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Review of Department of Correctional Services'
Research on Female Commitments

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ACQUISITIONS

REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONAL SERVICES'
RESEARCH ON FEMALE COMMITMENTS

The Department receives numerous questions on female offender issues. These questions include:

1. How have the characteristics of female inmates changed over time?
2. What is the profile of female inmates?
3. How do women under custody compare to men under custody?
4. What percentage of women recidivate?
5. What percentage of the women under custody are mothers?
6. What crimes did the female inmates commit?

The Office of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation has addressed these issues in a series of reports on women under the Department's custody. The purpose of this review is to briefly discuss these reports to facilitate readers' requests for the actual reports. This review provides a general picture of the kind of research the Department has done in this area.

A. TRENDS IN THE FEMALE INMATE POPULATION

These reports contain extensive information designed to reflect changes which have occurred in the female inmate population over several years.

1. "Characteristics of Female Inmates Held Under Custody, 1975 through 1985"

This report provides a statistical profile of the changes in the Department's female inmate population during the 11 year period 1975 through 1985. Information is provided on variables such as crime of commitment, first or second felony offender status, prior adult record, minimum and maximum sentence length, age, ethnic status, years of education, marital status, region of commitment, and occupational status.

2. "An Examination of the Trend of Female New Commitments, 1976 through 1984"

This report provides information on female new commitments to Department custody over the nine year period 1976 through 1984. The focus of this report is changes in the number of women committed, the crime of commitment, and the impact of second and persistent felony offender legislation.

B. COMPARISON AND PROFILE REPORTS

3. "Comparison of Male and Female Inmates Under the Department's Custody: June 1, 1983"

This report compares males and females under the Department's custody in terms of county of commitment, ethnic background, education, commitment age, conviction crime, and prior record.

4. "A Comparison of Women Under Custody: 1912 and 1982"

This second comparison report concerns women under custody in 1912 and 1982. The 1912 information was obtained from the Annual Report of the Superintendent of State Prisons, a publication put out yearly as part of the budget request to the state legislature. The women under custody in 1912 were housed at the State Prison at Auburn, comprising 2% of the under custody population as opposed to 3% in 1982.

5. "An Examination of the Trend of Female New Commitments: 1960 to 1982"

This report researches the trend of female new commitments for crime from 1960 to 1982. Examined are the number of commitments for felony versus non-felony and violent versus non-violent offenses.

6. "Trend in Female Offenders Under the Department's Custody: 1978 through 1984"

This paper examines the trend in the number of female offenders under the Department's custody from 1978 through 1984. This analysis considers the impact of new commitments, second felony and violent felony laws, and number of releases.

7. "Profile of Women Under Custody: March 1985"

This report provides a profile of women under the Department's custody as of March 1985. Information on the offense, sentence, family background, and demographics are presented.

C. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

8. "Domestic Violence and Incarcerated Women: Survey Results"

In July of 1985, a survey on domestic violence was administered to the female inmate population at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The purpose of this survey was to gather information on the issue of domestic violence and incarcerated women. This report presents the data from the survey results.

D. RECIDIVISM RESEARCH

9. "Analysis of Low Return Rate Among Female Offenders"

The purpose of this report is to analyze the recurring findings of Department research that a lower percentage of female offenders are returned to the Department's custody than male offenders. The cohort used to examine recidivism was the 1975 release group. Conviction crime, prior record, and age upon commitment are compared for male and female offenders.

E. REPORTS ON WOMEN COMMITTED FOR HOMICIDE

10. "Survey of 1980 New Commitments for Murder/Homicide Involving Family Members"

This report examines male and female new commitments in 1980 for all homicide cases in order to develop an estimate of the number of victims who are related to the offender. Approximately 13% of male homicide commitments in 1980 involved family members as victims. However, 44% of the female new commitments for homicide involved family members. "Family members" are defined as legal or common-law spouse, paramour, children of the offender or spouse, parents and grandparents.

11. "1981 Female New Commitments for Homicide"

This report focuses solely on the 50 female new commitments in 1981 for murder, manslaughter, and criminally negligent homicide. Topics discussed include the offender's role, the offender's relationship to the victim, as well as the type of weapon used.

F. INMATE MOTHERS

12. "Bedford Hills Nursery Mothers Follow-Up"

This report is a follow-up study of the 28 women who had babies born in 1981 and 1982 and participated in the Nursery Program at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The focus is on the custody of the infant and other children following release.

13. "Survey of Nursery Programs in Ten States"

This report describes a survey done of ten states to see what kind of nursery programs exist for women who have babies while incarcerated. States with a female under custody population of 250 or more were included. None of the surveyed states had a nursery program where the infants return to the prison.

G. TIME SERVED

14. "Time Served Among Female Releases, 1978 through 1983"

This report examines the average time served for female offenders in state prison over the release years 1978 through 1983. Although this study shows a moderate increase in average time served over these years for women, it also shows that in comparable offense categories, female commitments serve less time than male commitments.

H. BEDFORD HILLS CLASSIFICATION DATA

The data used in preparing this series of reports is the Classification Questionnaire, a comprehensive self-report survey which was distributed at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility during reception. All women who were committed to the Department's custody were processed through that facility, spending their

first few weeks in a classification process where educational, medical, and psychological tests were administered. The Classification Questionnaire covered a wide range of topics including family, offense, victims, drugs and alcohol, and prior record.

15. "Female Commitments 1982: The Family"

This report examines the data collected on the family for the women committed to the Department in 1982. Two different aspects of the family are discussed. Childhood background and current family situation. Specific areas include women as mothers, physical and sexual abuse, custody of children and prior employment.

16. "Female Commitments 1982: The Offense"

As in the preceding report, this data is based on 1982 female commitments to the Department. However, the focus in this report is the offender's perception of the current offense, including their role in the crime, co-offender, influence of drugs and alcohol, relationship to victim and factors leading to crime.

17. "Family Situations of Selected 1981 Female Commitments"

This is the first of three reports written on 1981 female commitments to the Department. The purpose of this report is to discuss the family situations of the women prior to the current incarceration. Particular attention is given to incarcerated women with respect to the number, age, and custody of her children. Employment and financial history, as reported by the offenders, is also presented.

18. "Family Histories of Selected Female 1981 Commitments"

This second report on 1981 female commitments examines the childhood family of the women. Topics include their attitudes towards their parents and siblings, as well as who had custody of them as children and whether they were abused as children.

19. "The Commitment Offenses of Selected 1981 Female Commitments"

This is the final report written on the 1981 female commitments to Bedford Hills. The type of offense, sentence length, offender's role, relationship to victim, and the offender's rationale for the offense are discussed.

All of the above cited research reports are available upon request. Please include the following checklist with your written requests.

Requests for these reports should be forwarded to:

Mr. Frank Tracy
Director of Program Planning,
Research and Evaluation
New York State Department of Correctional Services
Building #2, State Campus
Albany, New York 12226

Questions concerning this report series may be directed to Mr. Tracy at (518) 457-1886 or Ms. Kathy Canestrini at (518) 457-1893.

CHECKLIST

REPORTS ON FEMALE COMMITMENTS

A. Trends in the Female Inmate Population

- 1. Characteristics of Female Inmates Held Under Custody, 1975 through 1985
- 2. An Examination of the Trend of Female New Commitments, 1976 through 1984

B. Comparison and Profile Reports

- 3. Comparison of Male and Female Inmates Under the Department's Custody: as of June 1, 1982
- 4. A Comparison of Women Under Custody: 1912 and 1982
- 5. An Examination of the Trend of Female New Commitments: 1960 to 1982
- 6. Trend in Female Offenders Under the Department's Custody: 1978 through 1984
- 7. Profile of Women Under Custody: March 1985

C. Domestic Violence

- 8. Domestic Violence and Incarcerated Women: Survey Results

D. Recidivism Research

- 9. Analysis of Low Return Rate Among Female Offenders

E. Reports on Women Committed for Homicide

- 10. Survey of 1980 New Commitments for Murder/Homicide Involving Family Members
- 11. 1981 Female New Commitments for Homicide

F. Inmate Mothers

- 12. Bedford Hills Nursery Mothers Follow-Up
- 13. Survey of Nursery Programs in Ten States

G. Time Served

- _____14. Time Served Among Female Releases, 1978 through 1990

H. Bedford Hills Classification Data

- _____15. Female Commitments 1982: The Family
- _____16. Female Commitments 1982: The Offense
- _____17. Family Situations of Selected 1981 Female Commitments
- _____18. Family Histories of Selected Female 1981 Commitments
- _____19. The Commitment Offenses of Selected 1981 Female Commitments