

To The Correction Advisory Committee;

First I'd like to thank you for taking the time to let people voice their concerns about the Connecticut correctional system. I am currently serving time at the womens jail, York and while I haven't been here long I do have some concerns that I'd like to address.

The first concern I have is about medication and mental health. I was told to bring my medication with me so there was no delay, so I did that. I take 5 different medications, 4 of those are mental health medications. While in medical I did get my birth control, for my PCOS. However, when I moved to my unit it took over a week to receive it again. As for my mental health medication it took almost a month to get. This was after countless times of writing and asking the nurse daily. Since I was off the medication for so long I had to restart at low doses and slowly increase back to my prescribed dose. Not having my medication and being on a low dose now, has been extremely hard. These are medications I've been on for awhile so very important for my mental well being. While on the subject of my mental health I was in therapy often and seeing my psychiatrist every other week. I'm not suggesting that those services happen as

often, but there isn't enough help it seems because the social workers are stretched thin. I take my mental health very serious, and I've been writing and trying to join different mental health & behavioral groups with no luck. I know groups could be very helpful but they are almost impossible to get into. I know I'm here due to a mental health issue(s) that I wasn't aware of, and I know that I need to continue that growth.

The next issue I'd like to address is the food provided to us and in commissary. The food offered in commissary is very unhealthy and very few healthier options. Then the food provided to us, honestly that's hard to describe. The protein pellets are a huge concern. I also think there should be healthier options and fruit offered for all meals. Most of the time when we get vegetables they are hard and not cooked. I know this is jail but the food is unhealthy.

Then there is the issues of black mold in the tiers. The showers don't have proper ventilation, creating mold. The old unit I was in had stuff growing from the air vent in the room. The unit I'm in now, my tier only has one working shower and that has been for a long time I've been told.

Again, I haven't been here that long and I've never been in a situation like this before. However, how some of the correction officers speak to inmates is very concerning. Thankfully I've never had an issue but I've seen it happen. We are allotted 20 minutes in the chow hall to eat and they hardly let us have 10 minutes. One of the officers told us to 'choke down your food and get out of here'. Eating that quickly isn't good for your digestion. I have heard officers on multiple different occasions call inmates derogatory names. There was an officer one time state he wanted people to get in a fight during rec time so he could lock us up. There was an officer who argued with an inmate calling her fat, poor, she had nothing in life while ^{he} had a home, a girlfriend and money. I watched an inmate ask for crisis multiple times and be denied. There are many great officers but many who make us feel like we are animals that they can treat poorly.

There are some inmates, like myself, who need to work. However, you are no longer allowed to work and go to school. I'd love to be able to work and go to school in the evenings. The recreation time for gym recreation isn't enough. There isn't enough movement during our days, creating no exercise for our bodies. Only three visits a week, which includes

video visits doesn't seem like enough. People with larger families have to pick and choose how to make visits work. I know approving visitors is very important and takes time. However, it is a very long process in which approval or denial takes. I've been told it can take over a month. Communication throughout the campus is complicated. We have to write and then wait a long period for a response. We have tablets there could be a way to utilize them for communication much like a trouble ticket on the tablet. I think it's wonderful the state has free phone calls and messages, I wish we were able to purchase more stamps for messages.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter on the concerns I've faced here at York. Again, I know I've been here a short time so I don't know all the in's and outs and I know it's jail but sometimes I feel like we are treated as animals and not humans. At the end of the day we are still humans, who yes made mistakes, but like me trying to rehabilitate and grow in my mental health. I thank you again for hearing our concerns and can't wait to hear the outcomes.

Thank you,
Shalena Hastings