



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

July 16, 2026

CAEFS' June 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 June 28 via Teams.

This letter summarizes reports we received and conditions we observed during our visit to the Grand Valley Institution on June 24 and 25, as well as summaries of the discussion between the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) and members of the IMT following the visit, the relevant laws and policies, and CAEFS' recommendations.

We look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Tise Ogunleye
Lead Advocate



Access to Health Care and First Aid

Description: The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies (CAEFS) received reports of an incident that occurred on June 19, in the minimum security (MSU) kitchen, where an individual sustained a cut and was bleeding. People expressed that staff were unsure where the first aid kit was located which delayed the response to the incident, and that this highlighted the ongoing concerns regarding access to first aid supplies within the MSU. Additionally, the kitchen where the incident occurred was closed until 3PM the following day due to a delayed response time from the biohazard cleaner. In light of this incident, people in the MSU suggested again that first aid kits be accessible on the living units, noting that the rotation of staff can cause confusion of the location of supplies.

People also reported that they are experiencing delays when attending scheduled nursing appointments. Many shared that they feel that these delays are caused by there being no receptionist available to receive or check them in. People expressed frustration that, when they try knocking to notify staff of their arrival, they are frequently ignored. They also noted that there is no communication from staff about how long they will need to wait. As a result, some individuals shared that they left before being seen in order to attend other commitments.

Discussion: The Institutional Management Team (IMT) shared that they are currently in the process of looking for an accessible place where staff can be aware when the first aid kit has been accessed. They shared that they are also considering putting first aid kits in the units. The IMT also offered to look into the delay regarding the biohazard cleanup. The IMT also shared that health care appointments are scheduled 15-minutes apart and are structured so that all issues an individual is experiencing can be addressed at once, which may cause delays. The IMT offered to look into how to address these potential delays.

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

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: CAEFS appreciates the IMT's willingness to explore additional measures to improve access to first aid supplies and address delays in health care services. Given the reported incident involving delayed access to a first aid kit and ongoing concerns regarding nursing appointment wait times, CAEFS recommends that GVI implement readily accessible first aid kits in all living units and establish clear procedures to ensure everyone is aware of their locations and use. CAEFS further recommends that CSC review current health care appointment processes to improve communication with individuals awaiting care, reduce unnecessary delays where possible, and ensure timely access to essential health services. Access to prompt first aid and health care is fundamental to maintaining a safe, healthful, and dignified penitentiary environment and is consistent with CSC's obligations under the CCRA and CCRR.

Barriers to the Grievance Process

Description: People shared with CAEFS that they have been feeling scared to file grievances because, when they do, they report that they are taunted and intimidated by staff. People also reported that staff sometimes make comments suggesting



that filing a grievance may result in retaliation, making them lose hope in the effectiveness of the grievance process and concerned that the only outcome of filing will be further negative consequences.

Discussion: The IMT shared that people have a right to access the grievance process and that they should not be treated unfairly while exercising that right. The IMT asked that if we have specific individuals who have experienced retaliation, to encourage them to speak directly to senior management.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 91: Every [federally sentenced person] shall have complete access to the offender grievance procedure without negative consequences.

CD 001, CSC Values Statement: **Respect:** Respectful behaviours honour the rationality and dignity of persons – their ability to choose their own path, within lawful order, to a meaningful life. A good test of respectful behaviour is treating others as we would like to be treated [...] **Accountability:** Accountability involves the notion of being willing and able to explain, answer to and justify the appropriateness of actions and decisions. Accountability is applicable to everyone within CSC. Accountability is also about accepting and ensuring responsibility – providing necessary support, feedback, and oversight.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates the IMT's support for an accessible and effective grievance process. The grievance process is the legislated tool for federally sentenced people to resolve issues they experience. Utilizing the grievance process demonstrates pro-social problem solving and should be encouraged by staff, rather than seen as adversarial. A complaint and grievance process that can be accessed without fear is essential for procedural fairness, and the timely resolution of concerns. CAEFS recommends that GVI remind staff of the importance of the grievance process and people's ability to utilize it without fear of negative consequences.

Access to the Informal Resolution

Description: People reported that when they receive an institutional disciplinary charge that informal resolution is checked off on the charge sheet, even when it was not offered to them, raising concerns about the reliability of the documentation. They also shared that staff often do not make attempts or seem to consider informal resolution prior to the laying of a disciplinary charge. They shared that without the opportunity to engage in informal resolution; people feel that their ability to progress in their correctional plans and have access the community is negatively impacted as charges follow them throughout their sentence.

Discussion: The IMT shared that moving forward, when informal resolution is checked off on a charge sheet, the charging officer will be asked to provide a more detailed account of what informal resolution was attempted.

Law & Policy:

CCRA s. 41 (1) Where a staff member believes on reasonable grounds that an [incarcerated person] has committed or is committing a disciplinary offence, the staff member shall take all reasonable steps to resolve the matter informally, where possible.

CD 580 s. 12: Informal resolution or attempts at informal resolution will: (a) be considered by the witnessing staff member completing the offence report as an option, at any point in the process, with the agreement of the parties involved; (b) be documented in a Statement/Observation Report, submitted to the Correctional Manager to demonstrate its consideration and/or application in the process, and where applicable, noted in the unit log book by the witnessing staff member; (c) be reviewed by the Correctional Manager responsible for quality control to ensure informal resolution was considered and attempted where possible



CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS welcomes the IMT's commitment to prioritizing the review of the use of informal resolution. Informal resolution is the legislated tool to mitigate use of the formal disciplinary system within the penitentiary environment. Both minor and major disciplinary convictions have profoundly negative impacts on the liberty of people who are incarcerated, and formal disciplinary actions are legislated to be imposed as a last resort because they have significant impacts on the present and future liberty of federally sentenced women and gender diverse people. CAEFS recommends that the legislation be closely followed, and informal resolution should be utilized in all possible instances.

Access to Parole Officers

Description: People reported that they often must put in multiple requests before they receive a response from their institutional Parole Officer (PO), with some people sharing that they have not heard back from their PO in months. People noted that it sometimes feels like their only hope for connecting with their PO is to try to speak to them in passing in the hallway. People expressed increasing frustration with the lack of availability of their PO because it is causing delays in the completion of their paperwork and is impeding on their ability to move forward with their correctional planning and personal goals.

Discussion: The IMT shared that there are times when paperwork is delayed due to people being away, but the expectation is always that POs should be responding to requests within 15 days. The IMT recommended reaching out to the Manager of Assessments and Interventions if requests have not been responded to or they have outstanding concerns. They also shared that they have sent reminders to POs about the importance of responding to requests.

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 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

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS appreciates the suggestion of escalating concerns, where appropriate, to the MAI's and the reminders to POs about the importance of timely response as barriers to accessing POs have been a longstanding reported issue at GVI. To more meaningfully address this concern, CAEFS recommends a systemic and comprehensive review of POs' responses and frequency of interactions with people on their caseloads.

Physical Living Conditions of Confinement: Minimum-Security Unit

Description: People reported to CAEFS that the vents in the minimum-security (MSU) living units are very dirty and require cleaning. People reported experiencing scratchy throats, allergy-like symptoms, and other discomfort over the past several months and believe that these symptoms are related to the dirty vents. It was reported that the vents are located directly above the beds in the MSU and that people have attempted to sleep facing away from the vents to mitigate symptoms but have gotten into trouble from staff doing rounds.

Individuals shared that they have consistently raised concerns with staff about the vents over the past few months, but staff have only responded that they are in the process of gathering quotes for a cleaning company.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they have recently found a company who is able to clean the vents, and that they anticipate that this concern will be resolved shortly.



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: CAEFS is pleased to hear that this issue will soon be addressed. CAEFS recommends that CSC ensure concerns related to environmental health and living conditions are addressed in a timely manner, with regularly scheduled maintenance, in order to mitigate any harmful impacts on people's health and well-being and to prevent any reoccurrences of this concern.

Access to Mental Health Supports in the Minimum-Security Unit

Description: People in the minimum-security unit (MSU) shared that they would like increased access to mental health and well-being supports, specifically, they would like access to courses or groups focused on anxiety management, sleep hygiene, self-esteem, and body image. People expressed that having the opportunity to engage in these topics would support them in their self-development and help them to better take care of their mental and physical well-being.

Discussion: The IMT shared that they are looking into potential courses to meet these expressed needs and anticipate implementing some of them in the future.

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.

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.

Creating Choices, Principles: Empowerment, Supportive Environment, Shared Responsibility.

CAEFS' Recommendations: CAEFS supports the desire of people in the MSU to engage in personal-development courses or opportunities that they feel will benefit their well-being and supports the overall mandate of CSC and appreciates the IMT's openness to exploring what course options may be available. CAEFS sees this request as a meaningful opportunity to engage with community stakeholders who already offer these programs who may be well-positioned to support people at GVI by offering them at the MSU or through the use of escorted or unescorted temporary absences. Further, GVI could seek to empower individuals incarcerated in the MSU who may hold these skills and knowledge to lead peer-led groups, leading to the creation of meaningful employment opportunities within the MSU.

