



DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY

**RESPONSE TO HOUSE CONCURRENT
RESOLUTION NO. 265
SESSION LAWS OF HAWAII 2004**

*Requesting the Department of Public Safety and the Office of
Youth Services to Develop a Plan for Creating and Implementing
Gender Responsive Environments at the Women's Community
Correctional Center and at the Hawaii Youth Correctional
Facility*

January 2005

INTRODUCTION

Hawaii has seen significant growth in its women offender population. From 1980 to 2000, the number of women offenders in Hawaii rose from 30 to 542. In response to the increased population and the multi-faceted needs of female offenders, the Department of Public Safety contracted, in 1999, with a national expert on female offenders to assist the department with developing gender responsive programs.

As a result, the Gender Responsivity Project was developed and implemented. The comprehensive effort focused on the following areas: staff training and development; security and operations; inter-agency and community collaboration; and inmate programs. The Project emphasized awareness of gender issues and ways to incorporate gender responsive approaches in all aspects of correctional operations, services and programs.

Since the project's inception, some noteworthy gains have been made.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Staff Training and Development

Each employee of the Women's Community Correctional Center (WCCC) received gender responsivity training that was offered from April 2001 to October 2001. National consultants provided expertise in the cross training of security and program staff. They also assisted WCCC staff with establishing its mission, goals and objectives. Although additional training has not been offered to existing personnel, ongoing training on gender responsive issues for new correctional officer recruits has continued.

Recruitment and retention of social workers and female correctional officers at WCCC continues to be a challenge. Efforts to attract social workers culminated in the Department of Human Resources Development approving a salary differential for social workers at WCCC in April 2001. The salary differential recognizes the experience of social worker applicants who possess professional experience in dealing with women's issues. Although 2 out of a total of 3 social worker positions at WCCC are currently filled, financial constraints have limited WCCC's capacity to consistently recruit and retain social workers.

Security and Operations

A department-wide policy for programs to adopt gender responsive approaches in its operations became effective November 2002.

Inter-agency and Community Collaboration

Inter-agency collaboration and community support was evident at the Hawaii Symposium on Female Offenders in December 2000, where policymakers from throughout Hawaii's criminal justice system and community agencies were brought together to address issues facing female offenders. Although there is no mechanism currently in place to track and determine the extent of continued inter-agency and community collaboration in this area, there are indications that efforts are ongoing in various communities.

WCCC has also benefited from the tremendous support of the community for its various activities and services. The Lani-Kailua Outdoor Circle, the Garden Club of Honolulu, Leeward and Windward Community Colleges, popular musicians and various faith-based organizations, have consistently supported WCCC's ongoing and special events. Various community organizations continue to sponsor Kids Day, an activity that provides time for incarcerated mothers to bond with their children during an extended visit. However, a child-friendly visit room called Keiki Hale that was planned and created by staff, offenders, corporate donors and community stakeholders that opened in March 2002 for mothers and their young children, has had sporadic use.

The department is currently involved in an innovative partnership that began with Maui agencies administering a supplemental survey to the current classification instrument used on women offenders statewide. Since April 2003, criminal justice agencies on Maui have been providing data from the survey to the University of Cincinnati. The university analyzes the data and provides demographic information and useful data on the program needs of women offenders. The implications of the results of this project may ultimately impact the classification of female offenders statewide. Preliminary results have been received and efforts are ongoing.

Inmate Programs

Substance abuse treatment is ongoing at WCCC through several programs. Ke Alaula, a 50-bed, gender responsive, substance abuse therapeutic community, opened in September 2001. It is administered through a purchase of service contract with a private provider, Hina Mauka. Ke Alaula is a 9-15 month program that provides a full continuum of substance abuse treatment services, including aftercare. The program also provides specialized treatment services in sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence, parenting, family and other issues. During FY 2003-2004, there were 51 offenders who were admitted into the program. Twenty-nine completed the program and 14 were terminated. There is a high demand for Ke Alaula treatment services and vacancies are filled quickly. There are no plans to currently expand the program.

Project Bridge is another program that opened as a result of the Gender Responsivity Project. Established in March 2001 at WCCC, Project Bridge is a 15-bed transitional program for inmates on furlough status. It provides opportunities in a gender responsive environment for offenders to practice skills acquired during treatment. Job seeking skills, interview techniques, work furlough, and resocialization activities are central components of the program. Participants are required to attend aftercare upon release. During FY 2003-2004, Project Bridge admitted 23 offenders into the program. Nineteen completed

the program and two were terminated. There are no plans to currently expand the program.

A gender responsive environment is also offered in a transitional community residential program, Ka Hale Hoala Hou No Na Wahine, which is administered by a private provider, T.J. Mahoney. The 36-bed program helps WCCC offenders transition from a highly structured prison environment to independent living in the community. Services are provided in the areas of substance abuse, vocational and job skills training, money management, life skills, anger management, domestic violence, relapse prevention, cognitive restructuring, work furlough and other types of individualized services. During FY 2003-2004, there were 69 offenders admitted into the program. Thirty-six completed the program and 19 were terminated. There are no plans to currently expand the program. However, the department plans to add an intensive supervision component to monitor offenders who complete the program to ensure successful transition to independent living.

WCCC currently offers parenting, anger management and other educational classes. Parenting From a Distance is a 14-week course designed to assist mothers who are separated from their children. The purpose of the program is to strengthen parental bonds between incarcerated mothers and their children. Anger management, corrective thinking, and breaking barriers classes focus on behavior patterns, emotional responses and thinking processes to enable participants to identify criminal thinking errors. Co-dependency classes educate offenders on the components of a healthy relationship and offer an opportunity for them to assess their past and current relationships. Landscaping, basic computer, pre-employment and pre-parole classes also support job development skills.

CONCLUSION

The department plans to continue to offer its current level of programs and services to women offenders.