



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

May 1st, 2026

CAEFS' March 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 April 2nd via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution on March 24th 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tise Ogunleye', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Tise Ogunleye
Lead Advocate

Lockdown

Description: The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) received reports that a lockdown on the evening of Sunday March 8th due to a staff work refusal under section 128 of the Canadian Labour Code. Individuals incarcerated at the Grand Valley Institution (GVI) shared that this lockdown lasted for over a week and had a significant impact on their mental health and overall wellbeing. During this time, people expressed they were given limited time outdoors, experienced increased restrictive security measures, disrupted programming, and delayed health care services. People also shared that they were not regularly updated throughout the lockdown. People shared that being prevented from their regular activities while not being properly informed on the lockdown situation further added to their distress.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) confirmed that the lockdown was due to a section 128 work refusal and that this meant that they were operating with staff at a limited capacity. They shared that everything is impacted during a lockdown and they do everything to ensure that people are provided with essential services. They stated that they always communicate with people to the best of their ability but were unable to share a timeline as they did not know when the lockdown would end.

Law & Policy:

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

CCRR s. 83 (2): The Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of every [incarcerated person] and that every [incarcerated person] is (d) given the opportunity to exercise for at least one hour every day outdoors, weather permitting, or indoors where the weather does not permit exercising outdoors.

CAEFS' Recommendations: Lockdowns produce significant trauma and result in long-term adverse impacts on individuals subjected to them. CAEFS encourages CSC to develop rights and dignity supporting responses relating to lockdowns. CAEFS encourages the CSC to understand that lockdowns, especially when they last for a significant period, are a significant deprivation of free movement and liberty.

Access to Healthcare

Description: People have reported to CAEFS that there is improved access to dental care in the medium and maximum-security units, but that people in minimum-security unit still have limited access to appointments. People also shared that they have no access to offsite dental appointments, which is concerning to them. People also reported that they have been denied methadone when they are late for distribution. Another individual shared that they were denied a second round of antibiotics, despite continuing to experience symptoms.

CAEFS continues to receive reports that there are no first aid kits in living units, and that people cannot access band aids and other basic supplies when injured and are expected to wait for an officer to give them the necessary supplies. People shared that having to ask for a band aid feels unnecessary and is something that should be managed independently especially in instances where staff cannot respond immediately.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that a thorough review of the triaging process for dental issues has been completed, and gaps in services have been addressed. A more streamlined way of address people's concerns related to dental care is also reportedly in progress. The health services manager also shared with CAEFS that they do not have direct involvement in what is prescribed to people but follow the recommended guidelines for prescriptions and distributions of methadone. The IMT also shared that first aid kits are kept in a secure area and can only be accessed by alerting an officer.



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: Federally sentenced women and gender diverse people are reliant on penitentiary staff and contractors to provide health services, access to first aid kits, referrals, emergency care and access to dental care. 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.

Barriers to Reintegration

Description: CAEFS continues to receive reports that parole hearings are being deferred due to incomplete paperwork. People shared that they are frustrated and feel that the delays are impeding their ability to successfully plan for release. People have also expressed concern that they are not being given an adequate amount of money, specifically cash, upon their release from prison. People explained that having cash is more useful to them immediately post release, as it means that they do not need to go to bank, which creates opportunities for stigmatization.

Discussion: Signed consent forms were provided and individual cases discussed. The IMT shared that these specific cases have been addressed. The IMT also shared that the amount of cash given upon release is aligned with policy.

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.

CD 860 s.25: Excluding temporary work releases, all money credited to the [incarcerated person] will be given to them upon release, pursuant to [paragraph 5\(e\)](#) of the *Accountable Advances Regulations*, and following payment of any money owed to the Crown. A maximum of \$750 can be released to the inmate in cash from the petty cash funds and the remainder should be released in a Receiver General of Canada cheque.



CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates GVI's attention to delayed parole hearings and making sure the issues that people have are resolved. Barriers to timely parole hearings, particularly when individuals feel pressured to sign waivers or postponements, cause prolonged incarceration and disruptions to release planning. CAEFS further recommends that in release planning that the CSC amend the policy to provide adequate cash to individuals to promote successful and sustainable reintegration into the community.

Access to Family

Description: CAEFS received reports that some mail is confiscated, including, pictures, internet clippings, crosswords, and children's drawings. People shared that this is very upsetting as these items are part of how they maintain meaningful connection with their families. Further, they report that the reasons for these items being confiscated has not been explained.

Discussion: The IMT shared that mail is not confiscated unless there are items that are against policy but offered to follow up on the reported concerns.

Law & Policy:

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. 71(1): In order to promote relationships between inmates and the community, an inmate is entitled to have reasonable contact, including visits and correspondence, with family, friends and other persons from outside the penitentiary, subject to such reasonable limits as are prescribed for protecting the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons.

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

CAEFS' Recommendations: Meaningful access to family and community is an integral part of individual wellbeing and a necessary component for reintegration. CAEFS recommends that CSC apply consistency and greater transparency when dealing with these issues and clearly communicate reasoning for confiscated mails, especially when items are seemingly aligned with the prison's policies.

Removal from the Mother-Child program

Description: CAEFS received reports that an individual who was removed from the mother child program and was not told why and has stated that her child was left unsupervised in the process.

Discussion: The IMT shared that the individual was notified every step of the way and received documentation to explain her removal.

Law & Policy:

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

Creating Choices, Principle #5, Shared Responsibility: That states "In order to develop the support systems and continuity of service which will enable women to take responsibility for their lives, federally sentenced women must



be integrated within their communities. To accomplish this goal, the responsibilities which federally sentenced women have for children and other family members in the community must be recognized and supported".

CAEFS' Recommendations: Meaningful access to family and community is an integral part of individual wellbeing and a necessary component for reintegration. CAEFS recommends that CSC apply consistency and greater transparency when dealing with these issues and apply a trauma informed lens when dealing with sensitive cases such as removal from the Mother-Child Program. This is consistent with the principle of Shared Responsibility outlined in Creating Choices.

Reported Lack of Employment & Program Opportunities

Description: CAEFS has continued to receive reports about cuts to education, libraries, and work release programs. People share that these programs gave them a sense of purpose and encouraged them to learn skills that will be valuable upon release, explaining that the cuts to these programs are detrimental to their mental health and will impede reintegration. People in the minimum-security also shared that they would like more access to physical exercise as they feel like the current opportunities are inconsistent and unreliable. They shared that more physical exercise and access to fresh air is essential for their wellbeing.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they continue to provide diverse work opportunities and programs to the best of their ability and based on eligibility. The IMT explained that individuals at the MSU are allowed to go outside if they notify staff and can walk around the building and would follow up on reported concerns.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s.4 (c2): the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs of [incarcerated people], including correctional, educational, vocational training and volunteer programs, with a view to improving access to alternatives to custody in a penitentiary and to promoting rehabilitation;

CCRA s. 3 The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by (b) assisting the rehabilitation of [incarcerated people] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS recommends that CSC increase opportunities for meaningful employment and programming both within the penitentiary and through conditional release processes, such as work releases. programming, employment, and recreational activities are all key components of successful integration and are especially important for individuals in the women and gender diverse sector, given the Creating choices model.

