



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

July 6, 2026

CAEFS' May 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 28th via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution from May 24th -25th 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



Physical Conditions of Confinement-Heat

Description: The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) received reports of extreme heat across all security levels with people citing that there are limited fans to adequately manage the heat. People shared their frustrations about the cost of purchasing personal fans and how the heat impacts their comfort, sleep, and overall wellbeing. These concerns have been consistently raised each summer over the past couple of years with no satisfactory remedy. To be proactive people in minimum security and medium security shared that they have put in proposals for ceiling fans and tinted windows and are still awaiting responses to their proposals.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that they plan to set up cooling stations across all security levels, and they have sent out a memo detailing tips to manage the heat. They share that they have received no proposals except for tinted windows request in the maximum-security unit which they are currently looking into. They also shared that they are also working to get blackout curtains in the minimum-security unit.

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

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: Given the frequency of extreme weather, we urge CSC to implement a high/extreme heat protocol that meet the health and well-being needs of the incarcerated population, created in collaboration with appropriate public health authorities and incarcerated individuals and be aligned with the CCRA and CCRR. Unlike in the community, incarcerated people cannot leave this extremely hot environment, and the temperature people are subjected to poses significant health and safety risks.

Access to Primary Workers

Description: CAEFS received reports that people do not have regular access to their primary workers and that forty-five-day reviews are being completed without their involvement. Individuals expressed that the purpose of 45-day reviews is to monitor ongoing progress of an individual and track participation in programs, employment, and other activities related to their progress and this can change in a 45-day period. Primary workers failing to involve the individual falls short of being able to provide accurate updates as to what progress is being made to meet their correctional plan.

Discussion: The IMT shared that this issue was raised with primary workers last week at a meeting and that they plan to continue to work with primary workers to resolve this issue.



Law & Policy:

CCRA, section 4 (f): Correctional decisions are made in a forthright and fair manner, with access by the [incarcerated person] to an effective grievance procedure.

CCRA, section 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 710-1, s. 12: The Correctional Officer II/Primary Worker will meet with the [incarcerated person] and complete a Structured Casework Record as outlined in Annex B within 45 days of admission to federal custody, arrival at an institution or case reassignment, and every 45 days thereafter

CAEFS' Recommendations: It is essential that people who are incarcerated are adequately involved and informed about their correctional planning as it is foundational to realizing the principles of Creating Choices and the purpose of the CSC. CAEFS recommends that GVI ensure 45-day reviews are completed consistently and thoroughly, to support individuals in progressing through their correctional plans in an informed, timely, and transparent manner.

Access to Employment and Positions of Trust

Description: People have reported to CAEFS that there is an ongoing shortage of employment opportunities and very few jobs posted. People expressed this shortage impacts their sense of purpose and fulfillment and negatively impacts mental health. People have also reported a change to criteria to be able to obtain a position of trust. The new criteria states that you must have no drug subculture and no incidents of concern. Individuals described how ambiguous this criterion is with no certainty on how they are being assessed. Further adding that there are no clear timelines around these criteria and the possibility that past incidents could continue to affect an individual's eligibility for acquiring a position of trust.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that each person's case is accessed differently and there is usually an ongoing process of review for positions of trust criteria. Depending on the issue, each case has its own timeline.

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(c.2) the Service ensures the effective delivery of programs to [federally sentenced 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: Employment is a key component that supports individuals in feeling empowered and contributes to overall wellbeing as aligned with the creating choices model. CAEFS strongly recommends that CSC prioritize and provide opportunities for meaningful employment both within the penitentiary and through conditional release processes such as work releases. CAEFS further recommends in alignment with the CCRA that GVI practice least restrictive measures when determining criteria for positions of trust.

Access to Healthcare and Dental Care

Description: People at the Grand Valley Institution (GVI) have continued to report that healthcare is not easily accessible and that healthcare staff are often dismissive of symptoms. One individual reported being in so much pain and discomfort that she asked to go to a hospital and was not taken seriously. People also continue to express their frustration with access to the dentist and shared that they are being placed on antibiotics and left to manage their pain for months before getting their treatment. Additionally, people shared that they would like more consistent foot care for people living with diabetes.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they encourage people to request to speak with the manager of health services if they encounter issues with healthcare. The IMT also shared that they conduct a regular audit of dental services and people are triaged depending on need. Regarding footcare, the IMT shared that they plan to train their nursing staff to increase accessibility.

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.

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

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 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, 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.



Access to Hygiene Items

Description: People reported to CAEFS that the quantity of hygiene products allocated to them is not enough for the entire month. People shared that they are given twelve pods for the month that they are expected to split this in half and only given one bar of body soap. People shared that purchasing additional items on canteen is expensive, especially when the hygiene allowance is seven dollars biweekly.

Discussion: The IMT clarified that people are given commercial grade detergent which requires the pods to be split in half and would make it 24 pods and good enough for 24 loads of laundry per month. They also shared that GVI pays more to get better and bigger bars of soap and which is given to individuals for free.

Law & Policy:

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: [...] (c) provided with toilet articles and all other articles necessary for personal health and cleanliness

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

CAEFS' Recommendations: Incarcerated individuals are consistently unable to afford and access essential hygiene items necessary for their health and well-being. The high cost of products such as soap and other essential items raises serious concerns about long-term health outcomes, and it has been found that long term incarceration in Canada reduces an individual's lifespan by 20 years from the general population (Iftene, 2020). This is unacceptable and every effort should be made to resolve this by emphasizing the Correctional Service of Canada's (CSC) commitment to treating incarcerated people with dignity. The principle that individuals in prison retain all rights except those necessarily restricted by incarceration is enshrined in the law and ensuring that all federally incarcerated people have reliable and affordable access to essential hygiene products is foundational for their dignity, health, and cleanliness— in both the short and long term.

Accessibility of Living Units

Description: Mobility issues and limited accessibility have been reported across all security levels. People shared the lack of accessibility makes it difficult to find employment opportunities. Specifically, Individuals reported that there are not enough accessible houses on the main compound, making it difficult for individuals with disabilities to safely and independently navigate the prison, noting that only one house currently has a ramp.

Discussion: The IMT shared that if someone needs to have an accessible unit, they need to go to healthcare to request it. The IMT further shared that they have a project starting next month to include more accessible bathrooms in units.

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



CD 710 s. 3

ensure correctional policies, assessments, programs and practices respect and are responsive to:

1. gender, including the special needs of women [in prison]
 2. ethnic, cultural and linguistic differences, including Indigenous [people]
 3. [Incarcerated people] requiring mental health care and those with [physical disabilities](#)
- ensure [Incarcerated people] with disabilities are treated equitably, in accordance with equality rights guaranteed under the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#)

CAEFS' Recommendations: A lack of accessibility can create significant barriers and limit people's ability to access essential services, programs, and employment opportunities. CAEFS recommends that CSC increase accessibility across all security levels by expanding the number of accessible living units and installing appropriate mobility accommodations, including ramps, in all areas of the prison.

