



State of California

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

December 15, 2004

The Honorable Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor of California

The Honorable Don Perata
President pro Tempore of the Senate
and members of the Senate

The Honorable Fabian Núñez
Speaker of the Assembly
and members of the Assembly

The Honorable Dick Ackerman
Senate Minority Leader

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Assembly Minority Leader

Dear Governor Schwarzenegger and Members of the Legislature:

To improve the performance of correctional policies, states are evolving from being tough on crime to being smart on crime. Smart crime policies incorporate the best strategies and programs to accomplish public goals, in this case reducing violence, crime and drug abuse. In many instances, the greatest benefits accrue when those strategies target people who are at the greatest risk of recurring harm – to themselves, their families and their communities.

The 10,000 women in California's prisons and the 12,000 women on parole are on the top of this list. Most of these women have been both victim and offender, and most of them have children. They represent some of the greatest challenges for the state's vast, noble and under-performing network of health, education, human service and criminal justice programs. While dollars are allocated to these programs each year, the real costs are tolled over generations.

Policy-makers have examined in detail over the last couple of years the need to reform multiple aspects of California's correctional policies and the implementation of those policies by the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency.

There is growing recognition of the need for change and the direction that California should pursue. But fundamental reforms have yet to be made.

In this report, the Commission follows up on its 2003 report on parole policies by examining the State's efforts to break the cycle of violence, crime and addiction by female offenders. This review further validated the overarching need for improving the correctional system, and for pioneering those reforms by developing a better correctional strategy for women.

By now, even prison officials publicly acknowledge that the purpose of prisons should be to prepare inmates for release. But large remote prisons were designed to incapacitate violent offenders. Overcrowded with non-violent drug offenders, these prisons are not equipped or managed in ways that can achieve that essential goal. The Commission in this report recommends as an alternative greater reliance on community corrections.

Similarly, more and more civic leaders and law enforcement officials recognize that something other than minimal supervision and the threat of re-incarceration are needed to help parolees get a job, find a home and stay clean. But state correctional officials are reluctant to give up their control over parole, and local officials distrust state leaders too much to take on responsibility without a guarantee that they will receive the resources now spent on these offenders. In this report, the Commission recommends transitioning responsibility for parolees to communities, beginning with female offenders, whose families are often extensively involved in public and charitable health and human service programs.

Reform will require leadership and trust, in that order.

Leadership will be needed to craft clear and measurable goals, agreed to by executive and legislative leaders, and to manage the correctional system to reduce violence, crime and drug abuse in California's communities. The integrity of that commitment will be measured by the system that is put in place to develop evidence-based strategies and performance-based management systems, from the Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency on down. The Commission, in its 2003 report and again in this document, describes a means of accomplishing this task.

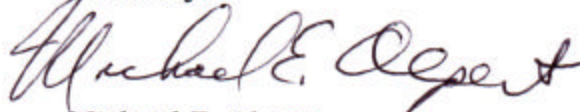
Fixing the system for women parolees also can be a good test of the correctional system's desire and capacity to improve. Lessons that are learned by improving outcomes for women can inspire and guide the management of the critically necessary system-wide reforms.

The Youth and Adult Correctional Agency cannot improve these outcomes by itself; it must rely heavily on local government and community-based partners. The Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency has publicly acknowledged the need for those partnerships and has begun to cultivate them – the first steps in exercising leadership and building trust.

Much of the promise and much of the failure for public programs are distilled in the parole system for female offenders. By effectively responding to addiction, poverty and crime among female offenders and their children, California will be acting with the prudence required to solve today's problem and to seize tomorrow's potential.

This report – and those before it – offer specific recommendations that if implemented could help policy-makers and correctional officials achieve those goals. The Commission urges you to embrace them and stands ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Michael E. Alpert", written in a cursive style.

Michael E. Alpert
Chairman

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for
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Breaking the Barriers *for Women on Parole*

An Executive Summary

Of the many scandals gripping California's correctional system, the failure to reduce crime, violence and drug abuse among parolees is one of the greatest. The costs and consequences of this failure are most onerous in the case of female offenders.

In a prison system as large as California's – and one so ridiculed for inmate abuse, cost overruns and ineffectiveness – it is easy to overlook the 10,000 incarcerated women and 12,000 women on parole.

The vast majority of female inmates are not a threat to public safety. Two-thirds of them were convicted of property or drug-related crimes.¹ Indeed, more of them have been victims of violent crimes than were convicted of violent crimes. A haunting four in 10 were physically or sexually abused before the age of 18.²

Most of them are housed in two of the nation's largest prisons isolated in the middle of the San Joaquin Valley. Despite the relatively low security risk of female inmates, the primary considerations in the design and operation of these facilities are preventing escapes and minimizing violence behind bars. Partly to control costs, the prisons are crowded far beyond design capacity. But the costly irony is the overcrowding further frustrates the anemic efforts at education, drug treatment and other interventions that – if managed correctly – could prevent many inmates from returning to prison after they are released.

With little preparation, all inmates are placed on parole at the end of their terms – something that is not done in most other states. Few of them receive help finding a job, a home, or staying clean, and in some cases they are denied help because of their convictions. Predictably, nearly half of these women violate the conditions of their parole and end up back in prison. More than 90 percent of those violations are for non-violent behaviors.³



On the cover: Susan Burton, a crime victim and parent who lost a son to violence, served time as a drug addict, earned a degree as a counselor, achieved her certificate of rehabilitation, and is now executive director of a non-profit assisting women on parole in Los Angeles County.

The State spends about \$1.5 billion a year on male and female inmates after they have completed their prison terms.⁴ Most of those costs are associated with re-incarcerating parole violators. While California's inmates are similar to those in other states, California ranks 49th in the percentage of offenders who successfully complete parole.⁵

In some instances, a strong case can be made that tough parole policies protect the public from serious and violent offenders. In its 2003 report on parole policies, the Little Hoover Commission recommended ways to strengthen policies regarding inmates and parolees with violent histories. The Commission also has advocated for better data and better analytical tools to assess the risks posed by individual offenders.

Surely, some female offenders pose a public safety risk, while in prison and on parole. The incarceration rate among female offenders for violent crimes has doubled over the last 20 years.⁶ But those offenders are not the ones responsible for the rapid growth and overcrowding. The statistics reveal that over the last generation, more and more women have been captured first by addiction and then the War on Drugs. They serve their time in prisons that are largely gender-blind and outcome ambivalent.

At the time of their arrest, half of these women were taking care of their children; two-thirds of those women were single parents.⁷ The correctional system does little to assess its impact on the prevention of future criminal behavior. It does even less to consider the impact of current policies – or the potential of alternative policies – on the thousands of children whose only parent, their mother, is in prison for petty theft with a prior or abusing drugs. Experts agree that parental incarceration is a significant risk factor for children, suggesting that

Safe and Sound Parole Policies

The Commission in 2003 declared California's parole system to be a \$1 billion failure, and made comprehensive recommendations for reducing costs and improving public safety by adapting proven strategies for reintegrating offenders back into California's communities. Among the recommendations:

1. The Board of Corrections should provide ongoing oversight of the parole system to ensure evidence-based strategies are properly implemented.
2. Prisons should prepare inmates for release. Wardens should be held accountable for operating effective programs and "good time" credits should be restructured to encourage inmates to prepare themselves.
3. Communities should assume greater responsibility for assisting parolees with housing, employment and other supports, funded by resources now spent by the State.
4. The State should develop a range of interventions for "failing" parolees based on effectiveness.
5. The State must scrutinize practices of re-incarcerating parolees suspected of serious crimes as parole violators rather than charging them with a new crime.

policy-makers reconsider the use of re-incarceration as the primary response to non-criminal parole violations – particularly for women offenders.

By not using analytical tools, by precluding rehabilitation with the priority on punishment, and by allowing policies to be based on the myth that only serious and violent inmates are sentenced to prison, the State has shackled itself to expensive and ultimately ineffective policies.

To be certain, there has been a vigorous debate about how to treat felons. The Little Hoover Commission – as indisputable evidence has emerged that some interventions can cost-effectively reduce crime, violence and drug-abuse – has urged policy-makers to implement those measures as a way of reducing public expenditures and improving public safety.

Former Governor Deukmejian – who in the 1980s championed the rapid expansion of the prison system and refocused it on incapacitation and punishment – this year concluded after a comprehensive and independent analysis that the pendulum had swung too far. He urged policy-makers to institute and expand programs that research has proven result in less crime, violence and drug abuse among the vast majority of felons who are released from prison and return home.

At this moment, no one can credibly defend California’s correctional policies or be satisfied with the Department of Corrections’ capacity to administer those policies.

There is at least rhetorical agreement from correctional officials that the primary policy goal should be to improve public safety by reducing crime, violence and addiction by inmates upon release. And in testimony, officials acknowledge that to be successful, they must faithfully replicate proven strategies.

But meaningful reforms have not been enacted.

This report builds on the Commission’s previous reports by examining and making recommendations for improving prison and parole policies as they relate to female offenders.

Improving policies for women offenders is not an alternative to reforming the entire system, and indeed reforming the entire system is both needed and would improve outcomes for women offenders.

But making the system more effective for male offenders will not be enough to make it more effective for female offenders. And because of their criminal histories, their smaller numbers, and the greater support

At this moment, no one can credibly defend California’s correctional policies or be satisfied with the Department of Corrections’ capacity to administer those policies.

for improving the outcomes for incarcerated mothers, the recommendations advocated in this report could pioneer the smart reforms that are needed systemwide.

To succeed, any reform must be predicated on two undeniable realities:

1. The Department of Corrections cannot change itself. If policy-makers and department officials are serious about making changes, they will put in place from the beginning an effective mechanism for independent, public, expert and outcome-based oversight of all programs and all facilities.
2. The Department of Corrections is only one part of the correctional continuum. It cannot and should not assume that it has sole responsibility for parolees, and it must work collaboratively with public and non-profit organizations to accomplish the goal of reducing crime. Specifically, the Commission believes the State's objective should be a community-centered and community-based parole system where the necessary supervision and assistance can be mustered to help parolees become responsible, contributing and free citizens.

This problem cannot be solved with more “programs.” Correctional leaders and policy-makers at the state and local levels must establish clear goals and the outcome measures that will gauge progress toward those goals. They must develop a strategy that makes the best use of existing resources – facilities, as well as annual budget expenditures – to institute evidence-based programs for reducing crime, violence and drug-addiction.

Toward that end, the Commission makes the following recommendations:

A Correctional Strategy for Female Offenders

Finding 1: The Department of Corrections has not developed a correctional strategy that effectively reduces crime, violence and drug abuse by the growing number of women inmates upon their release.

The number of women incarcerated in California grew exponentially over the past two decades. California has squandered limited resources by not responding with a strategy to reduce criminal activity and enhance public safety.

Four out of every 10 women on parole will fail and return to prison.⁸ The costs and consequences of this failure place an enormous burden on more than just the criminal justice and correctional systems, but the

child welfare, mental health and juvenile justice systems as well. Research shows that children of prisoners are five to six times more likely to become incarcerated than their peers. Ten percent are in foster care.

For the most part, the State has relied on a punishment strategy rather than a correctional strategy. California has failed to develop strategies to prepare inmates for their imminent release and their transition back to the community, despite a growing body of evidence of what works. And the State has made minimal efforts to provide the gender-responsive strategies that experts agree are essential for female parolees to become self-sufficient and law-abiding citizens.

Recommendation 1: The Department of Corrections should develop a coherent strategy to hold female offenders accountable for their crimes and improve their ability to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Specifically, the department should:

- ❑ ***Develop leadership for reforms.*** CDC should appoint a director for women’s programs to guide the development and implementation of reforms in institutions and parole to effectively address the risks and needs of women offenders and their children. The director should be the equivalent of the regional directors proposed by the Independent Review Panel. Previously the Commission recommended that wardens should be appointed to fixed terms and managed with performance contracts. In addition, wardens of women’s prisons should have professional training and skills in gender-responsive management, operations and programs.
- ❑ ***Embrace evidence-based practices.*** The department should implement programs that have the best evidence of effectiveness in producing the desired outcomes, including reduced recidivism, greater employment, substance abuse recovery and reunification. The director for women’s programs should empanel a council of criminal justice researchers to identify and recommend best practices and critique their implementation by the department. Independently conducted program evaluations should be reviewed and commented upon by this council. The panel should publicly report on whether programs are faithfully replicating proven programs, and whether they should be modified, expanded or discontinued.
- ❑ ***Develop a strategic plan.*** The director for women’s programs should develop a strategic plan for female offenders, consistent with the department’s overall strategic plan. The plan should include input and ownership of staff and management; statements of values, mission, goals and objectives. It should include an implementation

plan that delineates activities, budgets, time lines and those responsible for the outcomes.

- ✓ The plan should include a robust community correctional system to effectively house and prepare female inmates for release.
 - ✓ The plan also should include a robust re-entry effort to effectively supervise and assist female parolees.
- **Measure and report performance.** The Department of Corrections should develop performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of its correctional strategy for women offenders. It should report the results to correctional staff, the public and policy-makers.

These two elements – community corrections and a community-based re-entry model – are described in the following findings.

Preparing for Success

Finding 2: Mega-prisons, designed primarily to incapacitate and punish violent offenders, are not effective for the majority of female offenders who are non-violent, serve short sentences and need specific services to successfully return home.

More women entered prison in the past two decades than ever before, many caught by the tough sentencing laws passed to respond to gang activity and the neighborhood drug wars.

However, the women caught in the drug dragnet are not like their male counterparts – they are mostly non-violent, the majority have been victims themselves, they have more mental health issues and more severe drug addictions, and they are more likely to be the primary caretaker of a young child.

Yet when reacting to the increase in female offenders, correctional policies did not take into account the change in the nature of crimes committed, or even in the gender of the offenders. The State responded by constructing large, remotely located prisons that isolate women from their children and do not provide the programs that can reduce crime and prevent released offenders from recycling back to prison.

The State has taken a few minor steps to develop community-based facilities that provide gender-responsive services to incarcerated mothers with young children. While program administrators have identified barriers to broader participation, little or nothing has been done to remove those barriers, and the programs have not been expanded or replicated.

Gender Differences Among Offenders	Female	Male
Californians Convicted of Crimes Against Persons in 2003 ⁹	835	15,008
Percent of California Parolees with Minimum or Low Supervision ¹⁰	88%	72%
Number of California Parolees Classified as High Control or 2 nd Strike ¹¹	822	24,246
Offenders Physically or Sexually Abused Prior to Prison Admission ¹²	57%	16%
Offenders in Counseling/Therapy for Mental Health Issues ¹³	27%	12%
Offenders Having a Child Under 18 Years Old ¹⁴	64%	57%
Percent Living With Their Children Prior to Arrest ¹⁵	53%	36%
Offenders Employed at the Time of Arrest ¹⁶	40%	60%

The State has one privately run community correctional facility for women where every inmate participates in educational and vocational training programs. Located in the heart of a neighborhood in a small community, the women at this facility have opportunities to learn skills and give back to the community in ways that their counterparts in the large remote facilities cannot. Yet this facility has never been evaluated, replicated or expanded.

Recommendation 2: A core element of a strategic plan for women should be a robust system of community correctional facilities focused on preparing women offenders for success on parole. The State should:

- ***Revise classification procedures.*** The Department of Corrections should tailor its classification tool to improve its ability to classify and make housing assignments for women offenders. The tool should be validated to ensure that it accurately assesses the risks female offenders pose to public safety and their needs for services to successfully transition from prison to the community
- ***Develop a continuum of incarceration options.*** The department should develop a continuum of facilities for female inmates to cost-effectively match inmates with the facility that best achieves the goals of public protection and successful re-entry.
 - ✓ The continuum should include community correctional facilities to house inmates closer to their communities; halfway back facilities to support the transition from prison to the community; and, facilities specifically designed to address the needs of parole violators who are inappropriate for less restrictive sanctions.

- ✓ Prisoner mother programs should be fortified and expanded. The eligibility criteria for the Family Foundations Program should be revised to make it consistent with other minimum security placements such as community correctional re-entry centers, camps and the Community Prisoner Mother Program. The department should explore incentives for participation in the programs, including providing “work credits” equal to those of the camp program.
- **Partner with communities.** The department should work with communities to plan, develop and operate facilities based on research and focused on successful re-entry. It should explore all options for siting facilities, including expanding existing facilities, utilizing closed military facilities, closed California Youth Authority facilities and contracting with sheriff’s departments and others.
- **Operationalize the continuum.** The department should use a competitive process to develop contracts for community correctional facilities to deliver the array of services shown to reduce recidivism among female offenders. Private companies, public agencies or partnerships among them should be encouraged to bid on the contracts.
 - ✓ The department should restructure the contracting process to emphasize quality of services over the lowest cost to contract with providers with expertise in addressing the needs of women offenders and link inmates with aftercare upon release.
 - ✓ The department should establish performance benchmarks in contracts with providers and monitor and report return-to-custody rates and other outcome measures.
 - ✓ The department should reward high-quality providers with higher rates of reimbursement and terminate the contracts of those that fail to meet specified outcomes.

A Re-entry Model to Reduce Recidivism

Finding 3: Female offenders are often denied assistance with housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, and family reunification, and as a result the public costs and personal tragedies continue to plague families and communities.

All offenders released back into the community face nearly insurmountable challenges – they frequently have nowhere to live, nowhere to work and nowhere to turn for help in fighting addiction.

Women must not only conquer these obstacles, they also are frequently returning as the sole caretaker of young children.

And at this most vulnerable juncture, many female parolees cannot tap into the services that could help them and their families succeed.

In an effort to block drug abusers from utilizing social service benefits to feed their addictions, the federal government placed a lifetime ban on access to federal welfare funds for drug offenders. So while a non-violent mother convicted of drug possession is denied access to federal funds that would help her get a job and take care of her family, a robber, a rapist or a murderer has no such restriction. Seventeen states have applied for a waiver to this restriction but California has not.

Not surprisingly many female offenders released to parole do not succeed and instead return to prison. Their crimes and addictions plague local communities and sap local government resources. Their children often are raised by over-burdened relatives or placed in costly foster care, where they are more likely than most to become the next generation of offenders continuing the cycle of crime and perpetuating the costs of incarceration.

Recommendation 3: The State should develop a community-based re-entry model to reduce recidivism among women offenders, improve public safety and reduce public costs. Specifically, the State should:

- ***Establish an interagency council on re-entry.*** The Governor should establish an interagency council on re-entry to develop a system of community supervision and re-entry with comprehensive, integrated services for female offenders.
 - ✓ The council should be co-chaired by the secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency and the secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency. Members should include state and community representatives from the fields of law enforcement, education, housing and community development, employment, alcohol and drug, mental health, child welfare, domestic violence and victim advocacy programs. Community members, offenders and their families should be represented.
 - ✓ The council should identify statutory, regulatory and practical barriers to re-entry and recommend to the Governor and Legislature ways to overcome them.
 - ✓ The council should identify and recommend to the Governor, Legislature and communities evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies for the children of incarcerated parents.

- **Shift the responsibility for parolee supervision and assistance to communities, starting with women.** The Governor and Legislature should require communities to assume responsibility for certain non-violent women parolees as a first step in transferring responsibility for the majority of non-violent offenders – male and female – to communities.
 - ✓ Communities should establish multi-agency coordinating councils and develop local plans for supervising, assisting and sanctioning female parolees using a case management approach and partnerships between the adult criminal courts and dependency courts.
 - ✓ The State should develop agreements with sheriffs or probation departments, in partnership with community agencies, to provide the services. The services should be supported by shifting funds from services now administered by the State.
- **Provide technical assistance.** The Youth and Adult Correctional Agency should provide assistance in developing, implementing and evaluating correctional plans. It should contract for technical assistance to help communities identify and overcome barriers to effective interagency partnerships, siting of transitional housing, development of adequate treatment resources and others.
- **Measure performance.** The Department of Corrections should establish and operate, with the cooperation and participation of its community partners, a statewide information and evaluation system to monitor the effectiveness of the community re-entry services.

Knocking Down the Barriers

For the community re-entry model to be effective, the State must take specific actions to reduce legal and practical barriers to re-entry for female offenders. Specifically, the State should:

- ❑ ***Immediately enact legislation to eliminate or modify the ban on CalWORKs for certain non-violent drug felons to improve access to housing, employment and drug treatment services critical to successful re-entry.***
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to housing, the State should:***
 - ✓ Require CDC to collect and report to the Legislature and local Public Housing Authorities data regarding the housing needs of female parolees and their children.
 - ✓ Create tax credit and bonus programs for private builders as incentives to build housing for female parolees.
 - ✓ Support, in partnership with communities, the development of a range of housing options for female offenders, including transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and sober living environments.
 - ✓ Establish partnerships with Public Housing Authorities to:
 - Encourage local public housing authorities to consider evidence of rehabilitation from criminal or substance abuse activity in their application of federal restrictions and give preference to female parolees with children.
 - Provide vouchers as incentives for completion of substance abuse treatment and other programs known to reduce recidivism.
 - Place eligible CDC inmates on public housing lists prior to release.
 - Adapt the Shelter Plus Care program to female parolees.
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to employment, the State should:***
 - ✓ Increase the allocation of discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds for offender programs. (Currently 15 percent of total discretionary funding, or \$10.6 million.)
 - ✓ Provide fiscal incentives for local Workforce Investment Boards to serve female parolees.
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to substance abuse recovery, the State should:***
 - ✓ Fully fund aftercare treatment for all offenders participating in in-prison drug treatment programs and make aftercare mandatory. It should expand aftercare options to include day treatment, sober living with support services and other options based on offender risk and needs assessments.
 - ✓ Expand drug treatment furlough for women offenders and use furlough as an incentive for completion of in-prison treatment.
 - ✓ Evaluate the two drug treatment programs for females at the California Rehabilitation Center to determine whether the full-time program is significantly more effective than the four-hour program. If it is not, it should be converted to a four-hour program to increase the number of offenders served.
 - ✓ Assign parole agents to specialized Female Offender Treatment and Employment Project caseloads to improve consistency and outcomes.
 - ✓ Measure and report Proposition 36 outcomes for female offenders.

Introduction

Shortly after the Commission released its November 2003 report on parole, Senator Gloria Romero, chair of the Senate Select Committee on the California Correctional System, asked the Little Hoover Commission to review the effectiveness of the parole system as it relates to women offenders. From previous studies, the Commission was aware of the costs resulting from the intersection of the criminal justice and human services systems. The Commission also understood the potential benefits to state budgets and community well-being of well-managed programs in these policy areas. Because women offenders are frequently the primary caretakers of young children, improving outcomes for women on parole could not only reduce costs and improve public safety, but positively impact the lives of California's children.

This is the fourth time in a decade that the Commission has reviewed state correctional policies. In its most recent review of parole policies, the Commission in 2003 found that California stood apart from the rest of the nation in its policy of placing every offender released from prison on parole and then using the most costly alternative – re-incarceration – when parolees violate a condition of their parole.

In examining other state programs, the Commission recognized that corrections contributes to the success or failure of related human service programs. When the Commission reviewed alcohol and drug treatment programs, it found that substance abuse was rampant in the offender population and that drug treatment in prison, followed by aftercare upon release, reduced parolee failure. In the Commission's review of the mental health system, it found that many Californians with mental illness commit crimes and end up in jail or prison because of inadequate mental health treatment in their communities. In its review of the foster care system, the Commission found that many children are in foster care because of their parents' criminal behavior, particularly drug abuse.

The Commission examined the impact of public policies on women on parole by conducting two public hearings. It received testimony from a national expert on gender-responsive criminal justice strategies, state correctional leaders, wardens from two prisons for women, victim's rights advocates and community activists.

The Commission heard from the founders of a successful jail-based program for women in Alameda County, as well as from a graduate of that program. Two judges, one at the forefront of drug and family courts and one who established a successful re-entry court, discussed the critical role of the judicial system in improving parole outcomes. The Commission also heard from a former female parolee, who not only successfully completed parole, but founded a non-profit organization that assists female parolees. The witnesses are listed in Appendix A.

Early in the study, the Commission identified three critical barriers for women parolees – the lack of affordable housing, challenges finding employment and substance abuse. The Commission convened three focus groups with experts, community activists, former offenders and corrections officials to gain insight on opportunities for removing these barriers that impact parolee success. Focus group participants are listed in Appendix B.

The Commission toured the California Institution for Women and the California Rehabilitation Center and met with wardens Dawn Davison and JoAnn Gordon to learn more about the programs offered in prison and discuss opportunities for improving parole outcomes for women. Commission staff also toured the Leo Chesney Community Correctional Facility, a community-based corrections alternative. Staff visited Los Angeles Centers for Alcohol and Drug Abuse, one of two Family Foundations Program sites and Prototypes, one of three Community Prisoner Mother Program sites. Both programs target women offenders who are pregnant or who have young children.

The study examines gender-responsive policies and strategies, evaluates the current model and programs for female inmates and parolees, and reviews the barriers that impact successful outcomes for female parolees.

The study provides recommendations that, if implemented, could reduce costs in both the criminal justice and human services systems, cut crime, turn offenders into taxpaying and law-abiding citizens, and improve the lives of children whose mothers are incarcerated.

This introduction is followed three stories of lives changed by community-based intervention and then by a background, which provides a profile of female offenders, details critical gender differences and identifies the State's current corrections programs. The background is followed by three findings and recommendations.

All written testimony submitted electronically for each of the two hearings and the executive summary and complete report are available online at the Commission's Web site, <http://www.lhc.ca.gov/lhc.html>.

Changing Lives Through Community Intervention

In every study, the Commission hears testimony from a broad group of stakeholders who provide insight on current policy and opportunities for improvements. Yet often it is the voices of Californians with first-hand knowledge that crystalize the impact of policies on real lives. In this study, the Commission heard from several women who spent time in prison and on parole. Their stories highlight the role the community can play in changing lives.

"That's Why It Works, Because They Care..."

Casondra Tshimonga left an abusive home life as a teen. Soon after, she was raising a disabled daughter by herself, got laid off from her job and began a life of crime. She was arrested for computer crimes and spent two years in a halfway house. With no permanent place to live and nowhere to work, she left the halfway house and returned to crime.

The second time she was arrested, Ms. Tshimonga was held in the Santa Rita Jail in Alameda County, where she entered the Maximizing Opportunities for Mothers to Succeed (MOMS) program which provides case management services for mothers in jail. She told her caseworker, "My biggest fear is that I will go back to crime when I get out." Her caseworker replied, "You are not going back to crime because I'm not going to let you. If you try to go back to crime, you can call me at three in the morning – whenever – I'm going to make sure you are not going back."

Abused as a teen, she left home early. A single parent caring for a disabled daughter, she turned to crime when she lost her job.

Ms. Tshimonga was sentenced to federal prison. A year later she was released from prison – with \$28 in her pocket and a phone number for the MOMS program. With nowhere to live and no job, she turned to the MOMS program. A new case manager immediately provided help. "I called and told her that I was a MOMS' client and that I was about to get out of prison. She picked me up and drove me to a shelter."

Ms. Tshimonga feared that she would be unable to find a job because she was prohibited from using a computer. Her caseworker referred her to a construction training program, where she learned a trade and got a job as a sheet metal worker.

"Everything I did when I got out was through a referral from my case manager. The MOMS program was a lifeline. It really works and they really care. That's why it works, because they care."

"Without Child Care, It's Hard to Go Back to Work..."

Reneca Corbin was fortunate when she got out of prison. Fortunate because she moved into one of two homes for women leaving prison run by the non-profit organization, A New Way of Life Re-entry Project, where she and her infant daughter could begin the journey toward self-sufficiency. A New Way of Life not only provided a home, but basic necessities, counseling and referrals.

Despite this assistance, Ms. Corbin faced numerous obstacles. Because she was convicted of a drug felony, she was no longer able to access federal benefits – welfare assistance, job training, child care, transportation – that are frequently the lifeline to achieving self-sufficiency. While many states have taken advantage of a waiver to the federal ban on benefits for drug felons, California has not.

Ms. Corbin, unlike many parolees, had a marketable job skill as a beautician. But without temporary assistance for child care, finding and keeping a job posed a significant challenge. Ms. Corbin told the Commission, "Without child care, it is really hard to go back to work."

"People Coming Out Need Someone to Believe in Them."

Phyllis Gonzales had been in and out of prison many times. The fifth time she was paroled from prison, she entered Volunteers in Parole, Inc., a program where attorneys volunteer to mentor parolees.

"Having this program has been a good experience for me. When you come out from prison there aren't too many resources," she said. "People coming out need encouragement and direction. They need people to believe in them."

When Ms. Gonzales left prison, she entered and successfully completed a residential drug treatment program. She then was able to access affordable housing through Cottage Housing, Inc., a Sacramento-based non-profit organization. Having a mentor gave her an important resource to connect to community services as well as a reliable person to call when she had questions or needed advice. "I gained more than a mentor, I gained a friend... someone who will be there for me until I am ready to give back someday."

At the time Ms. Gonzales testified to the Commission, she was the mother of five children with another one on the way. Her son was incarcerated at Folsom Prison – the third generation in her family to enter prison. "The things I'm doing right now, I hope will influence him when he comes home. He's going to be in the VIP program whether he likes it or not."

Casondra Tshimonga testified at a Little Hoover Commission public hearing on April 22, 2004. Reneca Corbin participated in the Little Hoover Commission's expert panel meetings on July 20-21, 2004. Phyllis Gonzales testified at a Little Hoover Commission public hearing on May 27, 2004, the same day she received an early discharge from parole.

Background

Women are the fastest growing portion of the California prison population. Like thousands of California men, women have increasingly been caught in the net cast to catch violent drug dealers and gang members as part of the "War on Drugs." Yet female offenders are different than their male counterparts in important ways – their crimes are different, their pathways into the criminal justice system are different, their life histories are different.

If correctional programs are going to help women break the cycle of their criminal behavior, policy-makers must recognize how women offenders are different from men. Women offenders have different challenges to address when they enter the criminal justice system and nearly insurmountable barriers when they attempt to leave the criminal justice system. If the State's goal is to enhance public safety and reduce costs, California must rethink its policies for female offenders.

The average female offender in California is in her late thirties. She is likely to have been a victim of physical or sexual abuse early in life. She is addicted to drugs, often has mental health issues and most likely was sent to prison for using drugs or stealing to support a drug habit. She also is likely to be a mother, and frequently the primary caregiver of young children. As the size of the female prison population escalates, so do the costs and burdens to society, both now and in the future.

California has more women incarcerated in prison than almost any other state. Only Texas surpasses California in the number of women locked up in state prison.¹⁷ As of 2003, California incarcerated approximately 10,000 women.¹⁸

The female prison population in California has grown more rapidly than the male prison population. Between 1983 and 2003, the number of women incarcerated in California increased five-fold, from approximately 2,000 to 10,000. The number of men incarcerated in that same time period increased four-fold.¹⁹

Similarly, the number of women on parole exploded during the past two decades. Between 1983 and 2003, the number of female parolees increased eight-fold, from just under 1,500 female parolees to more than 12,000.²⁰

Nearly half of the women on parole will fail. In 2003, the rate of female felons returned to prison was 44 out of every 100 women on parole. In 2003, nearly 6,300 female parolees were returned to custody.²¹

Half of all commitments of women to prison are parolees. In 2003, 6,268 women were new admissions from court and 6,288 were female parolees returned to custody.²²

Almost all female parolees returned to custody are charged with a parole violation. In 2003, of all female parolees returned to custody, nearly 5,000 or 80 percent were charged with a parole violation while 1,300 or 20 percent were convicted of a new crime and sentenced to serve a new term.²³

Prior Parole Policy Recommendations

In its November 2003 report on parole policies, *Back to the Community: Safe & Sound Parole Policies*, the Little Hoover Commission made the following conclusions:

To protect the public, the correctional system must use proven strategies to prepare inmates for release, supervise and assist parolees in their communities, and intervene when parolees fail. The State should create the means to improve the performance of the correctional system by changing laws, budgets and programs to increase success among parolees.

To increase public safety, state and local correctional agencies, community organizations and the inmates themselves should prepare for the predictable release of inmates from prison.

The goals for parole – public safety and successful reintegration – are undermined by the way the State supervises and assists parolees and the lack of community involvement in re-entry.

Correctional officials do not intervene in cost-effective ways with parolees who are not successfully reintegrating. When parole violators are returned to custody, they are not prepared for their imminent re-release.

To ensure public safety and fairness, the State should scrutinize its responses to parolees charged with new, serious crimes.

Source: Little Hoover Commission. November 2003. "Back to the Community: Safe & Sound Parole Policies." Sacramento.

These numbers are significant because the majority of these women have children. And their relatively short stays in prison disrupt their lives and most critically, the lives of their children, making reunification more difficult.

This failure of the parole system for women is consistent with the Little Hoover Commission's findings in its November 2003 report, *Back to the Community: Safe & Sound Parole Policies*, which evaluated California's overall parole system. The Commission found that while most states face challenges with the parole population, California stood alone in the number of offenders it places on parole and in its policy of returning most parole violators to prison instead of using less costly community-based sanctions.

In its 2003 study, the Commission found several fundamental problems:

- Time in prison is not used to prepare inmates for their eventual release.
- Available resources – particularly those in communities – are not used to help parolees who with some assistance could get a job and stay out of trouble.
- When parolees do get into trouble, the majority of them go back to prison – even if drug treatment, short jail stays or some other intervention would cost less or provide a better opportunity for parole success.

The consequences of these public policy failures are not just mirrored, but magnified when evaluating women offenders. When women offenders arrive at the prison gate, they are more likely than their male counterparts to be unemployed, uneducated, and more severely addicted to drugs. These women also are more likely to be primary caregivers of young children. The constant recycling of all California offenders is expensive and has not been proven to enhance public safety.²⁴ And the costs of recycling non-violent female offenders will be paid for years as the children of these women are more likely than most to become the next generation of offenders – committing crime and doing time.

Profile of Female Inmates

The profile of the female prison inmate is significantly different from the male prison inmate. To begin with, female offenders overall are significantly less violent. Because fewer women have been convicted of a violent crime, more are classified as low-risk inmates and most will serve a short sentence.

Female offenders commit fewer violent crimes. More than two-thirds of female inmates in California prisons were convicted of a non-violent drug or property crime, whereas 50 percent of their male counterparts have been convicted of a crime against another person. The vast majority of female offenders have been convicted of a property crime, such as petty theft with a prior, or a drug offense, such as possession or possession with intent to sell.²⁵ The table below compares female and male offenders serving time in California prisons by offense category.

Type of Commitment Offenses California Prison Population 2003²⁶	Female	Male
Crimes Against Persons	30%	52%
Property Crimes	33%	20%
Drug Crimes	31%	21%
Other Crimes	7%	7%
Missing	1%	.3%

The commitment offenses on the chart above are biased for both women and men by serious offenders serving lengthy sentences. A statistical breakdown of inmates coming into the system more accurately reveals the nature of inmates being sentenced to prison. Because so many women commit low-level crimes, serve short sentences and rapidly cycle out of prisons, they are not part of the long-term prison population. The chart below details the crimes committed by women and men entering

prison in 2003 and reveals that approximately 87 percent of women entering prison were convicted of non-violent property or drug crimes.

Type of Commitment Offenses New Commitments in 2003²⁷	Female	Male
Crimes Against Persons	13%	28%
Property Crimes	47%	31%
Drug Crimes	34%	29%
Other Crimes	5%	12%

Most female offenders are classified as low-risk. Once incarcerated, women are much more likely to be classified as low-risk than their male counterparts. The California Department of Corrections (CDC), like most other state prison systems, uses a classification system to help determine the most appropriate placement of offenders. As offenders are processed at a reception center prior to placement in a specific prison, they are scored on a variety of items including length of sentence, disciplinary history, employment history, age, prior incarcerations and more. A higher score is supposed to reflect a greater potential to misbehave or attempt an escape.²⁸ California has four levels of housing security, as defined below:

- Level I – Primarily open dormitories with a low security perimeter.
- Level II – Primarily open dormitories with a low security perimeter, which may include armed coverage.
- Level III – Facilities primarily have a secure perimeter with armed coverage and housing units with cells adjacent to exterior walls.
- Level IV – Facilities have a secure perimeter with internal and external armed coverage and housing units or cell block housing with cells non-adjacent to exterior walls.²⁹

Approximately 42 percent of female offenders are classified as Level I as compared to only 15 percent of male offenders. The table on the following page compares the classifications of women and men incarcerated in California prisons.

Inmate Classification ³⁰	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	10,124	100%	150,655	100%
No Score	1,074	10%		
Level I	4,296	42%	22,155	15%
Level II	2,698	27%	47,488	32%
Level III	1,152	11%	50,660	34%
Level IV	852	8%	27,455	18%
SHU (Segregated Housing Unit)	52	.005%	2,896	2%

Female offenders serve less time. Because female offenders overall commit crimes that are less violent and less serious than their male counterparts, on average they serve much shorter sentences, typically 14 months as compared to 19 months for men. The table compares the median time served for women and men first released to parole in California in 2003.

Time Served on Sentence Felons First Released to Parole 2003 ³¹	Female	Male
Average (median) time served	14 mos.	19 mos.
Time Served – Crimes Against Persons	22.2 mos.	27.1 mos.
Time Served – Property Crimes	13.3 mos.	14.7 mos.
Time Served – Drug Crimes	14.6 mos.	19.8 mos.
Time Served – Other Crimes	14.3 mos.	14.6 mos.

Nearly 75 percent of all female offenders are serving a determinate sentence as compared to 57 percent of male offenders. Determinate sentences require that an offender be released once her time has been served, minus any "good time" credit earned by working or participating in a prison-based program. Approximately 13 percent of female offenders are serving a second strike sentence, 8.5 percent are serving a life sentence with the possibility of parole and less than 1 percent are serving a third strike commitment. Only 137 women, or less than 2 percent, are serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole or a death sentence.³²

In 2003, nearly 90 percent of female offenders released to parole had served slightly more than one year for a non-violent property or drug offense.³³ In California, virtually every offender released from prison is placed on parole for a period of one to three years.

Profile of Female Parolees

The distinction between male and female offenders continues upon release to parole as more female parolees require minimal supervision. There are four major parole supervision classifications: minimum supervision, control services, high control and high services. Most female parolees, approximately 88 percent, are either classified as minimum supervision, meaning they must make face-to-face contact with their parole agent once every 120 days, or control services, meaning they must make face-to-face contact twice per quarter.³⁴

Minimum Supervision. After satisfactorily completing 120 days under a control services classification, parolees are automatically assigned to minimum supervision, where they must have one face-to-face contact with their parole agent every 120 days. Additionally, they must submit a written form if they have a change of address, employment or marital status. As of October 2004, 2,459 female parolees, or 20 percent were classified as minimum supervision and 1,195, or 10 percent were classified as minimum supervision under Proposition 36, which requires drug treatment for offenders and parolees charged with non-violent drug offenses.

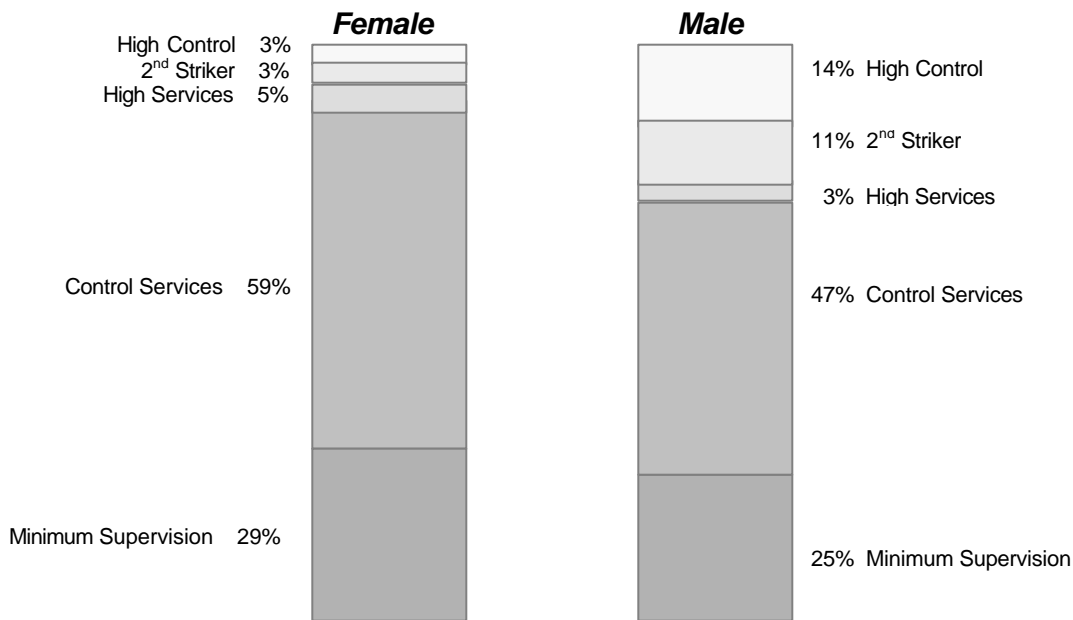
Control Services. Parolees in this classification must make two face-to-face contacts per quarter with the parole agent. As of September 2004, 4,794 female parolees, or 38 percent were classified under control services and 1,895, or 21 percent, were classified as control services under Proposition 36.

High Services and High Control. Parolees categorized as either high control or high services must make contact with a parole agent twice a month – once at the parolee's residence and once at another location. Additionally, parole agents make two collateral contacts per month with a doctor, relative, spouse, employer or other individual who has contact with the parolee. High control parolees are those who were convicted of violent felonies, must register as sex offenders, are known gang offenders, or are of particular interest to the public. Approximately 3 percent of female parolees are high control or high-risk sex offenders. An additional 4 percent are classified as second strikers.³⁵ Second strike parolees receive tighter supervision because they are high-risk offenders, and because a third strike conviction will result in a sentence of 25 years to life, at great expense to the State.³⁶

High Services. Parolees classified as high services have the same reporting requirements as parolees classified as high control. High service parolees have special needs or behaviors, such as people with severe mental illness. Approximately 1.4 percent of female parolees are “enhanced outpatients,” defined as parolees requiring psychiatric assistance and extensive help; 4 percent are classified as high services for other reasons.

Approximately 88 percent of female parolees require relatively low supervision and have minimal contact with their parole agents. Of the 12,500 women on parole, only about 800 are considered high risk, requiring more frequent contact with their parole agents. Approximately 72 percent of male parolees require relatively low supervision. However, of the more than 97,500 men on parole, more than 24,000 or 25 percent are considered high risk. The graphic below reflects the percentages of female and male parolees who are categorized in each of the parole classifications.

Comparison of Female and Male Parole Classifications



Source: California Department of Corrections. Parole & Community Services Division. October 5, 2004. Written Communication. Female Parolees by Class and Male Parolees by Class. (Numbers have been rounded.)

Female Parole Violators

As noted earlier, about half of the approximately 12,500 women committed to prison in 2003 were parolees returned to custody. Approximately 20 percent of the women returned to custody were

charged with a new crime and sentenced to a new term. The remainder, 80 percent, were returned for a parole violation.³⁷

CDC uses the term "administrative return" for parole violations that result in a return to custody and further distinguishes between "criminal" and "non-criminal" returns. A criminal return involves criminal activity, even though the parolee is not convicted of a new crime. A non-criminal return is a violation that does not involve criminal activity and would not result in a prison sentence except for the terms of parole, for example, failing to meet with a parole officer.

Male parole violators are more likely than female parole violators to return to custody for violent offenses; they are twice as likely to be charged with assault and battery or weapons offenses, whereas women are more likely to be charged with theft, forgery or drug possession. Nearly 55 percent of female parole violators were charged with a drug-related offense as compared to 40 percent of male parole violators. The chart on the following page compares principal charge categories for female and male parole violators in California in 2000, the most recent year this data is available.

National Comparison of Female Offenders

While California incarcerates significantly more women than every state except Texas, female offenders in California are not significantly different than female offenders in other states. And despite the sheer size of the female offender population, California's rate of incarceration per 100,000 female citizens is about average at 57 per 100,000, with 29 states having a lower rate of incarceration and 20 states having the same or higher rates of incarceration.³⁸

Female Inmates Top Ten States 2003

Texas	13,487
California	10,656
Florida	5,068
Georgia	3,145
New York	2,914
Ohio	2,897
Illinois	2,700
Virginia	2,681
Arizona	2,656
Louisiana	2,405

Source: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. November 2004. "Prisoners in 2003."

California's female parole population also is large compared to other states, largely because of the size of the female prison population and California's policies, which place virtually every offender released from prison on parole.³⁹

Female offenders in California are comparable to female offenders across the nation in terms of types of crimes committed. Although information on the characteristics of California female offenders is fairly limited, data from one study that analyzed a small group of female offenders revealed the characteristics of California offenders were similar to female offenders in a national study.⁴⁰

Parole Violators Released from Custody by Principal Charge Category				
	Female		Male	
Rate of Parole Violators Returned to Prison (2003)	44%		61%	
	Number	Pct.	Number	Pct.
Felton Parolees Returned to Custody (2000)	6,484		55,999	
Parole Violators Returned to Custody (PV-RTC)	5,676		53,834	
Continued on Parole	808		2,165	
Parole Violators Returned to Custody	5,676	100.0	55,999	100.0
Violations of Parole Process	947	17.4	10,616	19.7
Crimes Against Persons	343	6.3	7,190	13.4
Weapons Related Offenses	105	1.9	1,704	3.2
Property Offenses	399	7.3	3,468	6.4
Drug Offenses	1,980	36.3	16,051	29.8
Other Offenses	1,676	30.8	14,805	27.5
Charge Information Not Available	226	3.9	2,165	3.9
Administrative Criminal Returns	4,475	82.1	42,686	79.3
TYPE I	2,985	54.8	21,100	39.2
Drug Possession	830	15.2	5,841	10.9
Drug Use	991	18.2	8,543	15.9
Miscellaneous Violations of Law	1,164	21.4	6,716	12.5
TYPE II	1,087	19.9	14,416	26.8
Sex Offenses	20	0.4	1,272	2.4
Battery and Assault (minor)	92	1.7	1,482	2.8
Burglary	18	0.3	488	0.9
Theft and Forgery	359	6.6	2,657	4.9
Drug Sales/Trafficking (minor)	115	2.1	1,260	2.3
Firearms and Weapons	37	0.7	329	0.6
Driving Violations (minor)	145	2.7	2,547	4.7
Miscellaneous Non-Violent Crimes	301	5.5	4,381	8.1
TYPE III	403	7.4	7,170	13.3
Homicide	4	0.1	74	0.1
Robbery	37	0.7	487	0.9
Rape and Sexual Assaults	3	0.1	381	0.7
Battery and Assault (major)	187	3.4	3,494	6.5
Burglary (major)	22	0.4	323	0.6
Drug Violations (major)	44	0.8	407	0.8
Weapon Offenses	40	0.7	843	1.6
Driving Violations (major)	12	0.2	352	0.7
Miscellaneous Violent Crimes (major)	54	1.0	809	1.5
Administrative Non-Criminal Returns	975	17.9	11,148	20.7
TYPE I - Violations of Parole Process	945	17.3	10,611	19.7
TYPE II - Weapons Access	28	0.5	532	1.0
TYPE III - Psychiatric Endangerment	2	0.0	5	0.0

Source: California Department of Corrections. "Rate of Felon Parolees Returned to California Prisons, CY 2003." Table 2, May 2004. (Rate is per 100 average daily population.) California Department of Corrections. California Prisoners and Parolees 2001." Table 42. Numbers have been rounded.

Characteristics of Female Offenders

While state-specific data on the characteristics of female offenders is not readily available, national data reveals that women arrive at prison with significantly more burdens than men: They have more severe drug addictions than their male counterparts, are more likely to be suffering from mental illness and have more extensive health issues.⁴¹ Additionally, the majority of women offenders were crime victims themselves at some point in their lives; more than half report having been physically or sexually abused prior to prison admission.⁴² In general, female offenders are less educated than male offenders, were less likely to have been employed prior to conviction and more likely to have been receiving some form of public assistance.⁴³ Additionally, both national and California data indicate that female offenders are more likely to be the parent of a child under 18-years-old than male offenders and they are more likely to have lived with their children and been a single parent prior to incarceration.⁴⁴ The table on the following page compares the characteristics of female offenders to that of male offenders nationally.

What About the Children?

The dramatic increase in the number of women in prison during the past two decades created a corresponding dramatic increase in the number of children with mothers in prison. While children are impacted by the incarceration of either parent, more children are displaced when their mother goes to prison than when their father goes to prison.

While 90 percent of the children of men incarcerated in California are cared for by their mother or step-mother, only 29 percent of the children of incarcerated mothers are cared for by their father or step-father.⁴⁵ The vast majority of children whose mothers are incarcerated are placed with relatives, particularly grandmothers, friends or neighbors. Approximately 9 percent of the children of arrested mothers are placed in foster care or group homes.⁴⁶

When a parent is incarcerated, no government agency is responsible for keeping track of the children, unless they are in foster care. Because nobody tracks these children, it is difficult to determine the impact of incarceration on their personal development or the financial burden on the social service system. In 1995, one study estimated the costs to the social service system for the children of women in California's prisons to be \$56 million.⁴⁷ But this estimate did not include the impact these children have on the juvenile justice system.

Comparison of Female and Male Offenders in State Prisons

	Female	Male
Substance Abuse Issues⁴⁸		
Percent of offenders:		
• with substance abuse problems	80-85%	80-85%
• under the influence of drugs when the crime occurred	40%	32%
• using drugs in the month prior to the offense	62%	56%
• ever using drugs regularly (once a week for a month or more)	74%	69%
Mental Health Issues⁴⁹		
Percent of offenders:		
• receiving therapy/counseling	27%	12%
• taking psychotropic medications	22%	9%
Physical Health Issues⁵⁰		
Percent of offenders:		
• participating in daily sick call	20-35%	7-10%
• who enter prison while pregnant	5%	0%
• who are HIV Positive	3.5%	2.2%
Prior Physical & Sexual Abuse of State Prisoners⁵¹		
Percent of offenders:		
• ever abused before prison admission	57%	16%
• ever physically abused before prison admission	46%	13%
• ever sexually abused before prison admission	39%	6%
• physically or sexually abused before age 18	37%	14%
Education & Employment⁵²		
Percent of offenders:		
• employed at the time of arrest	40%	60%
• with an income less than \$600 per month prior to arrest	37%	20%
• who received welfare assistance prior to arrest	30%	8%
Offenders and Their Children– National Data⁵³		
Percent of offenders:		
• having at least one child under 18 years old	65%	55%
• who lived with their children prior to prison admission	64%	44%
• living as part of a two-parent household in the month prior to arrest	12%	20%
• living in a single-parent household in the month prior to arrest	46%	15%
• with minor children being cared for by the child's other parent or step-parent	28%	90%
Offenders and Their Children – California Data⁵⁴		
Percent of offenders:		
• having at least one child under 18 years old	64%	57%
• who lived with their children prior to arrest	53%	36%
Of those offenders living with their children prior to arrest, percent:		
• living as part of a two-parent household	33%	63%
• living in a single-parent household	67%	37%
• with at least one child being cared for by the child's other parent or step-parent	29%	85%

Not enough empirical data exists on these children to draw a direct line between parental incarceration and future incarceration of the child. Attempts to attribute specific outcomes solely to parental incarceration are difficult, because children who suffer the loss of a parent through imprisonment also are more likely to have other risk factors including poverty, family violence, substance abuse, changes in residence, shifts in caregivers and peer and community stigma.⁵⁵

However, two small studies found that children of offenders are far more likely than other children to enter the criminal justice system. In one study of children of offenders, nearly one-third of 11 to 14-year-olds had been arrested or incarcerated. Another study of 100 women in jail in Riverside County found that 11 percent of the children of the women participating in the study had been arrested and 10 percent had been incarcerated.⁵⁶

The State has no strategy for identifying these children or targeting prevention and intervention efforts to this vulnerable population. It also does little to develop and target programs that would make incarcerated parents more successful when they are released from prison.

Programs for Female Inmates

With the exception of two small programs for pregnant or parenting female offenders, the vast majority of programs in the four women's prisons are identical to the programs offered in the men's prisons. Participation in programs overall is limited to a small percentage of the population, as it is in the men's prisons, due to program capacity.

Less than one-third of all female inmates are enrolled in an academic or vocational education program or employment training program. About one-fourth are in a distance learning re-entry education program that enables inmates to do coursework in their cells. Many others are in drug treatment programs. However, nearly 2,000 women who are eligible for programs are unable to participate due to the lack of program capacity.⁵⁷ These programs include:

- ✓ ***Vocational Education.*** Vocational education programs teach offenders job skills including painting, printing, upholstery, electronics, graphic arts, auto body repair, landscaping and office services.
- ✓ ***Academic Education.*** Educational courses include basic literacy, general education development (GED) and English as a second language. Additionally, a six-week re-entry program for women is

taught covering job search techniques and how to apply for benefits and identification.

- ✓ ***Bridging Education.*** In fall 2003, the CDC added a distance learning program to serve offenders in reception centers. Participants are provided information packets and given assignments to assist their ability to reintegrate back into the community.
- ✓ ***Substance Abuse Program (SAP).*** The Office of Substance Abuse Programs coordinates the alcohol and drug treatment programs inside the prisons. The programs utilize therapeutic communities and are run by private contractors.
- ✓ ***Prison Industry Authority (PIA).*** The PIA was established to reduce the cost of prison operations and help rehabilitate offenders by putting them to work. Programs include clothing and textile manufacturing, dental laboratory, farm operation and eyewear manufacturing.
- ✓ ***Joint Venture.*** Joint Venture programs are partnerships between prisons and local businesses that agree to set up a production or service enterprise within the prison walls, hire, train and supervise inmates and sell products and services to the public. Participants are paid prevailing wages and 80 percent of their earnings are subject to deductions for taxes, room and board, restitution and family support.

In addition to these programs, several classes and gender-responsive support groups are offered, including a parent and child development course, a conflict and anger management course focusing on domestic violence and self-esteem building, battered women support groups and mental health groups focusing on surviving sexual abuse and other women's issues. However, these programs serve only about 2 percent of the population at any given time.⁵⁸

California Correctional Facilities for Female Offenders

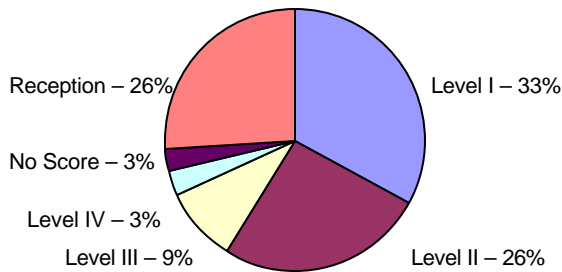
As of September 2004, 10,264 women were incarcerated in California's four women's prisons. All four facilities are occupied at more than 150 percent of the stated design capacity, with the California Institution for Women the most crowded at 195 percent of design capacity.⁵⁹ The following sections briefly describe each institution.

California Institution for Women (CIW). Located in Chino, approximately 40 miles east of Los Angeles, CIW houses female offenders classified from Level I through Level III and functions as a reception/processing center for incoming inmates awaiting classification and program assignment. As of September 2004, 1,680 female offenders were incarcerated at CIW and 318 offenders were in the reception center. CIW also houses offenders with special needs such as pregnancy, psychiatric care, methadone treatment, and medical problems, such as HIV infection.

Constructed in 1952, CIW serves as a hub institution for the selection and physical fitness training for female firefighters selected for conservation camps. The Prison Industry Authority operates a textile factory producing clothing, including Nomex fire retardant clothes for California firefighters and orange vests for Caltrans workers. Other

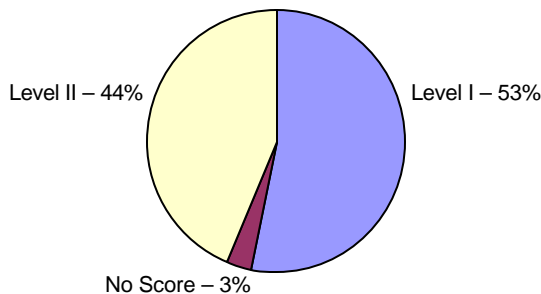
programs include vocational and basic educational training. Approximately 22 percent of the women are in these programs. Another 36 percent participate in the Bridging Education Program. About 14 percent are in the Forever Free program for prison-based substance abuse treatment. Women offenders at CIW also participate in a variety of community-based volunteer programs including the Prison Pup Program in which offenders train dogs to serve mobility-impaired Californians.⁶⁰

CIW Inmate Classification



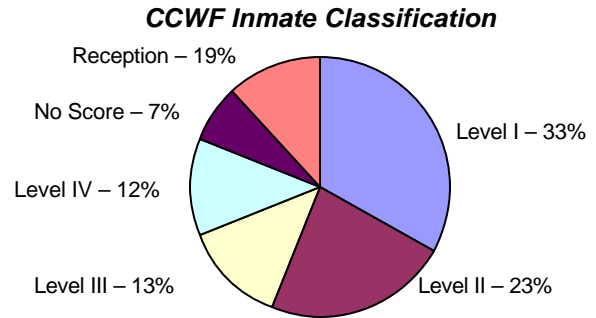
California Rehabilitation Center (CRC). Located approximately 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles in Norco, CRC is the only institution in California to house both male and female offenders, albeit in separate facilities. CRC is a Level II medium security prison and is distinguished nationally as having the largest substance abuse treatment program for incarcerated offenders. CRC was established as a correctional facility in 1962, converting what was once a naval facility and luxury resort into a prison. As of September 2004, 774 women offenders were housed at CRC, including 251 civil addicts, or offenders who have agreed to participate in specified drug treatment programs while in prison and upon release from prison in lieu of receiving a felony conviction.

CRC Inmate Classification



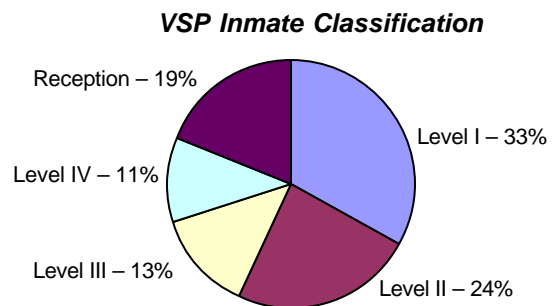
Two private contractors provide drug treatment programs for female offenders. Virtually all of the 526 substance abuse treatment slots are full at all times and many of the women in the treatment programs also participate in educational and vocational training, including a painting and woodworking course and a graphic art and printing shop.⁶¹

Central California Women's Facility (CCWF). Opened in 1990, CCWF is located in the San Joaquin Valley town of Chowchilla, about 30 miles north of Fresno, and is one of the largest correctional facilities for women in the United States. As of September 2004, CCWF housed 3,046 female offenders ranging from Level I through Level IV, and had 663 offenders awaiting classification in its reception center. CCWF also is home to California's 15 women on death row. About one-third of the inmates are enrolled in educational, vocational or employment training programs, including 45 women employed by a Joint Venture electronic manufacturing operation. About 22 percent are in the Bridging Education Program and 14 percent are in a drug treatment program.⁶²



Valley State Prison for Women (VSP). Also in Chowchilla, VSP is California's newest facility for women having opened in 1995. It also is one of the largest in the United States. As of September 2004, the facility housed 3,735 female offenders. Of these, 2,980 women are classified in Levels I through IV, nearly 701 are awaiting classification in the facility's reception center and 54 are in a segregated housing unit (SHU). VSP also is designed to be a hub for female offenders with mobility impairments.

Nearly one-third of the inmates participate in programs, including a Prison Industry Authority program offering farm operation, eyewear manufacturing and laundry, as well as traditional vocational and basic educational training. Approximately 21 percent participate in Bridging Education and 14 percent are in a substance abuse treatment program.⁶³ Other volunteer-led programs include toastmasters, a mother-child book recording program, peer grief counseling and a cancer support group.



Community Correctional Facilities

There are a limited number of small, community-based correctional centers that provide alternatives for low-level non-violent female offenders. CDC administers two programs at five facilities for female offenders who are pregnant or who are mothers of young children. There are three fire camps for women offenders in Southern California and one privately run community correctional facility. Additionally, in 2004 CDC began a drug treatment furlough program utilizing community-based facilities. The table describes these facilities.

Community-Based Correctional Facilities

Facility/Program	Capacity	Population
Leo Chesney Community Correctional Facility	220	200
<p>The Leo Chesney facility is one of 12 minimum security community correctional facilities housing low-level, non-violent offenders and is the only facility designated for women.⁶⁴ Located in Live Oak, approximately 60 miles northeast of Sacramento, it is operated by a private contractor, Cornell Companies, Inc. Offenders can be placed in the Leo Chesney facility either directly from a prison reception center or as a step-down from prison. On average, women serve four to six months at the facility and there is an 18-month limit. Educational programs include basic education as well as collegiate-level coursework offered by neighboring Yuba Community College. Vocational programs include culinary arts, carpentry, landscaping and master gardening training. The facility also offers a 30-day voluntary pre-release program and a weekly cognitive behavioral treatment therapy group.⁶⁵</p>		
Community Prisoner Mother Program (CPMP)	70	68
<p>The Community Prisoner Mother Program was established in 1980 for female felons with children under the age of six years who are convicted of non-violent crimes and whose sentences do not exceed six years. Inmates apply to CDC to transfer from prison to the program, and stay an average of eight months. These therapeutic communities are located in Oakland, Pomona and Bakersfield. Private contractors site the facilities and provide substance abuse treatment programs. In addition to the 70 offenders, the facilities have the capacity to house 105 children (no more than two per mother) at a total annual cost of about \$2.3 million.⁶⁶</p>		
Family Foundations Program (FFP)	70	60
<p>The Pregnant and Parenting Women's Alternative Sentencing Program Act of 1994 authorized the Family Foundations Program, an alternative to prison for non-violent, substance abusing pregnant or parenting female offenders with children six years of age or younger. Offenders are referred to the program by the court as a diversion from prison, must have sentences of 36 months or less and meet other criteria. Two facilities owned by CDC offer the program in Los Angeles County and San Diego County. Substance abuse and supportive services are provided by private contractors. Each facility houses up to 35 women and 40 children. A facility was purchased in Fresno, but its opening was delayed pending an increase in demand and assessment of the impact of Proposition 36 on this population. The facility is currently being used as a Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program facility – a substance abuse aftercare program for women who have participated in prison-based treatment.⁶⁷</p>		
Conservation Camps	320	311
<p>Of the 37 conservation camps scattered across rural California and operated by CDC, three camps house female offenders. All three are in Southern California, with one in Malibu, one just east of Camp Pendleton and one in northeastern San Diego County. Inmates in camps are trained to fight forest fires and join fire lines during fire season. In the off season, they build and repair river dikes and roads, maintain state parks and join rescue missions. Eligibility is confined to low-level offenders with no records of violence, sexual offenses or arson. Camps are the only opportunity where offenders can earn two days of "good time" credit for every day of service.</p>		
Drug Treatment Furlough	150	58
<p>CDC's Office of Substance Abuse Programs (OSAP) oversees a newly implemented drug treatment furlough program designed to allow up to 450 non-violent in-prison substance abuse program participants to be placed in a community residential treatment facility 120 days prior to release to parole. CDC anticipates establishing 150 beds for women on drug treatment furlough. As of July 2004, 58 female offenders were participating in the drug treatment furlough.⁶⁸</p>		

Programs for Female Parolees

CDC's Parole and Community Services Division and Office of Substance Abuse Programs (OSAP) oversee programs intended to help parolees successfully reintegrate back into the community. Most of the programs offered are gender neutral, with the exception of OSAP's Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP). The chart below identifies programs available to parolees through CDC and, where data is available, the number of women estimated to be participating annually in each program.

Parole & Community Services Programs for Parolees	Women Served Annually*	Female	Male
Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery (STAR) is a curriculum-based program designed to motivate substance abusers to participate in post-release recovery activities. Contra Costa County Office of Education administers the program and serves the same parole units as the literacy centers plus three additional units. The majority of the parolees are participating as an alternative to a return to prison for a drug or alcohol use-related parole violation. ⁶⁹	1,397	15.2%	84.8%
Computerized Literacy Learning Centers serve 4,727 parolees and are administered by the Contra Costa County Office of Education through 45 parole units in California. The California Department of Corrections (CDC) estimates that 55,000 to 70,000 parolees could benefit from participating in this program. The program offers computerized instruction in reading, writing, math, and resumé preparation. ⁷⁰	752	15.9%	84.1%
Residential Multiservice Centers provide housing, meals, counseling and life skills, including parenting, money management and budgeting, and job search and placement assistance. This six-month program has 228 beds in centers located in Fresno, Stockton, Bakersfield and Los Angeles. ⁷¹	49	10.7%	89.3%
Offender Employment Continuum provides parolees educational, vocational and job placement services. It includes a mandatory 40-hour weeklong program to assess job skills and provide job preparation assistance. It is offered in 41 parole units in six counties: Fresno, Sacramento, Contra Costa, Alameda, Los Angeles and San Diego. CDC estimates that 80,000 to 100,000 parolees need these services. ⁷²	309	12.3%	87.7%
Community Correctional Re-entry Centers/Halfway Back Centers traditionally provided transitional housing for approximately 880 lower level prison inmates with 120 days or less remaining on their sentence. These centers provide education, job training and counseling. In 2004, CDC began utilizing these facilities as an intermediate sanction for parole violators. There are 18 facilities with a total of 792 beds of which 61 are for women. CDC anticipates expanding the number of beds by 500 in 2006. ⁷³	61	8%	92%%
Mental Health Services Continuum provides case management for mentally ill parolees, including assistance in setting mental health appointments and coordinating other services, such as drug treatment, education and job programs and housing. ⁷⁴	3,770	18%	82%
Transitional Case Management Program for HIV/AIDS provides inmates who identify themselves as HIV positive with medication and case management services before and after release to parole. Upon release, HIV parolees are treated at local government or other community facilities. ⁷⁵	196	14%	82%

LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION

Parole & Community Services Programs for Parolees	Women Served Annually*	Female	Male
Parolee Employment Program (PEP) provides employment services to parolees. The maximum capacity of the PEP program is 3,200 parolees at an annual cost of approximately \$2 million. Because this is a new program, data is not yet available.	Data unavailable		
Employment Development Department (EDD) , through a contract with CDC, provides employment assistance through job placement specialists working with parole units. EDD served about 8,000 parolees in fiscal year 2002-03, but it estimates that 80,000 to 100,000 parolees need job placement assistance.	Data unavailable		
Substance Abuse Treatment Control Unit (SATCU) provides 30-day community-based custody with enhanced STAR education followed by a 90-day continuing care component through SASCA.	Data unavailable		
PACT – Parole and Corrections Teams partners parole with local law enforcement and community organizations to serve new parolees. Parolees attend a mandatory orientation session where they have opportunities for employment, vocational training and substance abuse treatment. PACT orientation sessions are held in more than 50 locations across the state on a weekly, biweekly or monthly basis. ⁷⁶	Data unavailable		

Office of Substance Abuse Programs (OSAP) Programs for Parolees	Women Served Annually*	Female	Male
Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP) provides residential substance abuse treatment for women parolees, primarily women who have participated in prison-based treatment programs. Partially funded by the federal workforce investment act, FOTEP incorporates educational, vocational and employment assistance components. The program promotes reunification with children, when appropriate. FOTEP programs have been implemented in 13 counties in California. ⁷⁷	989	100%	0%
Substance Abuse Services Coordination Agency (SASCA) connects parolees who have participated in substance abuse treatment programs while in prison. The SASCA program connects these parolees, on a voluntary basis, with a wide range of aftercare treatment options, including residential, outpatient and sober living. ⁷⁸	1,298	12.5%	87.5%
Parole Services Network (PSN) is a partnership between CDC and the Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs that provides substance abuse treatment to parolees who did not receive treatment services while in prison. The majority of parolees in PSN treatment programs are enrolled as an alternative sanction as a result of a parole violation. Four networks serve nine counties. ⁷⁹	463	14%	86%
*CDC data on participants served is from 2002-03 or 2003-04. The percentages served are based on participation data by gender for 2000-01 and 2001-02. All data for the Mental Health Services Continuum and HIV case management project are for 2003-04.			

Drug-related Parole Violations

While the majority of parole violators are returned to prison, diversion alternatives are frequently used for parolees with drug violations. In 2000, more than 60 percent of California voters approved Proposition 36, a law diverting non-violent drug offenders into community-based treatment instead of incarceration. Offenders on probation or parole, who commit non-violent drug offenses or who violate conditions of parole

related to substance abuse also may receive treatment. From 2001 to 2002, the State's female inmate population dropped by 10 percent and CDC officials acknowledged that Proposition 36 was the biggest contributing factor in this decline.⁸⁰

During the first full operational year of Proposition 36, 2001-02, over 30,000 people received treatment. Of these, 28 percent or 8,500 were female and of these, 514 were female parolees.⁸¹ Data from 2002-03 are similar, with 35,947 people receiving treatment. Of these, 9,814 were women and 763 of these were female parolees.⁸²

Many other female parolees with drug possession or use violations who do not utilize Proposition 36 may avoid a return to custody by agreeing to enter treatment through the Parole Services Network or participate in the STAR program. In 2002-03, there were 5,542 drug violations by female parolees, and of these, just 17 percent were referred for revocation.⁸³

Parole Program Evaluations

Several parole programs have been evaluated by independent researchers to determine the impact on recidivism and identify opportunities for improvement. In creating FOTEP, the Legislature required that the program be evaluated on an ongoing basis. In December 2003, a researcher completed an evaluation of five parole programs that make up the Preventing Parolee Crime Program.

Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP).

Evaluations of the in-prison substance abuse treatment program for women, Forever Free, revealed that parolees were more successful if they received community-based aftercare. As a result, the Legislature in 1998 established FOTEP with three pilot programs in Southern California. The programs were evaluated and expanded to include sites in 13 counties that accommodate about 400 women at a time, and nearly 1,000 annually. The program provides comprehensive case management for women who participated in prison-based substance abuse treatment as well as a small number of substance abusing parole violators. Wrap-around services include drug treatment, parenting/family services, and vocational and employment services. Minor children may live with their mothers in the FOTEP program and child care is available.⁸⁴

FOTEP has been evaluated annually by researchers at the University of California at Los Angeles. In 2003, the evaluators compared FOTEP participants with women offenders who had participated in the prison-based treatment program but did not participate in aftercare. A year after completing the program, the FOTEP group had a significantly

higher rate of living in the community and not using drugs, 51 percent compared to 28 percent of the control group. The FOTEP participants also had a much lower rate of being incarcerated, 37 percent as compared to 59 percent of the control group.⁸⁵

Preventing Parolee Crime Program (PPCP). Five programs make up the Preventing Parolee Crime Program: the Offender Employment Continuum, the Parolee Services Network, Residential Multiservice Centers, Computerized Literacy Learning Centers and the Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery program. Jobs Plus, formerly a part of PPCP, was eliminated in 2003. An evaluation by researchers at California State University at San Marcos found that 44.8 percent of parolees who participated in one or more of the programs returned to prison within one year as compared to 52.8 percent for non-PPCP participants. For parolees who completed a program, reincarceration rates were even lower at 32.7 percent.⁸⁶ The study indicated the PPCP programs saved the State more than \$21 million in reduced correctional costs during the study period, after subtracting program costs. Those numbers did not include savings to local law enforcement, the judicial system or potential crime victims.⁸⁷

Evaluators also reviewed program participation by gender. In 2003, women comprised 9 percent of the parole population and on average, women comprised 14 percent of the PPCP participants, suggesting that women are more likely than men to use PPCP services.⁸⁸

A Correctional Strategy for Female Offenders

Finding 1: The Department of Corrections has not developed a correctional strategy that effectively reduces crime, violence and drug abuse by the growing number of women inmates upon their release.

In 2003, 44 out of 100 female parolees released from state prisons failed parole and returned to the cellblocks, most for drug-related violations.⁸⁹ The costs of these failures are borne by the criminal justice and the correctional systems, as well as the foster care, juvenile justice and mental health systems. Some 10 percent of the children of arrested mothers are in foster care or group homes.⁹⁰ And one in ten children whose parents are incarcerated will one day become incarcerated themselves.⁹¹ So there are both fiscal and human consequences, today and in the future, when correctional programs do not break the chain of crime, violence or addiction.

California's Department of Corrections has fallen behind other state prison systems by failing to develop strategies focused on preparing inmates for release and assisting their transition back to their communities. Similarly there is a growing consensus among correctional experts that to be effective with female offenders "re-entry" strategies must specifically address the circumstances and needs of women while they are incarcerated and upon release.

Nationally and in California, the numbers of female inmates are increasing faster than their male counterparts, a trend that has highlighted the lack of policies and procedures geared toward women.⁹² Nationally, from 1990 to 2000 the number of women under correctional control increased 81 percent, compared to a 45 percent increase in the number of men.⁹³ During that same time frame, the number of women in California prisons increased 394 percent, compared with a 291 percent increase in the number of men.⁹⁴ And while California, because of its large population, is expected to have more female inmates than less-populated states, the job of housing large numbers of female inmates has usurped efforts to deal with the causes of criminal behavior. For the most part, the State has relied on a prison strategy rather than a correctional strategy. While it has developed "programs" intended to reduce recidivism – and even introduced programs tailored for female

offenders – the dominant factor has been the State’s reliance on large, centralized, highly secure and now overcrowded prisons.

CDC officials assert a new goal of the department will be to prepare inmates for release – reducing the harm many parolees inflict on their communities, their families and themselves, and ultimately driving up prison-related expenses. But in doing so, corrections officials will have to distinguish between male and female offenders.

Gender Differences Influence Outcomes

Female offenders differ from male offenders in their personal histories and pathways to crime and these differences have important implications for policies and programs in institutions and for community corrections. For example, female offenders are far less likely to be convicted of violent offenses than males or to be considered a danger to their community. They are, however, far more likely to have been the victim of a violent crime, physically or sexually abused, and are more likely to have health and mental health needs.⁹⁵ They are more likely to have been the primary caretaker of young children prior to arrest, and more likely to have been unemployed and homeless. Experts assert that policies and practices must address the characteristics and circumstances unique to women offenders to improve the effectiveness of the criminal justice system.⁹⁶

Gender Differences Among Offenders	Female	Male
Californians Convicted of Crimes Against Persons in 2003 ⁹⁷	835	15,008
Percent of California Parolees with Minimum or Low Supervision ⁹⁸	88%	72%
Number of California Parolees Classified as High Control or 2 nd Strike ⁹⁹	822	24,246
Offenders Physically or Sexually Abused Prior to Prison Admission ¹⁰⁰	57%	16%
Offenders in Counseling/Therapy for Mental Health Issues ¹⁰¹	27%	12%
Offenders Having a Child Under 18 Years Old ¹⁰²	64%	57%
Percent Living With Their Children Prior to Arrest ¹⁰³	53%	36%
Offenders Employed at the Time of Arrest ¹⁰⁴	40%	60%

In a System Designed for Men

Through the 1980s and 1990s, the Department of Corrections was focused on the overwhelming job of designing, building and staffing a rapid expansion in the prison system. And with policies focused on punishment, the department's overriding concern was incarceration. Through this period, policy-makers and program administrators made few distinctions based on whether inmates were male or female or young or old. Inmates were classified based on security risk, with length-of-sentence a dominant factor. In turn, the department planned and built facilities based on the projected numbers of high, medium and low security inmates.

As the Commission has previously reported, correctional policies in this period were not based on the substantial and growing body of research on what works and what does not work to prevent and respond to crime, let alone what works for women. The minimal rehabilitative efforts that survived – in California prisons as in other states – were largely developed for male offenders.

As a result of these two trends, the majority of female offenders are incarcerated in large, remote prisons that undermine the chances that women will become self-sufficient and law-abiding when released. The physical structure of the prison system tends to sever rather than strengthen bonds between women and their children. Research shows that inmates who maintain and improve family ties have lower recidivism rates,¹⁰⁵ however more than half the children of women prisoners never visit their mothers during their incarceration.¹⁰⁶ Research also suggests that search and supervision practices within prisons often re-traumatize women with histories of sexual and physical abuse,¹⁰⁷ but the department has not addressed these issues. And the lack of vocational and educational programs means that women offenders – who enter prison with fewer educational and vocational skills than men – are released just as ill-equipped for independence and self-sufficiency, increasing their chances of re-incarceration.

Independent Review Panel

At the request of Governor Schwarzenegger, former Governor George Deukmejian oversaw an independent review of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency in 2003. The panel urged “high priority” reforms in the areas of leadership, organizational structure, selection and development of personnel, the role of labor unions and values and ethics.

The panel made specific recommendations for improving the management of inmates and parolees, calling for the expanded use of education, vocational training and drug treatment to prepare inmates for release, and a greater reliance on community-based services to assist parolees attempting to reintegrate into their communities.

Many of the recommendations related to improving outcomes of the correctional system are consistent with recommendations previously made by the Little Hoover Commission. The panel, however, did not suggest ways to specifically manage the correctional system to improve outcomes for female offenders.

The recommendations in this report, including a strategic plan to make the best use of facilities and other resources to reduce future criminal involvement by female offenders, consistently builds on these previous reviews that sought to improve public safety and lower public costs.

The Independent Review Panel's recommendations are available at www.cpr.ca.gov.

While the department operates four major facilities for women, it does not have written policies or practices regarding classification, property, programs or services for women offenders. Gender is not considered in staffing decisions – for institutions or parole – and training is not provided to prepare staff to work effectively with female offenders.

For example, the warden at the California Institution for Women was unaware of the ratio of female and male staff to inmates. She said she did not understand why women inmates received so few visits – even though it is well documented that visitation efforts are frustrated by the remote location of women’s prisons, a lack of transportation and the difficulties for caregivers in arranging visitation.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, a male CDC correctional officer newly assigned to the Leo Chesney Community Correctional Facility said he had received no training prior to being assigned to the all-female community correctional center.

The circumstances and consequences of these gender-blind policies are detailed in Finding 2 as they relate to prison issues and in Finding 3 as they relate to parole issues. Developing a framework for evidence-based and gender-based policies, however, is a prerequisite for making specific improvements behind bars and in communities.

In the Context of Larger Problems

In its November 2003 report on the State’s parole policies, the Commission found that the department did not use information about offenders and the growing body of evidence about effective correctional practices to guide its policies. The Commission recommended that offender risk and needs assessments be used to allocate resources for inmates and parolees and that correctional officials use strategies shown by research to reduce recidivism.

The secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency has acknowledged the shortcomings of the correctional system overall and vowed to improve the performance of the system, in part by adapting evidence-based crime prevention strategies and developing partnerships with community stakeholders.¹⁰⁹

The secretary convened agency and department leaders at a week-long meeting in July 2004 to consider the recommendations of the Governor’s Independent Review Panel and begin developing a strategic plan. (The department’s last strategic plan was prepared in June 1997.) However, there was no mention of female offenders in the goals that the secretary described – or in the Independent Review Panel’s critique of the system.

The department director has acknowledged the need to create a separate framework for managing female offenders. In April 2003, the director said she would appoint an assistant director for women's issues – a policy supported by the research – but as of October 2004, had not done so. Reportedly, the director has initiated a review of policies regarding gender-specific inmate property rules.¹¹⁰ And the director said she was looking at implementing “lots of pilot programs” – a strategy that risks squandering public money on experimental programs when evidence-based practices have already been identified.¹¹¹

These promises for reform have been greeted by many with skepticism. Some of the concern is over the system's actual willingness to change, and some concern lies in its ability to change. Over the last decade, the department has consistently failed to successfully manage programs intended to reduce recidivism. Even in cases where CDC has documented the potential for a program – such as drug-treatment – the department has not remained faithful to the original model, compromising the outcomes. Despite consensus that risk and needs assessments are foundational to making decisions about offenders that impact public safety, the department has implemented a more lenient revocation policy without the benefit of that tool. And it still does not use risk and needs assessments to more effectively allocate scarce educational, vocational and treatment resources.

Using Research to Guide Reforms

Drawing on research from a variety of disciplines, correctional experts have identified both strategies and specific programs that can be used to prepare inmates for release and better transition them from incarceration to community. At a macro level, the major elements apply to both male and female offenders:

- ❑ Planning for re-entry should begin on the first day of incarceration.
- ❑ Inmates should be released from prison with the tools and support they need to succeed in the community.
- ❑ Communities should be provided with the necessary resources to assist inmates and their families.
- ❑ Public policies should promote family and community well-being.

But developing those policy goals into programs requires careful attention to the differences between male and female offenders. In that regard, researchers have identified six guiding principles that policy-makers should consider in establishing programs to supervise and treat women offenders. They also assembled some “policy considerations” that contribute to the successful implementation of such programs. Those components are detailed in the box on the following page.

Crafting Policies for Female Offenders

Given the differences between female and male offenders, policy-makers and program managers must develop gender-based strategies if they are to improve outcomes for offenders, their families and their communities.

Guiding principles. In a report published by the U.S. Department of Justice, Dr. Barbara Bloom and her colleagues distilled the following guiding principles for developing effective policies:

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

Policy considerations. Drawing from the National Institute of Corrections, Federal Bureau of Prisons, American Correctional Association and several states, the researchers also identified common policy considerations that are fundamental to a systematic approach to managing female offenders:

- ❑ **Create parity.** Female offenders must receive the equivalent range of services available to male offenders, including opportunities for individual programming and services that recognize the unique needs of women.
- ❑ **Commit to women's services.** Mission and vision statements regarding women's issues, an executive-level position charged with implementing the mission, and appropriate levels of resources, staffing and training are necessary to ensure that women's issues become a priority.
- ❑ **Develop procedures that apply to women offenders.** The American Correctional Association recommends procedures that address the female population's needs regarding clothing, personal property, hygiene, exercise, recreation, and visitations with children and family.
- ❑ **Respond to women's pathways.** Policies and programs need to respond specifically to women's pathways in and out of crime and to the contexts of their lives that support criminal behavior.
- ❑ **Consider community.** Based on the lower risk of violence and community harm among female offenders and a belief that community programs are better equipped to respond to women offenders, a wide range of correctional experts advocate for community-based alternatives to state prison. It is important that written policy acknowledge the actual level of risk associated with women offenders in custody and in the community to foster strong community partnerships.
- ❑ **Include children and families.** ACA policy states that the criminal justice system should "facilitate the maintenance and strengthening of family ties, particularly between parents and children."

Source: Barbara Bloom, Ph.D., Barbara Owen, Ph.D. and Stephanie Covington, Ph.D. July 2003. "Gender-Responsive Strategies – Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders." National Institute of Corrections. Washington D.C.

Similarly, the American Correctional Association in 1995 adopted a policy concerning female offenders. The policy encouraged correctional agencies to develop service delivery systems comparable to those for male offenders and recommended additional services be provided to meet the unique needs of female offenders, including:

- ❑ Access to a range of alternatives to incarceration;
- ❑ Acceptable conditions of confinement;
- ❑ Access to a full range of work and programs to expand economic and social roles;
- ❑ Maintenance and strengthening of family ties;
- ❑ Delivery of appropriate programs and services, including medical, dental, mental health, substance abuse, access to legal services, religious, educational, rehabilitative, women's support groups, life skills; and,
- ❑ Access to release programs.¹¹²

Some states have developed specific strategies for female offenders. In 1999 Florida passed the Corrections Equality Act, which mandates parity in programs and services for female offenders. The Operational Plan for Female Offenders is a blueprint for ensuring that the correctional system meets the needs of female offenders. The plan places a high priority on needs assessments to guide the development of a continuum of services and includes mandatory staff training for correctional officers and other professionals working in women's institutions and community corrections. A Female Offender Program Unit was created to ensure accountability, reliability and continuous improvement. The plan includes goals and objectives and a timeline for implementation. It identifies responsible officials and estimates the fiscal impact of implementing the reforms.¹¹³

Likewise, the Minnesota Legislature in 1981 established the Advisory Task Force on the Female Offender and provided for a full-time Director of Planning for Female Offenders within the Department of Corrections. In 1990 the law was amended to include youthful female offenders. The law requires that adult and juvenile women receive programming on par with that for men; that programs for female offenders be based upon the special needs of female offenders; and that counties submit annual plans to the commissioner of corrections describing services for female offenders.¹¹⁴

The trend toward tailoring interventions based on the needs of offenders is supported by broader efforts to encourage correctional agencies to replicate programs that have been proven to reduce crime, violence and addiction. For example, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy have launched an initiative to

advance evidence-based crime and substance abuse policy. The goal is to promulgate those interventions that have shown to be effective in randomized trials and to encourage agencies using federal funds to adopt these programs.¹¹⁵ Similarly, the U.S. departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services have developed guides for instituting effective programs.

Summary

High rates of recidivism, unemployment and homelessness are some of the obvious indicators that California's correctional system is not working well for the vast majority of female offenders. The State will need to embrace the knowledge regarding the characteristics and needs of female offenders and enact reforms to improve outcomes for women offenders, their children and their communities. In turn, the State will then be better capable of applying the lessons learned from those efforts to all offenders.

Recommendation 1: The Department of Corrections should develop a coherent strategy to hold female offenders accountable for their crimes and improve their ability to successfully reintegrate into their communities. Specifically, the department should:

- ***Develop leadership for reforms.*** CDC should appoint a director for women's programs to guide the development and implementation of reforms in institutions and parole to effectively address the risks and needs of women offenders and their children. The director should be the equivalent of the regional directors proposed by the Independent Review Panel. Previously the Commission recommended that wardens should be appointed to fixed terms and managed with performance contracts. In addition, wardens of women's prisons should have professional training and skills in gender-responsive management, operations and programs.
- ***Embrace evidence-based practices.*** The department should implement programs that have the best evidence of effectiveness in producing the desired outcomes, including reduced recidivism, greater employment, substance abuse recovery and reunification. The director for women's programs should empanel a council of criminal justice researchers to identify and recommend best practices and critique their implementation by the department. Independently conducted program evaluations should be reviewed and commented upon by this council. The panel should publicly report on whether programs are faithfully replicating proven programs, and whether they should be modified, expanded or discontinued.

- ***Develop a strategic plan.*** The director for women's programs should develop a strategic plan for female offenders, consistent with the department's overall strategic plan. The plan should include input and ownership of staff and management; statements of values, mission, goals and objectives. It should include an implementation plan that delineates activities, budgets, timelines and those responsible for the outcomes.
 - ✓ The plan should include a robust community correctional system to effectively house and prepare female inmates for release.
 - ✓ The plan also should include a robust re-entry effort to effectively supervise and assist female parolees.

- ***Measure and report performance.*** The Department of Corrections should develop performance measures to gauge the effectiveness of its correctional strategy for women offenders. It should report the results to correctional staff, the public and policy-makers.

These two elements – community corrections and a community-based re-entry model – are described in the following findings.

Preparing for Success

Finding 2: Mega-prisons, designed primarily to incapacitate and punish violent offenders, are not effective for the majority of female offenders who are non-violent, serve short sentences and need specific services to successfully return home.

Large prisons – because of their physical characteristics and the way they are operated – are not preparing female offenders to live self-sufficient, crime-free lives upon release. While two-thirds of California’s female inmates are convicted of non-violent, drug-related and property crimes, most women are incarcerated in large and remote institutions that are designed to incapacitate serious, violent, and mostly male offenders.

Over the last 20 years, policy-makers have deliberately reduced the rehabilitative aspects of prison and emphasized the punishment aspects. Some aspects of the prisons, while intended to increase the punishment imposed, also undermine programs and other efforts that researchers say can improve the chances that felons will succeed upon their release. For example, only a fraction of female inmates have access to educational, vocational and drug treatment programs. And most ties to family and community are severed by both distance and visiting policies.

A correctional strategy focused on improving public safety by breaking the cycle of crime and violence would look much different. California has not taken that approach to corrections for male or female offenders. But the discrepancy between inmate characteristics and the capacity of institutions to improve outcomes is greatest for female offenders. A better designed correctional system would result in a strong continuum of facilities and programs that provide incapacitation, punishment and preparation based on the risks associated with individuals and the interventions that research shows can change behavior.

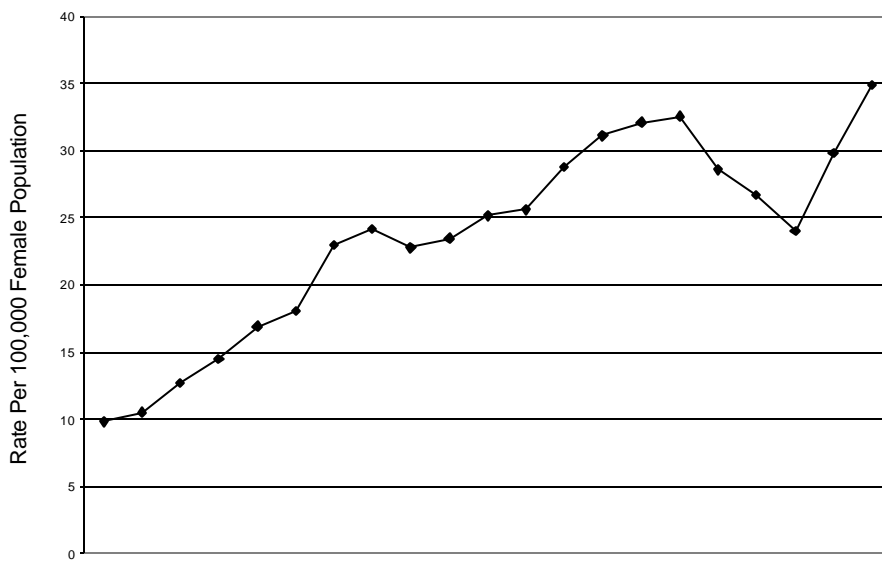
Prisons vs. Corrections

California has not always responded to non-violent female offenders with incarceration in state prisons. The early 1980s saw a surge in violence, often involving youth gangs and disputes among drug dealers. Other horrific cases focused attention on the failure of sentencing policies to incapacitate repeat violent offenders. Mandatory minimum sentences

were enacted for drug crimes. Truth-in-sentencing statutes and the three-strikes law were enacted, fortifying the reliance on prisons to incapacitate career criminals.

Expanded sentencing policies captured more and more women. The chart below reflects the climb in the rate of women admitted to prison over the past two decades.

Rate of Female Offenders Per 100,000 Female Population
(New Admissions to California Prisons CY 1983-2003)



1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988 1989 1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003
Sources: California Department of Corrections, May 2004, "Historical Trends: 1983-2003," Table 4 and November 2003, "California Prisoners and Parolees 2002," Table 27. Also, California Department of Finance. "E-7 Historical California Population Estimates."

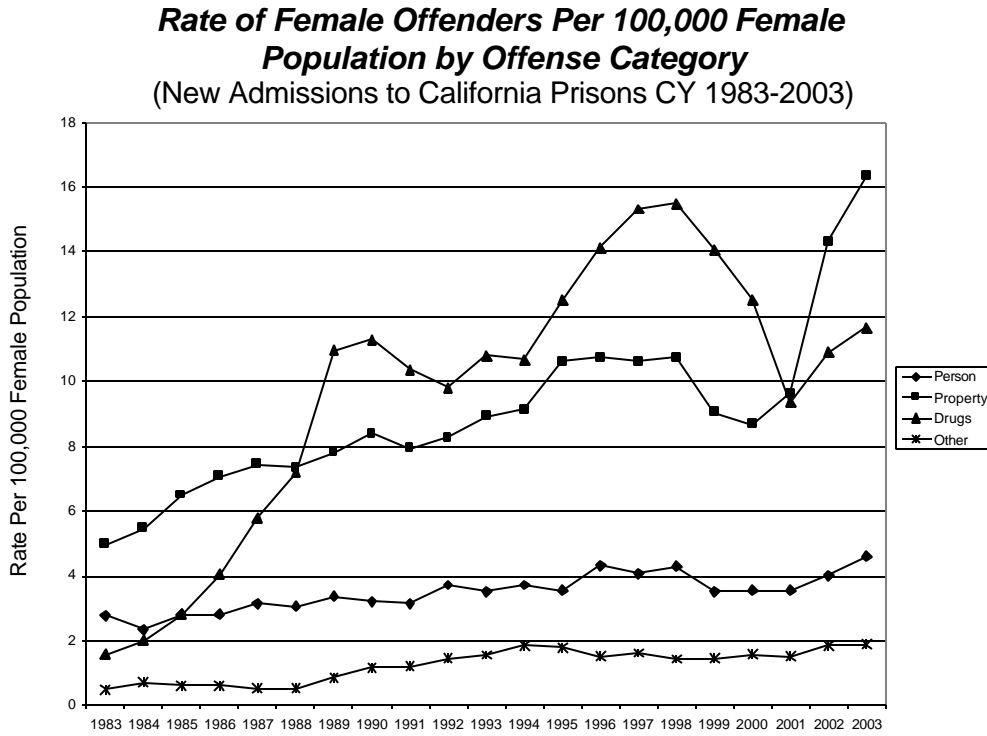
Not only were many more women entering prison, but they were sentenced to prison for much less serious offenses. A greater proportion of women were incarcerated for non-violent offenses.

Two decades ago 40 percent of all women incarcerated had committed a serious crime against another person while just 14 percent were convicted of a drug offense.¹¹⁶ Today, the percent of women incarcerated for non-violent drug offenses is higher than the percent of women incarcerated for a violent offense.¹¹⁷ Prior to the changes in sentencing policies, many of these non-violent women would have been sanctioned in the community rather than sent to state prisons.

As a result, the mix of inmates changed substantially. While female prisons once housed mostly violent and serious criminals, they now

house mostly women sentenced for drug and property crimes frequently committed to support drug habits.

The chart below compares the rate of incarceration for each of the four major offense categories and displays the dramatic increase in the rate of female offenders admitted to prison for drug crimes.



Sources: California Department of Corrections, May 2004, "Historical Trends: 1983-2003," Table 4. Also, California Department of Finance. "E-7 Historical California Population Estimates."

The growth in prison commitments triggered a growth in prisons. In the short term, the most economical way of housing large numbers of inmates is in large, remote facilities that rely on physical barriers – such as walls, electric fences and remote-controlled cell doors – to minimize operational costs. Between 1984 and 1997, California opened 21 new prisons, including three for women, to house a burgeoning prison population.

However, this vast expansion of the prison system did not take into account the changing nature of the female inmate population. In fact, the expansion did not even take into account the significant differences between female and male inmates. More than half of male inmates are convicted of a crime against another person, whereas the majority of female offenders are convicted of non-violent drug or property offenses. The chart on the following page compares the offenses committed by female and male offenders in California.

A Comparison of Female and Male Offenders in California by Controlling Offense				
	Female		Male	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total	9,994	100%	145,728	100%
Crimes Against Persons	2,986	30%	75,293	52%
Murder 1 st Degree	418	4.2%	9,893	6.8%
Murder 2 nd Degree	508	5.1%	9,731	6.7%
Manslaughter	217	2.2%	2,629	1.8%
Vehicular Manslaughter	55	.6%	496	.3%
Robbery	622	6.2%	16,338	11.2%
Assault with a Deadly Weapon	423	4.2%	9,895	6.8%
Other Assault/Battery	539	5.4%	10,666	7.3%
Rape	9	.1%	2,176	1.5%
Lewd Act with a Child	62	.6%	7,508	5.2%
Oral Copulation	10	.1%	705	.5%
Sodomy	0	0%	231	.2%
Penetration with an Object	4	0%	447	.3%
Other Sex Offenses	31	.3%	2,308	1.6%
Kidnapping	88	.9%	2,270	1.6%
Property Crimes	3,351	34%	30,147	21%
Burglary 1 st Degree	317	3%	6,527	4.5%
Burglary 2 nd Degree	564	6%	5,400	4%
Grand Theft	340	3%	2,258	1.5%
Petty Theft with a Prior	751	7.5%	4,773	3%
Receiving Stolen Property	284	3%	2,901	2%
Vehicle Theft	294	3%	4,894	3%
Forgery/Fraud	730	7%	1,964	1%
Other Property Crimes	71	.7%	590	.4%
Drug Crimes	3,105	31%	33,252	21%
Controlled Substance Possession	1,370	14%	11,691	8%
Controlled Substance Possession for Sale	980	10%	9,963	7%
Controlled Substance Sales	408	4%	4,450	3%
Controlled Substance Manufacturing	192	2%	2,164	1.5%
Controlled Substance Other	113	1%	671	.5%
Miscellaneous Other	42	.4%	1208	.8%
Other Crimes	456	5%	10,562	7%
Escape	18	.2%	177	.1%
Driving Under the Influence	95	1%	2,001	1.4%
Arson	44	.4%	382	.3%
Possession of Weapon	89	.9%	4,704	3.2%
Other Offenses	210	2.1%	3,298	2.3%
Missing	96	1%	419	.3%

Source: California Department of Corrections, Prison Census Data as of December 31, 2003. Sacramento. February 2004.

The vast majority of female felons are incarcerated in four prisons operated by the California Department of Corrections: California Institution for Women in Corona; California Rehabilitation Center in Norco; Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla and Valley State Prison in Chowchilla.

The state also operates under contract with private providers a few smaller facilities that could be considered community correctional facilities. The minimum-security Leo Chesney Correctional Center in Live Oak, Sutter County, houses women who are nearing the end of their terms. This and other community correction programs are described later in this Finding.

While the characteristics of the female inmate population have changed, the facilities and the programs did not significantly evolve to reflect that change. One reason was CDC’s focus on safely housing inmates, without any meaningful expectation that the sources of criminal behavior be addressed. In contrast, the department was under scrutiny to show that it was housing inmates as economically as possible, which drove prison siting, design and operational decisions.

The classification system is evidence of this policy focus. As explained in detail in the box on the following page, the classification system drives decisions about what kinds of facilities are built and where inmates are placed.

To the extent the classification system overstates the risk associated with female inmates, the State has over-relied on remote, large and highly secure facilities. To the extent the classification system, or any other management tool, does not assess the criminality of inmates, alternative facilities and interventions are not considered.

A National Assessment

A national assessment of state and federal classification practices for female offenders found the following:

- ✓ Most policy-makers recognize that, as a group, women offenders are less dangerous than male offenders.
- ✓ Classification systems in many states overclassify women offenders.
- ✓ Many states do not use the classification system to make housing assignments for women offenders.
- ✓ Only about 20 states have validated their classification systems for women offenders.

Source: Barbara Bloom, Ph.D., Barbara Owen, Ph.D. and Stephanie Covington, Ph.D. July 2003. "Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research Practice and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders," referencing P. Van Voorhis and L. Presser. 2001. "Classification of Women Offenders: A National Assessment of Current Practice." National Institute of Corrections. Washington D.C.

Gender-Neutral Classification System Drives Decisions

In correctional institutions, classification systems are used to make housing and programming assignments. While the focus is primarily on safety and security, classification drives most institutional decisions. One expert said, "Both male and female inmates have enormous stakes in valid and equitable classification because it governs decisions regarding: eligibility and access to programs, housing assignments, selection of cell-mates, safety, access to worker status, and the fairness, equity and appropriateness of virtually all inmate processing decisions while incarcerated."

There is substantial agreement that "gender-neutral" classification systems – used by most correctional agencies – place women in higher custody levels than is necessary. Correctional expert James Austin states that "because female prisoners are far less likely to become involved in serious or potentially violent behavior while incarcerated, as a class they are likely to be over-classified under a system that has been normed on the male prisoner population." Evidence also is growing that when applied to women these systems poorly predict institutional security or public safety risk.

A national assessment of state and federal classification practices for female offenders found classification systems often over-classify female offenders resulting in unwarranted assignment to higher security levels and exclusion from community correctional placements. A study in Tennessee in 1984 found that many inmates could be re-classified as minimum custody without affecting public and prison safety.

California uses a single, "gender-neutral" classification system for all inmates. The stated goal of CDC's system is to place an inmate in the least restrictive security level consistent with internal security and public safety. In the men's prisons, inmate classification scores are used to determine placement in one of four security levels, with Level I and Level II prisoners considered minimum risks for violence or escape, Level III prisoners considered medium risk, and Level IV prisoners presenting the highest potential for violence or escape.

In California's prisons, 69 percent of female inmates are Level I and Level II. But unlike men, low risk female offenders are sometimes housed with Level III and IV inmates. Referring to the low propensity for violence and escape among female offenders, one warden conceded: "A Level III woman is not the same as a Level III man."

In its 1994 final report, the Senate Concurrent Resolution 33 Commission on Female Inmate and Parolee Issues recommended the department develop a classification system for female inmates. It recommended the system account for the lower security and safety risk that women pose and the implications for program eligibility.

In 1998, CDC revised its classification system to more accurately predict an offender's potential for violence. CDC contracted with UCLA to conduct a randomized experiment to test the revised system. The system – intended for all inmates – was tested only on male inmates. In explaining the methodology, the evaluators said: "Approximately 90 percent of all recent CDC inmates are male, and levels of housing security only apply to male inmates; there really are no security levels for female prisoners. While classification scores are computed on all inmates, only for males do the scores have important placement implications."

When asked whether CDC had considered adapting the classification system for women, the chief of the classification unit said she was not aware of any such considerations. She was aware that the National Institute of Corrections had published a number of documents on the issue, but had not read them.

Sources: Barbara Bloom, Ph.D., Barbara Owen, Ph.D. and Stephanie Covington, Ph.D. July 2003. "Gender-Responsive Strategies – Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders." National Institute of Corrections. Washington D.C. Tim Brennan. 1998. "Institutional Classification of Females: Problems and Some Proposals for Reform," in "Female Offenders: Critical Perspectives and Effective Interventions," Ruth T. Zaplan, Aspen Publishers Inc. Gaithersburg, Maryland. James Austin, Ph. D. June 25, 2003. "Findings in Prison Classification and Risk Assessment." National Institute of Corrections, Prisons Division, Issues in Brief. The George Washington University. Richard A. Berk, Heather Ladd, Heidi Graziano, and Jong-Ho Baek. February 10, 2003. "A Randomized Experiment Testing Inmate Classification Systems." UCLA Department of Statistics. JoAnn Gordon, Warden, California Rehabilitation Center. August 31, 2004. Personal communication. "Senate Concurrent Resolution 33 Commission Report on Female Inmate and Parolee Issues, Final Report." June 1994. Linda Rianda, Chief, Classifications Services Unit, Institutions Division, California Department of Corrections. Personal communication.

The result of this decision-making process is a prison-based strategy with limited potential to break the cycle of crime, violence and drug addiction. Among the reasons:

Remote Prisons Sever Ties to Family and Community

The State's policy of siting large correctional facilities in remote locations impacts the ability of women offenders to maintain connections with their families and children during their incarceration.

While the 28 facilities housing male offenders are located throughout the state, some 75 percent of female offenders are housed in the two facilities located in the San Joaquin Valley town of Chowchilla, 30 miles north of Fresno. The majority of the remaining female offenders are housed in two small facilities 40 and 50 miles southeast of Los Angeles.

Two-thirds of incarcerated women have minor children and about two-thirds of women in state prisons lived with their young children before entering prison.¹¹⁸

More than half of the children of female prisoners never visit their mothers during their incarceration, in part because of the difficulty caretakers face in arranging transportation to remotely located prisons.¹¹⁹ Experts assert that whether connections between prisoners and their families are maintained can mean the difference between offender success and recidivism.¹²⁰

The problem has been exacerbated by the department's decision to cut back visiting days to save money. Visiting was reduced from four days to two days a week at the California Institution for Women. At the same time, however, the prison was working with the Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents to assess and improve the visiting policies.¹²¹ At the California Rehabilitation Center, visiting was cut from three days to two days a week.¹²² According to the warden, the cutbacks decreased the opportunities for social workers to bring children in foster care to visit their mothers – a common requirement for reunification.¹²³

Overcrowded Facilities Frustrate Efforts to Rehabilitate

Female prisons are nearly as crowded as male prisons. The most severely crowded women's prisons are operating at 185 to 190 percent of design capacity.¹²⁴ With the exception of violence, the effects of overcrowding – reduced programming space, reduced programming and inadequate staffing – are as severe as in the men's prisons.¹²⁵ (The State in 2002 closed the Northern California Women's Facility. The closure was attributed to declining female offender population due in part to the

success of Proposition 36, which diverted non-violent drug offenders into treatment in lieu of a prison sentence.)

The differences between female and male offenders have important implications for how prisons prepare women for release. Research shows that to become self-sufficient, avoid future crime and reunite with their families, female offenders need an array of interventions that are delivered in a way that is responsive to their unique characteristics and needs. Female offenders particularly need educational and vocational services, health and drug treatment programs and opportunities to restore and strengthen bonds with their children and families. And they need re-entry planning to help them successfully transition from prison to the community.¹²⁶

In the last two decades, overcrowded facilities, the focus on punishment and budget constraints have dramatically limited educational and other programs in prisons, including those for women.

□ **Education and vocational education.** Approximately 29 percent of the women in California's four women's prisons are enrolled in an academic or vocational education program or employed through Joint Venture or the Prison Industry Authority. Another quarter of the female inmate population participates in the Bridging Education Program, a distance learning program implemented in late 2003 to allow inmates in reception centers and other inmates who are not in a program to earn day-for-day credits by completing educational activities in their cells. Student-teacher ratios vary wildly from prison to prison for the Bridging Education program. While two of the women's prisons were at or near the goal of a 54 to 1 ratio, one facility had just five instructors for more than 700 students. Still, nearly 2,000 women who are eligible to participate and could benefit from educational and job training programs are unable to participate due to the lack of program capacity.¹²⁷

□ **Substance abuse treatment.** While California has expanded drug treatment in prisons, only a fraction of substance abusers have access to treatment. Numerous studies have documented that in-prison substance abuse treatment, followed by community-based

Replicating Success?

Even when CDC employs strategies that can work, the department does not do what should be done to replicate proven successes.

AT CRC, the department contracts with two providers. Program participants spend four hours a day in the program operated by Mental Health Systems, Inc. The Walden House Program is more intensive, with inmates involved eight hours per day. The staff said the variance resulted from two separate competitive contracts initiated at different times with different funding amounts.

Inmates are assigned based on openings, rather than which program would best match their needs.

The programs have not been evaluated, so it is unknown whether the eight-hour program produces better outcomes than the four-hour program, or if the four-hour program could be expanded to cost-effectively serve more inmates. The warden's observation is that the eight-hour program is better.

Source: JoAnn Gordon, Warden, California Rehabilitation Center. July 7, 2004. Personal communication.

aftercare, dramatically reduces recidivism. Approximately 80 percent of women in state prisons have substance abuse problems.¹²⁸ The department oversees an in-prison substance abuse treatment program with 8,500 treatment slots. Of these, 1,764 beds are allocated for female offenders serving approximately 18 percent of the female population estimated to be in need of treatment. (Male offenders are allocated 6,736 beds, serving approximately 5 percent of those estimated to be in need of treatment.)

- **Re-entry programs.** What happens to offenders in prisons – whether they are male or female – influences whether they succeed or fail on parole. Until recently there were approximately 900 re-entry prison slots and a limited number of substance abuse treatment slots that met the needs of a fraction of the prison population.¹²⁹ In response to the mandate in the 2003-04 budget to reduce recidivism, the department in February 2004 began placing parole violators into existing Community Correctional Re-entry Centers, pending the establishment of a system of halfway back centers for parole violators. The strategy eliminated 61 re-entry beds for women prisoners to transition from prison to parole, using them instead for female parole violators as an alternative to re-incarceration. According to a parole administrator, the department has issued requests for bids to operate halfway back facilities in three parole regions beginning in January 2005.¹³⁰

Attempts at Community Corrections

Despite the overarching trends and policies, the State has made a few attempts at using less secure, but potentially more effective facilities and programs to deal with the female offenders who in the past would have not been sent to state prison.

A Community-based Facility

The Leo Chesney Community Correctional Facility houses approximately 200 Level I and II female inmates in Sutter County. All of the women are involved in educational, vocational or pre-release programs to prepare them to return to the community. In addition to the basic education courses, the center offers collegiate-level coursework through neighboring Yuba Community College. Vocational education includes a culinary arts school, carpentry, landscaping and a master gardening program, which trains women for jobs with nurseries and landscaping companies and provides fresh produce for the center's cafeteria. For recreation, the facility has a gym open seven days a week where women participate in sports, games or hobby craft.

Although the facility is locked, it is located within a neighborhood. Inmates from the center participate in a variety of community service projects, such as park and public building exterior maintenance, food distribution and set up and clean up of civic events. The Live Oak community, although at first cautious about the facility, is now supportive of the facility and rallied with the center when CDC attempted to shut it down.

CDC contracts with Cornell Companies, Inc. to run the facility. CDC does not permit Cornell to collect recidivism data and the facility has not been evaluated for outcomes. The director of the facility stated he could accept an additional 50 offenders immediately. CDC has not sought to expand its use of the facility; the California Correctional Peace Officers Association is opposed to privately run facilities.

Alternatives for Pregnant and Parenting Women

Faced with a growing number of female inmates with substance abuse problems and children, policy-makers established two community correctional programs: the Community Prisoner Mother Program and the Family Foundations Program. Both programs allow low-level and non-violent female offenders who also are pregnant or parenting to live in a community facility with their children.

Surprisingly, department staff struggle to get inmates to enter these voluntary programs. CDC staff regularly go to women's prisons and jails to recruit participants for the Community Prisoner Mother Program and make presentations to judges, district attorneys and public defenders to encourage referrals to the Family Foundations Program. But despite the assumption that women would be anxious to stay with their children, many offenders reportedly find it easier to leave their children with a caretaker and do their time.¹³¹ In addition, these programs compete with the fire camp program for the same inmates and camp participants earn two days off their sentences for every day served, which is twice the credit for participating in some other program. It also was suggested that prison staff discourage women from entering these alternative programs to ensure that prison beds remain filled.

The Family Foundations Program must overcome even greater challenges maintaining enrollment. While the program was designed for substance abusers, only women sentenced for simple possession are allowed to participate. Women convicted for transportation or sale of drugs, for instance, are excluded. As a result, many of the women who could benefit – and for whom the program was ostensibly designed – are ineligible. Also, women who voluntarily enter the program must agree to

serve 12-months – requiring them to forfeit six months of “good time” credit they would earn in prison.¹³²

While neither program has been subject to independent evaluation, anecdotes and observations suggest they are effective with the small numbers of women who have access to them. According to CDC staff, a “point in time” study showed an 85 percent success rate for the Family Foundations Program compared to a 73 percent success rate for the Community Prisoner Mother Program, which required the shorter stay.¹³³ But eligibility criteria and program requirements limit access and discourage participation. Furthermore, the model has not been considered for the larger population of female offenders – with similar characteristics and risk levels – who could benefit.

Community Correctional Re-entry Centers

Existing law permits the CDC director to establish and operate community correctional re-entry facilities for certain non-violent offenders and parole violators. Offenders must have 120 days or less left on a sentence and must apply for a transfer.¹³⁴

CDC contracts with public, private and non-profit organizations to operate these facilities. In addition to housing and supervision, the contractors provide counseling, substance abuse treatment, computer supported education, job search and placement assistance, pre-release planning and other services. Currently, there are 18 community correctional re-entry facilities in California with 792 beds, of which 61 are for women. In 2004, CDC increased the use of these facilities as an intermediate sanction for parole violators and anticipates that inmate placement will be phased out by the end of 2004.¹³⁵ Simultaneously, CDC's Office of Substance Abuse Programs began implementation of a new drug treatment furlough program that would allow up to 450 non-violent offenders who participated in prison-based treatment to be released to a residential treatment facility 120 days prior to release to parole.

Restitution Centers

There are two restitution centers with 60 beds for female offenders and 50 beds for male offenders. Offenders are sent to a restitution center through a court commitment and must have a sentence of three years or less. These centers provide a means for offenders to pay their victims financial restitution either as ordered by the court or as agreed upon by the offender and the victim. Inmates' earnings are equally divided among the State, the victim and the inmate. CDC has proposed expanding restitution center capacity by 390 beds beginning in January 2005.¹³⁶

Non-violent Offenders Can Be Treated Differently

Research supports the growing consensus among experts and practitioners that a large proportion of female offenders are not career criminals, are not violent and do not pose a serious threat to the community and could be more effectively held in community-based facilities that address their underlying problems.¹³⁷ The research also indicates that outcomes for non-violent women offenders would be improved – and public costs reduced – if these offenders were incarcerated in smaller, community correctional facilities that can provide proximity to children and families and the multiple community-based services that female offenders need to be successful.

Over the last decade several independent reviews have recommended that the State treat non-violent offenders – and specifically non-violent female offenders – differently than serious, violent male offenders. Among them:

- ***Commission on Female Inmate and Parolee Issues.*** The Senate Concurrent Resolution 33 Commission on Female Inmate and Parolee Issues said in its 1994 final report: “Female inmates and parolees generally have a lower rate of commitment to prison for violent offenses and exhibit significantly less violent behavior in prison than males. These characteristics offer CDC and the State of California opportunities to develop, for very specific targeted female populations, demonstration programs, punishment options, intermediate sanctions, and other methods of holding inmates accountable for their actions without decreasing public safety.”¹³⁸
- ***Blue Ribbon Commission on Inmate Population Management.*** In 1990, the commission found that “there is an economic and practical need to support the development and maintenance of a broad spectrum of punishment options and services for offenders, giving sentencing authorities options beyond state incarceration and traditional probation and parole.” It recommended establishing a partnership between state and local government to significantly expand intermediate community sanctions for offenders. It said that the State should target non-violent offenders with short-term sentences and non-violent parole violators. The Commission recommended that the State construct secure facilities to house 100 to 400 offenders in counties that volunteered to participate in this partnership with the State and these counties would be funded by the State to operate the facilities.¹³⁹
- ***Little Hoover Commission.*** In its 1994 and 1998 reports on the correctional system, the Commission concluded that the State was using prisons – the most expensive and often least effective sanction -

for increasing numbers of non-violent drug offenders. The Commission recommended that the State treat non-violent offenders differently than violent offenders. It urged policy-makers to adopt a multi-faceted correctional strategy that ensures there is always room in state prisons for the worst offenders and uses less costly, more effective community-based strategies for low-level offenders.¹⁴⁰

Finally, in its 2003 report on parole, the Commission concluded that the State's prisons overall are failing to prepare inmates for success on parole, largely because of the singular focus on punishment, parole revocation policies that drive overcrowding and failure to effectively target limited resources.

- **Independent Review Panel.** The recent report of the Department of Correction's Independent Review Panel also concluded that the current system is not adequately preparing inmates for a successful return to society, resulting in the State's high recidivism rate; it recommended a renewed focus on preparing inmates for release.¹⁴¹

In 1997, Senator Richard Polanco authored legislation to create the Nonviolent, Nonserious Women Offenders' Alternative Sentencing Program to provide for community incarceration of nonviolent female felons. The bill would have required the court to sentence female offenders convicted of crimes other than serious, violent felonies to the Department of Corrections for placement in a community correctional facility. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimated that the State could save more than \$7 million – a 7 percent reduction in prison operating costs – if the proposal were enacted. At the time, there were about the same number of female inmates as there are today (10,000) and about the same percentage (75 percent) were low-level offenders serving sentences for nonviolent, drug-related or property crimes.¹⁴² The department, the California Correctional Peace Officers Association and the California State Employees Association opposed the bill and it died in the Assembly.

Summary

The number of women incarcerated for non-violent low-level offenses has grown dramatically in the past two decades. California responded to this growth by building prisons – with little consideration for the type of offender or even the gender. For more than a decade, experts have asserted that non-violent female offenders pose little risk to public safety and could be most effectively held in community-based facilities with programs that address the underlying issues, such as poverty and substance abuse, that lead to crime.

Recommendation 2: A core element of a strategic plan for women should be a robust system of community correctional facilities focused on preparing women offenders for success on parole. The State should:

- **Revise classification procedures.** The Department of Corrections should tailor its classification tool to improve its ability to classify and make housing assignments for women offenders. The tool should be validated to ensure that it accurately assesses the risks female offenders pose to public safety and their needs for services to successfully transition from prison to the community.
- **Develop a continuum of incarceration options.** The department should develop a continuum of facilities for female inmates to cost-effectively match inmates with the facility that best achieves the goals of public protection and successful re-entry.
 - ✓ The continuum should include community correctional facilities to house inmates closer to their communities; halfway back facilities to support the transition from prison to the community; and, facilities specifically designed to address the needs of parole violators who are inappropriate for less restrictive sanctions.
 - ✓ Prisoner mother programs should be fortified and expanded. The eligibility criteria for the Family Foundations Program should be revised to make it consistent with other minimum security placements such as community correctional re-entry centers, camps and the Community Prisoner Mother Program. The department should explore incentives for participation in the programs, including providing “work credits” equal to those of the camp program.
- **Partner with communities.** The department should work with communities to plan, develop and operate facilities based on research and focused on successful re-entry. It should explore all options for siting facilities, including expanding existing facilities, utilizing closed military facilities, closed California Youth Authority facilities and contracting with sheriff’s departments and others.
- **Operationalize the continuum.** The department should use a competitive process to develop contracts for community correctional facilities to deliver the array of services shown to reduce recidivism among female offenders. Private companies, public agencies or partnerships among them should be encouraged to bid on the contracts.
 - ✓ The department should restructure the contracting process to emphasize quality of services over the lowest cost to contract with providers with expertise in addressing the needs of women offenders and link inmates with aftercare upon release.

- ✓ The department should establish performance benchmarks in contracts with providers and monitor and report return-to-custody rates and other outcome measures.
- ✓ The department should reward high-quality providers with higher rates of reimbursement and terminate the contracts of those that fail to meet specified outcomes.

A Re-entry Model to Reduce Recidivism

Finding 3: Female offenders are often denied assistance with housing, employment, substance abuse treatment, and family reunification, and as a result the public costs and personal tragedies continue to plague families and communities.

While female parolees face many of the same challenges as their male counterparts, the nature of their criminal involvement, their ability to support themselves, and their responsibilities as mothers often make those challenges even harder to overcome.

Moreover, much of the public assistance that would be available to them because they are impoverished, the caretakers of young children or the victims of crime, is denied them once they are convicted of crimes, and drug crimes, in particular.

The research is convincing that without assistance with basic needs, most of these parolees will not become self-sufficient, free of drugs and alcohol and capable of taking care of their children. The fiscal consequences of this continued failure are also clear. A year in prison for a single drug offender costs the state General Fund \$31,000. Parolees who are released unprepared and unassisted carry that burden into the community – drawing on emergency rooms, police and jail services, and charity-based efforts to care for the homeless, the hungry, and the untreated mentally ill.

California can only break this cycle if it changes policies, reallocates resources and enlists community assets to more effectively intervene in the lives of the offenders and to prevent the expensive repercussions for their children.

Some of these barriers are deliberate public policy choices. As part of “welfare reform” and the “War on Drugs,” policy-makers have sought to punish drug users or prevent them from misusing benefits. But denied housing and food assistance, and even drug treatment, female parolees are more likely to be homeless, addicted, commit a crime or be the victim of crime – and be re-incarcerated.

The 1996 federal welfare reform law prohibits anyone convicted of a drug felony after that time from receiving federally funded food stamps or Title

IV-A welfare assistance. As a result, many women offenders with drug convictions are ineligible for cash assistance, employment services and drug treatment through CalWORKs, California's program to implement the federal welfare law. Ironically, offenders who were convicted of serious violent offenses like murder and rape are not denied this assistance. While states have the option of limiting or even eliminating the ban, California is one of 17 states that has not passed such legislation.

Federal policies also permit communities to restrict access to publicly assisted housing for criminal behavior, including drug crimes. And longer, mandatory sentences for drug crimes means that many low-level female offenders with children in foster care are not able to meet new, stricter reunification time frames.¹⁴³

These policies – intended primarily for serious, career criminals who threaten the safety of communities – are significant obstacles to re-entry for non-violent female offenders, increasing their chances of re-offending.

As described in Finding 2, existing resources could be better used to prepare female offenders for release and keep them connected to their children and community. Similarly, by reconsidering policy-erected barriers to re-entry, making better use of existing resources, and encouraging communities to assist female parolees, California could benefit offenders, their families and communities.

Housing Is One of the Largest Barriers

Experts say that access to safe and affordable housing is one of the greatest challenges facing women when they are released from prison. Yet in many instances housing is the linchpin to successful re-entry. Adequate housing affects the ability of parolees to obtain and retain employment, participate in substance abuse treatment and reunify with children, particularly those in the child welfare system.

In part, the problem is just one more dimension of the State's overall shortage of affordable housing. Parolees compete for affordable housing with millions of other Californians – and do so with the added challenges of a criminal record and non-existent or poor credit and tenant histories.

According to researchers, the characteristics common to female parolees – severed social relations, economic vulnerability, addiction, and abuse – increase their likelihood of being homeless.¹⁴⁴ Criminologist Barbara Bloom reports that women offenders identify better housing as one of six vital factors that would help them avoid further criminal involvement.¹⁴⁵

Some 10 percent of California parolees are homeless when released from prison.¹⁴⁶ In urban areas homelessness among parolees ranges from 30 to 50 percent.¹⁴⁷ Homeless women involved in the criminal justice system are much more likely than their male counterparts to have young children in their care and to be dependent on public assistance.¹⁴⁸ According to the California Research Bureau, one in four inmate mothers reported living on the street or in a shelter for some or all of the year before their arrest. Offender mothers were more than twice as likely as imprisoned fathers to have been homeless.¹⁴⁹

Little Assistance from the State

With an increasing focus on punishment, the prison system has essentially abandoned efforts to ensure that inmates have a plan for housing prior to release. Most prisoners are released from prison with no “step down” process to help them make the transition. CDC has three transitional housing programs available for female parolees. The Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP) provides residential treatment for fewer than 1,000 women parolees with substance abuse problems. Four Residential Multi-Service Centers provide 228 beds for homeless parolees who stay an average of six months. In 2003-04 women occupied 10.7 percent of those beds. Community Correctional Re-entry Centers in 2003-04 provided transitional housing for about 880 lower level inmates with 120 days or less remaining on their sentences; women occupied about 13 percent of the available slots. In 2004 CDC began utilizing these facilities for parole violators and implemented a drug treatment furlough program for up to 450 non-violent offenders who have participated in prison-based drug treatment. CDC plans to utilize 150 of these beds for female offenders.

Application of Federal Housing Policies

The Commission surveyed 10 local housing authorities regarding their application of the federal drug and criminal activity policies. The surveys indicated:

- ✓ Most give preference to veterans, the elderly, the disabled and individuals already living or working within the authority's service area. No agency specifically targeted services to women parolees or collected data on the number of women parolees they serve.
- ✓ All indicated that women on parole could participate in their programs provided they otherwise met eligibility requirements, including the housing authority restrictions on criminal and drug activity.
- ✓ All conducted some type of criminal background assessment. Some gave criminal background checks a low priority, doing them when individuals applied for assistance or when the housing authority perceived a possible threat to public safety or property. Others made criminal record checks a high priority, requesting criminal records from law enforcement officials when screening applicants and also doing routine checks for some households already receiving assistance.

When making a determination to deny housing assistance, all said they would consider mitigating evidence that showed rehabilitation from criminal or substance abuse activity. However, some housing authorities appeared to have more formal evidence requirements than others for determining what demonstrated rehabilitation.

Finally, CDC has some discretionary funds to assist parolees with housing, but approximately 90 percent of those funds are used to house paroled sex offenders.¹⁵⁰

Sacramento's New Housing Policy

In August 2004, the Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority adopted a new policy to increase criminal background checks on adults living in public housing or receiving rent subsidy checks.

Currently, all new applicants to public housing are screened with a criminal background check. Applicants with a criminal history are reviewed on a case-by-case basis and depending on the nature of the crime they may be denied housing.

Beginning in 2005, the agency also plans to conduct criminal background checks on tenants in targeted buildings or neighborhoods where there is criminal activity. The new policy is meant to identify tenants who commit new crimes or join a household after the initial screening. Evidence of a felony conviction of an adult household member could result in an eviction, again, depending upon the nature of the crime.

The director of the program stated that the goal was not to get people kicked out of public housing. The policy provides another tool that the agency can use to keep neighborhoods safe, calm and peaceful.

Source: Mark Stephenson, Assistant Director of Housing Management, Sacramento Housing and Redevelopment Authority. October 28, 2004. Personal communication.

Federal Rules Exclude Many Women from Public Housing

Federal regulations ban access to federally funded housing by anyone convicted of manufacturing or producing methamphetamine in federally assisted housing or anyone with a lifetime requirement to register as a sex offender. This regulation, often called the "one strike" rule, also gives local housing agencies broad discretion to bar individuals with a history of drug or criminal activity from public housing.¹⁵¹

Advocates for female offenders assert that these federal housing policies, designed to promote safe and secure housing environments, significantly limit the ability of women parolees to access public housing – making it harder for them to successfully re-enter society.¹⁵²

Riverside County, for example, took a "zero tolerance" approach toward criminal activity that strictly applies federal rules. The policy excludes people with drug convictions from receiving housing assistance. Applicants, however, can appeal based on proof that they have been rehabilitated. Advocates for parolees argue these types of policies disproportionately

Shelter Plus Care

Shelter Plus Care is a program run by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development which targets homeless persons who are mentally ill, addicted or physically disabled. This competitive grant program provides state and local governments and public housing authorities funding for rental assistance for the hard-to-serve homeless population.

Grant recipients must match the funding with supportive services, such as case management. Rental assistance is awarded for five or 10 years, depending upon the nature of the assistance requested, providing a long-term housing solution. Grants can be renewed annually through a non-competitive process. In December 2003, California cities, counties and public housing authorities were awarded more than 80 grants totaling over \$46 million.

Source: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. "Shelter Plus Care Program." www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/splusc/index.cfm Web site accessed October 15, 2004.

impact women offenders. At the same time, housing authorities say they grapple with balancing conflicting public goals – the need to protect housing properties and tenants, and the need to help women offenders transition back into society.¹⁵³

Experts point out that while public housing is an important resource, it would be largely unavailable to parolees even without the federal restriction because of the limited supply and lengthy waiting lists. For women to succeed, communities will need to increase the supply of a range of housing options, including transitional housing, congregate sober living homes and permanent supportive housing.¹⁵⁴

Housing Alone Is Not Enough

Corrections and housing officials and offenders said housing must be part of a comprehensive package that includes therapy and other support services. For many women parolees, that includes a structured setting with strict monitoring to ensure they are not victimized by male criminals. An official with the Oakland Housing Authority estimates that between 25 and 30 percent of all evictions in Oakland are due to a male coming into a woman's household and engaging in criminal activity.¹⁵⁵

In many communities, religious groups, local agencies and community-based organizations provide housing or help women to access publicly assisted housing. These projects generally follow the model advocated by criminologists for integrated or “wrap-around” services, as described in the box.

Providing housing and improving outcomes for women offenders and their children will require a commitment from state leaders, communities and public and private entities. It will likely require some new resources and the reallocation of existing resources. Mostly, it will require the recognition that having a safe and affordable place to live is foundational to success on parole – and that communities benefit when women and their children are successful. It will require the recognition that failing to intervene effectively in

“Wrap-around” Service Providers

A New Way of Life Foundation. A New Way of Life Re-entry Project in Southern California provides housing for up to 25 women leaving prison and some of their children. Services include day treatment, counseling, assistance in obtaining and filing government documents, assistance in obtaining health care and re-unification with family. Additionally, the program offers referrals to health and mental health services, job opportunities, educational courses and long-term housing solutions.

Cottage Housing, Inc. This non-profit provides Sacramento's disabled homeless with housing and social programs. The program targets people coming out of emergency shelters, substance abuse treatment or domestic violence programs, including women parolees. It operates two housing projects, including Quinn Cottages, and plans to build two more in the next few years.

Catherine Center. A faith-based effort by the St. Vincent de Paul Society in San Mateo and the Sisters of Mercy in Burlingame, Catherine Center provides transitional housing and employment assistance for women after release from prison. The center houses six women for up to six months while they complete substance abuse, education and career development programs.

MOMS Program. MOMS is a partnership of the Oakland Housing Authority and the Alameda Sheriff. Women offenders and their children live in one of 10 housing units owned by the housing authority. If they successfully complete a nine-month re-entry program the housing authority transitions them into federally funded public housing.

the lives of female parolees and their children will result in higher costs to the criminal justice, mental health, juvenile justice and child welfare systems as the cycle of crime and victimization is perpetuated. Finding adequate resources is an obvious challenge. But given the resources spent on a poorly performing system, the opportunity is to move dollars from ineffective to effective programs.

Housing – Potential Resources

Enormous resources are spent on incarceration and parole supervision for non-violent offenders. Incarceration costs the State \$31,000 annually per inmate. Over \$1 billion alone is spent on parolees who are returned to custody. Policy-makers should reallocate some of these resources to expand housing for women parolees. The State should tap potential additional federal and private funding sources. And it should bolster the use of community-based efforts. Initial opportunities are suggested below.

- ***Reallocate existing resources:*** Most female offenders qualify for early release to a community correctional center for the last 120 days of incarceration and are appropriate for community-based alternatives to revocation. Experts estimate that the State could save \$151 million by using alternatives to prison for the large percentage of parole violators charged with drug use and possession, and could save an additional \$300 million annually by reducing the length of revocation sentences for certain offenders from an average of 140 to 100 days. The State could reallocate savings generated from these reforms to expand re-entry centers and transitional and supportive housing options. The State could reallocate parole resources to reimburse local organizations, and partnerships like the MOMs program in Alameda County, willing to house and provide services to non-violent women parolees upon release. Existing resources could be used more efficiently to provide support services to parolees with disabilities and mental illness if funneled through the Supportive Housing Initiative Act (SHIA) and county mental health programs.
- ***Identify new resources:*** The federal Shelter Plus Care program targets the disabled homeless population, a demographic characteristic of many parolees. California local governments and public housing authorities received \$46 million in 2004 from this program that requires matching case management services. The State should consider eliminating parole for certain low level offenders and reallocate savings to local governments to fund case management services and draw down additional federal Shelter Plus Care funding.

The Governor should request an in-state Policy Academy by the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness designed to help state and local policymakers improve access to resources and services for the homeless. (California is one of only three states that have not taken advantage of this free assistance.)

The State should identify a permanent, dedicated source of funding for the California Housing Trust Fund, as recommended by the Commission in its May 2002 report on the State's affordable housing crises.

- ***Optimize community assets:*** In California, A New Way of Life Re-entry Project, Catherine Center and Cottage Housing are examples of non-profit organizations providing housing and assistance for parolees. The State could save money by providing some funding to these and other non-profit. In Illinois, for example, the Department of Corrections pays St. Leonard's Ministries, a local supportive housing provider, just under what its costs to supervise parolees; St. Leonard's then provides housing, social services and a large portion of the supervision for parolees. (www.reentrypolicy.org)

Barriers to Employment for Female Parolees

Research has established a positive link between employment and reduced criminality. A 1995 meta-analysis of 400 studies from 1950 to 1990 found that the single most effective factor in lower offending rates was employment.¹⁵⁶ One study showed that 89 percent of parolees who violated parole in New York were also unemployed.¹⁵⁷ A 1997 report by CDC found that 70 to 90 percent of parolees in California were unemployed.”¹⁵⁸

Some experts assert that compared to men, women offenders face unique and possibly greater challenges in obtaining and retaining employment. Barriers to employment include less education and vocational training, greater incidents of substance abuse and mental illness, poor employment and earnings histories, and lack of child care, transportation and stable housing.

Parolees also face legal barriers to employment. In California, parolees are barred from working in the professions of law, real estate, medicine, nursing, physical therapy and education. Some offenders are also barred from professions that involve computer technology.¹⁵⁹ All states bar former offenders from employment as barbers, beauticians and nurses.¹⁶⁰ There is, however, a process for obtaining waivers from the restriction on employment in the cosmetology professions.¹⁶¹

Some barriers are easier to resolve. To be employed, parolees need identification. But California’s prison system has struggled unsuccessfully for years to ensure that inmates have identification and other necessary documents upon release. Correctional officials assert that the Department of Motor Vehicles will provide identification cards to inmates as part of a new pre-release program mandated by the Legislature.

Employers Are Reluctant to Hire Ex-offenders

Many employers are reluctant to hire ex-offenders. Ex-offenders also have difficulty in meeting employers’ requirements for bonding against theft. In *Hawker v. New York* (1968) the court ruled that employers may refuse bonding to felons. And prospective employers sometimes insist on bonds from people with criminal records that they do not require of others. Many bonding companies refuse to underwrite bonds for ex-prisoners.¹⁶²

The federal and state governments provide fiscal incentives to employers who hire ex-offenders, but many potential employers, parole agents and

parolees are not aware of these programs. The Work Opportunity Tax Credit Program provides employers with a federal tax credit of up to \$8,500 when they hire an economically disadvantaged ex-felon within one year of conviction or release from prison.¹⁶³ The Fidelity Bonding Program provides bonding services at no cost to employers, employees and job seekers at Job Service sites and One-Stop Career Centers. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor and administered by the Employment Development Department (EDD).¹⁶⁴

At the same time, some industries, such as construction, have been willing to hire ex-offenders – in part because they desperately need workers. For female parolees, “non-traditional” jobs permit them to earn living wages not paid in most jobs available to unskilled women generally.

Workforce Development Programs

California administers 34 different employment programs in 14 state agencies and departments, but little of that money benefits female offenders. A report by the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research identified over \$4.6 billion allocated to state workforce development programs in 2003.¹⁶⁵ Of that amount, approximately 2 percent was budgeted for job training programs in CDC and women parolees benefited from only some of this spending.

Finding Jobs for the Hard to Employ in Los Angeles County

Chrysalis, a non-profit employment organization in Los Angeles County, targets the hard to employ, including the homeless, ex-offenders, recovering addicts, and the long-term unemployed. In 2003, the organization assisted 2,300 job-seekers at a cost of \$2,600 per job placement. By contrast, \$110 million in federal Workforce Investment Act funds were allocated to local Workforce Investment Boards in California to assist the general adult population in finding employment. Nearly 21,000 participants entered employment at a cost of \$5,300 per job placement. Additionally, 90 percent of the funding for the Chrysalis programs are from revenues generated from a street-sweeping business and a temporary labor business run by the organization and by private donations. The remaining 10 percent of funding comes from government contracts and grants.

Source: "Year End Review 2003. Chrysalis. www.changinglives.org. Web site accessed November 5, 2004. California Workforce Investment Board. "Workforce Investment Act Title I-B – California's Annual Report." Program Year 2003-04." Pages 43 and 54.

□ ***Workforce Investment Act.*** California receives approximately \$450 million annually through the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) to help the unemployed and working poor become self-sufficient. Youthful offenders ages 14 to 21 are a target group for WIA-funded programs.

State government is allocated 15 percent of federal WIA funds (approximately \$68 million) for discretionary purposes such as administration, state employment service programs, or employment-related grants. The remaining 85 percent (approximately \$388 million annually) is allocated through EDD to local Workforce Investment Boards. In California, \$10.6 million, or 15 percent of the discretionary WIA funding, goes to offender employment services.¹⁶⁶

Most local workforce investment boards do not specifically target their programs to parolees. They assert that “pay-for-performance” requirements are a disincentive to serve this “hard-to-employ” population and that they cannot absorb costs that are not reimbursed when parolees fail. In 2003-04, local Workforce Investment Boards served only 1,113 female offenders and these included any women who are or have been subject to any stage of the criminal justice process – a group much broader than female parolees.¹⁶⁷

□ **Employment Development Department.** The department administers two programs designed to assist hard to employ individuals, including:

✓ **Job Service Program.** The program refers job applicants to employers seeking to hire. The program operates through more than 100 field offices throughout the state.

✓ **One-Stop Centers.** Funded by the federal Workforce Investment Act, these neighborhood-based service centers provide unemployed and working poor individuals a range of services pertaining to employment, training and education, employer assistance, and guidance for obtaining other assistance. Administered by local Workforce Investment Boards, services and programs are designed to reflect the unique needs of their area.

CDC uses some WIA funds to contract with EDD to provide special job services to parolees. An EDD administrator reported that while EDD previously provided this assistance to approximately 40 parole units, this would be trimmed to about 30 units due to budget reductions.¹⁶⁸

□ **CDC workforce preparation efforts.** Vocational programs in prison have been targeted in recent budget cuts and as a result, only a small percentage of women offenders have access to those programs.

Project RIO

Project RIO (Reintegration of Offenders) is jointly operated by the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Parole officers are required to refer all unemployed, underemployed and part-time employed parolees to the program at their initial parole visit. Parolees are required to contact the program, find a job on their own or return to prison for violation of their parole.

Project RIO provides placement services to about 16,000 parolees each year. A 1992 independent evaluation documented that 69 percent of RIO participants found employment, compared with 36 percent of a matched group of non-RIO parolees. During the year after release, 23 percent of high-risk RIO participants returned to prison, compared with 38 percent of a comparable group of non-RIO parolees. The study found that the program was especially beneficial for those rated “high risk.”

Project RIO also helps inmates leave prison with official picture identifications, birth certificates, social security cards, resumes and other documents that they must have to begin the search for work immediately upon release. The project has developed a pool of 12,000 employers that have hired parolees from the program.

Source: S. Heinrich. "Reducing Recidivism Through Work: Barriers and Opportunities for Employment of Ex-Offenders." P. 11-12. Great Cities Institute, University of Illinois. Chicago.

A survey of participants in the Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program (FOTEP) revealed they were most critical of the employment assistance component of the program designed to help substance abusing female parolees transition from prison to the community.

Similarly, CDC has not developed effective partnerships with community-based employment assistance providers, like workforce investment boards, who serve hard-to-employ individuals. The Secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency has recently acknowledged the failure to do so and vowed to partner with community agencies statewide to reduce recidivism. In July 2004 representatives of 150 community-based organizations were invited to meet with department leaders.

Policies Thwart the Goals for Re-entry

Because California has not modified or eliminated the ban on access to CalWORKs for drug offenders, the large proportion of female parolees convicted of drug offenses are ineligible for critically needed employment assistance. The CalWORKs ban does not only restrict drug offenders' access to cash assistance during the critical time immediately after their release from prison. It also makes them ineligible for CalWORKs funded employment services designed to help recipients get and hold jobs – including case management, child care, transportation assistance and training.

Community and Faith-based Efforts

A growing number of community and faith-based programs are stepping in to help parolees become employed. Some of the more promising programs combine housing assistance, substance abuse treatment, counseling and other services with employment opportunities, skill training and job-readiness counseling. Other programs focus on providing specialized employment services while collaborating with other community-based service providers to meet the needs of parolee participants. Some tap public funding to pay for programs, others do not. Some examples:

- ✓ ***Northern California Construction Training, Inc.*** This program prepares men and women ex-offenders for apprenticeships in the construction industry. Trainees learn construction skills by building homes under the supervision of journeymen instructors. The program has been in operation for 10 years, has over 500 graduates and has built more than 90 homes affordable to low-income first-time buyers.¹⁶⁹ Wages after graduation generally range from \$10 to

\$15 per hour and jobs usually provide health benefits. The training program routinely recruits women trainees and typically half the recruits are women.

- ✓ ***Century Community Training Program.*** Administered by Century Housing, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit corporation, the program offers building trade training for men and women transitioning from incarceration into the workforce. The program reported that under a contract with the Alameda Corridor Transportation Authority, it trained and placed in employment 685 trainees; more than half (55 percent) were ex-offenders. Approximately 15 percent of those placed were women. Most graduates get union jobs. Program officials estimate that placing ex-offenders in jobs saved \$260 million in corrections-related costs.¹⁷⁰
- ✓ ***Delancey Street Foundation.*** Delancey Street provides a structured employment, educational and living environment for ex-felons. Residents live and work together, pooling income generated through businesses owned and operated by Delancey Street. The foundation helps parolees develop job skills and provides work opportunities through its businesses, providing a bridge to long-term employment. Delancey reports it has moved over 10,000 offenders into productive lives. Women comprise about 25 percent of the clients. Headquartered in San Francisco, Delancey Street also operates in Los Angeles, New Mexico, North Carolina and New York.

In its 2003 report on parole policies, the Commission concluded that the State's failure to use prison time to prepare offenders for release was jeopardizing public safety and squandering public resources. It recommended strategies to hold wardens accountable for developing programs - including vocational and educational programs - to prepare inmates for release and incentives for inmates to participate meaningfully in programs. But after release, the opportunity for leadership shifts to communities - local governments and non-profit agencies - that are better suited to coordinate the multiple supports that parolees need to break free of criminality.

Employment – Potential Resources

More than \$4.6 billion in public funds are allocated to workforce development programs. Non-profit employment agencies funded primarily by foundations are successfully helping the homeless and ex-offender populations get jobs at a fraction of the cost of state and federal programs. Policy-makers should examine the effectiveness of the billions spent on employment services and consider reallocating resources to proven community-based programs. Additionally, new sources of federal funding could be tapped for job training. Initial opportunities to consider are detailed below.

- ***Reallocate existing resources:*** The State receives \$68 million in discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds, of which \$10.6 million is allocated to offender employment programs. The State could evaluate these programs to determine their effectiveness in assisting parolees to get and retain jobs and based on the evaluation, reallocate WIA resources to the successful programs or to non-profit organizations that successfully assist parolees in obtaining jobs.
- ***Identify new resources:*** The State could adopt a waiver to the lifetime federal ban for CalWORKs, similar to the waiver adopted by the Legislature in 2004 for food stamps, to tap into additional federal funds to provide transportation assistance, child care and employment training to female parolees so they can find jobs.
- ***Optimize community assets:*** Non-profit organizations such as Delancey Street, Northern California Training Council, Century Community Training and others who have proven successful in helping hard-to-serve clients could be bolstered by state support funded through CDC savings.

The Challenge of Addiction

Substance abuse is a major barrier to success on parole, particularly for female offenders. Approximately 31 percent of females incarcerated in California were convicted of a drug-related offense and more than 34 percent of females incarcerated were convicted of a property crime.¹⁷¹ National research indicates substance abuse is the underlying cause of at least one-third of all property crimes committed by women. One-third of female parolees returned to custody for a parole violation are charged with a drug-related offense.

There are significant differences between substance-abusing male and female offenders that impact treatment outcomes.

- Women are more likely to have a severe history of substance abuse and recovery may involve more than one relapse. Women also are more likely to have a co-occurring mental disorder, which complicates both the therapy and reduces the chances that effective publicly funded treatment will be available.

- Treatment for women often must take into consideration their greater history with physical and sexual abuse.
- Because of minimal job experience and extreme poverty, addiction is often not the only or even the primary hurdle to self-sufficiency.
- Female offenders are much more likely to be the primary caretaker of young children. Child care responsibilities often impede the ability of female offenders to successfully complete aftercare treatment. Aftercare treatment facilities often cannot accommodate children.
- Treatment may be a foster care system requirement for reunification with children.

Drug Offenses Unpacked

Approximately 31 percent of women incarcerated in California prisons were convicted of a drug crime. The data below depicts the percentage of women convicted of drug crimes by the type of drug offense.

Drug Possession	1,370	44%
Possession for Sale	980	32%
Drug Sales	408	13%
Drug Manufacturing	192	6%
Other Drug Offenses	113	4%
Miscellaneous Other	42	1%

Source: California Department of Corrections. "Prison Census Data as of December 31, 2003." February 2004. Sacramento.

Despite the need for treatment – and addiction-related challenges facing many female parolees – the State’s policies fall short of assertively and effectively responding to this need. Substance abuse treatment for inmates for the most part is voluntary, and is not linked to any concrete incentive. Similarly, the aftercare component also is voluntary, and is funded at 50 percent of those participating in treatment while in prison, even though evaluations show that aftercare is critical to recovery. Finally, the majority of parolees who violate parole are returned to prison, rather than less costly alternatives like community-based drug treatment. However, as described in the Background, many female parolees with drug-related violations receive treatment as an alternative to prison or are diverted to treatment through the provisions of Proposition 36.

In August 2004, the California Legislature modified the federal ban on access to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) funds, by adopting a law that will allow certain low-level non-violent drug offenders who participate in substance abuse treatment to receive food stamps. Because the food stamp program is administered through an electronically tracked debit card, there is little opportunity to convert food assistance into drugs. In signing the bill into law, Governor Schwarzenegger wrote:

The challenge of overcoming a drug addiction is substantial and universally denying food stamp benefits to people with felony drug convictions has created additional obstacles to independent drug free living and increases the likelihood of re-offending behavior.... Individuals who do not participate in treatment or were convicted of

felonies beyond personal use will remain ineligible. As such, this bill offers an appropriate incentive and reward to individuals who overcome their addiction.¹⁷²

However, parolees convicted of drug offenses still cannot participate in treatment funded through CalWORKs – California’s version of welfare reform – or receive other benefits that can assist in recovery, such as child care. Women offenders are disproportionately impacted because they are more likely than male offenders to have been convicted of a drug offense. Because so many of these women are the primary caretakers of minor children, the laws impact their children as well.

Substance Abuse – Potential Resources

California annually spends \$11 billion on the costs and consequences of substance abuse. The tentacles of substance abuse reach deep into the budgets of the child welfare, health care, mental health, public safety and criminal justice systems. Addiction costs the criminal justice system more than \$4 billion a year. Policy-makers should reallocate existing resources to maximize the effectiveness of drug treatment programs, better utilize federal resources and bolster effective community-based efforts to treat substance abuse. Initial opportunities are identified below.

- **Reallocate existing resources:** The State could reallocate a portion of the funding for in-prison substance abuse programs to fully fund aftercare for those who participate in prison-based programs.
- **Identify new resources:** The State could adopt a waiver to the lifetime federal ban for CalWORKs, similar to the waiver adopted in 2004 for food stamps, to tap into additional federal funds to assist women in gaining access to substance abuse treatment.
- **Optimize community assets:** A New Way of Life, Catherine Center, Cottage Housing and other non-profit organizations that provide sober living, access to treatment and other wrap-around services could be expanded or replicated to serve more clients. Private foundations could be made aware of the critical link between female parolee success and improved outcomes for children, families and communities.

Family Reunification

Incarceration and limited visiting, coupled with post-release challenges in obtaining housing, employment and treatment, impact the ability of female offenders to successfully reunify with their children. Reunification challenges escalate when children are in the child welfare system, in part because these families need the most complex – and costly – array of services and because the goals of the criminal court and dependency court often conflict. It is estimated that 10 percent of women prisoners have children in foster care.¹⁷³

When asked about the intersection between the criminal court and dependency court, a Santa Clara County Superior Court judge with years of experience with women offenders and their children said, “when women with children are arrested and held in custody, their intersection with the dependency system is a ‘collision,’ not an intersection.” Drug abusing women offenders are sentenced to prison during which it is nearly impossible for them to demonstrate that they are able to provide for their children, while at the same time reunification time lines are short and strict. The judge asserted that there is little doubt that many children are placed in foster care and group homes because incarcerated mothers were “unavailable” to participate in court ordered reunification services.

Santa Clara County has established an effective program for female drug offenders that provides a bridge linking the dependency court and the adult criminal drug court in an effort to prevent a prison sentence that could eventually lead to termination of parental rights. Officials from both courts meet weekly to discuss mutual clients and set compatible goals that include some form of reunification.¹⁷⁴

Most experts agree that once a woman is incarcerated, reunification with children in the foster care system is challenging. The federal 1997 Adoption and Safe Families Act authorizes termination of parental rights once a child has been in foster care for 15 or more months of a 22-month period.¹⁷⁵ In California, termination of parental rights can occur once a child under three has been in foster care for six months or more and once a child over three has been in foster care 12 months or more.¹⁷⁶ The average time served by women in California prisons is 14 months, perilously close to the federal termination time line and beyond the California time line.

Once released to parole, a mother who is quickly attempting to reunify with her children may neglect needed substance abuse treatment, will incur additional cost burdens and may have limited access to welfare services if she was convicted of a drug crime. Child care issues can exacerbate unemployment problems.

Currently, there is no simple way to calculate the cost burden of women in prison to the foster care system as data from foster care cannot be matched with criminal justice data, and corrections and law enforcement

Why the Goals Must Change

"If we do nothing, we perpetuate two systems that are antagonistic to one another, involved with a parent who is caught in the middle, without motivation, and given no incentive, let alone hope. Continued recidivism on release is the forgone conclusion."

"If we truly believe in successful offender re-entry and family reunification, then we must take risks and create change. In sum, I have concluded that children are given a better chance if they remain with their mothers and the needed services are provided and mandated, while the participants are under continued judicial supervision, and that mothers will more likely reunify with their children if we change our goals."

Source: Stephen V. Manley, Judge, Santa Clara County Superior Court. May 27, 2004. Written testimony to the Little Hoover Commission.

do not keep data on the children of inmates. What is known, is that one in 10 children whose parents are incarcerated will one day become incarcerated themselves.¹⁷⁷

When mothers are sentenced to prison, their children are sentenced to instability. The majority are sent to live with relatives or friends or are placed in foster care. Family reunification becomes challenging, if not impossible. The costs to society are immense as the cycle of crime and conviction continues as these children become the next generation of offenders.

Multiple Needs Require Multiple Interventions

In its 2003 report on the State's parole policies, the Commission found that the goals for parole – public safety and successful reintegration – are undermined by the way the State supervises and assists parolees and the lack of community involvement in re-entry. The Commission

recommended that communities assume greater responsibility for parolees and provide the leadership and funding to make those efforts successful.

The supervision and services that female parolees need most are those that the CDC is least equipped to provide. The National Council on Crime and Delinquency conducted a study to identify the most “promising” strategies for supervising female offenders in the community. It found the programs that appeared to be most effective used reliable, consistent and coordinated supervision measures to maintain women offenders in the least restrictive settings, consistent with public safety.¹⁷⁸ In comparison, the majority of California's female parolees see their parole agent two times every three months, even in the critical time immediately following release.¹⁷⁹ The services female parolees need, including housing, employment, drug treatment and child welfare are all delivered by local government and private agencies – not the State. To be effective for the most needy and

difficult to serve parolees, the services must be integrated and case managed to address multiple needs and overcome structural barriers – competencies of local communities, not the State.

Community Assets – Mentors

Many programs and opportunities exist within communities that could be utilized to assist parolees in transitioning back to the community with minimal costs.

Two female offenders testified to the Commission that mentoring was key to their success on parole. One woman had a formal case manager through the Oakland MOMs program. She stated that just having someone to call who really cared was key to her success. Another woman had participated in a formal mentoring program that paired her with an attorney upon release from prison through Volunteers in Parole, Inc. The attorney-mentor provided assistance in finding social services and most importantly, providing the parolee with someone to call for help.

Many community members could fill similar roles as mentors for parolees including retirees, teachers, doctors and government workers.

Summary

Public policies deny many women offenders – particularly drug offenders – access to public services that can make the difference between success and failure on parole. The policies impact the ability of these women to obtain housing, employment, drug treatment and to take care of their children. And so the costly cycle of crime and victimization continues. The cycle will only be broken if California reforms policies, reallocates resources and effectively leverages community assets.

Recommendation 3: The State should develop a community-based re-entry model to reduce recidivism among women offenders, improve public safety and reduce public costs. Specifically, the State should:

- ***Establish an interagency council on re-entry.*** The Governor should establish an interagency council on re-entry to develop a system of community supervision and re-entry with comprehensive, integrated services for female offenders.
 - ✓ The council should be co-chaired by the secretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency and the secretary of the Health and Human Services Agency. Members should include state and community representatives from the fields of law enforcement, education, housing and community development, employment, alcohol and drug, mental health, child welfare, domestic violence and victim advocacy programs. Community members, offenders and their families should be represented.
 - ✓ The council should identify statutory, regulatory and practical barriers to re-entry and recommend to the Governor and Legislature ways to overcome them.
 - ✓ The council should identify and recommend to the Governor, Legislature and communities evidence-based prevention and intervention strategies for the children of incarcerated parents.

- ***Shift the responsibility for parolee supervision and assistance to communities, starting with women.*** The Governor and Legislature should require communities to assume responsibility for certain non-violent women parolees as a first step in transferring responsibility for the majority of non-violent offenders – male and female – to communities.
 - ✓ Communities should establish multi-agency coordinating councils and develop local plans for supervising, assisting and

sanctioning female parolees using a case management approach and partnerships between the adult criminal courts and dependency courts.

- ✓ The State should develop agreements with sheriffs or probation departments, in partnership with community agencies, to provide the services. The services should be supported by shifting funds from services now administered by the State.

- **Provide technical assistance.** The Youth and Adult Correctional Agency should provide assistance in developing, implementing and evaluating correctional plans. It should contract for technical assistance to help communities identify and overcome barriers to effective interagency partnerships, siting of transitional housing, development of adequate treatment resources and others.

- **Measure performance.** The Department of Corrections should establish and operate, with the cooperation and participation of its community partners, a statewide information and evaluation system to monitor the effectiveness of the community re-entry services.

Knocking Down the Barriers

For the community re-entry model to be effective, the State must take specific actions to reduce legal and practical barriers to re-entry for female offenders. Specifically, the State should:

- ❑ ***Immediately enact legislation to eliminate or modify the ban on CalWORKs for certain non-violent drug felons to improve access to housing, employment and drug treatment services critical to successful re-entry.***
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to housing, the State should:***
 - ✓ Require CDC to collect and report to the Legislature and local Public Housing Authorities data regarding the housing needs of female parolees and their children.
 - ✓ Create tax credit and bonus programs for private builders as incentives to build housing for female parolees.
 - ✓ Support, in partnership with communities, the development of a range of housing options for female offenders, including transitional housing, permanent supportive housing and sober living environments.
 - ✓ Establish partnerships with Public Housing Authorities to:
 - Encourage local public housing authorities to consider evidence of rehabilitation from criminal or substance abuse activity in their application of federal restrictions and give preference to female parolees with children.
 - Provide vouchers as incentives for completion of substance abuse treatment and other programs known to reduce recidivism.
 - Place eligible CDC inmates on public housing lists prior to release.
 - Adapt the Shelter Plus Care program to female parolees.
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to employment, the State should:***
 - ✓ Increase the allocation of discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds for offender programs. (Currently 15 percent of total discretionary funding, or \$10.6 million.)
 - ✓ Provide fiscal incentives for local Workforce Investment Boards to serve female parolees.
- ❑ ***To reduce barriers to substance abuse recovery, the State should:***
 - ✓ Fully fund aftercare treatment for all offenders participating in in-prison drug treatment programs and make aftercare mandatory. It should expand aftercare options to include day treatment, sober living with support services and other options based on offender risk and needs assessments.
 - ✓ Expand drug treatment furlough for women offenders and use furlough as an incentive for completion of in-prison treatment.
 - ✓ Evaluate the two drug treatment programs for females at the California Rehabilitation Center to determine whether the full-time program is significantly more effective than the four-hour program. If it is not, it should be converted to a four-hour program to increase the number of offenders served.
 - ✓ Assign parole agents to specialized Female Offender Treatment and Employment Program caseloads to improve consistency and outcomes.
 - ✓ Measure and report Proposition 36 outcomes for female offenders.

Conclusion

California spends hundreds of millions of dollars on prison and parole strategies for women offenders that don't work. The State needs to acknowledge the facts about women offenders and develop a new strategy built on community-centered practices that research shows could effectively address the underlying causes of crime and prepare these women to lead law-abiding lives.

The failure of the State to effectively manage women offenders is not a failure of information or knowledge. Information about what works to reduce crime, violence and drug abuse is growing and other states – and some communities in California – are using proven programs to reduce recidivism and cut correctional costs. But the State has remained focused, almost singularly, on a policy of punishment and incapacitation designed for violent male offenders. A decade of research and blue ribbon reports – including several from this Commission – have reviewed the evidence and recommended alternatives.

In its 2003 report on parole, the Commission advocated for a correctional strategy that distinguishes between violent and non-violent offenders and that emphasizes community-based assistance, supervision and sanctions for non-violent offenders.

Correctional leaders have acknowledged the failures. But they are reluctant to yield control over programs to local agencies. Community leaders, in turn, fear that state leaders will not honor any commitment to provide the resources along with the responsibilities. Policy-makers – despite frustration with the failures and concurrence with suggested reforms – have not pursued this bold next step.

The department has begun to implement some reforms required by the Legislature. But the changes are intended primarily to cut costs, not improve outcomes – and in the long run may not do either. Some local law enforcement leaders assert that the reforms are threatening rather than improving public safety.

Admittedly, reforming a large bureaucracy as fundamentally dysfunctional as the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency is hard work. But a commitment to policies based on the evidence of what works allows

decisions to be based on facts rather than ideology – and to overcome the special interest pressures to preserve the status quo.

The costs – in public dollars, individual lives and community well-being – grow every day the State fails to tackle this problem.

The reforms proposed by the Commission are not radical, are firmly supported by the research, and have been successfully implemented in other states. In nearly every example the critical factor in garnering support for the changes – and in successfully implementing them – was leadership.

It will be no different in California. Fixing corrections will require the leadership of the Governor, members of the Legislature and corrections officials. Reform will require a firm and unwavering commitment to improved outcomes – reduced crime, violence and drug abuse – and to make investments based on evidence about what works to achieve those goals.

Reforming the correctional policies for women offenders would be a good – and smart – place to start. An initial focus on the much smaller population of women offenders could pave the way for changes in how the State responds to all offenders.

A smart investment in women offenders today can pay dividends for generations to come. A focus on women offenders promises improvement in the lives of these women, as well as the lives of their children who are at increased risks for costly involvement in foster care, juvenile delinquency and adult criminality.

Many of these women, like their children, were victims before they were criminals. Tragically, their children are poised to follow in their footsteps, becoming the next generation of inmates and parolees if state leaders fail to act. Those are the stakes. Individuals, families and communities would benefit.

Correctional leaders should move beyond rhetoric with meaningful, research-based action. The Governor and Legislature should ensure that they do – and hold them accountable if they do not.

Appendices & Notes

✓ *Public Hearing Witnesses*

✓ *Expert Panel Meeting Participants*

✓ *Notes*

Appendix A

Little Hoover Commission Public Hearing Witnesses

***Witnesses Appearing at Little Hoover Commission
Public Hearing on Women & Parole, April 22, 2004***

Elizabeth Belzer
Women's Programs Coordinator
Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Jo Ann Gordon
Warden
California Rehabilitation Center

Barbara E. Bloom, Ph.D.
Associate Professor, Department of
Criminal Justice Administration
California State University, Sonoma and
Project Director, National Institute of
Corrections, Gender-Responsive Principles
Project

Richard Rimmer
Acting Chief Deputy Director
California Department of Corrections
Field Operations Division

Casondra Tshimanga,
MOMS Program Alumna

John Dovey
Warden
California Institution for Women

Curtis L. Watson, Undersheriff
Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Jeanne S. Woodford, Director
California Department of Corrections

***Witnesses Appearing at Little Hoover Commission
Public Hearing on Women & Parole, May 27, 2004***

Cindy Marie Absey
Victim/Witness Director
San Luis Obispo County
District Attorney's Office

Robin Taylor
Attorney Mentor
Volunteers in Parole, Inc.

Susan Burton, Executive Director
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Phyllis Gonzalez
Mentee
Volunteers in Parole, Inc.

Stephen V. Manley, Judge
Santa Clara County Superior Court

Mike Zimmerman
Executive Director
Volunteers in Parole

John Surbeck, Judge
Allen County Superior Court
Fort Wayne, IN

Appendix B

Expert Panel Meeting Participants

The following people participated in one of the Commission's three expert panel meetings convened during the Women and Parole study. The meetings focused on three key challenges in successfully transitioning from prison to the community, including accessing safe and affordable housing, obtaining and maintaining employment, and addressing substance abuse issues.

Participants at a Little Hoover Commission Expert Panel Meeting on Housing on July 20, 2004

Elizabeth Belzer
Women's Programs Specialist
Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Fred Haywood
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Marguerite Buchanan, Program Director
Catherine Center, Burlingame

Cynthia Hunt
Quinn Cottages

Susan Burton, Executive Director
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

David Husid

Yvonne Cooks, Community Liaison
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Tim Jones
Oakland Housing Authority

Reneca Corbin
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Cecelia Lakatos Sullivan

Sharon DeCray, Family Services Manager
Alameda County Housing Authority

Peggy Merial, Program Director
Quinn Cottages

Matthew Doherty, Program Officer
Corporation for Supportive Housing

Gloria Ramirez, Resident
Quinn Cottages

Linda Evans, Organizer
All of Us or None
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Ken Shoenlau
Southern California Sober Living Coalition

Millicent Gomes
Mental Health Administrator
California Department of Corrections
Parole and Community Services Division

Karen Shouldis

Robert Tobin, Executive Director
Cottage Housing

Judy Harris, Deputy Parole Administrator
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Dyana Wheeler, Resident
Quinn Cottages

Arlene Wilson Grant
Sacramento Region Community Foundation

**Participants at a Little Hoover Commission
Expert Panel Meeting on Employment on July 21, 2004**

Kenneth Allen, Program Manager
HALT/RSAT Program
Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center

Elizabeth Belzer
Women's Programs Specialist
Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Bill Burke
Employment Development Department
Workforce Development Branch

Susan Burton, Executive Director
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Yvonne Cooks, Community Liaison
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Reneca Corbin
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Linda Evans, Organizer
All of Us or None
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Jodi Green
Sacramento Sheriff's Department

Judy Harris
Deputy Parole Administrator
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Marilyn Kalvelage
Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Delores Lyles
Program Manager

Dr. J. Alfred Smith, Sr.
Training Academy
Allen Temple Baptist Church

Charr Lee Metsker, Chief
Employment & Eligibility Branch
California Department of Social Services

***Participants at a Little Hoover Commission
Expert Panel Meeting on Substance Abuse on July 21, 2004***

Kenneth Allen, Program Manager
HALT/RSAT Program
Rio Cosumnes Correctional Center

Judy Appel
Deputy Director of Legal Affairs
Drug Policy Alliance

Elizabeth Belzer
Women's Programs Specialist
Alameda County Sheriff's Office

Susan Burton, Executive Director
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Yvonne Cooks, Community Liaison
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Reneca Corbin
A New Way of Life Re-entry Project

Victoria Eberle
California Department of Corrections
Office of Substance Abuse Programs

Linda Evans, Organizer
All of Us or None
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children

Jodi Green
Sacramento Sheriff's Department

Judy Harris
Deputy Parole Administrator
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Karen Johnson
California Department of Corrections
Office of Substance Abuse Programs

Marilyn Kalvelage
Assistant Deputy Director
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Toni J. Moore, Director
Alcohol & Drug Programs
Sacramento County Department of Health
& Human Services

Rod Mullen, President & CEO
Amity Foundation

Joe Ossmann, Parole Agent III
California Department of Corrections
Parole & Community Services Division

Denise Sassoon, Program Manager
Providence Place
Mental Health Systems, Inc.

Del Sayles-Owen, Deputy Director
Office of Criminal Justice Collaboration
California Department of Alcohol and Drug
Programs

Renee Smith LCSW
Director of Criminal Justice Programs
Walden House, Treasure Island

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