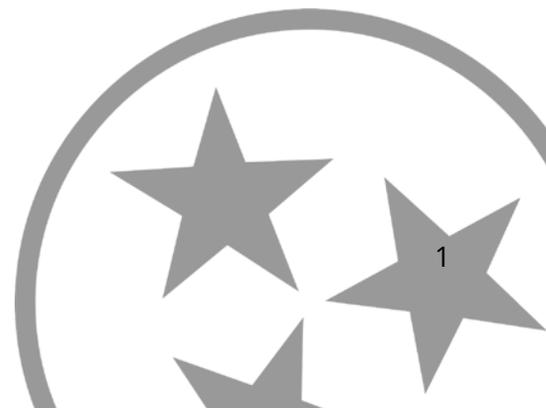




Mission Change at WTSP

The Next Level in Gender Specific Incarceration

Tennessee Department of Correction | July 2016



Background

As the Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) continuously evaluates our facilities and resources, we always seek opportunities for improvement not only in the way we utilize our resources but also how we manage the offender population we receive from jurisdictions across the state. One aspect we evaluate is the utilization of bed space and ensuring we have the right offender in the right bed. Proper bed management not only consists of matching the security requirements of an offender with the appropriate infrastructure but also consists of placing offenders in a facility where they have access to services necessary to prepare them for reentry back into the community. This includes ensuring that we adapt our facilities and services therein to provide such an environment to meet the needs of the constantly changing incarcerated population.

Last year our team examined the mission at each prison and sought out areas where efficiencies could be gained. One recurring theme is the need for more beds and programming for female offenders. For several years the female offender population in Tennessee has consistently increased and has doubled in the past 15 years with only minimal increase of female beds within TDOC to support such growth.



The female population in Tennessee has doubled in the past 15 years.

Mission Change

Equipped with this research, TDOC is in the process of a mission change at West Tennessee State Penitentiary (WTSP). The current prison has two separate sites that can operate independently of each other. The mission change will convert Site 1 to a female facility and Site 2 will remain a maximum-security male prison. This mission change will assist in managing the growing female population and provide instant relief to our partners operating county jails.

WTSP Site 1 will now be known as the Women's Therapeutic Residential Center (WTRC) at West Tennessee State Penitentiary. The WTRC will provide an opportunity for offenders to receive programs and services designed for women through a phase-based, therapeutic community model that will emphasize responsibility, accountability and peer support. Research has shown inmates who participate in a therapeutic community model combined with aftercare have more opportunity for success in society after their release.

Our staff has spent much of the summer working to convert Site 1 into a facility ready for female offenders. In addition, our training team has been on site working with the Correctional Officers and Counseling Team to ensure that they are trained on the latest gender specific correctional practices. It must be noted that no positions will be lost in the transition.

Next Steps

The first female offenders are expected to move into WTRC in late August/early September. This facility will have intensive programming and family reunification options that use the latest technology. In addition, eligible offenders will be allowed to take advantage of overnight child visitation that is tentatively scheduled to start in January 2017.

Final Thoughts

The Tennessee Department of Correction is committed to the mission of operating safe and secure prisons and providing effective community supervision in order to enhance public safety. This department is committed to a system of continuous improvement by constantly reviewing our practices, updating as needed and piloting the most innovative methods in offender management. The move to a therapeutic setting for female offenders will move the Tennessee Department of Correction closer to fulfilling our vision of being the best correctional agency in the nation.

Learn more about these exciting changes on TDOC's Youtube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oy_xvlytg2k