



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

May 19th, 2026

CAEFS' April 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 May 4th via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution from April 27th -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 ETA's and UTA's

Description: The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) received reports that Escorted Temporary Absences (ETA's) and Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTA's) are extremely delayed with people sharing that they have been asked by staff to withdraw their applications because they are not supported for an ETA at their current security level (people classified as medium security). People have shared that staff have said that some ETA's can only be supported if their security level is minimum.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that escorted temporary absences can be medium or minimum, and they have safety guards in place to make sure people are not told otherwise. They share that the parole officer has to sign off on a withdrawal and can clarify if an application needs to be withdrawn. They also share that things are decided within the expected timeframe.

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.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 710-3: ETAs may be granted to any inmate at any time, pursuant to [Annex C](#), except for inmates who are detained ([subsection 130\(5\)](#) of the CCRA) and are only eligible for ETAs for medical or administrative purposes.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS recommends that GVI and CSC review the current practices surrounding Escorted Temporary Absences (ETAs) and Unescorted Temporary Absences (UTAs) to ensure that applications are processed in a timely, fair, and policy-compliant manner and that communication is consistent. Access to temporary absences and other forms of conditional release are an essential component within CSC's mandate. As access to gradual release significantly improves successful reintegration outcomes, CAEFS urges CSC to further promote their access and availability.

Access to Employment and Impacts of Institutional Employment on Aging Individuals

Description: CAEFS continues to receive reports that jobs are limited in the prison, and when people put in job applications, they have to wait several months and sometimes never receive a response. People are increasingly frustrated by this as having access to work provides them with a sense of fulfillment, especially when these roles highlight an individual's strengths and skills. People have also expressed increasing concern about elderly people over sixty who are often pressured to find a job despite having physical limitations that may cause difficulties or unsafe conditions for them. People shared that it causes them significant stress and anxiety knowing that their case management team expects them to find a job without consideration of their age and ability levels, and may see their refusal as a lack of effort to follow their correctional plan rather than age or health related barriers.

Discussion: The IMT had no response at the time of the meeting but indicated that they respond at a later date.



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;

CD 735 s.9: The intuitional Head/District Director will:

(c) ensure that reasonable accommodations are provided to [the incarcerated person] with specific physical and/or mental health care needs and/or disabilities in order to allow them to participate in employment and employability program assignments.

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 opportunities. We recommend creating opportunities both within the penitentiary and through conditional release processes, such as work releases, as there is a direct correlation between people's abilities to gain and maintain institutional employment, and their ability to be prepared for successful release. Importantly, the issue of employment is closely related to issues of aging that impact federally sentenced women and gender diverse people. CAEFS encourages CSC to be intentional in developing pathways and accommodation of the aging population in prisons, to be considerate of physical limitations that people may face when factoring in their eligibility for employment, and the impacts that age barriers related to employment may have on older people's correctional plans and outcomes.

Access to Dental Care

Description: People have reported to CAEFS that, although they have completed initial assessments and been seen by the dentist, they are still left in excruciating pain while waiting several weeks to hear back from the dentist on and start their treatment. People are citing reoccurring infections and multiple rounds of antibiotics and express their frustration on how good dental health is important and should be treated with greater urgency and is an essential part of overall wellbeing and the ability to reintegrate successfully into the community.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that the triaging process has seen a great improvement and people are getting initial assessments completed in a timely manner. They shared that the dentist has come up with a treatment plan for each individual and they cannot interfere with that and that people have also agreed to these treatment plans. The IMT share that if treatments cannot be fully carried out at GVI, it will be followed up by a community dentist.

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: CAEFS appreciates GVI's mentioned efforts to improve dental services, as 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 continue to prioritize addressing this issue, and implement additional measures to protect the dignity and well-being of those in its care. Access to appropriate, trauma-informed health and dental care is essential, not only to meet community standards but also to meet the principles of Creating Choices, and allowing incarcerated individuals to not lose physical health, empowerment, and self confidence through lack of access to dental care.

Living Conditions at the Minimum Security Unit

Description: Several different concerns from people within the Minimum Security Unit (MSU) were reported to CAEFS. People shared that they are unhappy with the inconsistency of the walking club and they have yet to be given a timeline on the creation of a safe and accessible walking path. People expressed that these barriers are incredibly frustrating and greatly harm their overall wellbeing. People also shared that male officers do not announce themselves before coming into living spaces and people find this practice incredibly inhumane and uncomfortable.

Additionally, people shared that mail is always significantly delayed even when it is correspondence within the prison. People shared that this is frustrating as mail is an essential part of maintaining relationships with family and friends.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they have received no complaints from people at the MSU regarding walking club or the need for a walking path. They shared that the walking path has no issues except concerns for the elderly population. The IMT also shared that they have reminded all officers to announce themselves when entering living spaces. Lastly, the IMT noted that mail is delivered in timely manner and according to policy.

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.

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

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.



CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates GVI's quick response to the issues around privacy at the MSU. CAEFS further recommends that GVI prioritize the importance of a safe and accessible walking path that can be used by everyone at MSU. Access to safe outdoor movement is an important part of overall health and wellness. As well, with mounting evidence that federal incarceration for women and gender diverse people is fracturing family connections, all efforts should be taken to improve connection to family and community during incarceration, including by improving mail systems.

Living Conditions in the Maximum Security Unit

Description: CAEFS received reports that there has been no designated Social Programs Officer for people in maximum security. People have shared that this has meant programming has been limited, and the unit is isolating. People have also shared that their daily outdoor time is primarily in the evening, when the sun has gone down and people have shared that they would like outdoor time during daylight as sunlight and fresh air are an essential component in boosting physical and mental health.

Discussion: The IMT were not able to share their response at the time of the meeting but will provide a response at a later date.

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. 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 encourages GVI and the CSC broadly to address and be responsive to the individual impacts produced by physical conditions of confinement, especially in maximum security units. Adverse impacts of incarceration are not undocumented or speculative; protection and mitigation from them are entrenched throughout Canadian and international laws and protocols related to the administration of incarceration. Access to sunlight, fresh air, meaningful opportunity and social engagement are essential components of supporting physical and mental health and can help mitigate some of the harmful impacts of incarceration.

