



Women in Jail: Facility Planning Issues

National Institute of Corrections

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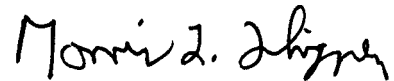
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FOREWORD

Historically, the nation's jails have been designed and operated for the detention of male inmates. Female inmates have constituted such a small minority of the jail population that they have often been overlooked in terms of facility design, programs, and services.

Although women make up only about 11% of the jail population, their numbers have nearly tripled over the last ten years. This increase has demanded that local officials identify and try to meet the needs of female inmates, yet severe limitations in resources often impede the provision of services specifically for women.

The National Institute of Corrections recognizes the challenge this poses for jail practitioners. This document is intended to help local officials identify issues related to female inmates that should be considered when planning a new jail. It takes into consideration that most jails have fewer than 100 beds, house both men and women, and face a variety of space constraints. We hope it will be useful in designing new jails that provide adequate and appropriate housing for both male and female inmates.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Morris L. Thigpen". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Morris L. Thigpen, Director
National Institute of Corrections

INTRODUCTION

For the past 20 years, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) has provided assistance to jurisdictions challenged with planning and building new jails and detention facilities. Through the Planning of New Institutions Program (PONI), NIC has provided training in a Total Systems Planning Process, which begins with identifying the jurisdiction's needs and ends with evaluating the newly constructed facility. This framework breaks the facility development process into five discrete phases:

1. Master Planning or Needs Assessment,
2. Pre-Architectural Programming,
3. Design,
4. Construction, and
5. Transition.

To help jurisdictions identify the needs of their female inmate population for facility planning, this document explores issues relevant to that population. The document was developed for smaller jails with so few female inmates that a separate institution would be unwarranted. It identifies considerations unique to the female inmate population that merit special attention during the planning and design of a new or renovated jail or detention facility. The reader will note that the construction and transition phases of the facility development process are not addressed as they are beyond the scope of this document.

The Female Inmate Population

Female inmates have always been a "minority" within the larger, predominantly male jail population. Although they continue to be a minority, they are a rapidly growing one. As shown in Table 1, women comprised 7% of the national adult jail population in 1983; by 1996, they made up 11% of the jail population. As a small but growing inmate subgroup in jails, women experience a number of specific problems, some of which are directly related to the size and limited resources of the jail.

Table 1. Adult Male and Female Jail Inmate Populations

	1983*	1988*	1993*	1996†
Total Adult Jail Inmates	221,815	341,893	455,600	510,400
Male	206,163 (93%)	311,594 (91%)	411,500 (90%)	454,700 (89%)
Female	15,652 (7%)	30,299 (9%)	44,100 (10%)	55,700 (11%)

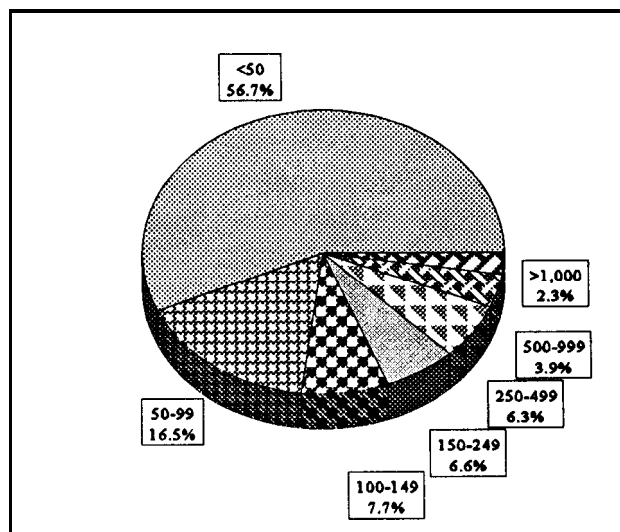
*Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) Bulletin, *Jails and Jail Inmates 1993-1994*, April 1995.

†Source: BJS Bulletin, *Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 1996*, January 1997.

The Impact of Jail Size

It is important to understand that the experience of female inmates in prisons and large jail systems is very different from the experience of those detained in the majority of jails in the United States. Prison systems and large jail systems have separate institutions for women with programs tailored exclusively for them. It is here that most of the writing and research has been done.

However, as shown in Figure 1, the majority of jails in the United States have fewer than 50 beds and, at any given time, three to five women are incarcerated in most. As a result, women in these jails have tended to be “forgotten inmates.” Often, because of the requirements for sight and sound separation of male and female inmates, the presence of one or two women in a standard-sized housing unit increases jail administrators’ frustration while they try to cope with either crowding or classification issues.



Source: BJS Bulletin, *Jails and Jail Inmates 1993-1994*.

Figure 1. Number of Beds and Percentage of Jails with Those Numbers

NEEDS ASSESSMENT PHASE

The needs assessment phase of the facility development process is when the local jurisdiction begins to explore such questions as:

- How many beds should be constructed.
- What security levels are required.
- What size the housing units should be.
- How the jail is currently being used.
- How the jail will be used in the future.
- The program needs of the inmates.
- The best options for meeting those needs.

Many needs assessment activities focus on collecting and analyzing data. Typically, jurisdictions conduct three types of statistical analysis. These analyses produce:

1. Historical trends, which describe recent patterns of average daily populations, the number of bookings, and the lengths of stay in the jail;
2. A population forecast, which identifies the number of beds that the local jurisdiction will need; and

3. A profile of inmates held at the jail, including demographic, criminal history, and arrest and release information.

Historical Trends

Historical trends help planners understand the factors that have shaped the jail population. As a result, they are the basis for good planning for the female inmate population. Each jurisdiction should:

- Calculate and chart the average daily population of women held in the jail,
- Chart the number of women booked in the jail, and
- Calculate the length of stay of female inmates.

It is important to know if the trends for male and female inmates are similar, as they are often very different. Differences may mean that:

- Program needs may be different, based on different lengths of stay,
- Female inmates are currently treated differently by the system.

One of the most important differences between the male and female inmate populations that should be considered during the needs assessment phase is the degree of variation in counts, often called a “peaking factor.” A peaking factor is the ratio or percent that results from dividing peak counts (usually the top 10%) in any year by the average daily population (ADP) for that same year. Table 2 shows just how different this can be for the female inmate population in a county.

Table 2. Average and Peak ADP for Male and Female Inmates

Year	Male ADP	Peak Male ADP	Peaking Factor	Female ADP	Peak Female ADP	Peaking Factor
1988	41.5	52.1	125.7%	2.8	4.3	155.8%
1989	52.2	64.7	123.9%	4.7	7.5	161.3%
1990	58.7	71.4	121.6%	7.1	12.1	170.2%
1991	62.2	77.3	124.2%	9.3	14.7	158.1%
1992	68.3	81.6	119.4%	8.7	13.9	159.8%
1993	67.1	82.7	123.2%	7.3	11.9	163.9%
1994	69.1	84.6	122.4%	6.3	10.2	161.9%
1995	71.3	85.2	119.5%	5.5	9.7	175.7%

Source: Stearns County, St. Cloud, Minnesota Master Planning Study, 1995, Voorhis Associates, Inc.

These numbers show that the female inmate population’s peak counts were no less than 156% of the female ADP and were as high as 176%. The peak population of male inmates was as low as 120% of ADP and as high as 126%. If the county planned its future housing capacity for women based on the “average” peaking factor of approximately 125%, it would seriously underestimate the number of beds needed for women.

Basic statistics such as these can be a tremendous help to local jurisdictions that are planning new or expanded facilities. Together with a sound method for forecasting jail populations, they can help establish the number of beds required. With a good female inmate profile, they can also provide information that is useful for classification, security designation, and program requirements.

Population Forecasting

Inmate population forecasts are the best predictor of future facility needs, assuming that the criminal justice system continues to operate as it has in the past. However, particularly in the case of female inmates, things change.

Space Shortages Result in Diverting Women. In many of the older, linear jails with open bargate cellblocks, holding female inmates can be very problematic. The cellblocks are typically all the same size, and it may be difficult to meet the requirements for sight and sound separation from male inmates. When the capacity of the women's housing area is reached, the facility operator has no ability to move women elsewhere in the jail. As a result, women are diverted from jail more frequently than men in some systems.

Sentencing Methods Influence the Female Population. It used to be a very common practice to forecast jail populations using the "at risk" population (typically males between the ages of 18 and 28), which basically excluded women from the forecast. However, many states have shifted toward mandatory, gender-neutral sentences for a variety of offenses. For instance, anyone convicted of driving under the influence will serve the mandatory sentence, resulting in more sentenced men **and women** in the local jail.

The Female Inmate Profile

Many jurisdictions assume that there are no differences between the male and female inmate populations. As shown in Table 3, however, women are less likely to be charged with a violent offense than men, but more likely to be charged with a substance abuse offense. This suggests some significant differences in the need for both facility bed space and program space (e.g., less high-security bed space and more substance abuse programming space).

Needs Assessment Warning Signs

In the needs assessment, several warning signs may suggest that a county's female inmate population might change when a new facility opens.

Table 3. Most Serious Charges Against Male and Female Jail Inmates

Type of Charge	Female	Male
Violent	13.3%	23.5%
Property	31.9%	29.9%
Drug	33.6%	21.9%
Public Order	19.0%	23.2%
Other	2.2%	1.5%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Source: BJS Report, *Women in Jail 1989, 1992*.

1. Are there differences of more than one or two percentage points between the number of women arrested and the number of women booked?
How different is this from the pattern for men?
2. Are there differences of more than one or two percentage points between the number of women booked and the female percentage of the average daily population? How different is this from the pattern for men?

If there are significant differences between arrests and bookings or in the treatment of comparably charged men and women, a jurisdiction might expect that the female inmate population will be different in the new facility. This is due to the propensity of the criminal justice system to fill all available beds and the likelihood that a new jail would have more beds for women.

Needs Assessment Results

The needs assessment phase gives a local jurisdiction a valuable opportunity to understand its female inmates and their specific needs. With a little additional consideration, jurisdictions can anticipate how the female population might increase or decrease in a new facility. At the end of this phase, jurisdictions will know:

1. How many jail beds they will construct for female inmates,
2. How these beds may be divided among the security levels, and
3. Why their female population is in custody.

These basic facts become the foundation on which the pre-architectural program for the facility is developed.

PRE-ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAMMING PHASE

If the needs assessment phase is when jurisdictions decide to do something, the pre-architectural programming phase is when they decide what to do. During pre-architectural programming, jurisdictions typically decide:

1. How all of the basic programs and services will be provided to facility users, including inmates;
2. How much and what types of space will be constructed;
3. How spaces will be arranged;
4. What specialized services will be delivered; and
5. How these specialized services will be delivered.

Perhaps because the number of female inmates, particularly in small jails, is limited, jurisdictions tend to assume that what works for male inmates will also work for women. In addressing pre-architectural programming issues, jurisdictions should consider the above questions from the perspective of both male and female inmates.

Classification

A jail's classification system needs to be "in synch" with the facility. A well-designed jail provides for separation of the various classification and custody levels of inmates. Most new facilities effectively provide for separation of the male population. However, jurisdictions often forget that all of the classifications that apply to the male population also apply to the female population. Women may not be incarcerated in the same numbers, or at the same time, but eventually even the smallest jail will encounter female inmates on work release and those who require special management, disciplinary housing, or high-security housing. In the past, jurisdictions tended to think of women as comprising a single classification level.

This issue is complicated by the fact that the economics of jail staffing strongly suggest that one staff post should be used to supervise the female housing areas-and often that post may need to perform other duties as well. In most jails, the number of inmates either observed or supervised by a single officer is the most essential aspect of efficient jail staffing. To stretch budget dollars, most local jails attempt to achieve a ratio of 1 officer to 48 or more inmates. As a result, women tend to be grouped with at least one male classification, further establishing the concept of "women as one classification" in the minds of facility operators.

This approach runs contrary to good classification practice. Most jail administrators frown on the idea of housing male work release inmates with male inmates who do not have access to the outside world, but routinely house female work release inmates in the same area as other female inmates. Most jail administrators feel strongly that special management male inmates, such as those in administrative segregation, need to be separated from general population inmates, but allow women who should be treated as special management to be housed with other women because there is no other option. During pre-architectural programming, jail operators should:

1. Use their profile data to determine the number of women who fall into each classification category; and
2. Determine the best strategies, such as sub-dayrooms and "flex housing," to provide for classification separations within the female housing unit(s).

For more information on classification of female jail inmates, *see Women in Jail: Classification Issues* by Tim Brennan and James Austin (NIC 1997).

Population Variability

During the needs assessment phase, most jurisdictions discover that the female inmate population varies more than the male population. For example, a jail that has a 10-bed housing unit for women may have a female population of 16 on one day, but 6 on another. A challenge for pre-architectural programming is to determine the best strategy to address this variability while staying within the project budget.

Flex Housing. One approach to variability is to develop housing areas that can be used by either male or female inmates. This approach, called "flex housing," also offers additional separation capability

for the male population when the space is not required for women. In pre-architectural programming, several issues should be considered:

1. Do the sight lines around both the women's housing unit and the flex housing unit provide for sight and sound separation? Do both units provide adequate privacy in the placement of showers and toilets?
2. Is the number of toilets consistent with standards for female housing units?*

Coed Approaches. Coed housing is a relatively radical concept for jails. While complete sight and sound separation of men and women in the housing areas is standard practice, a handful of jails have developed some types of coed housing for two specific populations: mental health and work release.

At least two jails in this country operate coed housing units for mental health populations. Both use direct supervision and staff the units with teams of mental health and corrections professionals. The units are configured to include areas within the dayroom and unit that can be made "off limits" at specific times, and they operate with a considerable amount of lockdown time. Both jails are located in states that exercise strict control over jail standards, and at least one has been accredited by the American Correctional Association.

For the work release population, more "ifs" apply. The basic issues are:

1. Whether the work release area can be a "community residential" facility, separate from the jail (basically a non-secure program); and
2. Whether the state has standards or regulations that preclude this option.

No standard requires sight and sound separation of male and female residents in community residential facility.

Residential facilities provide for separate sleeping areas, but allow male and female residents to share common day space and program space.

It is worth noting that using coed areas is a common practice in small juvenile detention facilities and is completely consistent with professional standards. The issue depends on the level of supervision provided. While coed areas may not be the preferred choice for most jails, they may be suitable for specific program areas.

Special Needs and Interests of Female Inmates

During the pre-architectural programming phase, planners should consider how all of the basic services offered in the facility are used by female inmates and the concerns that relate exclusively to women.

*American Correctional Association standards require toilets in a ratio of 1:8 for women and 1: 12 for men. Substitution of urinals for toilets in flex housing units is inappropriate.

Medical and Health-Related Issues. Staff of jail medical programs often feel that female inmates use medical services more than their male peers, which suggests that easy access to medical services is important. In addition, because some women are pregnant during their incarceration, traditional jail bunks and fixed-seating arrangements in the dayroom or at dining room tables may present both safety and comfort issues. These issues are easily addressed by providing some non-fixed seating.

Visiting Issues. Most jails are currently moving toward non-contact (security) visiting because of the increased staffing required for contact visiting. However, although standards may not require contact visiting and the jail may not want to provide it, there is a strong possibility that contact visiting may actually be **ordered** for some women in custody. More than two-thirds of all women in custody have children under the age of 18 who were living with them prior to incarceration.* While the proportion of women whose children are placed in foster care or an institution is relatively small (less than 10%),* the courts have frequently required contact visiting for these inmates.

As a result, a county needs to consider where jail space, such as an attorney-client visiting area, would be provided for this type of visit. Some local jails are merging the visiting function with a specific program, such as developing parenting skills. Since women in custody are more likely to be the custodial parent than their male peers, appropriate space for this type of programming might best be located in proximity to both the female housing unit and the visitors' entrance.

Coed or Same-Gender Activity and Treatment Programming. This issue is particularly difficult for small jails. The competing forces are cost, time, values, and specific program needs and interests. It costs money and staff time to provide programs for inmates, and providing separate activities for men and women requires additional staff time. If volunteers are used to conduct programs, staff time is also required for processing them in and out of the jail. Time also acts as a barrier to separate programs because of the desire to fit program activities into a short program day (typically one shift in small jails) and the fact that activity spaces are likely to be centralized or shared spaces. These issues force jails toward coed programming.

On the other hand, most jail administrators seem to prefer to separate male and female inmates in all aspects of operation. Because 40% of women in custody have been a victim of either physical or sexual abuse prior to their incarceration,* the dynamics of coed programming can present unwanted consequences for some of them. In those areas likely to be influenced by these dynamics, same-gender programming is needed for female inmates. Women in custody may also have different interests in some programming areas, such as recreation.

As a result, a jurisdiction needs to consider options that will allow for the same programs to be offered separately for male and female inmates, as well as gender-specific programming. In pre-architectural programming, a jurisdiction should consider that:

1. Spaces that are likely to be heavily used by female inmates should be easily accessible to them.

*BJS Report, *Women in Jail* 1989, 1992.

2. Multi-use program spaces should be readily available to the female housing areas.
3. Benefits may derive from decentralizing some recreational activities for women to be at or adjacent to their housing area.

Supplementing Programs for Women. Even a new jail will not provide for all the needs of the female inmate population. In the absence of additional program development, particularly in small jails, little will change for female inmates other than their immediate environment.

One approach for addressing the special program needs of female inmates is to locate resources in the community that work specifically with women and find ways to either broker these programs into the jail or develop a bridge or referral program. This approach has the added benefit of allowing the women to continue with programs following release. Such community services and programs might include a domestic violence victims' assistance program, a women's health program, a women's shelter, or self-help groups. Referral information should be readily available in the jail.

Equal Access

The courts have ruled that female inmates have a legal right to equal access to programs and services. This causes difficulties in small jails when the jail requires complete separation of men and women in program activities. Because the population of women is much smaller than that of men and the demand for access to shared-use spaces is high, in practice women have seldom been afforded the same degree of access to program activities.

This creates the greatest problem, at least from a legal perspective, in the area of work assignments because, in many states, work is tied to the ability to earn "good time." Traditionally, work assignments in a jail have been limited to inmate worker or trusty jobs, including kitchen, laundry, and maintenance work. In the 1980s and 1990s many jurisdictions expanded these opportunities to include community service work outside the facility. Few small facilities can offer equal opportunities for work assignments to male and female inmates. Jurisdictions that cite the problem of supervising inmate workers will not prevail if that rationale is used to deny female inmates access to work assignments.

As a result, jurisdictions should determine during pre-architectural programming:

1. How equal access to work assignments will be provided to female inmates.
2. Which programs will be coed; which will be same-gender; and which might be either, depending on the nature of the programs and the classification levels of the inmates to whom they are provided.

For an in-depth discussion of legal issues, see *Women in Jail: Legal Issues* by William C. Collins and Andrew W. Collins (NIC 1996).

Supervision Strategies

While many jails have taken the position that female officers may supervise male inmates, relatively few allow male officers to supervise female inmates. Some state standards or caselaw **prohibit** the

supervision of female inmates by male officers. Although physical searches of inmates must be done by staff of the same gender, there will be times when male staff will supervise female inmates, particularly in small jails. This is a difficult issue for local jurisdictions, which must balance the rights to privacy of the female inmate, the security concerns of the jail, the potential for false accusation of a male officer, and the possibility of inappropriate actions (accidental or deliberate) by male staff. During pre-architectural programming, jurisdictions need to consider how the jail design can allow staff to easily observe the housing unit, while also providing for the privacy of female inmates, particularly in toilet and shower areas.

Many jurisdictions planning new jails are exploring the concept of direct supervision (an inmate management style in which corrections officers are posted in the dayroom of a housing unit to supervise inmates). In the past, direct supervision was often thought to be only for large facilities. However, over the past 10 years, direct-supervision units began to appear in facilities as small as 75 beds. To make direct supervision feasible in terms of cost, housing units must be large enough to justify a staff post. In smaller facilities, female units are often not large enough for direct supervision. As a result, facility operators should consider intermediate steps, such as assigning an officer to the housing unit for part of the shift to provide increased interaction while supplementing other styles of supervision.

Meeting the needs of incarcerated women can also be advanced by providing specialized training for staff who will work with them. The training should include a variety of topics, ranging from substantive knowledge of the resources available in the jail and the community to interpersonal communications and training that increases staff awareness of the concerns of female inmates.

DESIGN PHASE

The majority of jails in the United States have less than 50 beds. At any given time, typically three to five women are incarcerated in most of these jails, and this number may only go as high as nine on a peak day. The small size of the female inmate population, in conjunction with classification requirements, presents special design challenges for jail planners.

Space Programming Considerations

Once the needs assessment is done and the number and types of beds for women are established, the next step is to identify the space requirements for the female population. Jurisdictions have often considered the female unit as just another housing unit and assigned the same spaces as would be appropriate for a typical male unit. However, the space requirements for the female housing unit should be driven by a different set of program, operational, and geometric assumptions.

For example, dayroom space is often assumed to be 35 square feet (s.f.) per inmate. If the housing pod has 24 cells, the dayroom is 840 net s.f., a space approximately 28 x 30 feet. If the female unit has six cells as shown in Figure 2, the female dayroom by this calculation will have 210 s.f. (6 x 35), a space roughly 14 x 15 feet. The dayroom usually accommodates tables and chairs, a passive

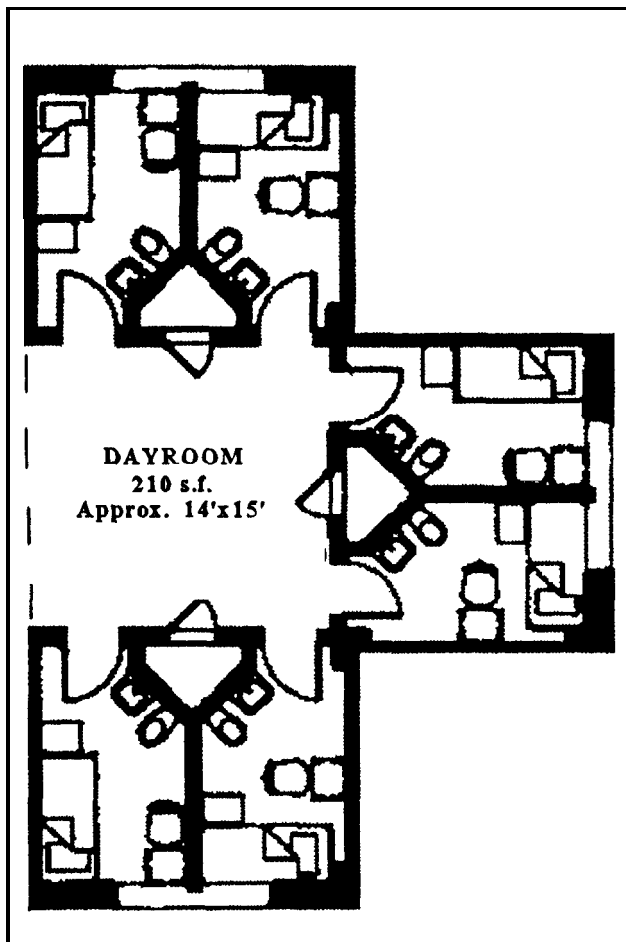


Figure 2. Sample Six-Bed Pod with 210 s.f. Dayroom

recreation area, circulation from the entry to the showers and the cells, windows to bring in daylight, and perhaps access to outdoor recreation. A 210 s.f. dayroom space does not adequately provide for these functions. In addition, it is desirable for the cells to open to the dayroom for visual surveillance.

To provide space for these relationships, the net square footage is multiplied by a grossing factor, or an *efficiency factor*.⁷ Because the baseline number for the women's dayroom is so much smaller than the typical male unit, the grossing factor will have to be greater than that used for the male unit.

As a way to envision this, consider that the women's dayroom shown in Figure 2 has 58 feet of perimeter (4 sides, two of which are 14' long and two of which are 15'). This perimeter has to accommodate the six cells, each of which is 8 feet wide from the midpoint of the wall of one cell to the midpoint of the wall of the adjacent cells. Just fitting the cells around the dayroom will take 48 linear feet (6' x 8'), leaving only 10 feet (58' minus 48') for the entry sallyport, showers, windows, officers' toilet, janitor closet, telephones, officer's station, and service

pantry. The smaller space, with less perimeter, is less able to accommodate the basic elements needed in and around the housing unit. Therefore, the smaller the number of cells, the greater the grossing factor will have to be to accommodate the fixed dimensions of all the doors, windows, cabinets, etc.

Allowing adequate floor space is not intended to "make life easy for inmates"; it is essential to improve visual openness and make it easier for the corrections officer to see, hear, and supervise inmates. Figure 3 shows a dayroom appropriately sized to accommodate the necessary functions, which are laid out to allow adequate space for pod entry, access to support areas and recreation, and an officer's station located to maximize supervision.

⁷The grossing factor is a ratio between the gross square footage (g.s.f.) of an area (which includes circulation, wall thicknesses, mechanical space—all of which must be constructed as part of the building) and the useable or net square footage (n.s.f.) of the same space. A typical grossing factor for housing is 1.7. For every 1 n.s.f. constructed, an additional .7 s.f. must be provided.

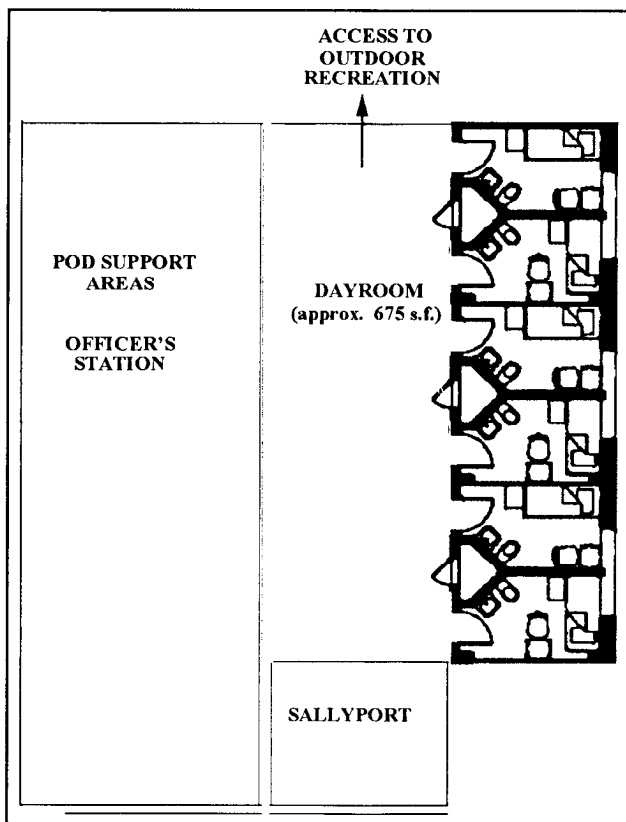


Figure 3. Sample Pod with Dayroom Sized for Necessary Support Functions

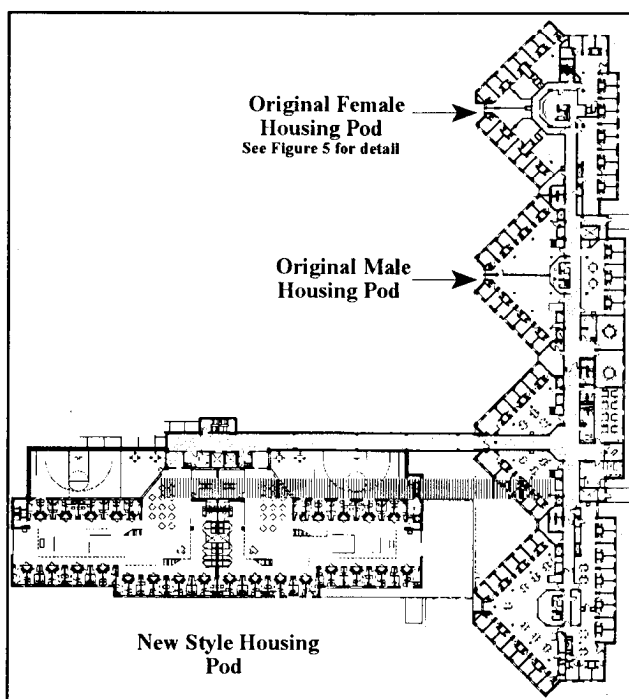


Figure 4. Dutchess County Jail, Poughkeepsie, New York

Design and Layout Issues

Podular Remote vs. Direct Supervision. The floor plan in Figure 4 shows the Dutchess County Jail in Poughkeepsie, New York. The original jail, opened in 1984, is a podular remote design. Each male pod has 14 cells. To accommodate the diverse female population, the original designer subdivided a pod into slices to separate women by classification levels. This is an example of how a rigid building design practically dictates that the female unit will be oddly shaped and have less visibility from the control area.

The new direct-supervision podular housing units for male inmates each have 50 cells and direct access to the outside. The triangular geometry of the older design allows daylight to only enter the cells, not the dayroom. The new design allows daylight to enter the dayroom and all cells and provides ready access to the recreation deck and program areas, as well as open lines of sight.

Thin Slices of the Pie. Many modern jails are designed using triangular wedge- or pie-shaped housing pods, and the officer sits in a control booth at the apex of the triangle. To provide for the various classifications of female inmates, the designer will often subdivide the larger triangle into several smaller pie-shaped pieces, still keeping the control booth at the apex. Although this appears to be the easiest and most cost-effective option, it often presents obstacles to inmate supervision and surveillance.

Figure 5 shows a wedge-shaped pod that was subdivided into smaller units for female inmates. The resulting units have “stretched” shapes that funnel down toward the control booth. The ability of the officer to see all areas in these “slices of the pie” is hindered and may result in serious safety, security, and operational problems.

Don't overlook surveillance and safety concerns because of the straightjacket of geometry!

Flex Space for Housing. Another reason that “slicing the female housing pie” does not always make sense is that this strategy cannot respond well to the variability in female offender counts and the corresponding changes in classification levels. Simply putting a door between units does not answer the challenge to design a housing unit that can be occupied one day by inmates of one classification level and the next day be split into two or more distinct zones for a few days and then revert back.

Figure 6 is a section drawing of such a flexible housing unit, showing a two-story dayroom with cells along the edge at each level. Adjacent to the lower-level cells is an area with solid and glazed walls, which can function as a separate dayroom. The control booth officer can see the lower cell fronts through the glazing of the lower dayroom. When housing women of all one classification, the lower dayroom doors can be left open so that the upper and lower dayrooms operate as one. When women of two different classifications must be housed, the doors to the lower dayroom are locked and the lower unit becomes a separate area.

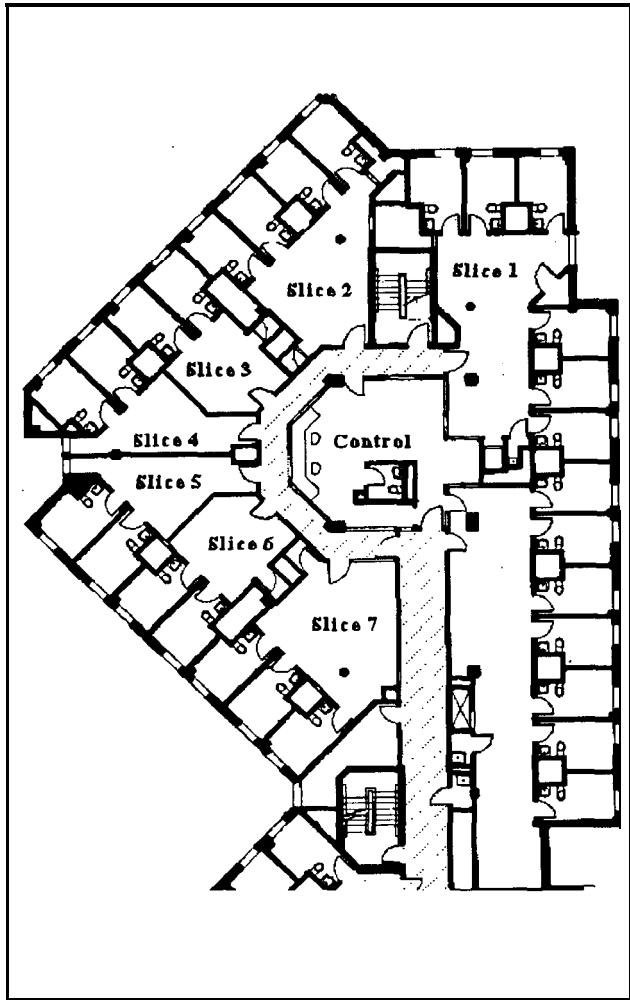


Figure 5. Illustration of “Pieces of the Pie”

Privacy and Supervision Strategies. Since female corrections officers were first used in male units over 10 years ago, privacy in toilet and shower areas has been an issue. There may be times when male officers have to supervise female inmates, especially in smaller jails.

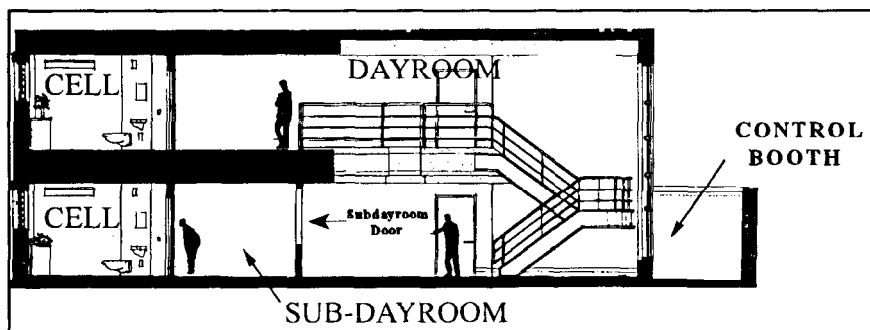


Figure 6. Pod Section of Flexible 2-Story Housing Unit

To provide privacy in toilet areas inside the cell, designers should consider the angle of view from the cell door vision panel and the location of the toilet. A short wall partition approximately 3 feet high adjacent to the toilet can provide an appropriate shielding of the lower

body when viewed from the cell door. Likewise, creative design of partitions in the shower areas can provide partial screening that meets the needs of both privacy and security.

Visiting. Access to visiting for women should be easily accomplished by a direct route. As shown in Figure 7, in the Hudson County Youth Detention Center, the female housing unit is located close to the visiting area and is accessible via the main corridor without passing by the male housing units. This flexibility allows detention staff to have either same-gender or coed visiting without disruption or distraction.

All visits are contact and most take place in a large (600 s.f) room. A separate contact visit room allows visits with children and related programs without using the main visit room. Both visit rooms are adjacent to the security perimeter, and visitors enter through a screening area and security vestibule.

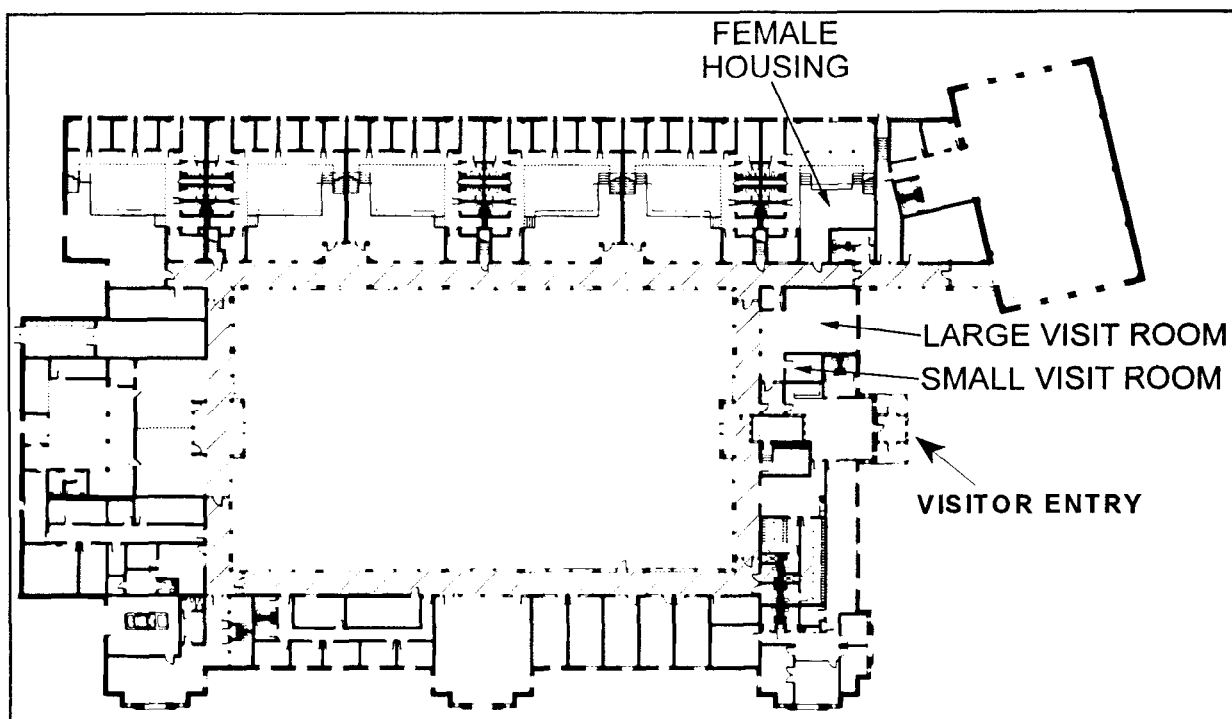


Figure 7. Visiting Areas at Hudson County Youth Detention Center, Jersey City, New Jersey

Nursery and Living Areas. Some jurisdictions permit women who give birth during their jail stay to have their newborn live with them for a period of time. If allowing for this possibility, jail operators and the architect will have to plan for the necessary equipment (e.g., a bassinet, changing table, storage, etc.). It will be equally important to design and locate the shared mother/infant room to maintain security and ensure that the newborn will not disturb the routine of the staff and inmates, especially during the night hours, and to provide for the infant's nap time. In a small jail, it may be cost-prohibitive to dedicate space to a cell with a nursery that would only be used infrequently.

Program Space. Most small jails attempt to schedule program activities during one shift to provide adequate staff coverage for movement and program supervision. When men and women are separated in program areas, additional space may be needed to provide equal access for women. If the jurisdiction ever changes to coed programming, some program areas might become redundant. These areas should be located so they can be easily converted to other uses or combined into larger spaces.

The circulation path for both men and women should be clean, adequately wide, well lit, and easy to observe. Jail design is more space efficient and less expensive when both genders use the same circulation path. Corridors are easy to manage when they have open lines of sight, few or no corners or blind alleys, and are wide enough to allow inmates to pass each other without interference.

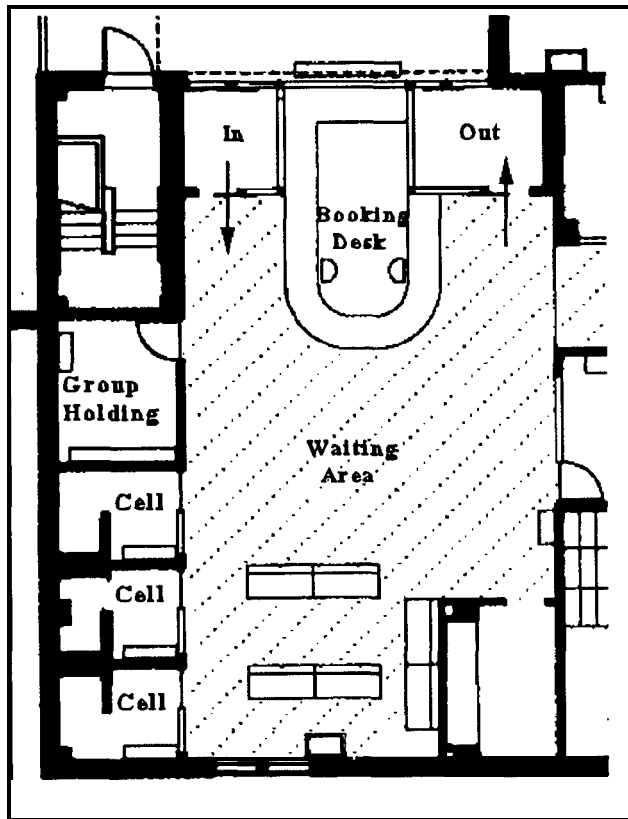


Figure 8. Open Booking Area at Dutchess County Jail, Poughkeepsie, New York

Booking Areas. Figure 8 shows the open booking area concept, which has been in use for more than 15 years. Both male and female arrestees sit in an open area while waiting their turn to be booked, processed, and admitted to the jail. A number of cells with glazed fronts and toilets are available if arrestees are uncooperative. Personal privacy must be maintained in the layout of these cells.

Coed Approaches. The separation of male and female inmates has been a “given” in most jails. However, other secure institutions, including juvenile detention, community corrections, and forensic facilities, have developed coed programs. In some specialized areas, such as forensic housing units, local jails have begun to experiment with the concept of not only coed programming, but also coed housing.

Delaware Forensic Mental Health Facility.

The new 42-bed forensic facility at the Delaware State Hospital (DSH), illustrated in Figure 9, shows how the economic considerations of staffing and building layout resulted in a coed

housing configuration. The forensic facility holds inmates determined to be incompetent to stand trial, being tested to determine competence, and transferred from the department of corrections (DOC) classified as “guilty but mentally ill.”

The facility is operated by the Delaware State Hospital using Department of Human Service personnel, but security is dictated by the DOC. The management of the facility is geared toward therapeutic and diagnostic functions but maintains a keen sense of the security issues inherent to a mentally disturbed population. The layout of the sleeping rooms, toilets, and program space around a central courtyard promotes visibility, keeps movement confined to a limited zone, eliminates hard-to-

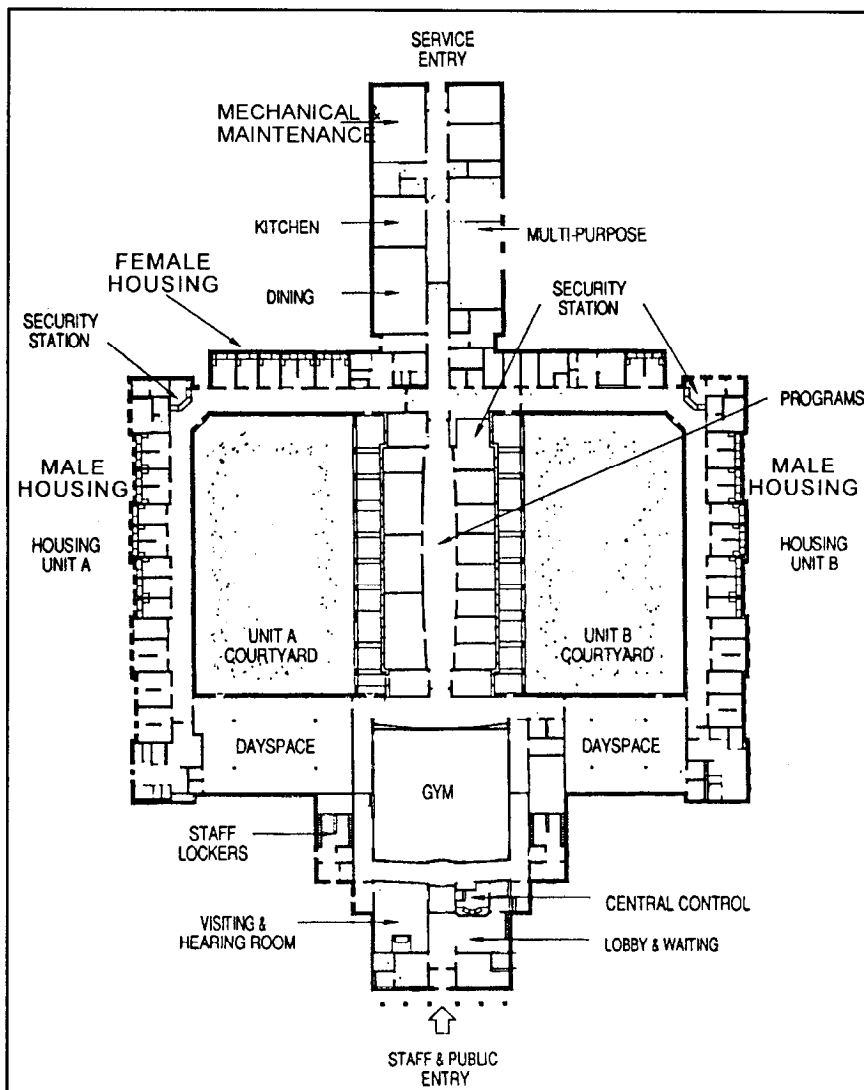


Figure 9. Coed Pod (Housing Unit A) at Delaware Forensic Mental Health Facility, Wilmington, Delaware

supervise areas, and allows a lot of daylight. This facility has a secure building envelope and a single fence around it. Internally all movement is controlled, the housing units are direct supervision, and two inmates share each sleeping room. The coed pod has 24 beds (18 male and 6 female), and the all-male pod has 18 beds.

During design, there was a strong desire to segregate the men into two populations based on behavior. DSH staff realized it would require additional staff to segregate women in a third housing area. It became evident that two housing units would require a simpler design than three and that two housing units organized around the interior courtyard would be easier to operate. The longer this option was considered, the more sense it made, especially since one of the

primary goals of the mental health unit is to reinforce normal socialization and life skills. Supervision had to be arranged to prevent sexual predation in the coed pod, but this was also true with an all-male unit. Only men with a demonstrated ability to interact appropriately with women, based on behavioral and criminal history, are permitted to live in the coed unit. Sleeping rooms and toilet facilities are separate, but dining, programs, and recreation are coed.

CONCLUSION

Planning for female inmates in small jails presents a variety of challenges to owners and designers. The key issues are:

- **Space Allocation and Housing-**The problems associated with developing good sight lines in smaller housing units like those typically occupied by female inmates require that space allocations be calculated differently during the pre-architectural programming phase. The female dayroom area allocations will be larger.
- **The Need for a Variety of Housing** Classifications-Female inmates need just as many classification levels as male inmates, but the ability to provide the small number of cells for each classification level is challenged by the geometry typically used for jail design. Flexible use of day space is one solution.
- **Privacy and Supervision-Layout** of cells **and** shower areas must provide shielding of female occupants in a way that preserves privacy without compromising security.
- **Visiting, Program, and Booking** Space-These areas can be either mixed- or single-gender. Scheduling is one way to provide segregation; design strategies provide alternate ways to achieve the same goals.
- **Coed Facilities-Coed** facilities may work for some populations. Good design can help staff maintain visual control and ease of circulation.

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