



To: *Angela Beecher, Warden  
Grand Valley Institution for Women  
1575 Homer Watson Blvd, Kitchener, ON, N2P 2C5*

*February 3rd, 2025*

### **CAEFS' December 2025 Advocacy Letter**

*Dear Angela,*

*We want to thank members of the institutional management team (IMT) at GVI for taking the time to meet with our advocacy team on December 15th via Teams.*

*This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution on December 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> as well as summaries of the discussion between the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and members of the institutional management team following the visit, the relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' recommendations.*

*We look forward to your response.*

*Respectfully,*

*Tise Ogunleye  
Lead Advocate*

## Accessibility of Parole Officers

**Description:** The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) received reports across all security levels indicating that Parole Officers are frequently inaccessible, and that this lack of accessibility has resulted in incomplete paperwork and a lack of preparedness related to parole hearings. Individuals shared that this issue has persisted for several months. Many reported submitting multiple requests and waiting several weeks before being able to meet with their Parole Officer.

People expressed significant frustration with this situation. They shared their understanding that it is the responsibility of Parole Officers to remain informed of upcoming deadlines for people on their caseloads, yet they increasingly feel responsible for tracking deadlines and reminding their Parole Officers of critical dates. While people expressed wanting to work collaboratively with their Parole Officers, this downloading of responsibility creates additional stress and delays in accessing conditional release and reintegration.

**Discussion:** The institutional management team (IMT) advised that Parole Officers currently do not have designated office space to meet with individuals. As a result, the current process requires individuals to submit a request, after which an appointment is scheduled when space becomes available. The IMT indicated that there is no established timeline for when office space will be secured. The IMT further requested that CAEFS bring specific cases of delays so they can look into them and attempt to resolve the issues.

## **Law & Policy:**

CD 700 s.10 (5): *The Parole Officer will facilitate the [incarcerated person's] reintegration into the community at the earliest possible time while ensuring public and staff safety in all case management decisions*

CCRA s.4 (f): *correctional decisions are made in a forthright and fair manner, with access by the [federally sentenced person] to an effective grievance procedure*

CCRA s.4(b): *the Service enhances its effectiveness and openness through the timely exchange of relevant information with victims, [incarcerated people] and other components of the criminal justice system and through communication about its correctional policies and programs to victims, [incarcerated people] and the public*

**CAEFS' Recommendations:** Ensuring that people can reliably connect with the parole officer assigned to their case supports timely conditional release, successful reintegration, and is aligned with the purpose of the Correctional Service of Canada and the principles of Creating Choices. CAEFS encourages GVI to further investigate and prevent further delays where possible.

## Access to Safe and Healthful Living Conditions

**Description:** CAEFS received several reports regarding living conditions in the medium-security unit and the maximum-security unit. It was reported to CAEFS that there was a refrigerator leak in one of the living units in medium-security, and that several other units contain ten to eleven people who are using one stove. People shared that this leads to overcrowding and rising frustrations and concerns over the overuse of the stove. In the maximum-security unit, it was reported that the ceiling collapsed into the shower of one of the pods. People shared that living in these conditions makes them feel unsafe and that they are concerned that their safety is not a priority.

**Discussion:** The IMT shared that any living unit with more than ten people has had electrical work completed and two stoves installed, with a plan to add more appliances soon. They share that the stoves are cleaned weekly and checked by staff to ensure proper hygiene and safety. They shared that the refrigerator leak was due to items that had been thawed and created excess water. Maintenance was informed, and tiles beneath the refrigerator were replaced. They shared that the ceiling collapse in the maximum-security unit was due to a pipe leaking above the shower, which has been repaired and replaced.



## Law & Policy:

CCRA s.70: *The Service shall take all reasonable steps ensure that penitentiaries, the penitentiary environment, the living and working conditions of [incarcerated people] and the working conditions of staff members are safe, healthful and free of practices that undermine a person's sense of personal dignity*

CCRR s.83 (1): *The Service shall, to ensure a safe and healthful penitentiary environment, ensure that all applicable federal health, safety, sanitation and fire laws are complied with in each penitentiary and that every penitentiary is inspected regularly by the persons responsible for enforcing those laws*

**CAEFS' Recommendations:** *Incarcerated people have the right to live in an environment that is safe, healthful, and free of practices that undermine a person's sense of personal dignity. CAEFS encourages GVI and the CSC broadly to address and be responsive to issues that concern the safety, health and overall well-being of people.*

## Impact and Reliability of Anonymous Peer Allegations

**Description:** CAEFS received reports indicating that anonymous notes written by other incarcerated people are perceived as reliable information by GVI staff. People shared that when notes are received by staff, and especially when paired with a person's past history, they are added to people's files and treated as fact. People shared that this has caused increased anxiety levels and fear that they could be punished at any time due to false statements made about them. People also shared that it has become difficult to move forward from past behaviour when they feel continuously judged for something they no longer do.

**Discussion:** *The IMT shared that anonymous notes go to the Security Intelligence Officer (SIO), who investigates and assigns a reliability code. They shared that information would not go into people's paperwork unless it had been investigated and confirmed. They shared that there is a process for paperwork corrections, if needed.*

## Law & Policy:

CCRA s.4 (f): *correctional decisions are made in a forthright and fair manner, with access by the [federally sentenced person] to an effective grievance procedure*

CCRA s.4 (c): *The Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and [federally sentenced people]*

CCRA s.41 (1): *Where a staff member believes on reasonable grounds that an [incarcerated person] has committed or is committing a disciplinary offence, the staff member shall take all reasonable steps to resolve the matter informally, where possible.*

**CAEFS' Recommendations:** CAEFS encourages GVI to respond to alleged intelligence in ways that prioritize least restrictive measures, reflect the principles of Creating Choices, and are aligned with the overall rehabilitative and reintegrative purpose of the CSC.

## Access to Culturally Sensitive Supports and Spiritual Care

**Description:** CAEFS received reports about the cancellation of the "Think 2wice" program, a program that provides culturally sensitive and trauma-informed supports for Black and Indigenous people. People shared that the program was really impactful



and provided a space for people of colour to be vulnerable and give back to their community by sharing their stories with students. The cancellation of this program was upsetting, as people shared that there is limited programming designed for Black and Indigenous peoples. The “Direct your life” program was put in place after “Think 2wice” but people reported that it is only a three-day seminar instead of an ongoing program. CAEFS also received reports regarding the church in the maximum-security unit, people shared that they would like more time to meet with the priest privately. People shared that currently, the priest comes to the door, and they feel hurried and unable to practice their religion in any meaningful way.

**Discussion:** The IMT shared that there were challenges from the beginning with facilitators and security concerns, and that GVI consulted with the region on how to proceed. They shared that additional security concerns eventually led to the cancellation of the program. They shared that the “Direct Your Life” program started and is similar, and is supported by the region, and they plan to continue with it. Regarding the reports of the church in the maximum-security unit, the IMT shared that individuals in the maximum-security unit have a room booked for the mass that they are allowed to use, and it was due to low attendance that it was changed to having the priest come to the door. They share that the room is available to be booked and that CAEFS can inform people of this.

### **Law & Policy:**

CCRA s. 4 (g): correctional policies, programs and practices respect gender, ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic differences, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and are responsive to the special needs of women, Indigenous persons, visible minorities, persons requiring mental health care and other groups;

CCRA s. 4 (c): The Service uses the least restrictive measures consistent with the protection of society, staff members and people in prison

CD 767 s. 1: The Assistant Commissioner, Correctional Operations and Programs, in consultation with the Deputy Commissioner for Women, as appropriate, will ensure delivery and monitor results of services and interventions that meet the identified needs of [ethnocultural offenders], utilizing an intersectional lens

**CAEFS’ Recommendations:** The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) has a legal obligation to provide programs and services that are responsive to people’s diverse needs, including culturally relevant and trauma-informed programming for people of colour and opportunities for meaningful spiritual practice. In line with this obligation CAEFS encourages GVI to expand programming that intentionally creates space for Black and Indigenous peoples.

### **Financial Transparency**

**Description:** CAEFS received reports that people were not receiving their pay stubs within the expected timeframe. Individuals shared that pay stubs are normally distributed biweekly on Wednesdays, but they are now being received after canteen orders have been placed. Receiving their paystubs on Wednesdays enables them to adequately budget for their expenses, such as purchasing canteen items. People reported that delays in receiving their pay stubs leave them unsure about how much money they have to spend and forcing them to wait until the next canteen ordering period, which causes delays in receiving their basic necessities.

CAEFS also received reports from the inmate committee representative in the minimum-security unit (MSU), who expressed a need for greater transparency regarding the MSU budget. House Representatives and Inmate Committee members explained that it is difficult to plan events and activities without clear information about what funds are available to them. People shared that they have spent time writing proposals for an event, only to be told there is not enough money in the budget to fund the event.



**Discussion:** The IMT confirmed that paystubs are typically distributed on Wednesdays and that canteen sheets are due on Thursday. They noted that they were not aware of delays and committed to looking into the reported issue. With respect to the minimum-security unit budget, the IMT stated that monthly financial reports are shared with the Inmate Committee at the MSU, and suggested that the challenge may relate to understanding the information provided. They indicated that they would follow up with the Manager of Programs to clarify annual budget amounts and spending details.

#### **Law & Policy:**

CD 730 s.2: *The Institutional Head: (1) Will ensure that a process is established for [inmate] payments*

CCRA s.74: *The Service shall provide [people in prison] with the opportunity to contribute to decisions of the Service affecting the population [of incarcerated people] as a whole, or affecting a group within the [incarcerated] population, except decisions relating to security matters.*

**CAEFS' Recommendations:** CAEFS appreciates the IMT's offer to follow up on the reported delays to ensure the pay stubs are distributed in a timely manner. CAEFS recommends that GVI ensure that Inmate committees are consistently provided with the resources, financial transparency, and autonomy needed to operate effectively. This will create opportunities for people to build community, contribute positively to the institutional environment, and develop transferable skills that support successful community re-entry.

