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LONG-TERM FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN

LITERATURE REVIEW

FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN PROGRAM

Correctional Service of Canada

December 1994

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INTRODUCTION¹

In 1991, the *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women* reported that there were 46 women in the population serving life sentences, 16 others were serving ten years or more, making a total of 62 women serving long-term sentences. This number has increased in the past three years. A census conducted July 13, 1994 reported that 51 women were serving life sentences, 19 others serving sentences of ten years or more, making a total of 70 women serving long-term sentences; of these, 12 are Native, 6 are Black, 2 Asian and 1 other.² Federally Sentenced Women (FSW) serving long terms (10 years or more) and/or life sentences have been recognized as a unique group with needs and concerns that must be acknowledged when developing programs for the new facilities. It is paramount that the needs of this group be clearly articulated, as many needs will undoubtedly overlap with those of all women being housed in these facilities. The identification of such will aid in the development of program strategies and in areas such as staff training.

The purpose of this paper, therefore, is to: summarize the findings of the literature that are pertinent to women serving long sentences; link these findings to the overall philosophy of *Creating Choices*; isolate the needs that, according to the literature, are specifically significant to this group; assess the programs outlined in the *Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women*, and examine their weaknesses and strengths as they pertain to women serving long-terms; and, review the four stages recommended by the Task Force on Long-Term Offenders (*The Perron Report*) and assess their applicability to the experiences of women.

LEGAL ISSUES

There are certain legal restrictions that apply to offenders serving long-term sentences that often have consequences on the type of programming they are able to access. The legal restrictions stem from Bill C-84 enacted in July 1976 and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA) enacted November 1992. C-84 formally abolished capital punishment (it had not been used since 1962)³ and instituted in its place mandatory life sentences with parole restrictions of 25 years for those convicted of first-degree murder and 10 to 25 years for those convicted of second-degree murder.⁴

¹ See Appendix 1 for Project Proposal.

² See Appendix 2 for more details.

³ Tina Hattem, Living Under a Life Sentence: The Roots of Control as Perceived by Women Serving Life Sentences and Their Resistance, (Unpublished, 1994) pg. 1

⁴ Glen Brown, "Judicial Review: How Does it Work and How Does It Affect Federal Corrections?" Forum on Corrections Research, (Vol. 4, No.2, 1992).

After serving 15 years of a life sentence with a 25 year parole eligibility date offenders are able to apply for a Judicial Review (offenders with eligibility dates of less than 25 years have their parole reviewed according to the general legal calculations). At that time, the offender may gain a reduction in years to be served before being eligible for parole. These restrictions are significant in that women serving life-25 sentences must serve at least 15 years within the confines of the prison perimeter. Furthermore, some individuals - identified by the court as Dangerous Offenders - are given an indeterminate sentence which means that they have no fixed release date (but reviews at specified intervals) and must deal with this added uncertainty. Under the CCRA there are further restrictions for temporary absences, day parole, etc., that apply to offenders serving life sentences:

- Temporary Absences

All offenders are eligible for Escorted Temporary Absences (ETA) at any time of their sentence. Unescorted Temporary Absence (UTA), on the other hand varies. In general, offenders may be eligible for a UTA after having served half of the time to his/her eligibility for full parole or six months into their sentence (whichever is greater). Offenders serving a life sentence, on the other hand, are eligible for UTA three years before they come eligible for full parole.

- Day Parole

Offenders serving life sentences are eligible for day parole three years before their parole eligibility. The same criteria is used for Work Releases.⁵

These restrictions are an impediment to accessing programs in the community which are the cornerstone philosophy of *Creating Choices*. Further, Judicial Reviews, as a legal entitlement, also have a great significance to women serving life sentences, because it is linked with their release. However, the actual review process can be a source of great anxiety. It is crucial, therefore, that both offenders and staff be provided with a significant amount of information about the Judicial Review process on an ongoing basis.

MANAGING LONG-TERM OFFENDERS

Overall, the literature identified several areas of concern for managing inmates serving long-terms. Of significance are the discussions on how the system deals with these offenders. For example, Frank J. Poporino, in his article "Difference in Response to

⁵ Solicitor General Canada, Basic Facts about... Corrections in Canada, 1993 Edition, Correctional Service of Canada, pg 54-55.

Long-Term Imprisonment: Implications for the Management of Long-Term Offenders", concludes that long-term offenders, and in particular offenders serving life sentences, have routinely been managed as a maximum security risk. This is due primarily to the process that focuses on length of sentence as the main method of determining classification. Little specialized programming for long-term offenders has been developed. He further concludes that release planning for these individuals has typically been postponed until well into the sentence.⁶⁶

Tina Hattem, in her article "The Realities of Life Imprisonment for Women Convicted of Murder", puts forth similar findings. She states that the women who participated in her interviews "...spoke of being denied access to programs or privileges (which they may otherwise have been entitled to) because of their sentence."⁷ Further, she states that "...eligibility for certain institutional programs and privileges is often determined by an inmate's security classification."⁸ The consequences of using security classification to determine accessibility to programs is detrimental to women serving life sentences because their high security classification is a result of their sentence length. Therefore, any revisions to classification and its relationship to accessing programs need to consider the needs of women serving long sentences.

Other significant contributions of the reviewed literature were those that identified specific issues associated with long sentences. For example, the article "Women Lifers: Assessing the Experience", by Elaine Genders and Elaine Player, found that women who become withdrawn while serving their sentence had a difficult time obtaining parole. They argue that: "(s)uch cases are considered unlikely candidates for release, if only because they are providing little or no opportunity for prison staff to assess the degree of risk they might pose to the outside community".⁹

Their study also showed that the officers' description of women were often contradictory: "on the one hand, the staff demonstrated concern for the women and compassion for their problem and, on the other, expressed cynicism and questioned their integrity."¹⁰ Genders and Player point out that out of 26 staff working with women serving long sentences in an institution in Durham, England, only two (2) had received specific training for working with lifers. The significance of the findings, as illustrated by the authors, is that in some instances officers evaluate the conduct of women offenders without having the proper understanding of the difficulties experienced by

⁶ Frank J. Porporino, "Difference in Response to Long Term Imprisonment: Implications for the Management of Long Term Officers." The Prison Journal, Vol. LXXX, No.1, 1990.

⁷ Tina Hattem, "The Realities of Life Imprisonment for Women Convicted of Murder", Forum on Corrections Research, January 1994, Vol. 6, No. 1, pg 43.

⁸ Ibid., pg. 43.

⁹ Elaine Genders and Elaine Player, "Women Lifers: Assessing the Experience", The Prison Journal, Vol. LXXX, No. 1, 1990, pg 46.

¹⁰ Ibid., pg. 48.

the women as they adjust to a life sentence. For example, they may describe a woman who sleeps all day as being unmotivated, when in fact she is experiencing depression. Being unable to properly identify the nature of a woman's behaviour will undoubtedly prevent her from getting the support she requires.

Another significant concern identified by Genders and Players was the constant fear experienced by women in regards to the status of their children. For example, women fear that their children would be adopted without their consent; that they will lose parental rights and contact with their children; and/or, that their children would not be cared for properly (although this study was based on long term offender findings such as these are applicable to all women offenders). Other issues, such as the experience of loss reported by the women (loss of liberty, family, freedom to express emotion, and self-identity) were also explored.

According to Genders and Player, there was a significant degree of low self-esteem manifested among the women in the study, not only as a lack of confidence in themselves as people, but also feelings of being personally devalued as women.¹¹ The authors assert that this process was triggered by events that took place prior to incarceration, but that the prison environment perpetuated and reinforced this derogatory status.

The needs and concerns illustrated in this study, it could be argued, are not different than those of incarcerated women in general; however, it is certain that for women who are serving long sentences they are more crucial (even if only because of the length of the sentence means a long term offender may spend longer periods in a, for example, depressed state). Some of the conclusions that can be drawn from this study are as follows:

- People working with this population need to be aware of and sensitive to issues confronted by these offenders.
- Women need to be empowered with information about their legal rights with respect to their children and rights in general.
- The environment needs to be supportive of women expressing their views, experiences and frustrations.

The literature reviewed identified needs such as "institutional careers" as a major component in providing meaningful choices to long-term offenders. Michael J. Sabath and Ernest L. Cowles, argue that one of the major differences in program planning between short- and long-term inmates is in the vocational skills training and institutional assignment areas.¹² They argue that for individuals spending decades in

¹¹ Ibid., pg. 53.

¹² Michael J. Sabath and Ernest L. Cowles, "Using Multiple Perspectives to Develop Strategies for

correctional institutions, many of the traditional job preparation programs have little meaning relative to their long sentences. Long-term inmates often feel frustrated that they are provided little opportunity to utilize their skills productively in a prison career. Examples of meaningful careers ranged from software development to educational video productions. Women long term offenders should have the opportunity to identify jobs that they deem meaningful. Being able to work for the community should be made a viable choice for both women serving long terms as well as all women offenders.

Another issue of importance described in the literature is early career planning. Barry Mitchell argues that if career plans are to be an effective managerial tool in establishing a sense of purpose and direction, they should be available at a relatively early stage in the sentence.¹³ This, he argues, will give lifers a sense of purpose and will help their prospects for an earlier release.

Lee Axon's study also supports this finding.¹⁴ According to the American survey she conducted, respondents suggested that choice of job assignment, higher wages, consideration for early release and special recognition by means of awards or notations in inmate files were all incentives used to combat the tendency towards apathy found among the long-term population.¹⁵ In her findings, she also reported that long-term offenders' mental health was reported to suffer: during the initial stages of incarceration; following unsuccessful appearances before parole; and, after approximately five years of confinement when, for many, family ties begin to dissolve.¹⁶ According to Axon, women serving long sentences received fewer visits as their period of confinement lengthened. The main reasons cited for this was lack of transportation.

Axon also reported that 60 percent of women that responded reported having special pre-release needs. This finding coincides with the findings of the *Release Study Survey of Federally Sentenced Women in the Community* which also reported that, as an important component for successful re-integration into the community women stated they needed more information and support for their release plan, as well as maintaining family ties (whatever the length of sentence). However, as reported by Timothy Flanagan, the literature in the area of release planning, as well as community reintegration, is lacking in assessing the particular needs of long-term offenders.¹⁷ One can deduce from the

Managing Long Term Inmates", The Prison Journal, vol LXXX, No. 1, 1990.

¹³ Barry Mitchell, "The Management of Life Sentence Prisoners in England and Wales", The Prison Journal, Vol LXXX, No. 1, 1990.

¹⁴ Lee Axon, Models of Exemplary Programs for Female Inmates, Volume I: Report to the Solicitor General of Canada, 1989.

¹⁵ Ibid., pg. 73.

¹⁶ Ibid., pg. 74.

¹⁷ Timothy J. Flanagan, "Long-Term Incarceration: Issues of Science, Policy and Correctional Practice",

literature that pre-release is more crucial to long-term offenders since they have to reintegrate into a community after many years of incarceration. However, concrete examples of what is required to facilitate release is wanting.

A significant contribution to the literature on inmates serving long sentences is the 1991 Correctional Service of Canada report of the *Task Force on Long-Term Offenders*, headed by Jean-Claude Perron and approved by the Correctional Service of Canada Executive Committee in March 1991 (*The Perron Report*). This Task Force set forth guidelines for the management of long-term sentences. Some of the most important guidelines are the following:

1. Involvement of the inmate in managing his/her sentence.
2. Personalizing programs and the decision-making process.
3. Developing programs adapted to the needs of this target group.
4. Promoting change for a successful reintegration in society.
5. Appealing for an increased involvement by the community.

These guidelines are consistent with the findings of this literature review regarding the needs of women serving long-term sentences. As well, these guidelines are similar to the five principles set forth in *Creating Choices*. The five (5) principles are:

1. **Empowerment:** the process through which women gain insight into their situation, identify their strengths, and are supported and provided the opportunity to take positive action to gain control of their lives.
2. **Meaningful and responsible choices:** options provided to allow Federally Sentenced Women (FSW) to make responsible choices.
3. **Respect and dignity:** mutual respect among FSW and staff.
4. **Supportive environment:** an environment which is supportive and positive.
5. **Shared responsibility:** integration of FSW into the community network.¹⁸

It is important to assess how the principles in the Task Force Report *Creating Choices*, meet the needs of offenders serving long-term sentences as identified in *The Perron Report*. Involvement of the inmate in managing his/her sentence and personalizing programs (perhaps creating their own jobs) and the decision-making process (as stated in *The Perron Report*) are addressed by the principles of empowerment, meaningful and responsible choices described in *Creating Choices*. The development of programs adapted to the needs of the target group is addressed in the *Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women*; all program development will take these

Forum on Corrections Research, Vol. 4, No. 2, June 1992.

¹⁸ See Creating Choices as well as the Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women for a comprehensive description of the principles.

principles into consideration. Promoting change for a successful reintegration in society will be addressed by one of the fundamental recommendations of *Creating Choices*, which is to "expand community based resources for women released from federal custody."¹⁹ Appealing for an increased involvement by the community will also be met by the principle of *Creating Choices*: that of shared responsibility with the community.

Overall, it can be stated that the principles of *Creating Choices* address the issues and recommendations put forth by *The Perron Report*; however, the difficulty lies in assessing how well these recommendations are executed within the context of women long-term offenders. For example, how can community involvement be achieved for women offenders serving long-terms in light of the legal restrictions discussed previously? This question is not easily answered at this time in the implementation phase of the FSW Initiative; however, identifying areas of difficulty through this literature review represents the first steps to ensure these issues are dealt with.

SPECIFIC NEEDS OF WOMEN SERVING LONG-TERM SENTENCES

Overall, many of the needs and concerns identified in the literature will be addressed by the overall philosophy and framework set out in *Creating Choices*, and in its successful implementation. However, there are some recommendations that need to be

acknowledged since they apply more particularly to women serving long-term sentences, and are present consistently throughout the literature on long term offenders. These findings were shared with FSW currently residing at the Prison for Women and serving a life or long sentences. Approximately 22 women provided their feedback to these findings.²⁰ The needs identified in the literature, as well as the women's responses, are as follows.

1. Staff Training

The literature identified staff training as a major component for a healthy relationship between FSW and staff. Staff training programs should focus on the unique problems of long-term inmates as well as problems faced by women offenders in general. This will help them to recognize and respond appropriately to situations arising from the experience of long confinement. This recommendation was found in both the Genders and Player study, and Cindie A. Unger and Robert A. Buchanan's guide for managing long-term inmates.²¹ Staff training was also one of the recommendations of *The Perron*

¹⁹ Louise Ellis, "Implementing the Federally Sentenced Women Task Force Report", *Let's Talk*, Correctional Service of Canada: February/March 1994, pg. 5.

²⁰ See Appendix 3 for report on the interviews with FSW serving life and/or long term sentences.

²¹ Cindie A. Unger and Robert A. Buchanan, *Managing Long-Term Inmates: A Guide for the*

Report which states "(t)hat CSC ensures that the staff working with inmates serving long-term sentences receive continuous and relevant training to meet the specific needs of these inmates...".²²

The training should perhaps be two-fold. First, it should be aimed at training all staff to work with women serving long-term sentences, articulating the special needs of the women with regards to support and issues associated with serving a long sentence. Second, the program should train staff to acquire some expertise on judicial reviews and legal issues so they may provide information and multiply possible sources of support for the women.

FEEDBACK: The women agreed with these findings. They agree that knowledge of both the difficulties in coping with the sentence, as well as of the legal restraints faced by FSW serving long sentences should be part of the staff training.

2. Programming

The literature disclosed that programming must meet the specific needs of women serving long sentences. Programs typically last 12 to 24 months and are intended to prepare the participants for imminent release. This is not appropriate for a population that may be incarcerated for many years, yet it is equally undesirable to have their programming postponed until late in their sentence as is the general practice. Meaningful occupations in conjunction with longer programs are more beneficial. The opportunity to pursue this should be available to women.²³ This is also supported by the recommendations of *The Perron Report* which states, "CSC, besides facilitating the access of these inmates to the programs offered to the population in general, develop programs meeting their specific needs."²⁴

FEEDBACK: The women agreed with this. They felt that immediate access to programs was important, especially to programs dealing with their frustration and parenting (primarily in regards to legal issues).

3. Meaningful Work

Meaningful work is closely related to programming needs. The literature consistently acknowledges that there is a tremendous need for women serving long-term sentences to feel that they are contributing to society. Developing institutional careers in which women can utilize skills they have or have learned in programming will contribute to

Correctional Inmates, U.S. Department of Justice: Fall 1995.

²² *Task Force Report on Long Term Sentences*, (The Perron Report), Correctional Service of Canada: April 1991.

²³ Unger and Buchanan, pg. 15.

²⁴ Perron Report.

their own self-worth.

FEEDBACK: Women agreed that this is an important component. They felt that they can use their experiences to help others in similar situations.

4. Mobility

Unger and Buchanan recommend that consideration be given to female long-termers experiencing boredom and monotony that stem from being housed in the same environment for most or all of their sentence. This can be alleviated by early release or transfers between institutions.

FEEDBACK: The women who participated, stated that this issue is not relevant at this time. They felt that program accessibility and work opportunities are far more pressing issues that need to be addressed. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the question of mobility merits further consideration, since choice is an important component for women overall. Further, with the closure of the facility that currently houses them, all women will be relocated, therefore it is understandable that this issue is not paramount; however, in the near future it may be a factor.

5. Release and Pre-release Stages

This is an area that lacks adequate information, yet it is paramount that the needs of women serving long-term sentences be clearly identified so that they can successfully reintegrate into society. Community support needs to be assessed in this area.

FEEDBACK: Women stated that being able to access programs as soon as they commenced serving their sentence would benefit them when they integrate back into the community.

CORRECTIONAL PROGRAM STRATEGY FOR FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN

The *Correctional Program Strategy for Federally Sentenced Women* identified several core programs that will be implemented in each of the new regional facilities. The core programs for FSW are:

1. Living Skills Programs
2. Survivor of Abuse Programs
3. Literacy and Continuous Learning Programs
4. Substance Abuse Programs

The Program Strategy ensures that the needs of all women including those of long-term offenders are met. However, all programs need to be sensitive to the experiences of women serving long-term sentences. A brief description of the core programs and its components is as follows:

1. Living Skills

- **Cognitive Skills**

The Cognitive Skills component addresses problem-solving skills and critical reasoning. This program has been reviewed and a few modifications will be made. There are no issues particular to FSW serving long sentences that needs to be addressed, other than to ensure accessibility.

- **Parenting Program**

The Parenting Program is very important for all women; this program will be reviewed and enhanced so that it deals with issues specific to FSW. The program must also be sensitive to the issues of those serving long sentences; that is having to cope with sustained long-distance parenting. Maria Christina Jose in her study of women doing life sentences, argues that long-distance mothering is painful, labelling the phenomenon as the "Phantom Mother." Women often feel guilty about what their long incarceration will do to their children.²⁵ Parenting programs should include an examination of this experience so that mothers are better able to cope; as well, it should include parental rights and legal issues. Although this experience may not be unique to women serving long sentences, it may be more severe.

- **Dealing with Anger and Understanding Emotions**

This program is in the development stages. As with all programming for FSW, it will take an holistic approach and incorporate the past experiences of women. Early access to such programs is crucial for women serving long sentences because frustration and anger about their situation is experienced through many stages of their sentence.

- **Leisure Education Program**

This program will promote health, wellness and nutrition. It is important to ensure that women serving long sentences have access to this program.

²⁵ Maria Christina Jose, Women Doing Life Sentences: A Phenomenological Study, 1985, pg. 165.

2. Survivors of Abuse/Trauma

This program's proposed approach suggests that women should access the community for support, since that is where the expertise lies. It is important, however, to keep in mind that legal restrictions may limit access to the community by women serving long-term sentences. In these cases, the community should be encouraged to enter the institution for program delivery.

3. Literacy and Continuous Learning

Continuous learning is a concept for adults whereby learning is ongoing. In this program strong emphasis will be placed on improving literacy and educational levels. It is important that women serving long sentences have ongoing access to such programs. There is a need for educational programs that have some longevity.

4. Substance Abuse Programs

Substance abuse programs must address the unique needs of women as well as the social context in which women find themselves, which includes, their histories of dependence, abuse and financial difficulties. The programs must address the issue of substance abuse within the facilities, although this is applicable for all women offenders, for long term offenders, access at an early stage is part of preparing them to serve a long sentence in the most constructive way possible. Hence, access to this programs needs to be ongoing for women serving long sentences.

Other Programs and Services

It is important to incorporate programs that may help women cope with their long sentence. These program strategies are not easily developed; however, a closer look at programs such as increased family access and institutional careers suggested in both the literature, and *The Perron Report*, may provide some insight.

STAGES IN A LONG-TERM SENTENCE

It is important to begin by assessing whether it is desirable to identify stages in the experiences of women serving long sentences. There is merit for such a framework, as it would help staff to understand some of the difficulties experienced by women serving long-term sentences. Also, it may provide some guidance as to the appropriate responses needed from staff to support women, and into what programs in each phase are needed to meet the women's needs. However, any type of framework that compartmentalizes women's (life) experiences must be scrutinized and used with

caution. There is always the potential that a framework will be used to codify women and hinder the articulation of their own experiences. On the other hand, if such frameworks are used only as an educational tool to provide insight into the difficulties and pain that goes along with serving a long-term sentence, then they can be beneficial for both the staff and the women themselves.

One of the main recommendations of the report was "that CSC adopts a management model for long-term sentences, according to the four stages... and that programs, modules and services be developed according to the characteristics and needs of each stage."²⁶

The Perron Report identified four stages in long-term sentences: adaptation; integration in the prison environment; preparation for release; and, reintegration in society.

1. Adaptation

Objectives: assist the inmate to accepting his²⁷ sentence. Guide him and support him in his adaptation to his new life. Specifically his needs shall be addressed in all areas of the correctional plan.

Programs: assessment, information, orientation, family/community, support.

2. Integration in prison environment

Objective: promote a way in which the inmate can serve his sentence by taking full advantage of the opportunities for personal growth inside the prison.

Programs: training/employment, personal growth, family/community, re-evaluation and reorientation.

3. Preparation for release

Objective: prepare the inmate to live progressively and harmoniously in society as a law-abiding citizen.

Programs: training/employment, personal growth, community internal/external,²⁸ re-evaluation and reorientation.

²⁶ Perron Report, Recommendation # 10.

²⁷ The Perron Report does not use inclusive language, although the findings are presumed to be applicable to women offenders.

²⁸ By internal, the report refers to increasing community presence inside the prison. External refers to providing inmates with progressive access to the community.

4. Return to society

Objectives: help the inmate adjust to life outside.

Programs: training/employment, personal growth, community.²⁹

The Perron Report identifies the management process for an offender with a long sentence. It asserts that programs need to be reflective of the offenders' needs as experienced in the different stages of their sentence.

Other models have identified similar phases with psychological adaptation as the focal point.³⁰ From the literature review, the most significant model for women offenders, nevertheless, was developed by Maria Christina Jose; her study draws from research done on long-term female offenders, using and describing the experiences of the women themselves. Jose, in her book *Women Doing Life Sentences: A Phenomenological Study*, describes the stages that women serving long sentences go through "before accepting the meaning of their incarceration."

1. Denial and Isolation

According to Jose, most women deny they will be in prison for very long. Most believed that their lawyers were appealing and they would, therefore, be freed shortly. She argues that denial can be present in many forms. For example, many women continue to think as a free person for the first year and refuse to identify themselves as prisoners. They refuse to mix with other prisoners or participate in any of the activities and become isolated and withdrawn.

2. Anger

Anger is the second identified stage. Jose argues that when denial cannot be maintained, coming to terms with the reality of a long prison sentence makes the prisoner very angry. Anger seems to be a necessary step before resigning to the reality

²⁹ Perron Report, pg. 70-77.

³⁰ For example, Lee Axon examines Camille Graham Camp's psychological model of adaptation, based on the work by Kubler-Ross with terminally ill patients. Camp identifies five stages:

- Denial - the process in which offenders refuse to accept their long sentence;
- Mourning stage - where offenders begin to accept the reality of their situation;
- Rebellion - in which officers are perceived as the enemy (release of hostility and frustration may be present in this stage);
- Adjustment - offenders begin to cooperate (it is in this stage that offenders become institutionalized); and,
- Socialization - the process of self-actualization.

Other models, such as the Palmer (1984) Lifesavers Program at Warkworth Institution and North Carolina's model "Chameleon Syndrome" - named to reflect the changes that long-term offenders must go through to protect themselves from their hostile environment - identified similar stages offenders go through during a long incarceration.

of the sentence. According to Jose, women in this stage are more likely to:

- rebel against the guards;
- rebel against the rules;
- rebel against other inmates;
- become bitter about the outside world (women begin to lose their ties -or they may in fact be rejecting - family and friends).

During this stage, women realize that they are not free and must live with regulations and daily intrusions. They now realize they are prisoners.

Anger is also sometimes expressed because of a greater need for self-assertion. This self-assertion is a product of their need to control some aspect of their lives. Given the restrictions imposed by the institutional system and the amount of control exercised over the women, any kind of autonomous decision-making is considered by offenders to be a luxury. In an institutional setting, women who express their frustration are often punished for displaying inappropriate behaviour. According to Jose, Kubler-Ross in their studies on loss and grieving suggest one should encourage subjects (in the Kubler-Ross study, the subjects are terminally-ill patients) to talk about their anger.³¹ However, for women in prison, she argues, there is no appropriate time or place in which anger is allowed to be expressed. Jose asserts that if women were allowed to acknowledge their anger, grief and loss, the institutions might "...have fewer "maladjusted normals" and more "inmate human beings" trying to come to terms as best they can with their prison reality."³²

3. Depression

Depression is the third stage identified by Jose. Depression often sets in when women realize they can no longer deny the reality of the length of their sentence. Women at this stage deal with a lot of losses, including contact with their children, lovers and family. Some women at this stage become suicidal, others learn to live with depression.

Jose argues that staff often encourage women to "look at the positive side of things" and to forget about their depression. She argues that often the institution and the officers do not want to acknowledge that women are going through depression and try to dismiss it.

There are a number of indications of depression including: self-inflicted injuries, sleepiness, wanting to be alone and to remain in or be sent to segregation.

³¹ Jose, pg. 133-150.

³² Jose, pg. 140-141.

4. Mourning

Mourning is the fourth stage identified in Jose's model. It begins when the losses are acknowledged. Some of the signs of mourning are:

- retreat from activities, people;
- may not want contact with the outside (it is more painful to see your love ones);
- grief;
- isolation (wanting to be alone);
- may feel and express more guilt about the situation;
- express more guilt about how this affected her children.³³

5. Acceptance

Acceptance is the fifth stage that a women goes through while serving her long-term sentence. Acceptance, according to Jose, does not mean that the women will be content in prison, but rather that they have become numb. Jose states that for women, it is a feeling of being empty and void. In a sense women feel as if no more pain could be taken in because they are already saturated with pain. They become disinterested with the outside world, gain or lose great amounts of weight and often lose hope.

Hope is described by Jose as very important for prisoners serving long sentences. Jose states that initially the women have hope with regard to their appeals, reviews and hearings since this often translates into the possibility of being freed. However, after a while women experience a loss of hope and that usually "this occurred after seven or eight years of incarceration."³⁴ The effects of losing ties with families are pertinent for all incarcerated women; however, for long-term offenders the awareness that these ties may be irrevocably lost creates a unique concern. In order to cope with this prospect, women often continue to see their roles outside as intact.

PROGRAMS

The stages presented by Jose, are similar but not identical to those in *The Perron Report*. The stages described by Jose give some insight about the situations and experiences of women offenders and provide insight into some of the turmoil endured by women. This framework may provide guidance to staff, members of the community and program providers so that they are sensitive to the experiences of these women in certain situations. It must be kept in mind, of course, that not all women will react to a certain situation in the same way; as well, not all women go through all the stages.

³³ Jose, pg. 133-150.

³⁴ Jose, pg. 148.

Nevertheless, the descriptions provided in each of the phases may be useful in aiding the development of programs. Lee Axon, in her report *Models of Exemplary Programs for Female Inmates*, found that others have used similar frameworks to develop programs for this population.³⁵ Some of the suggested programs in accordance with the different phases/stages described by Maria Jose are the following:

- **Denial**

Intervention: short term relationship counselling and crisis intervention.

Programs: child custody/placement services; law library services; any activities that involve persons from the community; intense orientation program; family day program; parenting in prison; job assignments.

- **Anger, depression and mourning**

Intervention: reality therapy, identity crisis intervention and anger groups.

Programs: vocational training, university degree programs, family day program, parenting in prison.

- **Acceptance and hope**

Intervention: family therapy, de-institutionalization, coping group, assertiveness training, and family role clarification.

Programs: any that assists in the re-socialization process (work release, study release, home passes, aging programs).

The programs listed above give some concrete examples of what sort of initiatives are needed so as to provide support. Overall, it is paramount that women be part of the process of evaluating what their own needs are.

CONCLUSION

As a whole, the literature provided some sense of the realities of women serving long-term sentences. It has also provided direction into what sort of strategy should and could be applied to best service this population. It is important to acknowledge that in the implementation process for the FSW facilities, steps have already been made to address some of the issues discussed. For example, the Women-Centred Staff Training will incorporate issues faced by FSW serving long-term sentences. An important

³⁵ Axon, pg. 85-87.

component of these findings is the suggestions provided by the women themselves (see Appendix 3) such as the creation of a kit outlining the programs available, and the difficulties experienced by women serving long sentences. These findings also illustrate that programs specifically for assisting FSW coping with a long sentence, and pre-release planning strategies for these women, need to be developed. As well, more information is needed in the area of community support for women on release.

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APPENDIX 1

PROJECT PROPOSAL

INTRODUCTION

The *Survey of Federally Sentenced Women* reported that in 1991 there were 46 women in the population serving life sentences, 16 other women were serving sentences of ten years or more, making a total of 62 women serving long term sentences. This number may have increased in the last three years. The Task Force report on Federally Sentenced Women, *Creating Choices*, stated that women serving long sentences do not seem to have different types of needs than women serving short-term sentences. However, it is recognized that WLTO's need for programming is perhaps intensified by virtue of their long sentence. Further, the survey reported that the women themselves identified a need for programming so as to be able to cope with their long sentence. The difficulty lies in identifying what specific issues need to be covered in such programming. Understanding the needs that this specific group has is crucial for the development of any program.

The Task Force on Long Term Offenders (*The Perron Report*) identified several guidelines for the management of long term offenders including: involvement of the inmate in managing his/her sentence, personalizing programs, developing programs according to the needs identified, increased involvement by the community. The document *Creating Choices* also addresses these guidelines in their own philosophy and principles which are: Empowerment, Meaningful and Responsible Choices, Respect and Dignity, Supportive Environment, and Shared Responsibility.

The Perron Report also recommends that the four stages identified in long term sentences (*adaptation, integration in the prison environment, preparation for release, reintegration in society*) be used as a framework for the development of programs for LTO's. *The Perron Report* recommends:

"that the CSC adopts a management model for long-term sentences, according to the four stages... and that programs modules and services be developed according to the characteristics and needs of each of these stages." (*The Perron Report pg 10 #1 of the list of 36 recommendations*)

It is therefore paramount to critically assess the stages suggested by the report to evaluate whether they are pertinent to women's experiences and to their needs. Further, it may also be important to first assess whether identifying stages in women's experiences for the purpose of program development is necessary or desirable.

Overall, it is necessary to evaluate the programs set forth by the *Correctional Program Strategy for FSW* and clearly outline how they will be meeting the needs of WLTO's. This requires relating the programs to the four stages mentioned. This will allow for an identification of potential weaknesses as well as strengths of the programs as they pertain to WLTO's, also it will identify any gaps in programming. In order to address the issues discussed the following course of action will be pursued.

I LITERATURE REVIEW

This will include a review of the resources available: the Task Force report, *Creating Choices* and all the reports stemming from the Task Force, *The Perron Report*, user reports, and literature that is directly related to women serving long sentences.

II DISCUSSION PAPER

A discussion paper will be prepared in which a summary of the literature review will be provided. The purpose of the paper will be to provide an analysis of how the findings in the literature relate to the principles set forth by the task force report *Creating Choices*. It will describe potential needs as they are identified in the literature and will clearly outline how those needs will be met by the programming already established in the *Correctional Program Strategy for FSW*.

A significant portion of the paper will be devoted to assessing the needs of WLTO's in the different phases of their sentence: incarceration stage, pre-release stage, and release stage. The programs established by the *Correctional Program Strategy* will also be assessed within the context of the different phases.

Further, the discussion paper will attempt to provide some insights and suggestions on what other tools could be used to meet the needs of WLTO's.

III SURVEY OF RELEASED WLTO'S

The literature review has so far indicated that there is little known about the needs of WLTO's while in the community. The literature available tends to center on identifying the needs of WLTO's while they are serving their sentence. There is a need to move beyond that and clearly assess and identify the needs of WLTO's while in the community. Nevertheless, some of the literature available, although not specific to WLTO's have provided some useful beginnings. For instance, *The Release Study Survey of Federally Sentenced Women in the Community*, reported that many women found difficulties with the release planning process. The women reported needing more support as well as more information about the resources available in the community. It is reasonable to assume that women serving long sentences may experience similar

perhaps more intense needs in this area. In addition, women serving long term sentences may perhaps experience more difficulty reintegrating back into the community. It is essential therefore, that these difficulties be identified so that they can be addressed while the women are serving their sentences. This will perhaps alleviate some of the problems encountered by women, who after many years of incarceration, return to society for a new beginning.

In order to identify the needs of WLTO's while in the community it may be perhaps necessary to conduct a survey of women who have serve long sentences and are now in the community.

The purpose of the proposed survey is to identify these areas -

- 1) What are the needs of WLTO's in the community, and at the pre-release stage?
- 2) What are the resources available (facilities/services) to meet the needs of WLTO's in the community. (this needs to be done by the regional facility)?
- 3) What are the needs of the people working with the women?

APPENDIX 2

**TOTAL NUMBER OF FSW
SERVING LIFE AND LONG TERM (10+) SENTENCES
ACCORDING TO THE JULY 13, 1994 CENSUS
OF INCARCERATED WOMEN**

In July 13 a census was conducted to determine how many women were physically at a given facility on this date. This number also included women for whom a bed was reserved on that date. The number of incarcerated FSW serving life and long term sentence (10+) is the following.

FSW SERVING LIFE SENTENCES:	51
FSW SERVING LONG TERM SENTENCES:	19
TOTAL	70

The regional distribution of FSW serving life and long term sentences is illustrated in the chart below. Place of residence was used as the criteria for determining what regional facility will house them.

REGION/ SENTENCE	ATLANTIC	QUEBEC	ONTARIO	PRAIRIES	PACIFIC
LIFE	3	13	14	14	7
LTO	0	5	7	4	3
TOTAL	3	18	21	18	10
NATIVE	1	0	0	10	1
Black	1	0	3	0	2
Asian	0	0	2	0	0
Other	0	0	1	0	0

APPENDIX 3

LONG TERM OFFENDERS: NEEDS IDENTIFICATION MEETING WITH FEDERALLY SENTENCED WOMEN SERVING LIFE AND LONG TERM SENTENCES

INTRODUCTION

According to a census conducted on July 13, 1994, there are 51 federally sentenced women serving life sentences and another 19 serving sentences of 10 years and more. It is important for programs and overall operations to be responsive to the needs of this group. Therefore, areas in which meaningful change can occur must be identified.

BACKGROUND

Traditionally, there has been concern regarding the management of those serving long-term sentences. Several studies have found that this population is generally neglected by correctional services. Those serving long sentences represent a small percentage of the entire offender population and programs tend not to be sensitive to the needs that stem from long incarceration. In 1990, a task force on long-term offenders (the Perron Report), put forth several recommendations regarding the management of these offenders. It is necessary to explore how those recommendations are applicable to the experiences of federally sentenced women serving long-term sentences. As well, the fulfilment of these needs must be examined in the context of the overall program strategy for the new regional facilities.

ACTION TAKEN

Literature on the needs and experiences that are encountered by long-term offenders was deemed sufficient for identifying the issues. There has been a number of studies conducted on the subject. Therefore, it was decided that a discussion paper would be prepared providing an overview of the literature. A draft has been completed, and the needs of federally sentenced women serving long-term sentences are highlighted. Also outlined is how those needs are met by the overall program strategy. To ensure that the findings in the discussion paper reflected the realities experienced, it was necessary to share the findings and have the women decide whether it was an accurate articulation of their needs.

With this purpose, a group interview with women serving life and long-term sentences was conducted at the Prison for Women on September 14, 1994. Presently, there are 22 women serving life sentences and 13 serving terms of ten years or more at that prison. Interviews for these two groups were held separately. Approximately 18 lifers participated in the first interview session and 4 long-term offenders participated in the second. Since the feedback and concerns were similar for both groups, the findings have been incorporated.

QUESTIONS

Overall, there was little structure to the interviews to allow the women to identify issues they thought as important. Questions and the rationale for those are as follows:

1) Do the findings in the literature regarding the needs of long-term offenders reflect your experiences as a women long-term offender?

Rationale: The main purpose of the interview was to determine whether the literature available presents an accurate portrayal of the needs felt by the women.

2) Are there any specific programs needed in the pre-release phase of incarceration?

Rationale: In the literature there was little information on the needs of long-term offenders during the pre-release phase of incarceration. Asking the women directly may provide some guidance into what is required.

3) Are there other issues and concerns that are not mentioned, that you deem as significant?

Rationale: The purpose of this question is to identify any other issues that may be absent in the literature. For example, since women will be transferred to the new facility, it is important to determine issues arising from the move.

FINDINGS

The discussion paper outlined several needs of federally sentenced women serving long-term sentences. The women commented on the findings as follows:

Need identified: Staff training

The literature identified that staff should be trained regarding the specific needs of offenders serving long-term sentences.

Comments:

- The women agreed with this finding. They felt that staff needed to be more aware of the difficulties experienced due to the length of sentence. In addition, they believed that, at the very least, their case managers should have the expertise regarding legal restraints, as well as sufficient knowledge regarding the judicial review process.
- The women also stated that having one case manager who deals exclusively with offenders serving long terms would be beneficial, for both the case manager and the offender. This would prevent, they argued, case managers from giving priority to those serving short sentences while neglecting those serving long sentences. Also, having to deal only with long-term offenders would enable the case manager to gain experience on their legal constraints and the judicial review process.

Need identified: Programming

The literature asserted that programming often did not met the needs of offenders serving long-term sentences. The duration of programs tended to be short and programs were often postponed to later in their sentences.

Comments:

- Women agreed with these findings. They stated feeling that due to the nature of their crime they should be given priority in programs such as anger management.
- Women claimed that some programs are given in all-day sessions, and it was felt that there was no connection to the program. Further, this provided no time to reflect on what was being learned and retaining the information given in such a short period of time was difficult.
- Women stated that there should be specific programs dealing with issues regarding parents legal rights.
- As well, they stated needing programs designed to deal with their judicial review. They said the judicial review was their primary goal as it represented a way out of incarceration.

Need identified: Meaningful Work

The literature identified meaningful work as an important need of offenders serving long-term sentences.

Comments:

- Women agreed that this is an important component. They want to have jobs that

will give them the skills to be self-sufficient in the community. Also, they stated needing to feel productive.

- Women felt they could be of assistance to those coming into the institution, since they have experienced the incarceration process. They could be of support and a source of information for the newly sentenced.
- Women were interested in having programs such as the buddy system, in which they can help other inmates orientate to the institution.

Need identified: Mobility

The literature identified the ability to move from institution to institution as an important need since it alleviated the boredom and monotony experienced when serving a sentence in one location.

Comments:

- The women found this not applicable to them at the moment. They asserted that there are far more pressing issues that must be dealt with. They acknowledged that once those issues are addressed, mobility may become more significant.
- Women also felt that they liked living in one place, so that they can feel like it was their own space.

Need identified: Release and Pre-release stages

There is very little literature dealing with this specific issue.

Comments:

- The women stated that being able to access programs as soon as they commenced serving their sentence would benefit them when they are to integrate back into the community.

OTHER SUGGESTIONS

The women made the following suggestions that would assist with the managing of their sentence, these are as follows:

- A kit should be developed which contains a list of all the programs available and a detailed explanation of the duration of the programs and what each contains. (*The women claimed that they often did not know what the programs entailed and this prevented them from being a full participant in their correctional plan.*)

- A kit outlining some of the experiences of women coping with long sentences, as well as information about the judicial review process would be useful. It would alleviate much of the uncertainty suffered by the women.
- Lifers and long-term offenders should be given institutional careers. They could co-facilitate some of the programs.
- Women serving long-term sentences should receive a correctional plan at the initial stages of their sentence.
- Since most women serving long-term sentences are usually classified at the highest level, it is important to clearly outline what they can do to lower that classification level.

OTHER CONCERNS

There were several issues and concerns that arose with regards to the new facilities. The following were mentioned:

- Since the new facilities will have no highly visible perimeters, i.e. no concrete wall, it is necessary to clearly state what is expected of the women. Since most are classified as high security, the restrictions and privileges afforded to them must be known.
- Concern was expressed regarding the information now circulating that in the new facilities they will be moved every six months, from cottage to cottage.
- They wanted to ensure that they were not all housed together. They expressed the need to see new people with whom they could talk about the outside.
- Women stated that a non-smoking cottage should be available for those that do not wish to be housed with smokers. Some have health concerns regarding second-hand smoke.
- Restrictions on belongings should be sensitive to the needs of long-term offenders.
- Levels of pay for women remain low, with some only receiving 40 dollars every two weeks.
- Restrictions concerning parcels should be sensitive to long-term offenders, since this can, at times, be their only contact with families.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the women agreed with the findings of the discussion paper presented to them. However, they asserted that these findings and recommendations are not innovative. Women serving long-term sentences have been voicing these concerns for a long time. Although these concerns were to be addressed by the implementation of the recommendations of the Perron Report, the women claimed that they have not yet been implemented at the Prison for Women.

Although the women that participated in the interview demonstrated a great willingness to share their experiences, expertise, and feedback, their level of frustration was obvious. It is crucial, therefore, that the findings and recommendations be acknowledged, and that some of the issues put forth be incorporated in the overall program strategy.

The Federally Sentenced Women Program, CSC National Headquarters would like to thank Ms. Pat Vargas for her work on this discussion paper.