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# Facility Planning To Meet the Needs of Female Inmates

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## NEW JAIL PLANNING

Bulletin From the Jails Division of the National Institute of Corrections

Since its establishment in 1977, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has provided assistance to jurisdictions that are planning and building new detention facilities. Through the Planning of New Institutions Program, NIC has provided training in a facility development process that begins with identification of the jurisdiction's needs and ends with evaluation of the newly constructed facility. This framework divides the process into four discrete stages:

- Pre-design, including master planning or needs assessment, economic feasibility, pre-architectural programming, and site selection/evaluation.

- Design, which includes multiple stages.
- Construction.
- Transition.

This bulletin was originally published in 1997 as *Women in Jail: Facility Planning Issues*; since then, the field has become more aware of the needs and gender-specific differences of female inmates. Much of the literature focuses on programmatic needs, but relatively little focuses on how these needs may influence facility design and construction. This updated bulletin discusses how jurisdictions of all sizes can consider and address the gender-specific needs

### FROM THE DIRECTOR

The number of women held in the nation's jails is considerably lower than the number of men. Nevertheless, the impact of the female inmate population on jail operations is significant. Awareness of the need for gender-responsive programs and services for female inmates has increased, but less attention has been given to how the specific needs of this population might be addressed through facility design.

There may be little potential for modifying an existing jail, but the construction of a new facility presents an ideal opportunity to create functional and flexible spaces that promote the well-being and dignity of female inmates. This bulletin identifies issues specific to female inmates at each stage of the facility planning process to help planners, architects, and policymakers develop jail environments that protect, respect, and support the women held in these facilities.

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of female inmates during the facility planning process.

### The Female Inmate Population

Female inmates are consistently a minority within the larger, predominantly male, jail population (see table 1). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the number of female inmates in local jails has increased 468 percent since 1983 (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1983–1993, 1994–1995, 1996–2004).

In 1983, 7 percent of the nation’s jail population consisted of female inmates. By 2003, the number of female inmates had increased to 12 percent of the nation’s jail population. As a small but growing subgroup within jail populations, female inmates experience a number of specific problems when they are incarcerated, many of which relate to the nature of their gender differences from the male population in institutions and programs that were designed for men. An institution’s size can exacerbate these problems.

### The Impact of Jail Size

It is important to acknowledge that the experience of female inmates in both prisons and large jail systems is very different from that of the majority of women detained in jails in the United States. Prisons and large jail systems are far more likely to have separate

**TABLE 1. NATIONAL TRENDS IN NUMBERS OF MALE AND FEMALE INMATES: 1983–2004**

Year	Total Inmates	Male		Female	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1983	225,781	210,451	93	15,330	7
1985	274,063	254,986	93	19,077	7
1988	334,566	306,379	92	28,187	8
1989	384,954	349,180	91	35,774	9
1990	403,019	365,821	91	37,198	9
1991	424,129	384,628	91	39,501	9
1992	441,780	401,106	91	40,674	9
1993	455,600	411,500	90	44,100	10
1994	479,800	431,300	90	48,500	10
1995	499,300	448,000	90	51,300	10
1996	510,400	454,700	89	55,700	11
1997	557,974	498,678	89	59,296	11
1998	584,372	520,581	89	63,791	11
1999	596,485	528,998	89	67,487	11
2000	613,534	543,120	89	70,414	11
2001	623,628	551,007	88	72,621	12
2002	658,228	581,411	88	76,817	12
2003	684,431	602,781	88	81,650	12
2004	706,907	619,908	88	86,999	12

Sources: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prisoners in . . .* (annual series) (1983–1993); *Prisoners at Midyear* (annual series) (1994–1995); *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear* (annual series) (1996–2004).

facilities or units for women and are large enough to have programs tailored exclusively for women. However, nearly half of the jails in the United States have fewer than 50 beds; nearly two-thirds have fewer than 100 beds (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, at any given time 5 to 10 women will be incarcerated in most of these institutions (see table 2). These women tend to be “forgotten inmates” in a predominantly male world.

### Target Population

This bulletin provides information for jurisdictions that hold both male and female inmates and that do not have enough female inmates to justify a separate facility for women. It is organized according to the stages of the planning process and raises issues that emerge during each phase. Its purpose is to identify issues that are specific to female inmates at each stage of the planning process.

**TABLE 2. JAIL SIZE IN THE UNITED STATES: 1999**

Number of Beds	U.S. Jails	
	Number	Percent
<50	1,573	47
50-99	544	16
100-149	265	8
150-249	256	8
250-499	241	7
500-999	188	6
1,000-1,499	98	3
1,500-1,999	44	1
>2,000	156	5
Unknown	11	0
Total	3,376	100%

Note: Detail may not add to total because of rounding.

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics, *1999 Census of Jails* (2001).

## Predesign Issues

The predesign phase of the facility development process has two distinct stages: master planning and prearchitectural programming. The master planning stage, also known as the “needs assessment,” focuses on identifying the nature of the jurisdiction’s facility problem and potential solutions. In this stage, the jurisdiction clearly identifies its needs for a specified number of years and begins to explore the costs and benefits of potential solutions. A preferred solution will emerge as a result of this process. The prearchitectural programming stage focuses on defining how the facility portion of the preferred solution will be developed; it identifies the functional and space requirements from which a specific design is developed.

## Master Planning

During this stage, jurisdictions explore basic issues, options, and alternatives, including the number of beds to be constructed, required security levels, size of housing units, programs needed, and options for meeting these needs. Many master planning activities involve collecting and analyzing data. Typically, jurisdictions carry out three related types of statistical analysis:

- An analysis of historical trends, which describes the patterns of average daily population, the number of bookings, and length of stay in the facility in the recent past.
- A profile of inmates held at the facility, including information on demographics, criminal history, and arrest and release.

- A population forecast, which identifies the number of beds that the local jurisdiction will need for a specific period.

These data can tell local planners a great deal about the female inmate population if the data are gathered in a way that allows female inmates to be analyzed separately from male inmates. These statistics are typically used as the basis for population projections, but they can provide much more information for local policymakers with minimal additional effort.

## Historical Trend Analysis

Historical trends help planners understand the factors that have shaped the jail population. They form the basis of a successful plan for the female inmate population. Each jurisdiction should calculate and record the average daily population, annual number of bookings, and length of stay separately for female inmates and male inmates to determine if the trends for male and female inmates follow similar patterns. It is common to find different patterns in even these very basic statistics. Even more striking differences may emerge in demographics, criminal history, and classification. In addition to gender-specific differences, variations in these basic statistics could mean that programs for female inmates may need to be delivered in a different way (based on length of stay) or that female inmates may currently be treated differently by the system.



The amount of variation in daily counts is one of the most important differences between the male and female inmate populations that must be considered during the master planning phase. This variation is often called a peaking factor.<sup>1</sup> Table 3 shows the differences in peaking factors for the male and female inmate populations.

In this real jurisdiction, the peak population of female inmates was no less than 156 percent of the average and as high as 176 percent of the average. The peak population of male inmates was as low as 119 percent of the average and as high as 126 percent of the average. If the county had planned its future housing capacity for women based on the average peaking factor for men, it would seriously have underestimated the number of beds needed for women much of the time.

In larger facilities, because of the nature of percentages, the peaking factors will always be smaller. Table 4 shows the potential interaction between average daily population, peaking, and capacity; the jail represented is clearly experiencing crowding, particularly in the female housing areas. Although the peaking factor for female inmates continues to be higher than that for males, it decreased significantly from 115

<sup>1</sup> A peaking factor is the ratio or percent that results from dividing peak counts (usually the top 10 percent in any year) by the average daily population for that same year.

**TABLE 3. MALE AND FEMALE PEAKING FACTORS IN SMALL JAILS: 1998–2005**

Year	Male Inmates			Female Inmates		
	ADP	Peak ADP	Peaking Factor (%)	ADP	Peak ADP	Peaking Factor (%)
1998	41.5	52.1	126	2.8	4.3	156
1999	52.2	64.7	124	4.7	7.5	161
2000	58.7	71.4	122	7.1	12.1	170
2001	62.2	77.3	124	9.3	14.7	158
2002	68.3	81.6	119	8.7	13.9	160
2003	67.1	82.7	123	7.3	11.9	164
2004	69.1	84.6	122	6.3	10.2	162
2005	71.3	85.2	120	5.5	9.7	176

ADP = average daily population

Source: Voorhis Associates, Inc., 2001.

percent in 1993 as the average daily population of females grew closer to capacity. The table shows that the peak average daily population of females exceeds capacity.

These basic statistics can be a tremendous help to local jurisdictions that are planning new or expanded facilities. Along with a sound method for forecasting jail populations, these statistics can help to establish the number of beds required in a facility. With a good inmate profile, they can provide information that is useful for classification, security designation, and program requirements. They form an effective basis for planning for the women who will be held in the new facility.

### Population Forecasting

Population forecasts are the best predictor of facility needs, assuming that the criminal justice

system will continue to operate the same way in the future that it operated in the past. However, system behavior often changes when new facilities are developed. These differences can be particularly important in planning for female inmates.

**A new facility may mean new practices.** Many of the older linear facilities that had open bar-grate cell blocks experienced problems with holding female inmates. Often, all of the cellblocks were the same size, and meeting the requirements for sight and sound separation of female inmates could be difficult. When the women's housing area reached capacity, the facility operator had minimal ability to move women to another housing area without losing male capacity. As a result, some systems found that women were either diverted or released

**TABLE 4. MALE AND FEMALE PEAKING FACTORS AND CAPACITY IN LARGE JAILS: 1993, 2000, 2004**

Year	Total Capacity (n = 2,275)			Male Capacity (n = 2,000)			Female Capacity (n = 275)		
	ADP	Peak ADP	Peaking Factor (%)	ADP	Peak ADP	Peaking Factor (%)	ADP	Peak ADP	Peaking Factor (%)
1993	1,956	2,099	107	1,745	1,906	109	211	243	115
2000	1,848	1,975	107	1,597	1,685	106	252	274	109
2004	2,057	2,172	106	1,785	1,862	104	272	294	108
<b>Percentage of capacity in 2004</b>									
	90	95		89	93		99	107	

ADP = average daily population  
 Source: Voorhis Associates, Inc., 2005.

from jail more frequently than men—even when the charges were comparable—or held in significantly more crowded housing areas. The jail whose data are presented in table 4 had been providing for early release of women for many years before it became an issue for the male population. The alternative, double and triple bunking or converting nonhousing space to housing space, would not have been consistent with either standards or good practice for correctional facilities.

Many jails have found that when a new facility opens, the female inmate population suddenly increases more than had been anticipated. To avoid this problem, population forecasts should be based on assumptions that reflect known changes in population without taking into account the modifications that had previously been used to deal with specific crowding in female housing areas. A successful plan should include

enough housing for a female inmate population that might grow more than expected.

**Other influences.** In the past, forecasts of jail populations were commonly based on the at-risk population (typically males ages 18 to 28). This practice basically excluded the female population of the jurisdiction from the forecast. As the population in general has aged, many analysts have either expanded the age range of the at-risk population or abandoned this theory. In addition, many states have moved toward mandatory sentencing, which is gender neutral.

**The Female Inmate Profile**

Today, jurisdictions recognize that differences exist between the male and female inmate populations, and they are paying special attention to the implications of these differences when designing facilities. Table 5 shows the significant difference in the numbers of men and women who are detained.

Women are considerably less likely than their male peers to be arrested for a crime of violence (Greenfeld and Snell, 1999). Female inmates are more likely to have had a prior relationship with the person they victimized; nearly two-thirds of women arrested for violent offenses had committed them against an intimate partner, relative, or acquaintance, compared with about one-third of men who committed offenses against people they knew (Greenfeld and Snell, 1999). The same study found that about 70 percent of women in correctional placement had children under age 18 and that about two-thirds of women in state prisons had been living with those children prior to incarceration. The study also found that 12 percent of female inmates in local jails were charged with violent offenses, 34 percent with property offenses, 30 percent with drug offenses, and 24 percent with public order offenses.

These national statistics suggest that significant differences may exist in facility needs such as the proportion of high-security areas (particularly those associated with violent acting-out behavior) and the availability of areas for substance abuse programming.

The large jurisdiction whose data are shown in table 4 developed a separate profile of its female inmates. It found significant differences between male and female inmates that were consistent with Greenfeld and Snell's findings and had implications for prearchitectural planning and programs:

- Women were much less likely to have been employed prior to incarceration.
- Women had achieved a higher educational level than their male peers.
- Women were much less likely to meet the objective criteria for assignment to maximum security housing.
- Women were much more likely to have mental health needs identified at the time of booking.
- Women were less likely to be charged with crimes of violence and more likely to be charged with property and drug offenses.
- Fewer women committed the types of offenses that made them eligible for placement at the Department of Corrections.

**TABLE 5. MALE AND FEMALE VIOLENT INMATES: 1993–1997**

Year	Number of Inmates per 1,000 Residents		Ratio of Inmate Rates (male:female)
	Male	Female	
1993	135	19	7.1
1994	140	20	7.0
1995	124	19	6.4
1996	107	19	5.7
1997	99	15	6.5

Source: L.A. Greenfeld and T.L. Snell, *Women Offenders*, Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999).

In the next predesign stage, planners will be challenged to determine the implications of these differences in both future operations and space needs.

### Summary: Master Planning

Master planning gives local jurisdictions a valuable opportunity to understand the characteristics and specific needs of their female inmate population and allows them to anticipate how the size of this population could change in a new facility. The master plan may reveal several warning signs suggesting that a county's female inmate population might be subject to change in a new facility:

- Is there a difference of more than 1 or 2 percentage points between the number of women who are arrested and the number of women who are booked? Can these differences be explained by their charges in conjunction with release criteria? Is this different from

the pattern for men who are arrested?

- Is there a difference of more than 1 or 2 percentage points between the number of women who are booked and the percentage of women in the average daily population? Is this different from the pattern for men who are booked and held at the facility?

If the differences between arrests and bookings cannot be explained by the charges involved and local law enforcement citation practices, or if significant differences exist in the treatment of men and women with comparable charges, then it would be wise to expect that in the new facility, the female inmate population will be different from what it was in the old one.

At the end of the master planning phase, jurisdictions will know the following:

- How many beds to construct for female inmates.



- How these beds will be divided among the security levels.
- Alternatives to incarceration or other custody options that may be available for the female inmate population.

These facts become the foundation on which the facility's prearchitectural program is developed.

### Prearchitectural Programming

During the master planning phase, jurisdictions decide to take action. During the prearchitectural programming phase, jurisdictions decide what actions to take. These actions can include developing a program and an operational plan that consider space requirements and relationships.

The tendency has been to assume that what works for male inmates will also work for female inmates. This section of the bulletin explains why jurisdictions should consider basic correctional functions from the perspective of both male and female inmates.

### Classification and Housing Separations

The jail's physical plant should reflect its inmate classification system. Many facilities effectively provide for separations within the male population but fail to provide the same options for female inmates. With the emergence of

### Consider a Regional Approach

When evaluating planning options, particularly in small jurisdictions, consider the potential for regionalized services for female inmates. Practitioners who work with female inmates believe and studies suggest that women in custody can benefit from gender-specific services. Regional services for female inmates may be worth considering if other jurisdictions in the immediate area either have or need beds for female inmates.

objective classification systems, jurisdictions have become increasingly sophisticated in measuring inmate risk and need considering both static variables (e.g., criminal history, which does not change) and dynamic variables (e.g., education, which can change). Many classification systems are weighted on risk factors. These systems are likely to neglect need-based factors, such as childhood victimization and patterns of abusive relationships, that may be more relevant for female inmates than for their male peers (Hardyman and Van Voorhis, 2004).

In small facilities, women are usually considered as a single classification; however, all of the classifications that exist in the male population will also exist in the female inmate population. Even the smallest facility will eventually encounter women on work release, women who require placement in disciplinary housing, and women who require high-security housing because of the risk of acting-out behavior or escape. However, the frequency and proportion of these

classifications may be different for female inmates.

This issue is made more difficult because of the limited funds available in small jails; one person is usually assigned to supervise the female housing areas, and often that individual may have additional responsibilities. The number of inmates who are supervised by a single officer is the most essential aspect of efficient jail staffing. To stretch budget dollars, most local jails attempt to develop staff posts of 1 officer to 48 or more inmates. As a result, women are often grouped with one or more male classifications, further establishing the concept of "women as one classification" in the minds of facility operators.

This approach is contrary to good classification practice. Most jail administrators would not house male work release inmates with those who do not have access to the outside world, yet they routinely house female work release, special management, or administrative segregation inmates in the same area as general population

female inmates because there is no other option. During programming, jail operators should use inmate profile data to determine the proportions of women who fall into each classification and determine the best strategy to provide for multiple classifications for female inmates.

These strategies will vary based on the size of the female inmate population. In facilities too small to provide staff-efficient multiple units for female inmates, options could include the following:

- The potential regionalization of housing and program services for female inmates.
- The use of subdivisions within a single housing unit to provide for different classifications.
- The use of smaller flexible housing units, which could respond to variability in population levels.

### ***Access to Program Services***

During prearchitectural programming, planners and jail operators determine basic delivery strategies for all jail services. These strategies can be divided into two basic methods:

- Centralized service delivery, in which all inmates are moved to one location to receive the service.
- Decentralized service delivery, in which the service is moved

to multiple locations, typically by housing unit or housing group.

Many small jails centralize the delivery of program services. For example, all inmates move to one exercise area. In larger jails, decentralized services are more common. Following are three ways in which these decisions can affect the female inmate population:

- As a small classification, female inmates may have less access to common space used for services than their male peers.
- Female inmates may not enjoy the same types of activities as their male peers.
- When many services are centralized and the female inmate population is small, the need for cost-effectiveness is likely to push the operating agency toward coed programming.

Access to program services is a particularly difficult issue for small jails. The competing forces are cost of construction and operation, time, values, and specific program needs and interests. On the one hand, providing programs for inmates is expensive. Even if the county hires the staff required to carry out programs, it may not be able to provide the additional staff that would be required to conduct separate activities for women. In addition, decentralized services require more space—and associated capital costs. If a facility uses volunteers to help with its programs,

limited volunteer resources might make providing separate services difficult; however, some volunteers may be specifically interested in the needs of women in custody. Time can also act as a barrier to separate programs because program activities may need to be scheduled within a limited timeframe (typically one shift in small jails) and the activity spaces involved are most likely to be centralized or shared spaces.

On the other hand, for a variety of reasons, even the smallest jails want to separate male and female inmates while they are in custody. This decision might be based on operational preferences, the difficulty of supervising coed programs, or organizational values. Currently, a number of practitioners and researchers suggest that there is a rationale for gender-specific treatment that allows women to address the issues that led to their criminal behavior without the distraction of male peers (Wallace, 1997). Therefore, jurisdictions need to consider options that will allow for either same-sex or gender-specific programming based on the following considerations:

- Do female inmates have easy access to the spaces they are likely to use the most?
- Can women access these services without coming into contact with male inmates?



- Do the areas in which women are housed have readily available multi-use spaces that could provide options for gender-specific programming?
- Is it beneficial to decentralize some program spaces so that activities for women can be in or adjacent to their housing area?

### ***Special Needs of Women in Jails and Implications for Prearchitectural Programming***

Several theories about female inmates are relevant during prearchitectural programming (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2005):

- The most common pathway that leads women into the justice system is their exposure to physical abuse, poverty, and substance abuse. This factor shapes program needs and behavior while in custody.
- The development of prosocial relationships is key to a woman's psychological development. Connection with others, rather than differentiation from others, is an essential aspect of female development.
- Trauma and addiction are related factors for female inmates.

Bloom and colleagues (2005) also identified the following guiding principles for the development of a gender-responsive criminal justice system:

- **Guiding Principle 1:** Acknowledge that gender makes a difference.
- **Guiding Principle 2:** Create an environment based on safety, respect, and dignity.
- **Guiding Principle 3:** Develop policies, practices, and programs that are relational and promote healthy connections to children, family, significant others, and the community.
- **Guiding Principle 4:** Address substance abuse, trauma, and mental health issues through comprehensive, integrated, and culturally relevant services and appropriate supervision.
- **Guiding Principle 5:** Provide women with opportunities to improve their socioeconomic conditions.
- **Guiding Principle 6:** Establish a system of community supervision and reentry with comprehensive, collaborative services.

Although these principles concern programs and services, they are also relevant for facility design. It is important to consider the implications of the physical, emotional, sexual, intellectual, and relational differences between men and women as they experience and use various areas of the facility. Differences between males and females identified in the gender-specific literature provide a starting point for understanding the implications when designing facilities:

- Physically, women experience normal bodily changes (pregnancy and menstruation) that result in shifting hormonal levels. In addition, many women have children for whom they have primary care responsibility.
- Many female inmates have been victims of sexual and physical abuse, and many have experienced years of conflict within their families.
- Women tend to be emotional and may be quick to react in a negative way.
- When trapped, women tend to run away to avoid a situation involving conflict.
- In the context of culturally mixed messages regarding sexuality, women may be emotionally needy and may seek attention and love through sexual acting out.
- Many female inmates have had negative experiences in their educational development and lack self-confidence.

“Form follows function” is a basic tenet in the design of correctional facilities. As a result, facility planners and operators typically determine the preferred new methods of operations before identifying spatial requirements. Primary functions include intake and release, housing, health services, visitation, recreation, education and treatment services, food service, and laundry service. As the new

facility plan for each of these functions is developed, it is helpful to think about the way in which gender differences can affect that function. These differences do not imply that areas used by female inmates should be “better” than areas used by their male peers. They may, however, be different in both design and operational characteristics.

### Intake and Release

Both men and women are likely to experience jail intake as a trying time. New inmates have just been arrested and may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. A number of routine intake functions have the potential to be particularly significant for female inmates and therefore merit special attention. Although not all of these considerations will result in additional space, they may affect how the spaces are used for female offenders as well as how and where some basic functions occur. In addition to the obvious requirements for sight and sound separation of male and female inmates in holding cells, several routine intake functions must be considered:

**Issue:** During intake, correctional officers perform a variety of physically invasive procedures. Officers must touch inmates during pat searches, and more thorough searches require inmates to be observed while unclothed. For female offenders, these necessary security functions have the potential to trigger feelings that result

from physical and/or sexual abuse. Observation while unclothed clearly requires privacy and an officer of the same gender as the inmate. However, the guidelines on pat searches are less definitive, and they typically occur in full view of others who may be in the intake area.

**Possible solutions:** For pat-searching female inmates, consider providing an area (such as an alcove) in which the inmate cannot be seen by other arrestees but at the same time is not in a completely enclosed area with an officer, particularly a male officer. This approach will provide some visual separation from male inmates but will not increase the degree to which either the female inmate or the staff person feels vulnerable. Many female inmates have lived in situations in which they do not feel safe, and they bring this experience with them to jail. Therefore, explanations about operational procedures that focus on personal safety are likely to be interpreted more positively than those that focus on facility security.

**Issue:** Correctional officers routinely ask a number of personal questions during the health screening interview at intake. Although both men and women need privacy during this interview, it is important to ensure that female inmates feel secure enough to respond to these questions thoroughly.

**Possible solutions:** Consider designing the booking desk in a way that provides some acoustic privacy for the person being interviewed; this could be accomplished by ensuring that there is adequate separation between the inmate being interviewed and others who are in the waiting area. Also consider whether some questions are pertinent to women only (e.g., questions about potential pregnancy and about arrangements for care of dependent children).

### Housing

Following are some programming issues related to housing that must be considered based on gender differences.

**Issue:** Many jurisdictions routinely use double occupancy in housing and stacked bunks in dormitories to conserve space. This strategy creates more difficulties for women who cannot reach the bunks easily and who do not have the upper body strength of men.

**Possible solutions:** Consider alternatives to traditional stacked bunks (e.g., single-level bunking) or provide a stepladder.

**Issue:** Fixed tables and stools commonly used in housing areas present a number of problems for pregnant women.

**Possible solutions:** If movable furnishings are not appropriate for the entire unit, consider allowing the temporary use of such furnishings for pregnant women.



**Issue:** Some visual barriers, such as privacy screens used in shower and toilet areas, are designed for male bodies and frequently fail to provide adequate visual screening for women.

**Possible solutions:** Consider using other types of visual barriers, such as commercial-size toilet partitions or shower curtains. The type of inmate uniform selected may also affect inmates' privacy in toilet areas.

**Issue:** There is some indication that men and women respond differently to direct supervision. In general, male inmates respond to the structure that the housing officer creates as the unit leader. Female inmates, however, are more responsive to the development of relationships (e.g., female inmates spend more time talking to each other and to staff). Frequent interaction with staff may be more important for women than for men, suggesting that the amount of time staff spend interacting with inmates instead of merely observing them should differ significantly in male and female housing units.

**Possible solutions:** Consider designing staff work areas in a way that allows staff to easily interact with inmates and at the same time be able to observe housing activities. Expect female inmates to spend more time at or around the staff workstation than their male peers. Consider developing a furnishings plan that creates several

small seating areas (possibly use a mezzanine or similar space) in which women can socialize. Consider how multi-use space in or immediately adjacent to the unit could be used as an area in which staff can help female inmates discuss concerns or problems. These areas should be separate from the room in which inmates sleep but should be visible from the dayroom areas.

**Issue:** Toilet areas must allow for appropriate disposal of potentially biohazardous waste and for storage of sanitary supplies. These issues also apply to toilet areas used by female inmates in the facility's program and support areas.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how female inmates can routinely access and dispose of sanitary supplies in all areas of the facility.

**Issue:** Grooming is more important for female inmates. Women who may be involved in some form of community custody are likely to need access to a larger variety of grooming tools. They often wear makeup and may need to style their hair.

**Possible solutions:** At a minimum, consider how women in community custody programs can have safe access to makeup and small appliances such as blow-dryers. Consider whether installing grooming amenities, such as built-in hair dryers, is appropriate in these areas.

**Issue:** Good correctional practice and correctional standards require female staff to supervise female inmates, particularly for searches and in areas such as shower and toilet rooms. However, although state standards and local preferences may ultimately dictate practices, male staff routinely supervise female inmates in many facilities.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how to balance the facility's need for security and supervision, the inmate's need for a minimal amount of modesty in shower and toilet areas, and the potential for allegations of inappropriate actions (accidental or deliberate) by male staff. Because many female inmates have a history of physical and sexual abuse and sexual acting-out behavior, most jail practitioners prefer same-sex supervision. At the same time, female inmates need to learn how to interact appropriately with men in nonthreatening situations. Therefore, more opportunities should be provided for well-supervised coed programming and different-gender supervision as inmates move toward prerelease in facilities that hold inmates for longer terms.

**Issue:** One consistent issue in the design of correctional facilities is the potential for inmates in one housing unit to see inmates in another housing unit. Regardless of gender, this is always problematic. However, it is a greater issue



in the context of sight and sound separation. It is particularly important to resolve this issue when female housing units are located adjacent to a male unit.

**Possible solutions:** During the planning stage, consider strategies for restricting vision from one unit to another. This must take place before the facility is occupied. Options include using an intervening space (such as a control room) to restrict vision, using glazing that provides light but restricts or distorts viewing, or using angled shades that allow staff to see into the unit but restrict vision to others.

### Health Services

Although both male and female inmates need access to health care services, evidence shows that women use health and mental health services more often than men. In addition, women are likely to need specialized gynecological and obstetrical services.

**Issue:** Although it is possible to decentralize some health services in a multi-use space at or adjacent to the housing unit, sometimes transferring an inmate to a central health area is necessary.

**Possible solutions:** Consider locating the health care area so that female inmates can move quickly and easily to this area with minimal need for staff escort.

**Issue:** Eventually, most facilities will need to deal with a female inmate who is due to deliver a baby during her period of incarceration. Most jurisdictions provide a temporary release, but in rare cases, releasing the infant may be a better option than releasing the inmate. Large prison systems may include nursery facilities in their planning, but smaller agencies are not likely to do so.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how to respond to the situation if it is required or desired to allow the mother to care for her child. Would it be possible to provide an area that is normally used for other purposes, such as a portion of the health care area or a “flex” housing unit?

**Issue:** As stated previously, female inmates use mental health services more often than their male peers. Depression, anxiety, and posttraumatic stress disorder are frequent diagnoses.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how to keep this population safe, particularly if supervision in the housing area is intermittent, while providing access to appropriate mental health services.

### Visitation

Most jails strongly prefer noncontact visitation because of the operational challenges of contact visiting; some jails have implemented video visitation. However,

regardless of operational preferences, a strong possibility exists that contact visitation may be ordered for some women in custody. Although this type of visitation might be ordered for male inmates as well, in practice it is more likely to occur with female inmates, as they are more likely to be the custodial parent.

**Issue:** About 70 percent of all women in custody have children under age 18, and about the same proportion have dependent children who were living with them before they were incarcerated (Greenfeld and Snell, 1999). The courts frequently require contact visitation for these inmates.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how to accommodate this type of visit. In most cases, space used for other confidential visits (e.g., attorney visits) can also be used for contact visitation. However, ideally this space should provide a noninstitutional atmosphere in which parent-child interaction other than conversation could occur. Because many of these visits are with young children, other issues to consider are the availability of restrooms, child-size furniture, and appropriate activities, such as games, that could involve both adults and children.

### Recreation

Standards and good practice in correctional institutions require frequent opportunities for out-of-cell

exercise, usually defined as cardiovascular and strength-building activities. Indoor and outdoor areas may be required. Access to these areas is equally important for men and women, but there are significant differences in preferred activities, which is an issue to be resolved when spaces are shared.

**Issue:** Basketball is the most common recreational activity in most facilities. In spite of the increase in female team sports, basketball is not as attractive to female inmates as to their male peers.

**Possible solutions:** Consider the flexibility of the space for both team and individual activities other than basketball. Female inmates may prefer other types of recreational activities, such as aerobics, and their preferred recreational activities may be less structured and less team oriented.

**Issue:** Outdoor recreational areas are typically adjacent to the facility security perimeter. The presence of a secure perimeter is an important factor for female inmates because running away is a typical female response to being trapped. However, the secure perimeter also protects female inmates from outside influences.

**Possible solutions:** Consider that the perimeter, particularly if it is a fence, should also provide a visual barrier between the institution and the community. Although being shielded from public view when

outside is an important consideration for male inmates, it may be of even greater concern to female inmates, many of whom have been in abusive relationships.

### Education and Treatment Services

The space used for education and treatment services should provide an appropriate balance of privacy and observation.

**Issue:** Jails use interview rooms and multi-use areas for both staff-provided and volunteer activities. To be sensitive to the needs of female inmates, these areas must be designed carefully to provide observation and acoustic privacy.

**Possible solutions:** Consider the ample use of glazing in these areas to create opportunities for staff to observe these rooms as they pass by. Locate these rooms in areas where staff observation can occur easily, but also consider that doing so enables male inmates using these corridors to see into these areas.

**Issue:** Adult learners are most successful when they are able to see how the material they are asked to learn relates to their lives. Although this is equally true for both male and female inmates, there is evidence that the lives of men and women are significantly different prior to incarceration. Educational materials and modules that interest male inmates may not be relevant or interesting to female inmates.

**Possible solutions:** Consider how the space used for educational and treatment programming can be personalized for female inmates and can include materials and images that are relevant to their lives.

**Issue:** Jails provide a variety of programs and services, ranging from General Equivalency Diploma and other types of educational programming to substance abuse treatment and other, more sophisticated approaches to addressing problems of recidivism. As part of this effort, many jails are beginning to develop reentry programs. Programs and services are undeniably important for both men and women. However, continuing access to programs and services that begin in jail and build a strong link to comparable services in the community while the inmate is still in custody may be more important for women, given the importance of relationship development in women's treatment programs.

**Possible solutions:** Consider the best way to accommodate cost-effective programming in small facilities by creating effective multi-use areas that are "volunteer friendly."

### Food and Laundry Services

In most facilities, food and laundry services provide a major source of inmate jobs. However, female inmates often do not have equal access to these jobs. This has the potential to raise significant issues



regarding equity, particularly if “good” or “work” time is attached to work requirements. Within the facility, these issues must be addressed during the master planning and prearchitectural programming stages.

**Issue:** Small jails in particular may not have enough female inmates to provide a work crew for one shift and, because of the increased freedom that inmates experience when they are working, jails are reluctant to consider coed work crews.

**Possible solutions:** During master planning, estimate the proportion of female inmates who are likely to fall into an inmate worker classification. During prearchitectural programming, determine the inmate worker opportunities that might be consistent with a population of this size. Consider designing the kitchen and laundry areas in a way that would allow female inmates to work in one or both of these areas. One way to accomplish this is to enhance the ability of staff to monitor inmates and minimize the potential for inmates who work in one area to interact with inmates assigned to another area. Also consider additional employment opportunities, including access to any out-of-facility work programs.

### **Summary: Prearchitectural Programming**

Clearly, men and women experience their time in jail differently.

Those differences are based in their different pathways to crime and in their different physiological, psychological, and emotional characters. Because of these factors, planning for female inmates in most jails requires determining how typical jail scenarios and processes should be modified for women. Few jurisdictions have the luxury of creating separate facilities for female inmates, but all jurisdictions have the opportunity to create functional spaces and meaningful programs that respond to the needs of the female inmates in their facility.

## **Design Issues**

It should be apparent that special design challenges result from the small size of the female inmate population in conjunction with classification requirements; this is particularly true in small jails. These challenges are most acute in housing areas but are experienced in program spaces as well.

### **Space Programming Considerations**

Once the needs assessment is complete and the number and type of beds for female inmates have been determined, the next step is to identify the space requirements of housing areas for female inmates. Although this process begins during prearchitectural programming, it also must be addressed during the schematic

design phase. Often, there is a tendency to consider the female unit as merely another housing unit and to assign the same spaces as the typical male unit. However, the space requirements for the female housing unit should be driven by a different set of program, operational, and geometric assumptions.

Most standards require 35 square feet per inmate in the dayroom area of the housing pod. Consider how this requirement differs in large and small housing pods:

- If the male pod houses 50 inmates, its dayroom will measure 1,750 square feet (approximately 42 feet by 42 feet).
- If the female pod houses six inmates, its dayroom will measure 210 square feet (approximately 14 feet by 14 feet).

The dayroom usually has to accommodate tables and chairs, provide a passive recreational area, allow circulation from the entry to the showers and the cells, have windows to bring in daylight, and, perhaps, allow access to outdoor recreation. The 210 square feet of programmed space described above does not provide adequate space for these functions. Jail minimum space standards do not work well for the smaller pods in which women are typically housed (see figure 1).

Because many of these units will be small and inmate supervision



strategies are likely to reflect a mixture of intermittent direct supervision and podular remote supervision, observation of these housing areas becomes critical. To provide for effective observation, most jail operators believe the cells should open to the dayroom. To provide space for these relationships, the net square footage is multiplied by a factor called a grossing factor or an efficiency factor. Because of the much smaller size of the female housing unit, the grossing factor must be greater than that used for the male unit.

To see this more clearly, consider what happens when the architect begins to lay out the 14-foot by

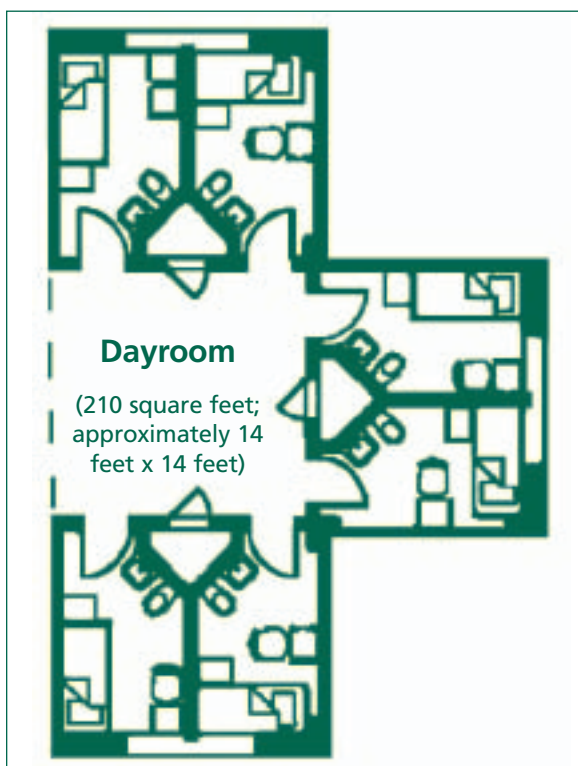
14-foot dayroom identified in the previous example. The women's dayroom has 56 feet of perimeter (14 times 4). This perimeter must accommodate the six cells, each of which is 8 feet center to center. A total of 48 linear feet (6 x 8) is required simply to fit the cells around the dayroom, leaving only 8 feet (56 – 48) for the entry sallyport, shower, windows, officer's toilet, janitor's closet, telephones, officer's station, and service pantry. In the smaller dayroom, with less perimeter wall, it is more difficult to accommodate the basic elements needed in and around the housing pod. Therefore, the smaller the number of cells in the housing pod, the greater the grossing factor must

be simply to accommodate the fixed dimensions of the required features. Without adequate floor space the design becomes the elongated linear floorplan that has failed to provide for effective supervision of inmates (see figure 2).

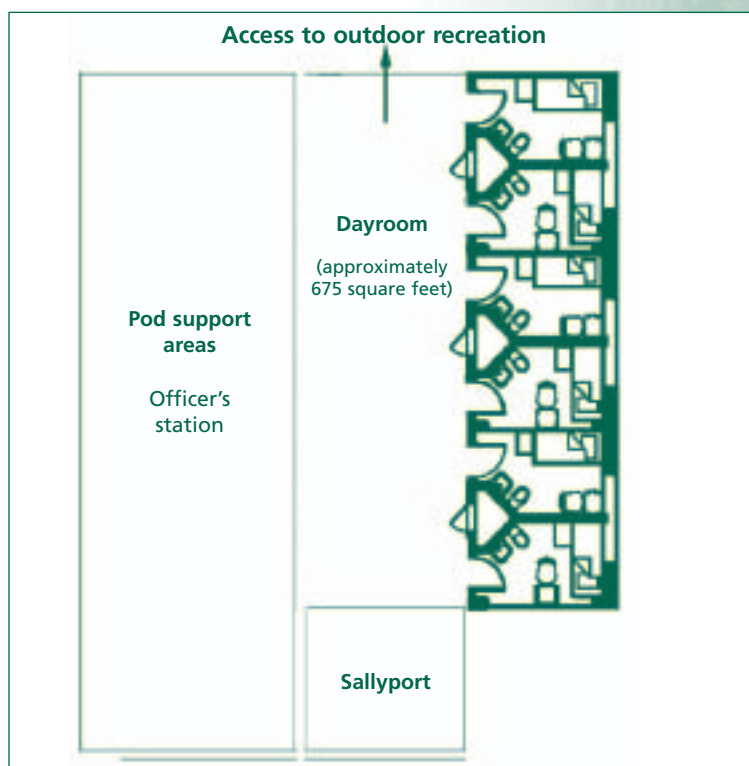
### Design Considerations

State standards can have a significant impact on the degree of separation that must be provided for female inmates. Although standards are consistent regarding the need for sight and sound separation in housing areas, the degree to which men and women must be separated in other areas of the facility can vary from complete separation at the point of booking (a separate booking area for women

**FIGURE 1. DAYROOM OF SIX-CELL HOUSING POD**



**FIGURE 2. SIX-CELL HOUSING POD DESIGN**



could be required) to no separation (areas are shared at all times), as long as staff are always available to provide supervision when males and females are using the area.

### Podular Remote vs. Direct Supervision Housing Strategies

The floor plan in figure 3 shows the Dutchess County Jail in Poughkeepsie, New York. The original design provided triangular, 14-cell, remote-supervision housing pods. To accommodate the diverse female population, the

original designer subdivided the pod into slices to achieve the separate female classifications. Figure 4 illustrates how the rigid geometry of the building meant that the female pod would be oddly shaped and would allow for less visibility from the control area.

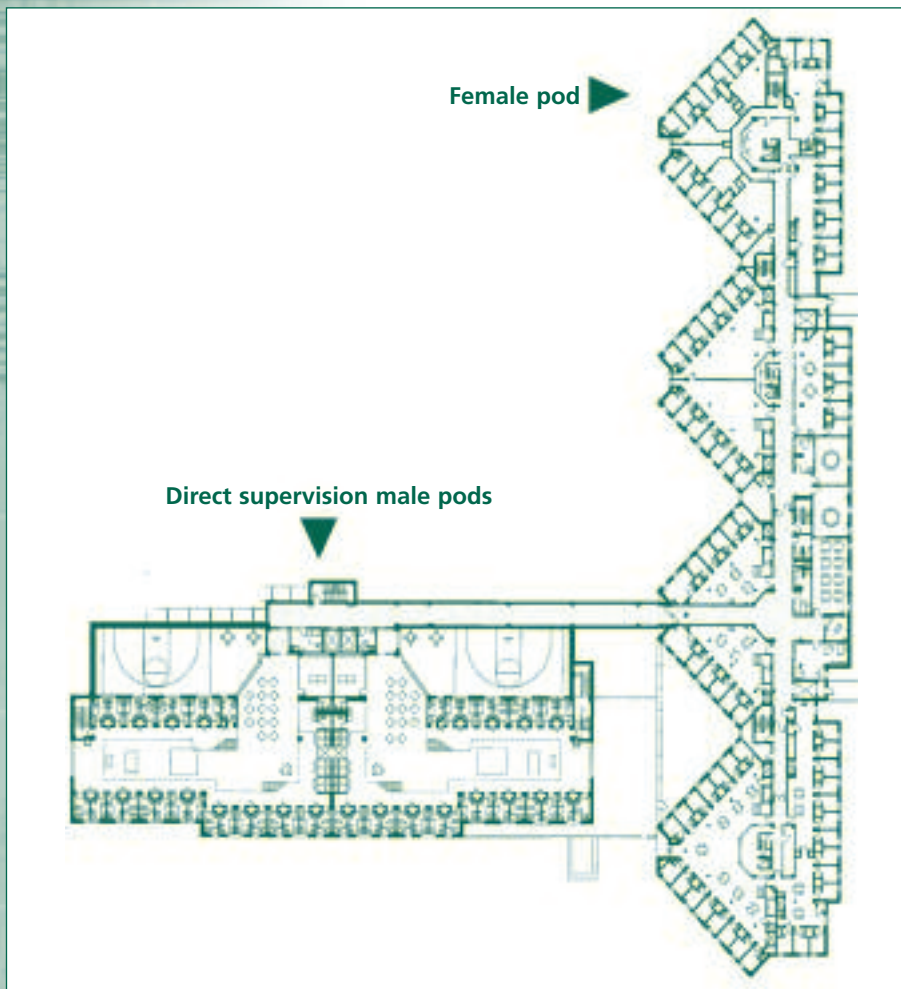
The new direct-supervision housing for male inmates provides 50 cells and direct access to the outside. The triangular shape of the older design allows daylight to enter the cells only, not the day-rooms. The new design provides

for direct entrance of daylight, immediate access to the recreation deck and program areas, daylight to all cells, and open lines of sight. The challenge in contemporary design is to develop a strategy that provides these advantages to a smaller population, which may not be large enough to justify full-time direct supervision.

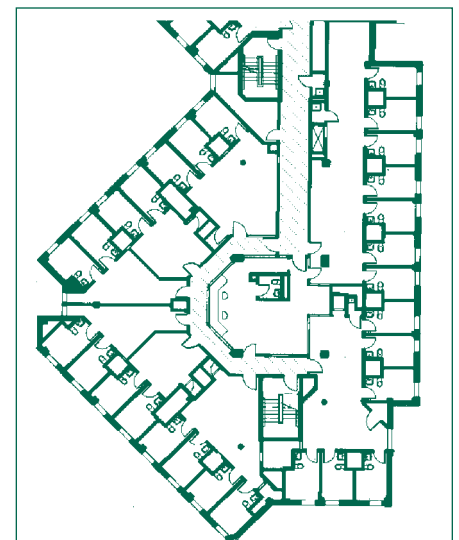
### Thin Slices of the Pie

Many small jails have been designed using wedge- or pie-shaped housing pods, approximating a triangle in shape, in which the officer sits in a control booth at the apex of the triangle. When considering how to provide for the various classifications of female inmates, many times the designer will subdivide the larger triangle into several smaller pie-shaped pieces, keeping the control booth at the apex. The resulting pods for female inmates have elongated

**FIGURE 3. SCHEMATIC DESIGN OF MALE AND FEMALE PODS**



**FIGURE 4. HOUSING POD GEOMETRY**





shapes that funnel down toward the control area. The ability of the officer to see all the areas in these “slices of the pie” is questionable.

Repetitive modules work well when repetition results in reduced costs. The design of the smaller housing areas in which women are typically housed must strike a balance between the cost effectiveness of repetitive design modules and the better operational characteristics of a different geometry.

### Flexible Space for Housing

Another reason why “slicing the housing pie” does not always work for female inmates is that this strategy does not respond well to the variations in numbers of female inmates and the corresponding changes in classification requirements. The solution requires more than merely installing a door between units. The challenge is to make the design of the housing unit flexible enough to house inmates with the same classification one day, be split into two or three distinct zones for a few

days, and then revert back to its original use.

Figure 5 is a section drawing of a flexible housing unit showing a two-story dayroom with cells along the edge. Adjacent to the lower range of cells is an area with both solid and glazed walls. This area can function as a separate dayroom. Control is able to see the fronts of the lower cells through the glazing of the lower dayroom. When housing inmates who all have the same classification, the lower dayroom doors can be left open so that the smaller and larger dayrooms can operate as one area. When there is a need to house two different classifications of inmates, the doors to the lower dayroom are locked so that the lower unit in effect acts as a separate entity.

### Balancing the Need for Modesty and Observation

Designing for privacy in toilet areas inside the cell will dictate the angle of vision from the cell door vision panel and the placement of the toilet. Figure 6 shows how the

use of a short wall provides an appropriate shielding of the lower body when viewed from the cell door. Creative design of appropriately sized partitions in the shower areas and use of materials such as glass block can provide partial screening that meets the need for both modesty and security. These issues are equally significant in designing toilet facilities for inmates in both program and support areas.

### Circulation

If services are centralized, women need a direct route to the areas in which the services occur. Consider placing the female housing pod close to the most frequently used areas so women can avoid the male housing areas. For all types of services and program space designs, the circulation path to these areas should be clean, ample, well lit, and easy to observe. When

FIGURE 5. SECTION OF SUBDIVIDED HOUSING POD

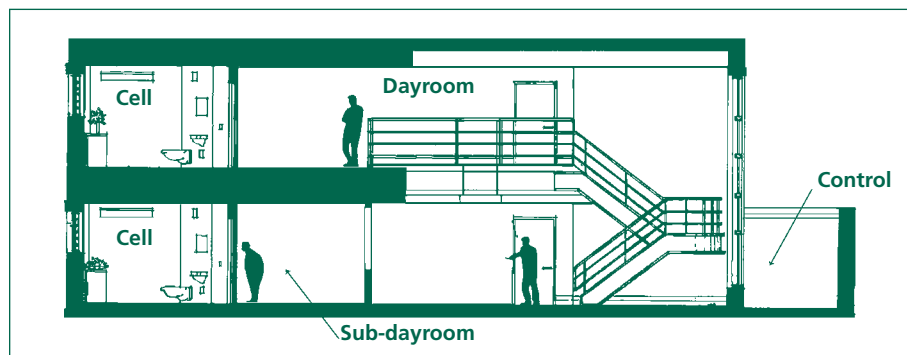


FIGURE 6. TOILET PLACEMENT IN CELLS





both sexes use the same circulation path, the design can be more space efficient and cost effective. Corridors are easy to manage when they have open lines of sight, have few or no corners or blind alleys, and are wide enough to allow inmates to pass each other but be kept separate.

### Booking Areas

Booking areas were traditionally designed with secure cells and to allow complete segregation of male and female inmates. However, during the past 25 years the open booking concept has become more mainstream. In this design concept, both male and female inmates sit in an open area while they are waiting to be booked, processed, and admitted to the facility (see figure 7). In the open booking design, facility operators can choose whether to separate women and how this will be accomplished. However, a number

FIGURE 7. OPEN BOOKING AREA



of cells with glazed fronts and toilets are provided for detainees who do not cooperate. Most jurisdictions include both types of holding spaces in their booking area. In an open booking area, consider how to ensure constant active staff supervision of seating areas and how to ensure that inmates do not leave seating areas without staff knowledge and consent. Appropriate toilet facilities for both men and women must be provided in these areas.

In more traditional secured holding areas, there must be sight and sound separation of male and female inmates while ensuring that staff can actively supervise these holding cells. Because these holding cells typically include toilet facilities, consider design features that provide the required level of privacy.

### Summary: Design Issues

Design considerations for female inmates present a variety of challenges to owners and designers. The key issues are as follows:

- **Space programming and housing.** The problems associated with developing good sight lines in smaller housing units, such as those typically occupied by female inmates, require that space allocations be calculated differently during programming. The standards used to allocate space for the dayroom area will be larger for female housing

units than for male housing units.

- **The need for a variety of housing classifications.** Female inmates need the same number of classifications as male inmates, but the ability to provide the small number of cells for each classification is challenged by the geometry typically used for jail design. Flexible use of day space is one solution.
- **Modesty and observation.** The layout of cells and shower areas must provide shielding of female occupants in a way that preserves modesty and dignity without compromising security.
- **Visiting, program space, and booking.** These areas can be reserved for one gender or can be used by both men and women. Scheduling is one option to provide segregation; design strategies provide alternate ways to achieve the same goals.

## A Last Word

The focus of this document is facility planning, not the development of programs and services for the inmates who will be held in these facilities. NIC has a wealth of information regarding effective programs and services, including specific programmatic and operational issues that affect the female inmate population. NIC's Gender-Responsive Strategies for Women Offenders bulletin series summarizes research

about female inmates. By considering the gender-specific issues identified in this document during master planning, prearchitectural programming, and design, jurisdictions can better create a facility that is functional and flexible for both staff and the female inmate population. However, the facility itself constitutes only one of the resources needed to achieve this goal; human and programmatic resources are also necessary.

Because female inmates are a minority in most jail populations, addressing their specific needs has sometimes been deferred so as to address the more pressing demands of the larger male population. This is particularly likely in small jails with very small female populations. However, the planning of a new facility provides an opportunity to consider program and service options that may not be possible or practical in an existing jail. Gender-specific differences have significant implications for delivery of programs and services. Understanding the aspects of female behavior that account for these differences may help staff work more effectively with female inmates. As a facility planning project moves into transition and then to operation, it may be useful to add a new conceptual framework, the potential impact of gender-specific differences, to the decisionmaking process for both the male and female inmate populations.

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GAIL ELIAS

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