

INTERNAL DOCUMENT

Advisory Council on Women Offenders

- a) The DOC shall have an advisory council consisting of field and facility staff, which meets regularly to discuss issues involving gender responsibility.
 - i) The advisory council shall perform the following functions:
 - (1) Answer questions and provide consultative services to staff with regards to the gender responsibility principles;
 - (2) Participate in the decision-making process surrounding specific cases when gender responsibility principles could alter a decision. The council shall only participate at the request of the local site;
 - (3) Identify necessary changes to policy, procedure, and/or practice in order to become more gender responsive;
 - (4) Make formal recommendations to Central Office on incorporating gender responsibility standards and best practices across the DOC. All recommendations shall be made to the Director of Program Services;
 - (a) The advisory council shall obtain authorization from the Director of Program Services before implementing any changes which:
 - (i) Require additional financial resources;
 - (ii) Interfere with facility operations;
 - (iii) Change existing policy; or
 - (iv) Changes DOC practice or procedure.
 - (5) Make recommendations on Correctional Facilities' local procedures to incorporate responsibility standards and best practices; and
 - (6) Make recommendations on Field Sites' local procedures to incorporate gender responsibility standards and best practice.
 - ii) The advisory council shall adopt a charter which addresses the following:
 - (1) Purpose of the council;
 - (2) The membership of the group and how the members of the group are selected;¹
 - (3) Membership and structure of the membership. - The council will have standing membership and non-standing membership. Standing members will always have representation on the council and shall not be subject to term limits. Non-standing

¹ The DOC council membership shall, at minimum, have successfully completed the National Institute of Correction's Women's Operational Procedures.

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members shall rotate and shall be subject to term limits. At minimum membership shall include:

- (i) Two representatives from different field sites;
 - (ii) A representative from a facility that houses cis-gender² females; and
 - (iii) A representative from a facility that houses cis-gender males;
- (4) Term limits - The non-standing council members shall serve for a maximum period of 3 years;
 - (5) Decision-making process;
 - (6) Frequency of meetings;
 - (7) Logistical and operational needs (notes);
 - (8) A tracking system for the services the council provides and outcomes from the council's decisions;
 - (9) Quality assurance measures; and
 - (10) A system for seeking the advice of persons outside the council on issues.
- iii) The advisory council shall meet regularly but no less than every three months. An open meeting shall be held annually.
 - iv) The advisory council shall present a work plan annually to the Director of Program Services. This work plan shall identify the priorities and goals for the coming year.
 - v) The advisory council shall prepare an annual written report for the Director of Program Services. This report shall include all activities accomplished in preceding year, and shall:
 - (1) Summarize referrals, decisions, lessons learned; and
 - (2) Update on the priorities and goals set from the previous year.
 - vi) The advisory council shall send a progress report on a quarterly basis to the Director of Program Services.
 - vii) The advisory council shall recognize the following:
 - (1) There is a growing amount of research surrounding women in the criminal justice system. This research finds that gender makes a difference in terms of women's profiles and pathways to crime being different than that of men's, and that women respond differently to correctional interventions than men.
 - (2) Research on female offenders has established conclusively that women enter the criminal justice system in ways that differ from those of male offenders. The

² Cisgender is the gender identity where an individual's experience of their own gender matches their birth gender. (See DOC's policy on [Gender Identification, Care, and Custody](#).)

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following differences have been empirically documented³:

- (a) The role of violence, trauma, and substance abuse in criminal pathways, offense, and re-offense patterns;
- (b) The impact of responsibilities for children and other dependent family members, and the reduced ability to support self and children after involvement with the criminal justice system;
- (c) The impacts of race and ethnicity on crime, violent partners, and substance abuse; and
- (d) The connections women may have with violent and substance-abusing partners.

³ A Theoretical Basis for Gender-Responsive Strategies in Criminal Justice, Bloom, Owen and Covington, 2002