

Focus Group Results:

WORKING WITH WOMEN OFFENDERS (94-S501)

On February 2, 1994, a focus group session was held with seven participants from the Academy Division's seminar "Working With Women Offenders." The participants, listed on the last page of this review, represented the fields of community corrections, county detention and corrections, and state prisons. The states of Indiana, Tennessee, Virginia, South Dakota, Connecticut and Kansas were represented.. The seventh participant was a "short-term fellow" representing the Japanese government.

The following open-ended question was placed before the group. This question generated a discussion which lasted nearly 50 minutes.

"What are some specific problems of women offenders and how does facility design facilitate or hinder the resolution of those problems?"

The participants comments were distilled and recorded on a flipchart. These words and phrases have been paraphrased into the sentences below.

- ◆ An open, campus style institution is best - more normal atmosphere.
- ◆ If facility is co-ed, designers should heed "cross-traffic areas."
- ◆ Pod designs work well.
- ◆ Natural light is positive.
- ◆ Colors are important.
- ◆ Outdoor recreation is important - women should have equal program opportunities.
- ◆ Designers should include passive observation of large areas.
- ◆ Wood doors instead of metal are preferable.
- ◆ Attention should be paid to the amount of noise made by doors.
- ◆ Need a isolation cell(s) with suicide precautions that meet standards.

- ◆ Don't forget ADA compliance in women's areas.
- ◆ Need spaces where women offenders can spend time privately and socially with their children. These should include a restroom with "a changing table" and restrooms for children.
- ◆ Need a separate unit for assaultive inmates.
- ◆ Need "lexan", opaque showers and bathtubs with minimal blind spots.
- ◆ Should have a mix of materials in interior construction.
- ◆ Attention should be paid to the room and restroom adjacencies.
- ◆ Indoor exercise areas should be provided. Equipment should be tied to programming.
- ◆ Laundry and hair-care facilities should be provided and easily accessible.
- ◆ Telephones should have a cutoff system.
- ◆ Lots of flexible space and numerous multi-purpose rooms are needed.
- ◆ Experienced consultants should be involved, if possible.
- ◆ Need to reduce impact on children visiting parents. Two door systems.
- ◆ Play space should be provided.
- ◆ Nurseries are important.
- ◆ Do not "short-change" the medical and mental health spaces.
- ◆ Do not "skimp" on storage space.
- ◆ Provide private spaces for screening.
- ◆ Inmates need secure storage space.

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Focus Group Results:

QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR MEDICAL CARE IN CORRECTIONS (94-S2102)

On February 16, 1994, a focus group session was held with six participants from the Academy Division's seminar:

"Quality Assurance for Medical Care in Corrections." The participants, listed on the last page of this review, represented the fields of county detention and state corrections.

The following open-ended question was placed before the group. This question generated a discussion which lasted nearly 45 minutes.

"What are some specific problems of women offenders and how does facility design facilitate or hinder the resolution of those problems?"

The participants comments were distilled and recorded on a flipchart. These words and phrases have been paraphrased into the sentences below.

- ◆ Must plan for the provision and storage of appropriate hygiene items.
- ◆ In terms of hygiene items, attention must be paid to the plumbing system.
- ◆ Appropriate recreational equipment must be provided for women offenders, such as "stair-steppers, craft equipment with sufficient storage, and various aerobic activities.
- ◆ Dry skin is a problem for women. Attention should be paid to the humidity control.
- ◆ Watch the heights of furniture, particularly bunks.
- ◆ Attention should be paid to "comfort needs." Things like soft furniture and colors are helpful.
- ◆ Hair-care facilities are important.
- ◆ Greenhouses and gardening programs are successful.
- ◆ For women housed long-term a baptismal font might be appropriate.

- ◆ Quiet space should be provided - someplace to meditate, receive bad news etc.
- ◆ Programs, services and staff training should focus on raising the women offender's self-esteem. This can translate to:
 - meeting hygiene needs,
 - encourage the taking of responsibilities,
 - implement small achievable goals,
 - training in and encouraging basic social skills, and
 - encouraging a well-groomed appearance:
- ◆ Provide as much light as possible.
- ◆ Programs like making toys for cops to carry in their cars helps self-esteem.
- ◆ Noise control is key - provide headphones.
- ◆ Provide outside facilities and programs - herb gardens.
- ◆ Areas where children are present should contain appropriate furnishings (i.e. chairs, toilets, tables, sinks, etc.). If "overnights" are allowed, proper beds should be provided.
- ◆ Women offenders should have the option of wearing dresses. This is particularly important when the offender has certain medical problems or certain treatments are being implemented.

The group felt that a workshop similar to the Planning of New institutions workshops would be helpful for those planning to construct a women's facility.

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Focus Group Results:

TREATMENT PROGRAMMING: AN ELEMENT OF OFFENDER RISK MANAGEMENT - 94-C2701

On April 12, 1994, a focus group session was held with seven participants from the Academy Division's seminar "Treatment Programming: An Element of Offender Risk Management." The participants, listed on the last page of this review, represented the fields of community corrections, county detention and corrections, and state prisons. The states of Arizona, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, and Vermont were represented.

The following open-ended question was placed before the group. This question generated a discussion which lasted nearly 50 minutes.

"What are some specific problems of women offenders and how does design facility in which you interact with them help or hinder the resolution of those problems?"

The participants comments were distilled and recorded on a flipchart. These words and phrases have been paraphrased into the sentences below.

- ◆ Small facilities have a lack of segregation space.
- ◆ Women's facilities have little privacy in the restrooms. Dormitories are especially bad.
- ◆ Co-dependency issues should be considered in programming.
- ◆ Too little "programming for parenting skills." Need to have a home-like atmosphere (almost a nursery) with small tables and chairs, books, games and toys. The children's comfort must be considered.

[It should be noted that a discussion ensued regarding the danger of making the area "too nice." The point was made that many of these children do not come from "home-like atmospheres. The agency should not create an atmosphere that "mom can't deliver."]

- ◆ A separate entrance into a facility is needed to mitigate the security systems.
- ◆ Programming and design must also consider the older children and teenagers.

- ◆ Women want to appear well-kept. There is too little opportunity for this.
- ◆ Community Corrections facilities generally provide better storage space for women offenders (both quantity and type.)
- ◆ Jails use the concept of gradually “better rooms” (i.e. cells.) Why can’t this be done in a community corrections facility?
- ◆ Temperature is a concern. Women always seem to be colder. Also a concern during drug testing.
- ◆ Better lighting helps facilitate better behavior.
- ◆ Community Corrections programs (i.e. work crews, “jails without walls” etc.) need to pay attention to who is placed in the program and their specific issues. Victimization? Safety? Security? Self-esteem? This also applies to treatment groups.
- ◆ The design of offices where women offenders are seen should be considered. There are often barriers and inappropriate decorations and furnishings.
- ◆ Must be careful about the ratios of men to women in the various programs and facilities.
- ◆ Unisex restrooms can be a problem in office settings.
- ◆ Many facilities seem not to be designed for women or men.
- ◆ Many program spaces are separate for women and men. Circulation and flow patterns should also consider this need for separation.
- ◆ If a program is trying to “reintegrate” a woman offender, all parties must be consider in addition to children (i.e. mothers, fathers, spouses, friends, etc.).
- ◆ Need to have waiting areas for those who bring children to the facility.
- ◆ Need to make any facility comfortable for volunteers if they are a part of the program.
- ◆ Need to identify ways in which women offenders “victimize” other women offenders and apply these findings to security measures.

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