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A WOMAN'S REFORMATORY IN THE MAKING MINIMUM STANDARDS¹

JANIE M. COGGESHALL and ALICE D. MENKEN²

FOREWORD

"It is a matter of congratulation that we have at last an authoritative compilation, the fruit of actual experience, as a guide in the perplexing field covering the care and treatment of women offenders. In the development of the new science of penology, male offenders for many years seemed to monopolize the first studies and the first attempts at a modern solution of the problem. Was it because they were the most obvious menace to Society? Was it because they had to be dealt with in such vastly great numbers? However doubtful the answer, there is no question that separate institutions for women offenders are of comparatively recent date. Nor has this, in the long run, proved a hardship, for the custody and training of women has not been handicapped by the inheritance of antiquated buildings and of all that embodies the mistakes and prejudices of a former era. The Federal Government and the States, one after the other, are adopting the policy of building, generally in the country and on the cottage plan, separate institutions for the women, where the administration emphasizes the value of individual treatment and which enjoy the invaluable support of groups of women, interested, effective and articulate.

"Because, in many states, such institutions have not heretofore existed, a new start is necessary. It is here that the value of this outline becomes apparent for it gives a clear and practical plan, not only for the buildings and the administration but also describing the type of staff whose personal contribution towards the desired result is more important than any other part of the project. After all, it is a spiritual awakening and a lasting rehabilitation that we

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are seeking and it is because this outline contains all of this that we wish it Godspeed in its mission of constructive service."

CAROLINE BAYARD WITTPENN,
Member of the International
Prison Commission.

June, 1932

A Woman's Reformatory is an institution controlled and maintained by Federal, State or City government to which are committed delinquent girls and women above the age of Juvenile Court jurisdiction which varies from 16 years to 21. In order that they may be adequately trained and prepared for readjustment in the community at large when released, every possible facility should be afforded for their physical, industrial, mental and moral rehabilitation.³

Certain basic principles for the successful development and administration of a Reformatory have been disclosed as the result of research and experimentation extending over a period of years. They are herewith outlined in the hope that they may guide the states confronted with the necessity of making provision for female law-breakers and also assist in bringing higher standards to existing institutions and within reach of the smaller institution in a remote locality. Success will depend on the personnel and the cooperation afforded by the departments of State Government and the general public.

Management

While authority is vested in a Central Board or Commissioner, a Board of Managers, Advisors or Visitors, should be appointed by the Governor or Chief Executive and be directly responsible to the central authority. This Board (not to exceed seven in number) should, subject to the approval of the central authority:

- Carry into effect the purposes of the Reformatory.
- Take general interest in the welfare of the inmates.
- Maintain an efficient inspection of the institution.
- Approve the person proposed for Superintendent before this officer is appointed by the central authority.
- Act as a Board of Parole.
- Maintain contacts between the institution and the public.

³It is recommended that the word "Reformatory" be omitted from the name chosen for the institution. Such titles as "farm," "industrial" or "training" may be substituted.

Location

The institution should not be located in a city or town but accessible both by rail and road to a town of fair size in order that the staff may not be isolated.

In selecting the site, consideration should be given to the possible need of additional land at a future date.

It is necessary to secure sufficient acreage for the production of farm products for the entire population. The prevailing standard is approximately one acre per person. This may not be sustained on a scientific basis and may vary in different sections of the country, but at present, is the best available guide. The farm provides healthful employment and plays a big part in the educational program as the greater part of the work is done by the inmates.

A fertile farm site preferably on elevated dry land is recommended, possessing a goodly number of healthy trees and affording a desirable outlook from the buildings where the inmates and staff are housed.

Good natural drainage and abundant supply of pure water are essential.

It is advisable that agricultural authorities survey the farm before any construction work is begun, to assure its fitness for producing food-stuffs, to plan the agricultural activities and to prevent the erection of buildings on the sections of land most valuable for farming purposes. These authorities should recommend the type, number and location of farm buildings.

Buildings

The proposed minimum and maximum capacity of the institution will regulate the number of buildings. A plan should be developed under expert advice for the maximum expansion of the institution even though it may take several years to complete.

All buildings should be fireproof and conform to standards of reliable insurance companies. Modern, first class plumbing is cheaper in the end and regarded as imperative.

I. Chapel

Set apart for religious services and of inestimable value. Frequently the gift to the institution of interested friends.

II. Administration Building

(The Staff House is sometimes combined with the Administration Building)

Offices for the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and Secretary.

Secretary's office must be large enough for desk and filing cabinets holding records of the inmates and a fireproof vault or cabinet for special records.

Office for additional staff and telephone switchboard.

III. *Staff House*

A bedroom, sitting room and bath for the Superintendent, unless a residence is provided.

A bedroom equipped with closet space for each member of the staff who does not live in an inmate cottage.

Bathing and toilet facilities adequate for the staff.

Sitting Room.

Dining Room.

Kitchen and Pantry.

Storeroom (above ground) for food-stuffs.

Porch.

Comfortable quarters and recreation for the staff are important factors in promoting the success of the institution.

IV. *Storehouse with Office for the Steward and Clerk*

Erected near the entrance of the grounds where all supplies are received, properly examined, checked against purchase records, stored until required and issued to the various cottages only on requisitions to the steward.

It is essential to keep carefully compiled and up-to-date records of this service.

V. *Reception Building and Hospital* (well ventilated and equipped for the examination and treatment of the inmates)

1. Room for examination with adjacent shower-bath.
2. Rooms for treatment and care of patients with venereal diseases. (See "Reference" 1-a, page 828)
3. Wards for surgical and non-infectious cases. (See "Reference" 1-b, page 828)
4. Section with small rooms which can be completely shut off for segregating those in quarantine; also one or two rooms completely isolated for patients with infectious diseases.
5. Rooms for staff.
6. Room for disinfecting clothing.
7. Linen room with separate space for handling soiled linen.
8. Closets for medical, surgical, optical and dental supplies.
9. Office for physician and other professional service such as dentist and nurse, large enough to contain record files.
10. Lavatory facilities for staff and for inmates.

VI. *Housing of Inmates*

The cottage plan is advocated or a unit plan with the essential features of a cottage plan.

Cottages or housing units for inmates should provide accommodations for 10 to 50 inmates. Individual bedrooms, 8' x 11', with doors opening outward for each inmate are strongly recommended. Each room with a window and equipped with bed, bureau, chair, shelf and table. Painted furniture is desirable. On each floor one room with a window is essential, where inmates may hang daytime clothes at night and sleeping clothes in daytime.

Bars on the windows are unnecessary but some type of fenestra sash may be desirable.

It is essential that one wash basin, toilet and shower for every eight inmates be on the same floor as their rooms.

Showers are preferable to bath tubs. A small locker can be purchased for the toilet articles of each inmate.

A combined recreation and living room in each cottage is recommended allowing space on the basis of 10 sq. ft. per person.

It is desirable that each cottage have a piano, victrola or radio (frequently donated by friends).

A dining room allowing 11 sq. ft. per person, with connection through pantry to kitchen.

Small tables properly set at meal times afford means for teaching service and table manners.

Kitchen (not in the basement) minimum 6 sq. ft. per person, provided with two sinks, a broom closet and a refrigerator. Pantry equipped with cupboards for china, current food supplies, etc.

A basement with separate entrance where there are lockers or other arrangement for inmates' outdoor work clothes, garments for rainy weather; laundry facilities for emergency; storage bins for vegetables, etc., and a cool dark closet for canned fruits and preserves if these are not kept in the storehouse.

A storeroom or closet for clean clothing and a pigeon hole for the personal possessions of each inmate.

Quarters, with bath and sitting room for the matron and assistant matron, located so as to facilitate supervision of the cottage, and at the same time give quiet during leisure periods.

Halls should be approximately 8 feet wide.

If babies are kept with their mothers at the institution, adequate provision must be made for them in a separate nursery building. (See "Reference" 2, page 828)

VII. *School Building* (as a rule includes library and auditorium)

School rooms to accommodate 15 to 25 inmates, made attractive by means of pictures, curtains and plants.

Number and size of rooms, furniture, blackboards, maps, etc., vary according to the educational program of the institution.

VIII. *Library*

A most important factor, primarily for diversion and training of the inmates in the care, use and distribution of books.

Books and magazines should be classified on shelves and tables. Reading lamps add to the attraction of the room. (See "Reference" 3, page 828)

IX. *Auditorium or Recreation Room*

Large enough to seat the entire population and with a platform suitable for entertainments of educational as well as recreational value.

The basement could be equipped for a gymnasium.

X. *Laundry Building*

Modern laundry equipment and space for sorting soiled and clean clothes, hand laundry and toilet facilities.

XI. *Industrial Building*

(See "Reference" 4, page 828)

STAFF

(Appointed from Civil Service lists in some states)

Superintendent

A well trained, socially minded person with high moral standards, broad educational viewpoint, executive ability and capable of adjusting difficult personalities.

*Assistant Superintendent**Secretary and Clerk**Storekeeper and Stewardess*

The Superintendent will assign duties to these officers according to the conditions and requirements of the institution.

Resident Woman Physician

Otherwise, a physician visiting regularly. Service from a visiting dentist.

Registered Nurse

Competent to give instruction in health education in addition to her regular duties.

*Teaching Staff**Academic Teacher*

Certified by the State Department of Education wherever possible.

Plan and conduct courses giving a broad outlook on life, including scholastic, commercial, budgeting, as well as special courses for the illiterates.

Cooking Teacher

Teach cooking and plan a well-balanced diet.

Recreation Teacher (Resident or Visiting)

Organize indoor and outdoor activities, gymnastics, baseball, etc., direct community singing unless a special music teacher is provided.

Director of Industries

(See "Reference" 4, page 828)

Farm Supervisor

Manage the farm and direct the inmates in dairy work, care of poultry and raising of vegetables.

Matrons and Assistant Matrons

The responsibility and opportunity of the matron as a training officer cannot be over-emphasized. The matron should have knowledge of the essentials of housekeeping, including laundry and cooking, good table manners and general courtesies, in order that she may carry out the special instructions of the professional teaching staff.

Parole Officers (Resident or Visiting)

With knowledge of social case work and record keeping, sympathetic, alert to the problems of the individual and her relation to the environment to which she returns. Case load of Parole Officer not to exceed 50.

PROGRAM FOR TREATMENT AND TRAINING OF INMATES

1. Thorough physical examinations, including teeth, eyes and routine blood tests, should be made of each inmate immediately on commitment.
2. Mental examinations.
3. Case study of the inmate's family and social history.
4. Quarantine for two weeks or until there is assurance that the individual is not suffering from an infectious disease. Reading and sewing should be allowed and fresh air is essential during this period.
5. Routine method of carrying out of all remedial physical measures is recommended.
6. It is advisable that the religious program be arranged to meet the religious needs as nearly as possible of both staff and inmates and that the selection of chaplains, resident or visiting, be jointly considered by the Central Authority of the State, the Superintendent and the Board of Managers.

It is recommended that there be chaplains representing Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths who are interested in giving the inmates religious education as well as conducting weekly services.

Where chaplains are not regularly assigned, a clergyman of the nearby town or city may suggest visiting clergymen for the approval of the Superintendent and the Board.

7. Training in the minimum essentials of home care, cooking, repair of clothing, personal hygiene, courtesies and behavior.

8. Educational programs worked out on a basis suited to the mentality and needs of the inmates.

9. Vocational training which will best fit the inmate for readjustment to the community. (See "Reference" 4, page 828)

10. Recreational program, well rounded, making constructive use of leisure time including competitive outdoor games, dancing, entertainments, planned by the inmates themselves. Motion pictures add interest and variety.

Assignment to Institutional Life

1. After the quarantine period, at a meeting of the Classification Committee, all reports on the inmate and a case study of her social history should be considered before she is classified according to her mental and physical status and placed in a cottage. The program of work suited to her needs, her tastes and ability should be planned and the requirements for her parole explained to her before she is assigned to a permanent place in the institutional life. It is advisable that the classification of inmates be reviewed every three months and changes made, if necessary, in their assignment. The superintendent should meet once a week with the staff to consider problems.

Clothing

The development of self-respect can be aided by attractive clothing. No uniform color or style need prevail. Simple percale dresses, comfortable and shapely underwear and special prettier dresses for Sunday are aids to "good morale". Shoes must be well-fitting and comfortable.

Discipline

Segregation quarters with plenty of light and air, books, magazines, handicraft and outdoor work for those requiring discipline.

Punishment should take the form of denial of privileges, and

isolation from the general population. Discipline should not include any form of corporal punishment, the use of handcuffs nor deprivation of food, nor should any special kind of work be assigned as "punishment".

Placement of responsibility upon inmates through some form of "inmate organization" is helpful towards their development and prevents their becoming institutionalized.

Transfer of Special Cases

It is recommended that transfer to suitable institutions be provided by law for the feeble-minded, psychopathic, epileptic and insane.

Parole

Parole is a method of maintaining control over an inmate returned to the outside community until the expiration of the sentence prescribed by law.

A year is generally accepted as the minimum for parole on an indeterminate sentence.

Having fulfilled the requirements for conduct and work, and when physical condition warrants, inmates eligible for parole should be considered at a monthly meeting of the Parole Committee consisting of the Board and the Superintendent.

Parole is based upon the recommendations of the staff and the reports of social agencies secured through previous knowledge of the inmates.

Before decision is reached it is important that careful investigation of the former home and environment be made. The placement of the girl in the work for which she is best fitted is vital. Contacts are advised with representatives of social agencies, preferably of her faith, in the community to which she is returned. These contacts should begin while in the institution. The representatives often assist the State parole officers in supervising the girl on parole, especially in securing employment.

Parole is not a discharge and the girl should be so informed.

It is the duty of the parole officer to encourage the girl to place even a small part of her earnings in a savings bank and report monthly to the institution as to home conditions, employment, recreation and religious affiliations. Through sympathetic interest and intelligent guidance there is opportunity for the parole officer and social worker

to readjust the girl so that she will become an asset in the community.

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The morale of the reformatory depends largely on the relationship between the staff and the inmates. The aim should be to regard the inmates as "the girls" not as "criminals nor prisoners"; not as "cases" but as "human beings". The character and personality of the staff are as important as their experience and their influence a vital factor in the work of reclamation and rehabilitation.

REFERENCES

Address: National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor,
Room 2209, 250 West 57th Street, New York City.

1. *Reception Building and Hospital*

(a) For equipment for Venereal Disease Treatment see "Minimum Standards for the Prevention and Treatment of Venereal Disease in Correctional Institutions," published by the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor and sent upon request.

(b) Standards for an infirmary may be secured from the American Hospital Association, 18 East Division St., Chicago, Illinois, and similar organizations.

2. *The Care of Infant Children of Inmates of Correctional Institutions*

Recommendations for the "Care of Infant Children of the Inmates of Correctional Institutions" may be secured from the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor. Also "Standards for Maternal Care in Correctional Institutions" which were prepared at the request of the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor by the Children's Bureau, U. S. Department of Labor; sent upon request.

3. *Library*

"The Prison Library Handbook," prepared for the Committee on Libraries in Correctional Institutions of the American Library Association and the Committee on Education of the American Prison Association. Published by the American Library Association, Chicago, Illinois, 1932.

4. *Industrial Building, Director of Industries, Program for Industrial Training*

Full information is provided in the "Survey of Industries for Correctional Institutions for Women" published by the National Committee on Prisons and Prison Labor; sent upon request.

COMMITTEE ON THE CARE AND TRAINING OF DELINQUENT WOMEN AND GIRLS

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