

**Women's Issues Sub-Committee Meeting
Adult Advisory Board
Illinois Department of Corrections
Kaskaskia Community College
August 24, 2009
10:30am**

Minutes

Present: William Warnell, Chair – Women's Issues Subcommittee
Michael Geriets – Women's Issues Subcommittee
Keith Lape – Women's Issues Subcommittee
Deb Denning, WFS Coordinator - IDOC
James Gannon, Chair – Adult Advisory Board
Patrick Hartshorn – Adult Advisory Board
James Reinhart, Chief of Staff – IDOC
Ed Huntley, Chief Legal Counsel – IDOC
Jerry Buscher, Deputy Director/Southern Region – IDOC
Bradley Robert, Warden – Centralia CC

Introductions

Each person in attendance introduced themselves.

Statutory Responsibilities

A copy of 730 ILCS 5/3-2-6 Section 3-2-6 – Advisory Boards was distributed. Paragraph c addresses the Subcommittee on Women Offenders to the Advisory Board. Paragraph c reads as follows:

There shall be a Subcommittee on Women Offenders to the Advisory Board. The Subcommittee shall be composed of 3 members of the Adult Advisory Board appointed by the Chairman who shall designate one member as the chairman of the Subcommittee. Members of the Subcommittee shall serve without compensation but shall be reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties. The Subcommittee shall meet no less often than quarterly and at other times at the call of its chairman.

The Subcommittee shall advise the Advisory Board and the Director on all policy matters and programs of the Department with regard to the custody, care, study, discipline, training and treatment of women in the State correctional institutions and for the care and supervision of women released on parole.

Committee Procedures/Goals

The Subcommittee's goal is to be receptive to the needs of Women and Family Services. Deb Denning, Women and Family Services Coordinator, discussed the following needs that she feels are a priority:

- Training of Staff – educating staff about the female offender population (past trauma, etc.).
- Programs and Services – WFS is currently waiting to see what programs may be lost due to budget cuts. Female offenders need vocation skills.

- Parole – WFS is not receiving much support w/regard to housing. Currently, there are only two places in the State that will house female parolees (mothers w/their children); one in Chicago and one in Champaign. WFS is currently writing grants and trying to get additional placement w/stimulus money.
- Sex Offender programming – The sex offender population is increasing. The goal this year is to find female sex offender programming. WFS is currently working w/Alyssa Williams, Coordinator of the SVP Evaluation Unit.

The members of the Sub-committee agreed that they should visit @ least one female facility per year. This visit could be in conjunction w/an Adult Advisory Board Meeting.

Tracking the recidivism rate for WFS is something that the Sub-committee would like to work on. The recidivism rate would need to be tracked over several years. This could help the Sub-committee develop some type of procedure based on the statistics.

Diversion programming was mentioned. The Women’s Treatment Center in Chicago has 15 beds designated for WFS. 11 of those beds are for pre-release (female offenders w/children that need drug treatment); 4 of those beds are for female parolees that are failing in the community. WFS has a hard time filling those 4 beds because the Women’s Treatment Center will not take any children over the age of 4 and the majority of mother’s want to be able to take all of their children w/them; or not go to the program @ all. Each year there is a meeting to discuss diversion/alternative sentencing and each year WFS tries to get money for the program.

Ms. Denning will prioritize the issues and provide that information to the members prior to the next meeting. Also, in the future, Ms. Denning will forward information that she would like the Sub-committee to address @ their meetings to Lori Killam and Ms. Killam will distribute the information to the members. This will give the members time to review the information and they will be better prepared to discuss the information @ the meetings.

Miscellaneous

Ms. Denning distributed a Monthly Inmate Profile Report for females, as well as an overview of Women & Family Services.

75% of the female population is between the ages of 26-49 w/the average age of a female offender being 36 years old. 70% of the female population is w/in 2 years of their release date. Over 50% of the female population is from Cook County and the collar counties. There has been a recent increase of females being incarcerated from central Illinois because of the new meth law. The majority of the females are incarcerated for narcotics charges.

Ms. Denning discussed some of the primary differences between the male and female populations. For example, WFS does not encounter as many concerns w/regard to shanks, gangs, etc., w/the female population.

Meetings Dates

The meeting dates for the Women’s Issues Sub-Committee will coincide w/the meeting dates of the Adult Advisory Board meetings.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned @ 11:10am.