



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

February 24th, 2026

CAEFS' January 2026 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 February 2nd via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution on January 27th to 29th 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

Access to Adequate Health Care and Dental Care

Description: CAEFS continues to receive numerous reports of barriers to health and dental care. Individuals across all security levels reported experiencing prolonged wait times to see a dentist. In several instances, people described being left in severe pain that significantly interfered with their daily functioning. Rather than receiving treatment to address the underlying dental issue, individuals reported being provided only with Tylenol or antibiotics as temporary measures, allowing their conditions to worsen over time. People shared that the delays in addressing the root causes of dental concerns have led to the worsening of their condition, with some individuals resorting to removing their own teeth in an attempt to get some relief.

CAEFS also received reports indicating that healthcare services do not adequately address individuals' health concerns. People shared that their symptoms are frequently dismissed and that pain management often consists solely of Tylenol, which provides little to no relief. As a result, some individuals reported becoming so unwell that they struggle to participate in basic daily activities.

Discussion: Signed consent forms were shared. The institutional management team (IMT) shared that they will respond once they have reviewed the associated files.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 86 (1): The Service shall provide every [incarcerated person] with (a) essential health care; and (b) reasonable access to non-essential health care.

CCRA s. 70: the Service shall take all reasonable steps to 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

CD 800 s.2: The Regional Director, Health Services, will ensure:

(a) the provision of health services to [incarcerated persons] in Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) institutions and in the community, in accordance with relevant legislation, professionally accepted standards, CSC policies and practice directives

(b) implementation of procedures to monitor and evaluate the quality and timeliness of health services and in a manner that promotes patient safety and quality improvement.

CAEFS' Recommendations: Considering CSC's unique responsibility to provide safe and humane custody to people in federal penitentiaries, and wherein those same people are reliant on penitentiary staff and contractors to provide health services, referrals, emergency care, timeframes etc., CAEFS urges CSC to adopt additional measures to protect the dignity and well-being of those in its care. Access to appropriate, trauma-informed health care is essential, not only to meet community standards but also to support meaningful engagement in correctional plans and successful reintegration.

Accessibility of Parole and Parole Officers

Description: CAEFS continues to receive reports of barriers related to access to parole officers and parole hearings. Individuals reported being unable to meet regularly with their parole officers, limiting their ability to address their outstanding concerns. People also shared that they felt increasing pressure from parole officers to sign waivers consenting to a thirty-day delay of their parole hearings, as they were told that proceeding without a waiver could result in a sixty-day delay by the Parole Board. In some cases, these delays were reported to be the result of incomplete or outstanding paperwork. Individuals described this process as stressful. They also shared feeling that their needs are not being prioritized and that critical information is being withheld from them, making planning for timely reintegration challenging.



Discussion: The IMT offered to have a conversation with the parole department but stated that they required more detail or specific cases to provide a response.

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. 3: The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and human custody and supervision of incarcerated people and by assisting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and their reintegration into community as law-abiding citizens.

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: Barriers to timely parole hearings, particularly when individuals feel pressured to sign waivers or postponements, have been a longstanding reported issue at GVI. While CAEFS appreciates the IMT's efforts to follow up with individuals, this concern is systemic and requires comprehensive review and action to support safe and timely reintegration. Given the ongoing population pressures at GVI, ensuring timely access to conditional release, in collaboration with parole officers, is essential to fulfilling CSC's legislative purpose.

Financial Transparency: Inconsistent Application of Visits & Correspondence Deposit Policies

Description: CAEFS is continuing to receive reports of inconsistent policies and related to bank drafts and money orders. Individuals shared that they are provided with differing information about the requirements that must be met in order to receive bank drafts from relatives. People also reported experiencing significant delays in receiving bank drafts or money orders, even after postal tracking indicated that the items had been delivered to the institution. People shared this caused family members to be worried and caused them financial stress.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they met with Inmate Committee representatives and the Visits and Correspondence (V&C) manager to review and clarify the procedure for processing bank drafts and money orders. Management indicated that distribution typically takes two to three weeks and that they will follow up on specific cases when required.

Law & Policy:

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

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

CD 860.s.10: In order to authenticate and validate funds, non-cash items will be held for a period of up to (a). 10 working days for Canadian cheques or money orders. (b). 30 working days foreign cheques or money orders



CAEFS' Recommendations: The rate of pay for incarcerated people has not increased since the 1980s. As a result, people in federal prison are increasingly relying on money from their family and community members to be able to afford to meet their needs while incarcerated. Ensuring timely, predictable, and consistent access to moneys sent in by family and community members is therefore essential. CAEFS appreciates that the IMT has reviewed and clarified the procedure for processing bank drafts and money orders to ensure they are applied consistently across the penitentiary and ongoing efforts to clarify miscommunication and reduce barriers to receiving financial support.

Maximum-Security Unit: Access to Safe and Healthful Living Conditions

Description: CAEFS received reports of poor food quality within the maximum-security unit. Individuals reported being served undercooked meals and, at times, receiving significantly reduced portion sizes. Individuals shared that they have skipped meals due to concerns about food safety. People also reported inconsistent room temperatures, potentially linked to broken windows, resulting in some rooms being excessively hot while others remain uncomfortably cold. People shared that they are wearing additional layers to cope with inadequate heating.

Discussion: The IMT shared that specific examples would be required in order for them to follow up on the reported issues related to food quality. The IMT shared the temperature within the penitentiary is set to twenty-two degrees, but the building is big and inconsistent temperatures are common.

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: Concerns regarding food quality and temperature regulation within maximum-security units in prisons designated for women, including at GVI, continue to be consistently reported. CAEFS encourages GVI to conduct a comprehensive, systemic review of food services and environmental conditions in the maximum-security unit, rather than relying solely on individual case follow-up. Incarcerated people have the right to live in conditions that are safe, healthful, and respectful of their dignity, and addressing these longstanding concerns proactively is essential to meeting CSC's legislative obligations.

Barriers to Meaningful Participation for Non-English Speakers

Description: CAEFS received reports that non-English speaking individuals at GVI unable to meet daily expectations, secure positions, or complete core programming requirements because of language barriers. The People report that they have requested translation support to help overcome these barriers, but that they have not been provided. People shared their concern that these language barriers will prevent them from meaningfully participating in their correctional plan and working towards successful community reintegration.

Discussion: The IMT shared that the official languages of Canada are English and French are that there is no legal obligation to provide additional support for non-English speaking individuals. The IMT shared that, despite this, translation devices are provided and that they will continue to support people to meet their programming requirements.



Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 27(4): An [incarcerated person] who does not have an adequate understanding of at least one of Canada's official languages is entitled to the assistance of an interpreter (a) at any hearing provided for by this Part or the regulations; and (b) for the purposes of understanding materials provided to the [incarcerated person] pursuant to this section.

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;

CD 767 s. 9: The Institutional Head will: (a) ensure services and interventions are in line with paragraph 4(g) of the CCRA, specifically with respect to ethnic, cultural, religious, and **linguistic differences**, and are responsive to the needs of visible minorities and other groups, as they relate to the reintegration of ethnocultural [incarcerated persons]. **Emphasis added.**

CAEFS' Recommendations: Meaningful access to correctional programming, information, and reintegration supports is essential to realizing CSC's mandate and ensuring equitable participation in the reintegration process. CAEFS encourages CSC to develop a consistent, national approach to providing effective interpretation and translation services for incarcerated people, so that language is not a barrier to safety, dignity, or successful reintegration

Access to Temporary Absences

Description: CAEFS received reports of barriers to accessing both Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs) and Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTAs). Individuals reported being told by their Case Management Team (CMT) that their applications had been approved and were awaiting the Warden's final decision. People shared that they have been waiting months for a decision and shared that when they submit a request to the Warden to follow up, they are frequently redirected back to their CMT. People also shared that during this process they sometimes discover that members of their CMT have been changed without notification. This lack of communication creates further barriers in accessing members of their CMT and people shared that they are incredibly frustrated by this process.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they required examples of specific cases in order for them to discuss these reported concerns. The IMT also shared that people are notified by letter when there is change is made to their CMT.

Law & Policy:

CCRA, s. 3: The purpose of the correctional system is to contribute to a just, peaceful, and safe society by carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and human custody and supervision of incarcerated people and by assisting the rehabilitation of incarcerated people and their reintegration into community as law-abiding citizens.

CD 710-3, s. 28: In cases where CSC is the granting authority, the Institutional Head will make a decision as soon as possible, but no later than 10 days after the completion of the Assessment for Decision

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS encourages GVI to review and address the systemic barriers reported in accessing Escorted and Unescorted Temporary Absences, including prolonged delays, insufficient communication, and unreported changes to Case Management Teams. While specific examples may support individual follow-up, an individualized approach will not resolve this frequently reported, systemic concern. Transparent, timely decision-making and consistent communication are essential to ensuring individuals can meaningfully participate in their release planning and reintegration

