

The background of the slide is a spiral-bound notebook with a light beige, textured paper cover and a dark brown spine on the left side. The spiral binding is visible on the left edge.

Realities for Incarcerated Women

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Lee Arrendale State Prison

Mental Health

Georgia Department of Corrections

- The number of women who are incarcerated in Georgia prisons is escalating.
- The total prison population is 55,360.
- Females number 3,815 or approximately 6.83%.
- This is 6 times the number of females in prison twenty years ago.
- Males number 51,545 or 92.23%.

Georgia's Prisons

- Georgia's incarceration rate is 0.58 percent of the population or 5.8 per 1,000 residents.
- As a comparison, for the first time in history, more than one in 100 American adults in the U.S. are incarcerated.
- In Georgia part of this increase in numbers is associated with harsher laws, reduced opportunities for parole or probation and serving longer periods of time.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

- In 1998 there were an estimated 3.2 million arrests of women, accounting for 22% of all arrests that year.
- Based on self-reports of victims of violence, women account for 14% of violent offenders, an annual average of about 2.1 million violent female offenders.
- Women accounted for about 16% of all felons convicted in State courts in 1996: 8% of convicted violent felons, 23% of property felons, and 17% of drug felons.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

- In 1998 more than 950,000 women were under correctional supervision, about 1% of the U.S. female population.
- They had an estimated 1.3 million minor children.
- Three out of four female violent offenders commit simple assaults, and three out of four female violent offenders attack other women.

Bureau of Justice Statistics

- Two-thirds of these violent female offenders had a prior relationship with their victims.
- About 40% of violent female offenders were thought to have been under the influence of drugs, alcohol or both.
- About 60 percent of female state prison inmates reported having experienced physical or sexual abuse prior to their incarceration.
- About one third have been abused by an intimate partner and about a quarter by a family member.

Realities for Incarcerated Women

- The realities for those females incarcerated can be harsh.
- The correction system alone is a very difficult reality for many women to adjust too.
- There is very little an individual has control of about their day, and learning to cope is often overwhelming.

Lee Arrendale State Prison

- Lee Arrendale is the largest female prison in the State of Georgia.
- Although the numbers fluctuate we range from 1,400 up to 1,650 inmates.
- Approximately one-half of these inmates are receiving mental health services.
- Additionally, there is a substance abuse treatment program for detainees located on the grounds of the facility.

Lee Arrendale State Prison

- This program is part of the risk reduction programs offered by the Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) and is called the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT).
- A large number of these detainees have histories of sexual and physical abuse in addition to the drug addiction issues.
- These detainees also receive mental health services.

Females in Georgia State Prisons

- Some of the most difficult realities for individuals that I work with are:
- Not being able to see their children.
- Fear that their children will not be taken care of or concerns for who the caretaker may be.
- Fear that their spouse will divorce them.

Females in Georgia State Prisons

- Never a private moment.
- Boredom.
- Fear of getting sick and dying in prison (the aging population).
- Those who have no one on the outside to write or visit.

Females in Georgia State Prisons

- Individuals who “don’t make store”. This is a significant symbolic status marker. Individuals who receive money placed on their accounts so that they can purchase basic items such as toothpaste and soap.
- There are also food items available and some individuals have enough on their accounts to eat exclusively from what they buy and never from the kitchens.

Females in Georgia State Prisons

- These realities can create a sub-culture of those who trade services for food and cigarettes.
- There are work details available but generally never enough for everyone.
- Inmates receive medications if needed, but they must walk to medical in early am/pm rain or sunshine. Many opt not to go because of the weather, jeopardizing their own health.

Not What the Public May Think

- There are no *pampered* rooms, air conditioning, and TV's in every space as some may believe.
- There may be 20 plus women to share one small TV at specified times.
- There are buildings with three levels at Lee Arrendale and there are no air-conditioners –only fans.

Other Concerns

- Although health care to include dental, vision, gynecology, and other needs are provided, the inmates have a specific system to request and obtain these services.
- Generally, if an inmate request to be seen and they have money on their account they have to pay \$5.00 to be seen.
- Often they delay asking to be seen because of monetary situations.

The Major Needs for Women

- Approved housing to parole out to is a significant factor.
- There are women who are eligible to parole out without serving their complete sentence, but have no where to go.
- There need to be more transition or half-way houses for them so that they can work the last year of their sentence and be able to provide for themselves upon release.

Summary

- The female population for Georgia prisons continues to rise rapidly.
- There are needs associated with the number of women who will need appropriate housing, transportation, and employment upon release.
- Many of these women have children and they wish to be able to provide for them and gain custody of their children upon release.

References

- Georgia Department of Corrections.
<http://www.dcor.state.ga.us/>
- Office of Justice Programs. Bureau of Justice Statistics.
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/crimoff.htm