

Testimony of Debra Dexter, Warden  
Ironwood State Prison, Blythe, California  
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation  
Review Panel on Prison Rape  
Hearings on Sexual Assault and Victimization in Prisons

I will begin by thanking you for this opportunity, to discuss the Federal Prison Rape Elimination Policy as related to Ironwood State Prison (ISP). Ironwood is located 90 miles east of Palm Springs, CA, and encompasses approximately 350 acres. ISP was activated February 1, 1984 and currently houses approximately 4700 offenders on four Level III facilities and one outside Level I Minimum facility. There are approximately 1200 employees assigned who successfully operate the institution on a daily basis.

The enactment of the Federal PREA of 2003 was to ensure Correctional Facilities develop strategies to detect and to prevent sexual assault incidents in prison. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation currently requires that each employee have 4 hours of training in the field of prevention as related to sexual assaults. Additionally, we are mandated to provide a safe and humane environment free from sexual misconduct. At Ironwood State Prison we not only teach the 4 hour training, but we have included, in our Inmate Peer Education Training, a segment that addresses Sexual Misconduct and the need for Zero tolerance within the institution.

Our Peer Education Department is managed by one full time Registered Public Health Nurse and is assisted by a Facility Captain. Currently, we have 125 Inmate Peer Instructors. This includes 30 inmates assigned to each Level III Facility and 5 inmates assigned to our Level I Minimum Support Facility. The responsibility of all of the positions assigned in the Peer Education Program is to educate the inmate population on Health issues in general, and specifically, on issues relating to the institutional setting.

During the training session, 3 hours of discussion is provided on Sexually Transmitted Diseases and PREA in early intervention to help keep others safe from infection. The

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis and Sexual Misconduct are areas that the inmates receive formal training to then educate other inmates regarding health care issues.

I believe another contributing factor to our low number of reported sexual assaults is due to the ethnic breakdown of the population of the institution. Currently ISP has an average daily population of 4700 inmates, 60% of which are Hispanic. We also have a large Gang influence as related to the southern Hispanic inmates, and due to "prison politics" Sexual Assaults are not permitted. This is widely prominent in the Hispanic population.

In closing, I feel that by application of comprehensive statewide prison rape elimination policies, programs, and procedures the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation has taken a leading role in creating a safer and more humane prison environment. Zero-tolerance of staff sexual misconduct and investigation of all sexual assault allegations support this effort. In addition, with implementation of the Inmate Peer Education Program the inmates have received, or been provided, the needed information to eliminate Rape and Sexual Misconduct at Ironwood State Prison.

I DECLARE UNDER PENALTY OF PERJURY THAT THE FOREGOING IS TRUE AND CORRECT, EXECUTED ON THIS 4<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH, 2008.

DEBRA DEXTER, WARDEN

IRONWOOD STATE PRISON

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION