



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
P.O. Box 41101 • Olympia, Washington 98504-1101

October 24, 2023

Dear Interested Parties:

I wanted to provide you with an update on the activities regarding the advancement of the Women's Prison Division. After careful consideration following our town halls and weighing your invaluable feedback, our leadership team believes there is great value in keeping both MCCCW and WCCW open while also addressing the pressing issues that need to be solved in order to continue advancing the women's prison division.

Based on what we know regarding today's population, this future includes not only maintaining both facilities, but also enhancing both campuses to better meet their mission.

By keeping both WCCW and MCCCW, the department will focus on key areas of

- 1) Enhancing vocational and educational programming at MCCCW.
- 2) Getting our volunteer base back to pre-covid levels.
- 3) Examining the opportunity to move some MI3 individuals to the hill at WCCW affording more peer-to-peer opportunities for those in long-term minimum custody.
- 4) Work to create an older adult unit at WCCW.
- 5) Evaluating BFOQ positions at WCCW.
- 6) Hiring and retaining staff at WCCW.
- 7) Implementing the new and improved gender responsive classification tool. This tool also reduces the risk of racial bias.
- 8) Determining if a new Risk Needs Responsivity tool is needed to address gender responsivity
- 9) Continuing to work on key policies affecting incarcerated women.
- 10) Revise our Correctional Worker's Academy curriculum address gender responsiveness, human centeredness, and racially unbiased.
- 11) Seek funding from legislature in 25-27 to request independent consultant to review staffing models (gender responsiveness and person center care)

You may recall that the department was looking at moving its staff training center to MCCCW. The department has found an alternative to MCCCW and will therefore not be moving it to MCCCW.

I want to thank all of you for your participation in the Best Bed Project. The project is committed to improving the programming, vocational opportunities, education, staff training and staffing needs at all our facilities. The team, including Charlotte Headley, Mindy Miller, Jo Wofford, Jeannie Darneille, Todd Dowler, Mike Steenhout, Sean Murphy and I appreciated having the opportunity to meet with you, to hear your voice and understand your thoughts, suggestions and cautions as we consider the best way to advance the DOC Women's Prison Division. We will keep you updated as we move forward with enacting these changes.

I know our visits, as well as some of our proposals, were a source of anxiety for you over the past month, but we could not have made these decisions without you.

Fondly,

Cheryl Strange,
Secretary, WA DOC