



To: Lilian Kordic, Institutional Head
Edmonton Institution for Women
11151 178 St NW Unit 1, Edmonton, AB T5S 2H9

July 20, 2026

Dear Lil,

I want to thank you and other members of the institutional management team (IMT) at the Edmonton Institution for Women (EIFW) for taking the time to meet with me on June 29, 2026, in person at EIFW.

This letter summarizes reports received and conditions observed during our visit to the Edmonton Institution for Women on June 27 and 28, 2026 as well as the subsequent discussion with members of the IMT following the visit, relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' recommendations.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Omstead
Senior Advocate



Access to Family: Installation of Phones in Minimum-Security Unit and Access to Private Family Visits

Description: CAEFS received reports and observed that phones have been installed in the minimum-security unit pods. People described this as a “game changer,” noting that pod-based phone access has eased interpersonal conflict, freed up time in their day, and supported more frequent and meaningful family contact.

It was also reported that no Private Family Visits (PFVs) have been cancelled due to population pressures. However, people reported that financial barriers are affecting access to PFVs, including requirements to maintain a certain account balance before an application is considered and delays in releasing funds placed on hold after a visit. One person reported waiting weeks for held funds to be released. As a result, it was reported that PFVs feel inaccessible to many people at EIFW in practice.

Discussion: The IMT noted that the phones reflected years of work and acknowledged their colleague’s contributions. Regarding PFVs, the IMT agreed to look into the reports, explaining that funds may be held for groceries and that minimum savings requirements may apply, though no other visit-related expenses should arise. They suggested families could send grocery funds in advance. CAEFS and the IMT also discussed PFV participation through the mother-child program, possible post-visit holds, and the PFV process in the Inmate Handbook.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 71 (1) In order to promote relationships between [incarcerated people] and the community, an [incarcerated person] 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.

CD 710-8, Purpose: To provide direction on private family visits and access to private family visit units, which are designed to enhance the [incarcerated person’s] daily living skills and to maintain positive community and familial relationships and responsibilities (e.g., parenting skills)

CAEFS’ Recommendations: CAEFS is encouraged by the reported expansion of access to family contact through the installation of telephones in living units and appreciates EIFW’s efforts to implement these changes. CAEFS recommends that CSC review practices related to Private Family Visits, including the impact of minimum account balance requirements, the use of financial holds, and reported delays in releasing funds following visits, to ensure that financial requirements are not acting as a barriers to family contact. PFVs are an essential part of supporting women in maintaining contact with their families while incarcerated and should not be limited based on a person’s individual financial circumstances, or that of their families.

Unescorted Temporary Absences: Access to Money and Phones

Description: People reported that they are not permitted to bring money with them on unescorted temporary absences (UTAs). They specifically expressed wanting to have money with them so that they could donate to the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) meetings they attend, including to help purchase coffee, food, and related supplies.

It was also reported that people in prisons designated for men are provided with cell phones during UTAs so they can contact the institution or seek assistance in emergencies. People noted that the lack of public pay phones, combined with reluctance from members of the public to lend phones, creates stress during UTAs when women are delayed, lost, or need to contact the institution. CAEFS noted that this can be particularly difficult for people who may be used to navigating public spaces with a cell phone for directions, communication, and connection.

Discussion: The IMT explained that people can request money for UTAs by submitting a money transfer request in advance, with the need for funds noted in the Assessment for Decision and agreed this process should be included in the Inmate Handbook. They also suggested the Inmate Wellness Committee (IWC) could donate annually to the AA and NA meetings many



women attend. On cell phones, the IMT could not confirm availability in prisons designated for men and noted this practice is not supported by policy, but acknowledged the barriers raised. The IMT proposed longer permits to account for unpredictable public transit and suggested people discuss alternatives with their case management team if needed.

Law & Policy:

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 [federally sentenced persons] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

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

CD 860 s. 22: Money will be committed for an approved temporary absence, based on reasonable actual costs.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates the IMT's willingness to identify solutions within the existing policy framework to respond to the concerns raised by women. At the same time, these reports highlight the need for CSC to review whether current UTA policies reflect contemporary realities. Public payphones are increasingly unavailable, while mobile phones have become an essential tool for communication, navigation, safety, and access to support. As UTAs are intended to facilitate gradual and successful community reintegration, policies governing these absences should equip women with the tools and resources necessary to participate safely and confidently in their communities. CAEFS encourages CSC to undertake a broader review of national policy with these objectives in mind.

Escorted Temporary Absences

Description: CAEFS was told that, although the escorted temporary absence (ETA) permit for church can accommodate six people, only four people are often listed on the permit or able to attend each week. People noted that this ETA is very popular and that a rotating roster is used to support equitable access and questioned why the full approved capacity is not being used.

Discussion: The IMT agreed to look into this report, noting that the reduced number of people listed on the permit may be due to vehicle size, recent accidents with larger vehicles, and new volunteers' comfort with larger groups. They added that absent participants cannot be replaced on the day of the ETA because permits can only be updated on the next business day.

Law & Policy:

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 [federally sentenced persons] and their reintegration into the community as law-abiding citizens through the provision of programs in penitentiaries and in the community.

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. 17(4): The institutional head shall give the [incarcerated person] written reasons for the authorizing, refusal or cancellation of a temporary absence.

CCRA s. 75: An [incarcerated person] is entitled to reasonable opportunities to freely and openly participate in, and express, religion or spirituality, subject to such reasonable limits as are prescribed for protecting the security of the penitentiary or the safety of persons.



CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates the IMT's willingness to examine the concerns raised regarding participation limits on church ETAs. CAEFS encourages EIFW to continue to expand its capacity to facilitate these opportunities. CAEFS further encourages EIFW to clearly communicate the rationale for any participation limits and to ensure that processes for allocating spaces remain fair, transparent, and equitable. Ensuring consistent access to reintegration opportunities through temporary absences, including ETAs, aligns with CSC's legislated purpose, as conditional release provides the strongest pathway to successful reintegration and reflects the principles of Creating Choices.

Structured Intervention Unit

Description: CAEFS met with the one woman in the Structured Intervention Unit (SIU). At the time of our meeting, she had already been in the SIU for over a month and shared that she believes she will remain in the SIU until her intake is completed and she can be transferred elsewhere. She reported feeling very lonely, while noting engagement with staff members. She provided feedback to CAEFS on other kinds of engagements that she would appreciate, including the opportunity to spend time outdoors in an area with grass rather than the cement SIU yard, and to be able to visit with family.

Discussion: The IMT emphasized that the SIU placement is for the person's protection and that she is fearful of integrating into the EIFW population. They noted that many SIU placements at EIFW are protective and that separation may be necessary for safety, and that they do not want to force integration. CAEFS brought forward a recommendation from the Peer Advocacy meeting that Peer Advocates be notified when someone is placed in the SIU so they can offer support. The IMT asked CAEFS to help identify ways to reduce loneliness and the impacts of isolation for people who may not feel safe engaging with peers. Suggestions from the IMT included developing a newsletter, which has been done at other federal penitentiaries designated for women, and CAEFS agreed to explore engagement options. For this individual, the IMT also offered to arrange escorted walks in a grassy area and follow up on family visiting applications. CAEFS and the IMT discussed challenges with the current paper- and mail-based visitor application process.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 3: The purpose of the federal correctional system is to contribute to the maintenance of a just, peaceful and safe society by (a) carrying out sentences imposed by courts through the safe and humane custody and supervision of [federally sentenced persons]

CCRA s. 28: If a person is or is to be confined in a penitentiary, the Service shall take all reasonable steps to ensure that the penitentiary in which they are confined is one that provides them with the least restrictive environment for that person, taking into account (a) the degree and kind of custody and control necessary for (ii) the safety of that person and other persons in the penitentiary

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

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates the IMT's engagement in exploring creative approaches to addressing the loneliness and the impacts of isolation experienced by individuals residing in the SIU. While recognizing that some placements occur for an individual's own protection, CAEFS encourages the CSC to consider the profound impacts of segregation on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of incarcerated people, as well as its impacts on the ability of the CSC to fulfill its dual purpose of providing safe and human custody and supervision and for the rehabilitation and reintegration of people in their care. To this end, CAEFS recommends that known incompatibilities and safety concerns be identified and addressed as early as possible in the intake and placement process. Proactive consideration of these factors may reduce the likelihood of prolonged SIU placements for protective reasons and support the least restrictive conditions of confinement possible.

Conditions in the Maximum-Security Unit

Description: CAEFS was told that a meeting had been held with the Elders, the Warden, and a group of people incarcerated in the maximum-security unit, and that there was agreement to work toward increased access to Elder support on the unit.



Participants in the meeting shared that they were encouraged by the meeting and hoped it would lead to improved access. Pod representatives also requested an update on the January meeting with Food Services about access to more culturally appropriate foods on the National Food Menu.

Women confined to the maximum-security unit also reported that loud door-slamming when staff enter and leave the pods is triggering, activating, and disruptive to sleep in an already stressful environment. They said they have asked staff to be mindful of this, but the issue has continued.

They also reported that requests to meet with Peer Advocates have been denied because they were told by staff that no Peer Advocates were available to them.

Discussion: The IMT agreed to follow up on the loud unit doors and explore possible solutions. They also offered to have the Correctional Manager share information about Peer Advocates with staff to support understanding. CAEFS shared that they had also provided staff with a flyer identifying the Peer Advocates and explaining their role for future reference. The IMT said they would follow up on the food-services request, while noting that requests for culturally appropriate foods should go through the Indigenous Liaison Officer.

Law & Policy:

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.

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

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

Creating Choices, Principle 4, Supportive Environment: "A positive lifestyle which can encourage the self-esteem, empowerment, dignity and respect for self and others so necessary to live a productive, meaningful life, can only be created in an environment in which all aspects of environment are positive and mutually supportive."

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS encourages CSC to more meaningfully embed the Creating Choices principles of empowerment, support, and person-centred care in the administration of the material conditions of incarceration. In CAEFS view, this necessitates the closure of the maximum-security units. While these units continue to exist, CAEFS appreciates EIFWs efforts to address reported concerns including improving access to Elders, reducing disruptive door noise, clarifying culturally appropriate food pathways, and ensuring access to Peer Advocates.

Health Care: Medications

Description: Many people reported that Healthcare staff have refused to provide written information about their prescriptions, including when medication changes were made. People said this was confusing and frustrating, particularly because their ability to independently access medication information is very limited.

It was also shared with CAEFS that another change to the National Formulary is planned for October 2026, including the removal of immediate-release psychostimulants for ADHD. It is further understood that an adult ADHD diagnosis, along with ongoing follow-up with the prescriber, will be required for long-acting stimulant medications. People expressed significant concern about the possibility of being removed from their medications and asked whether those currently taking these medications will be prioritized for ADHD assessments to confirm an adult diagnosis, if needed.



An individual reported fluid buildup and swelling in her elbow following surgery, which subsequently ruptured. She reported that the area was hot, painful, and red, and that Healthcare staff had only provided her with band-aids. She expressed concern regarding the lack of care she had received and expressed that she believed she may need antibiotics.

Discussion: No Health Services representative was available for the meeting. As agreed, CAEFS sent a follow-up email with the reports above to be shared with the Manager of Health Services, and the Warden confirmed receipt. The IMT also shared that a new process for timely responses to health-care-related grievances was being implemented, given the high volume of grievances and the limited capacity of the Manager of Health Services and Chief of care.

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.

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, s.7: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CSC must ensure the dignity, health, and well-being of all people in its care. CAEFS recommends expanding access to medication counselling, including the routine provision of clear, written information about prescribed medications. To support professional autonomy and the delivery of essential health care, CSC's National Formulary should be aligned with evidence-based clinical best practices rather than driven by security considerations. CAEFS further recommends strengthened, proactive external oversight by the relevant regulatory bodies overseeing health professionals working in penitentiaries, alongside a renewed commitment to holistic, patient-centred care in both policy and practice. Finally, CAEFS suggests amending the Canada Health Act to recognize federally incarcerated people as insured persons. Such a change would help ensure equitable access to health care while reducing CSC's growing health-care costs and administrative responsibilities.

Population Count

On June 29, 2026, there were 187 people at EIFW, with 191 people registered, and one person in the Structured Intervention Unit.

