps 3-4 women at a time) would be beneficial for women in W4C2. They have the most unremitting symptoms of mental illness that are pervasive, from a

psychological perspective. These symptoms do not mean that they are going to be violent when in custody so there is potential that they could be out together and do just fine. Psychological research endorses that both social skills training and social support benefit patients with psychotic illnesses. When women go from 8A to W42 it has potential to exacerbate symptoms from confinement and lack of interaction because it is similar to an “administrative segregation” type housing. Although other inmates are around they are unable to have face to face contact or be out with others. If they are then released to programs as many of them are, they have trouble with interpersonal boundaries and social skills because they have been isolated the entire time. However, if they could have controlled exposure to others it would ease them into the reality of the community and has potential to increase success. Since women are also more relational, peer support and accountability from peers is sometimes the key to recovery and treatment compliance. If one woman in a group disapproves the other sometimes follow and then they work to problem-solve and support their peers. Also, in terms of allocation of mental health resources, staff would be able to see many more patients in a group, freeing up their time for other mental health services. Further, by providing these women with treatment similar to what they would get in the community and when they get to a program it supports a trauma-informed way to set them up for success and avoids triggers for common ailments such as PTSD.

Effects of an aging facility are far-reaching, particularly for women with mental health issues. Early intervention and detection of symptoms, behaviors and need for medication with close monitoring from mental health staff has the potential to stop or at least decrease adverse outcomes (pepper spray incidents, officer injuries, worker’s compensation, attrition of staff). For both the inmates and the staff a lot of physical, financial and emotional harm could be prevented if some additional support and rearrangement of things occurs. Addressing mental health needs could be done more effectively than how it is being done and there is an unequal way in which men and women are managed.

Monitoring Components: Interaction with Staff

During visits monitors converse with the Department of Correction staff to learn about their day-to-day experiences and responsibilities. Some staff have expressed interest in receiving gender-responsive training and believe that it would be beneficial to their day to day interactions with the women at Elmwood. A critical piece is the ratio between staff and incarcerated women. During one observation monitors entered the medium security level and noticed that there were 60 women, all with high needs including medical and psychological issues, to one (1) staff member. Even for the most exceptional staff that monitors have observed, this is not adequate.

Monitoring Components: Interaction with Women who are Incarcerated

Tours provide the opportunity to speak to the women from all security levels, to better understand their experiences, what is working well and what can be improved. Several issues have emerged from these conversations:

- **Access to Medical Care** - The women explained that it takes approximately 30 days to see a doctor once they submit their medical request (aka white card). For women who have commissary money, each new request costs \$3, for those who do not have commissary money the visit is free of charge. They have also stated that they wish there was a better process to address urgent medical needs. Based on feedback from the women, there is no clear policy or structure set in place to receive urgent medical care. Monitors are also concerned that there was a charge for a service that inmates are legally guaranteed and support the policy change that eliminated this fee as of July 1, 2015.

- **Timely Meals** - A typical day for the women at Elmwood begins at 4:30AM with breakfast. While they are required to throw away any leftover food it is not uncommon for women to hold on to food to snack on until lunch is served at 10:30AM. The same practice is applied to lunch when they will hold on to leftover food until dinner is served at 4:30PM. Some explained that there is a large gap between meals. If they have commissary money they are able to purchase snacks, but if they do not have any funds, they must wait until the next meal is served and for many, especially expectant mothers, the time gap between meals is significant. As discussed in the Program Section, depending on the security level, some women have the option to a few programs. If no programming is available they spend the majority of their time in their cells.

- **Basic Hygiene** - Self-care for women is very important and during visits monitors have observed women doing their hair, make-up, and trying to maintain their hygiene. Many women have explained that even though they understand that they are incarcerated they still like to take pride in themselves. Clean uniforms and undergarments are very important to them. An area of concern was centered on the timing of the distribution of the clean uniforms. Policy is that women receive seven (7) pairs of undergarments, three (3) bras, and two (2) outer garments. Women receive uniforms twice a week, therefore if a woman is placed at Elmwood on a Thursday, she might not have clean undergarments until the next round, which takes anywhere from 3-5 days. Women reported that in those situations they depended on their cellmates for clean undergarments. One major barrier to address-

ing the clothing needs of the women is that residential grade washers and dryers were used. DOC replaced these machines in the FY16 budget with industrial grade washers and dryers and it is believed that this will eliminate any delay that could periodically happen in the past.

Monitoring Components: Observations

The Jail Monitors have toured the Elmwood Facility, Main County Jail, and the Re-Entry Center. To date, monitors have conducted four visits to Elmwood and have recurring monthly monitoring sessions scheduled every third Friday of the month. Monitors have had the opportunity to take an in-depth look at the facility, talk to the women first hand, and learn more about the different institutional systems and processes.

Monitoring Components: Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted, one in custody and one post custody. Participants provided verbal responses to the questions posed by the Jail Monitors. Key themes, needs and opportunities emerged and are highlighted.

Housing:

- Housing was voiced as the top priority and concern—specifically, finding housing, affordable housing and housing for families with children.
- Transition Housing Units (THU): There is a waitlist for these housing services, which are described as becoming like more of a “new-age shelter.”
- Focus Group participants shared how important it is for women who are getting ready to reenter to understand the intricacies, challenges and expectations they will encounter. Rather than just looking forward to their release, it is best for reentering women to be informed and provided with concrete facts along every step of the reentry process.

Recovery:

- Support in Recovery from alcohol and substance abuse was voiced as the second greatest need.

Access to Services/Programs:

- While at Elmwood, women learn about available services through word of mouth, which was described as the best way to disseminate information regarding programs.
- There are no clear systems in place for communicating service options to female inmates.

Health:

- Homeless Connect: Located on Alexian Drive, this health clinic provides patients with a full range of medical services, including same day medication but only one participant was aware of this service and she wished she had learned of it much sooner.
- VMC Urgent Care: VMC is another option for medical services, but patients do not always receive their medications on the same day.

“What would I tell the women at Elmwood about being out? Get ready. It’s harder than I thought it’d be. It’s just really, really hard.”
- Post-Custody
Focus Group Participant

Addressing the Need for a Gender-Responsive Re-Entry Center

The Re-Entry Resource Center is a centralized location for custodial and non-custodial individuals to receive referral and wrap around services. Its vision is to build safer communities and strengthen families through successful reintegration and reentry of formerly incarcerated individuals back into Santa Clara County. As such, the Re-Entry Center is a critical component to meet the needs of women and jail monitors toured the Re-Entry Center to see firsthand the continuum of care available. The Center provides alcohol and drug treatment and care, counseling, general assistance benefits, and health referrals, just to name a few critical services. The mission of the Re-Entry Center is to reduce recidivism by using evidence-based practices in implementing a seamless system of services, supports, and supervision.

The tour provided monitors the opportunity to identify if and how the needs of women are being met and what can be done to improve the experience of those who utilize the Center.

Overall, the facility was well maintained and clean. During a visit, it was noticed that two Sheriffs greeted individuals as they entered the Re-Entry Center. Monitors learned from staff that this may be intimidating for the individuals who seek services but they noted the County was in the process of filling that position with a non-badge classification.

Further, a section of the Center serves as a referral and resource center for which numerous non-profit organizations are housed to provide critical information to individuals. The information is pivotal to supporting custodial

and non-custodial individuals. However, what was not noticed were posters that displayed phone numbers for crisis services, breastfeeding support, child care support, or ways to report a grievance. It is important to display this information and to make it easily accessible.

An opportunity to observe a class was presented and what was observed was that it was predominantly attended by men. As members spoke to staff, it was learned that child care is not a resource provided at Re-Entry. The lack of child care creates a barrier for parents to utilize the services or participate in any classes.

The Re-Entry Center plays an instrumental role in the rehabilitative support of non-custody individuals and there are some wonderful things happening there. However, there were limited numbers of women visiting the center and a lack of gender-responsive programming and services. It is worth exploring how well the faith-based re-entry centers are meeting the needs of women and where women are going for reentry support as well as supporting any Re-Entry Center efforts to better address the needs of women.

Some women noted that they were intimidated by the “government atmosphere” of the Re-Entry Center. Others noted that they went expecting to be placed in housing, programming or with other services and instead received a list of agencies and phone numbers. For a woman exiting jail with no cell phone, computer access or money, the added expectation that she must find services is overwhelming. One woman explained that she just didn’t think to ask for a bus pass and later found out the center can provide them. And although she was helped by a center worker, a bus pass was not offered. Phone access was also not offered so she took her list and hoped to connect with someone who would let her use their phone to make some calls.

Based on data provided by Re-Entry staff, 18% of clients accessing the County’s Re-Entry Resource Center each month are female and 14% of these women are AB109 Realignment Population.

Since spring 2014 when CSW toured the Re-Entry Resource Center, the Office of Re-Entry Services has made significant improvements in triaging clients to services within the Center and to community services. Some of the improvements include implementing a new interim referral tracking systems to automate the client registration process, increasing subsidized employment slots through Goodwill Industries, contracting with Gardner Family Care to provide family reunification and support services, contracting with Bay Area Legal Aid and Pro Bono Project to provide legal services to address issues of child custody, fees & fines, housing and employment discrimination, and regaining access to driver’s license, increasing the Reentry Mobile Medical Clinic from 1 day to 2.5 days per week with access to psychiatry services, adding dental services once day per week, working with DOC to develop

transition plan for moderate and high risk individuals 30 days prior to release, and funding four faith-based reentry resource centers located through the County.

Addressing the Need for a Gender Responsive Facility

The DOC, OWP and CSW have committed to working together to address the needs of female offenders. This includes further planning for the following:

Consistent with the research that shows when correctional facilities incorporate gender responsive programs and practices there are benefits both for the inmates, the staff and the system itself, monitors offer some practical examples for DOC to consider as we work toward a gender-responsive strategic plan for justice involved women.

Provide Trauma-informed training for all staff that work with incarcerated women. This includes understanding the backgrounds of trauma and abuse, establishing trust, respect and recognizing a woman's strengths. One way of establishing trust is by using trauma-informed language as shown in these examples (Dezial, 2014). Given the nearly universal rates of violence and victimization, communication with female offenders, especially verbal interactions with male staff, must be carefully examined. Training to give staff the tools to more effectively communicate and de-escalate situations can transform the institution.

INSTEAD OF	CONSIDER
Referring to inmates by last name	Refer to them as "Ms. Smith"
Referring to staff by last name	Refer to them as "Sergeant Smith"
Saying "cells"	Saying "rooms"
Saying "blocks" or "walks"	Saying "pods" or "wings"
Saying "shake-down"	Saying "safety check"
Saying "lug her"	Saying "take her to a secure area"

Vicarious Trauma training will be a component that provides staff with the opportunity to debrief and heal and connect as a team so they can effectively do their work in the DOC.

Gender-Responsive training will be provided for all staff working with women. This will include, but is not limited to, correctional officers and any other staff coming into contact with women such clergy, health care, social services and case management workers.

Gender Specific training will be provided. Staff will be trained regarding critical information that should be collected when assessing women offenders.

This information includes:

1. History of Abuse
2. Relationship Status Issues
3. Self-esteem
4. Mental Health (depression, anxiety, PTSD)
5. Parental Related Stress (regarding managing children, number of children)
6. Degree of Family Support or Conflicts
7. Finances/Poverty
8. Safety (violence abuse)
9. Strengths & Protective Factors

Classification System Validated by Gender

DOC staff indicated a need for the women's side to be classified independently from the men's side for several reasons. The first reason being a matter of structure: under the current system, the administrative lieutenant does not have full control over the women's side, which should be under her jurisdiction. A classification system validated by gender should also be explored and implemented. National research affirms that systems not validated by gender typically over-classify women and this was also highlighted in the recent Jail Needs Assessment Report presented to the Board of Supervisors (May 2015).

Programming

Another reason for classifying the women's side independently from the men's involves programming. Both quantity and quality are issues affecting women's programming. The AB109 population is represented by 10-13% of inmates, which means that there are more women serving longer sentences. However, programming has not yet adapted to reflect the needs of this high-risk population.

High-Risk Population Programming

Specific programming needs for high-risk female populations should address their mental, physical, social and spiritual needs and include the following program areas:

- Domestic Violence
- Parent Reunification
- Education & Employment Training
- Substance Abuse/Recovery-Oriented

IN CLOSING

As these observations have elucidated, a better system is one that provides services to female inmates at a gender-responsive facility with culturally competent programming. Further, a trauma-informed, recovery orientation is necessary in order to ensure that the women are able to re-enter society as more productive and integral members.

There are also risk factors and experiences which are unique to gender. The table below illustrates the difference between gender neutral verses gender specific risk factors (National Institute of Corrections, 2012).

RISK FACTORS FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS	
GENERAL NEUTRAL RISK FACTORS	GENDER RESPONSIVE RISK FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal History • Antisocial Attitudes • Antisocial Associates • Educational Challenges • Employment/Financial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Conflict • Substance Abuse History • Dynamic Substance Abuse • History of Mental Illness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental Health History • Depression Symptoms • Psychotic Symptoms • Child Abuse (Institutions) • Relationship Conflict <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family Conflict • Parental Stress • Housing Safety • Adult Victimization (Sample Variations) • And Strengths (Self-efficacy, Self-esteem, Family)

Monitors recognize that resources for female inmates are not abundant, that facilities are old and programming is severely limited, but with appropriate training and investment in programming, the DOC may be able to have more success in rehabilitation, be more cost-effective for the community in the long-run, and create a detention facility that speaks to the realities of these women’s lives.

In attempts to get the firsthand perspective of the female inmates themselves, the Jail Monitors have visited the inmates and toured facilities. Jail Monitors have observed several needs that can be addressed to ensure that the inmates are able to serve their time in humane conditions with an emphasis on rehabilitation. The Jail Monitors believe that there can be improvements in crisis services and grievance procedures. Also, the need for more staff is something that is imperative both for staff and for the inmates in order to increase the security and conditions that the women live in.

The Jail Monitors have also done focus groups in order to understand more closely what the challenges are for the inmates in their experiences in custody and their experiences re-entering into their communities. The focus groups gave the Jail Monitors insight into challenges faced by inmates such as their feeling of frustration over the lack of programming or other rehabilitative activities. The focus groups yielded insights into the alarming lack of support for and resources for women who are released from jail. Inmates noted that housing was especially difficult for them to come by, and something that often led them to return to the conditions and pathways to prison.

Future focus groups will likely target specific demographics such as pregnant women, self-identified lesbians, women in programming, women about to be released, and women who only speak a language other than English, such as Spanish speaking women.

Additionally, our County hosts a model Re-Entry Center that can be a source of integral support for women once they have left the correctional facility. The Re-Entry Center can play an instrumental role in the continued rehabilitation and making it more accessible for women must be prioritized.

Jail Monitor recommendations include implementation of the following:

1. Explore the feasibility of staffing the women’s section as an autonomous facility
2. Develop and implement a department-wide gender-responsive protocol
3. Gender-responsive training for all staff beginning at the Academy level
4. Gender-responsive, trauma-informed, recovery-oriented, culturally appropriate programming and services for inmates;
5. Implement a classification system validated by gender
6. Ensure that all inmates leave the facility with an exit plan that includes preparation and orientation about support programs for re-entry

Women’s Jail Monitoring is intentionally designed to be something that is more than a response to complaints and unlike other monitoring programs. However, future Jail Monitor Reports should include an analysis of grievances. That data was not available this year.

Additional questions monitors have and ask Supervisors to explore and continue to address with staff include:

- The need for improved data in general and by gender
- Classification: the number of reclassifications requested and approved (by gender) as well as the time it takes to process a reclassification request
- Analysis of grievances and infractions
- A comparison of programming for women and men
- A deeper analysis of lockdown times and other time when women, particularly in minimum camp, must remain on their bunks
- An analysis of mental health referrals by gender

“Thank you for visiting us. I can’t believe you’re here. I sometimes feel completely forgotten.”
- Inmate to Monitor at Monthly Visit

Prisons were created to keep very dangerous men away from society. The model just doesn’t work when applied to the typical low-level, non-violent female inmate. The goal for all working with women in the criminal justice system should be to decrease the number of inmates—through the one control that the DOC has—by providing a space where offenders can rehabilitate and change their lives in an effort to rejoin the community as contributing members of society. CSW has a good working relationship with OWP and DOC and by working directly with the Elmwood Administration we strive to bring equality and positive changes to the female in-custody population.

In the dialogue among criminal justice agencies and departments there has been recognition that more must be done for women and girls in this system. This report is an important piece to a complex puzzle but if thoughtfully considered and its recommendations integrated, we will move closer toward a truly rehabilitative correctional system that allows women to effectively break the cycle of incarceration and rebuild their lives.

The Commission on the Status of Women thanks the Department of Correction and Office of Women’s Policy for working with us toward this end.

Meeting the Needs of Women in California’s County Justice Systems: A Toolkit for Policymakers & Practitioners, Barbara Bloom, May 2015

Final Report, Department of Correction Needs Assessment/Facility Report, December 2014

Santa Clara County Sherriff’s Office, Custody Bureau, Programs Unit Document on Programs, 2014

Program Units Support Services Division FY14 Report on In-Custody Programs Statistics and Rehabilitation Officer Activities, July 1, 2013 – February 28, 2014

Program Units Support Services Division FY13 Report, July 1, 2012 – June 30, 2013

New York Times Women Inmates: Why the Male Model Doesn’t Work, Melanie Dezial, April 2014

Huskey & Associates Report, 2012

Addressing the Needs of Women and Girls: Developing Core Competencies for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Service Professionals, SAMHSA 2011

Report of the Federal Partners Committee on Women & Trauma: A Federal Intergovernmental Partnership on Mental Health Transformation: Women & Trauma, June 2011

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