

HJR 16: State-Operated Institutions ***Montana Women's Prison***

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General Overview

The Montana Women's Prison (MWP) houses slightly fewer than 200 women who have been convicted of felony offenses and who:

- were sentenced by a judge to serve a term at the prison;
- were sentenced by a judge to the Department of Corrections, which has determined that placement at the prison is most appropriate;
- were removed from a community placement at the request of a facility or program;
- violated the conditions of their probation or parole;
- are in need of services not available in a community placement; or
- were transferred from Montana State Hospital.

The Department of Corrections operates the prison, which is located in Billings. The main prison building has an intake area and eight housing units that have varying levels of security for different classifications of inmates. Another building within the secure, fenced perimeter is used for programming and work activities.

The prison's intake area consists of three cells. Two are temporary holding cells, while the third is an observation cell for inmates who express thoughts of suicide or self harm. All inmates go through an intake process before placement in the main population. Assessments conducted during the first 30 to 60 days of an offender's stay at MWP helps determine the services — including mental health services — that the person will need in order to successfully return to the community.

Five low-security units at MWP house minimum- and medium-custody prisoners. The units have capacities ranging from 24 to 40 inmates. Prisoners needing a higher level of custody are held in another unit. The prison also has two locked units, where inmates have fewer privileges and are generally confined to their cells because of disciplinary or behavioral problems. The locked units can each house up to 11 inmates.

Makeup of the Prison's Mental Health Population

Potentially, every inmate at MWP may receive mental health services. Each inmate is evaluated by a staff member, using the Women's Risks and Needs Assessment. A licensed mental health professional also conducts a biopsychosocial and chemical dependency assessment for each inmate. The results are used to develop individual treatment and recovery plans.

The prison reviewed the medical and psychiatric charts for all inmates on July 19 and found that 151 of the 196 inmates, or 77 percent, had at least one diagnosable mental disorder. The three most-diagnosed conditions were Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (59 inmates), major depressive disorder (49 inmates), and bipolar II disorder (32 inmates).

Eight individuals at MWP had been found guilty of a crime but also found to have a "mental disease or defect" that prevented them from appreciating the criminality of their conduct or to act in conformance with the law. This status is typically described as "guilty but mentally ill," or GBMI. These inmates were sentenced on a total of 14 different felony charges for the following crimes: deliberate homicide, mitigated deliberate homicide, sexual assault, aggravated assault, assault on a peace officer, intimidation, criminal endangerment, robbery, accountability for theft, and tampering with physical evidence.

The prison does not try to identify individuals who would meet the criteria for a Severe Disabling Mental Illness (SDMI), which is the diagnosis required to obtain state-funded mental health services in the community. SDMI criteria are not based solely on an individual's diagnosis.

Mental Health Services at MWP

Any inmate at the prison may ask to be seen by a mental health professional. In addition, staff members may refer women for services. The prison offers the following mental health services:

- assessment upon entry, including an in-depth assessment by a licensed clinician;
- management of psychiatric medications;
- individual and group counseling;
- weekly rounds of inmates placed in locked housing units; and
- participation by mental health staff in individual recovery and re-entry planning meetings.

The services are provided by a mix of MWP staff and contracted personnel. The prison contracts with a psychiatrist for 16 hours of services per week, a licensed addiction counselor for 30 to 40 hours of services per week, and a licensed mental health professional for 10 hours of services per week. In addition, MWP has a clinical case manager on staff, as well as a full-time licensed clinical professional counselor/licensed addiction counselor and a licensed clinical social worker.

MWP Appropriation and Daily Costs

House Bill 2 appropriated about \$6.4 million of general fund in each year of the biennium for the prison. The appropriation does not reflect pay increases or retirement adjustments made in other legislation in 2013.

The Department of Corrections estimates that the average cost of housing inmates at MWP was \$104.07 in FY 2012, or \$37,986 per year. The figure includes administrative costs.

Recidivism

The prison tracks the number of offenders who return to prison for any reason within three years of their release from prison. That recidivism rate was 34.4 percent for offenders leaving prison in 2009. The prison does not have a separate recidivism figure for offenders with a mental disorder because it does not maintain a mental health discharge caseload.

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Sources:

- Interviews with and e-mails from the following Department of Corrections staff members in July and August 2013: Montana Women's Prison Warden Joan Daly, MWP Operations Manager Annamae Siegfried-Derrick, and DOC Communications Director Judy Beck
- *2013 Biennial Report*, Department of Corrections

