

To the Correction Advisory Committee and the office of Correction Ombuds,

I'm not even sure where to start. I am an incarcerated woman at York Correctional Institution. Despite finding myself here, I have a bachelor's in Psychology and a master's in Social Work. To say I was appalled when I first arrived here is an understatement. I came in with immense fear and poor mental health. As a result, I was thrown into what they call a "turtle suit" for 5 days. They stripped me bare naked and gave me nothing but a poorly designed velcro gown that left me exposed more times than not. I have extremely poor eye sight and my glasses were taken from me as well. For 5 days, I was exposed, blind, and not given any of my meds for the first 2 days due to it being a weekend, I was on benzo anxiety meds and they cut me off cold turkey. Something that can kill you. The room I was in was filthy. Yellow piss in the toilet still from the previous person, food crusted on the walls, and the best part: another persons urine between my toes because they didn't feel the need to clean between people. What made it even better? That was on day 1. I wasn't given any soap or ability to shower or wash my hands until day 5. Coming from a professional who has worked with mentally ill individuals, putting them in this type of environment is one sure way to push them to the point of suicide, not help them.

Let's fast forward to when I finally made it to

general population. I live on the west side, where seeing the sun/outdoors is barely existent. Vitamin D, one of the key vitamins in helping reduce depression in woman, is barely existent to us. I have been here since October and the only time we get to be outside is when we walk to show the 2-3 times a week (if we're lucky). Most of the time we are stuck in our rooms and given trays within the unit.

CO's all have their own set of rules that they follow. They don't care about what's in the handbook or written in a directive. And if you try to write to your captain about a CO, it goes ignored. Which eventually leads to writing a grievance that is almost always denied. The CO's get to be loud and vulgar with us, but once it's returned then it's a problem, as if it wasn't them who instigated it to begin with.

It took over a month to get shower shoes, or sweats, or underwear because commissary is consistently out of stock for many things. Then we have to wait another 2 weeks to try again.

The water tastes toxic and causes a lot of skin and scalp problems that lead to needing medical attention. I developed a very serious and painful puss filled rash, on my once completely clear back, as soon as I arrived here. It has been 4 months and still no solution. My back is now covered in scars and only getting worse.

The lobby where our families wait for visits have two bathrooms, a men's and a women's. The

women's bathroom has had 2 inches of water on the ground for the past 3 months. My family has had to use the men's room because the issue has consistently been ignored. During my grandmother's first visit to see me, she slipped and fell after using the women's room, resulting in her breaking her arm in 3 spots and dislocating her wrist. She ultimately needed surgery to place multiple metal screws in her body.

Page 31, section G-4, states "You may have no more than three (3) adult visitors in the visiting room. As many children under 18 that may be reasonably accommodated may be permitted to visit at the same time." Yet families are denied entry. I have a young niece and nephew that often visit with their mom (my sister) and my fiancé comes as well. There are certain CO's who will deny my fiancé because they swear up and down that it's only 3 people allowed.

There are also some CO's who will do strip searches in the bathroom of visits with the door open and families still present in the visiting area. There is a designated strip search room for a reason, use it. There is no reason that our families should be made to feel uncomfortable because there are women being stripped naked and spreading their cheeks mere feet away from them.

There is not nearly enough opportunity for us to exercise. Most of the women I live with are

obese due to the poor unbalanced meals we receive and lack of time outdoors. There are large fenced in areas attached to each of our units and no reason why we can't be using them.

Request forms state it should take no longer than 15 days to receive a response, yet most of the time it takes months. Or you just get blatantly ignored. And with no responses to attach to a grievance, it will be denied. You can't just say you didn't receive a response. So how are our issues supposed to be heard and how is change supposed to occur?

It has been 4 weeks since one of our showers broke and not a single maintenance person has even come to look at it. Two work orders had been put in. 24 girls and one shower. How are we supposed to maintain proper hygiene when there is only one shower and minimal rec time?

Going back to the unbalanced meals, why don't we have vegetable and fruit gardens in the gated areas of the units on the west side? We could have someone in charge of tending to them. This will not only teach valuable skills in harvesting, but will allow the inmates to have real fresh fruits and veggies. We are not receiving the vitamins we need to be healthy by being locked indoors 24 hours a day and being fed heaping amounts of carbs and minuscule amounts of meat and veggies.

Securus allows for 10 messages to be sent a day and only 6 phone calls a day. I have noticed more times than I can count, that calls will be dropped out of nowhere and a phone call will be wasted. I will be in the middle of a call, when the line goes silent. Why can't we have the option to purchase additional calls if/when this happens? Purchasing additional messages would also be nice. Having that connection to our loved ones is extremely beneficial to our success stories.

Speaking of success stories, most of us are robbed of the chance for parole because we are put on waitlists for programs that we are never called for. If prison is about rehabilitation, then why are we not rehabilitating? And what about mental health? I came in here thinking this place was meant to better us. I was seeing my therapist once a week prior to coming in here and now I have none. We have 1 social worker to share among 96 women in our unit. It takes at least 24 hours to get a response and even then, it is not consistent support. Why is it so difficult to receive continued mental health support?

The storage of the foods we are served and areas of preparation are disgusting. We have had incidents of finding maggots and roaches and often hair in our foods. Roaches have been seen

climbing all over the food that is then later served to us. How is this sanitary? Is this not a health and safety hazard?

The new body scanners are going to kill some of us. I am fortunate enough to get 3 visits a week, without fail. One of the CO's who did my first scan was able to tell me that my intestines were full... so these scans are practically full body X-rays. If I have 3 visits a week and I'm here for another 2 years, potentially, then that means I will have almost 312 full body X-rays during my time here. That amount of radiation can, without a doubt, cause bodily harm. Even if you are able to refuse the body scan, not everyone would know because there is no proper communication for anything that goes on here.

CO's attitudes are grossly unprofessional and vulgar, even when unprovoked. Filing a grievance or getting a response from our building captain is nearly impossible. Request responses should take no more than 15 days, but are often gone completely unanswered. How are we supposed to make our voices heard if no one is willing to listen?

Thank you for your time.

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