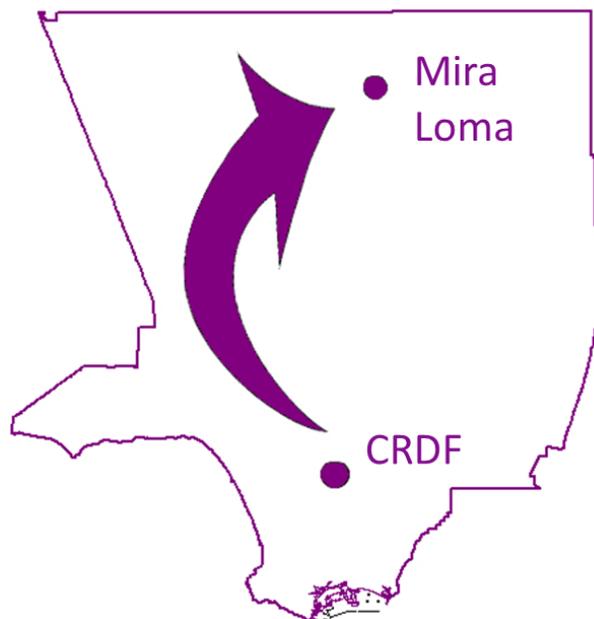


Lynwood to Lancaster:

Opportunities and Challenges for the Los Angeles County Women's Jail Relocation



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I. Statement of Interest

The Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law (the Center) was founded in the 1980s to provide family law services to low-income families in Los Angeles County. The Center serves residents in all five districts. In 2004, the Center received its first contract from the Sheriff's Department to teach classes to women in jail. The curriculum, Mothers Behind Bars, is still taught today to voluntary participants as a series of three workshops spanning three days. The workshop topics are dependency court, domestic violence and restraining orders, parentage, and child support. The Center has also been a member of the Sheriff Department's Gender Responsive Advisory Committee since 2016.

The Center developed and launched the Mira Loma Women's Jail Project in June 2018 to (1) gather information about the County's plans for the move, (2) advocate for gender-responsive programming for women that will improve their life outcomes, and (3) advocate for accessible transportation to and visitation at the facility for children and families. This report is the first step in the project and primarily addresses goal (1). It is the Center's summary of findings from two months of research that focused narrowly on the jail relocation to Mira Loma. During this research period, the Center interviewed members of the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department, Board of Supervisors offices, and community organizations. The Center also reviewed numerous public documents and visited the future Mira Loma facility site with representatives from the Sheriff's Department and Department of Public Works. This report is not endorsed or verified by any party who was interviewed. It represents only the opinions of the Center and the facts as it understands them based on its research.

This project was motivated by a desire to confirm that women's voices are involved in the planning process for the jail relocation. The findings reveal a number of opportunities to create a gender-responsive system at the new jail. These include additional visitation space, a minimum-security facility design, and accessible outdoor space. The findings also show that the construction and architectural plans are the most developed. Other plans, like program selection, visitor transportation assistance, and improved visitation procedures should also be developed as thoroughly as building plans in order to help the new Mira Loma facility reach its maximum potential as a place for rehabilitation.

This project and report are well poised in time because decisions have been made to move forward with the facility, but the details of how the new facility will operate have not been finalized. The Center believes the recommendations in this report are reasonable and can be implemented with the help of public and private stakeholders. This move can and should be a success story for the County of Los Angeles.

II. Executive Summary

This report serves two primary goals. The first is to provide a comprehensive overview of Los Angeles County's plan to relocate the women's jail from Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF) in Lynwood to the Mira Loma Detention Center (Mira Loma) in Lancaster. The second is to offer recommendations about the planning process. Preparations for the move to Mira Loma have largely focused thus far on facility updates. But operational planning for program implementation, visitor transportation, and models of visitation should happen in tandem with structural facility planning. Utilizing a holistic approach during preparation will help Mira Loma be a facility where all components work together for the common goal of rehabilitation. It will also help transform the women's jail from a site with some gender-responsive programs and policies into a gender-responsive system.

Program planning should start now by researching and selecting evidence-based models for implementation that will improve post-release outcomes, including employment and family reunification. Some of these models may be strong programs that are migrated from CRDF; others may be newly implemented. Program models for Mira Loma should be selected based on their demonstrated success in addressing areas of rehabilitation for women, rather than their existence at CRDF or their geographic location near the new facility. Mira Loma's remote location will make this process more challenging, so program planning should start now in order to have programs operating when women arrive at the facility in a few years.

Los Angeles County will also need to ensure that visitors will be able to access the Mira Loma's facility. It is extremely difficult to travel to by public transportation and is effectively inaccessible by public transit for people with disabilities or young children. There are many ways to assist visitors with transportation, and it will likely take more than one approach for assistance to be effective. Planning should begin now because researching the options for transportation support and formalizing agreements with third parties will take time.

The third area of planning that should begin now is for improved models of visitation at Mira Loma. Visitation rates are reportedly low for women incarcerated at CRDF and across the nation compared with rates for men. The visitation rate is likely to be even lower at Mira Loma because of the location. Visitation is important to rehabilitation because incarcerated women that maintain supportive relationships on the outside are more likely to successfully reintegrate into the community after release. Mother-child visitation has also been shown to increase positive outcomes for both the mother and the child. Preparations should include investigating ways to support families in visiting their incarcerated female relatives, increasing visitation between mothers and children placed with caretakers, and expanding eligibility for contact visitation.

Currently and formerly incarcerated women in Los Angeles County should have a significant voice in the planning process for programming, visitor transportation, and visitation models at Mira Loma. One way that incarcerated women are different from their male counterparts is that their risk of re-offending is more accurately predicted by their unmet needs than their prior criminal history. The best way to understand the unmet needs of incarcerated women is to ask them. Programs selected for delivery at Mira Loma should meet these needs. Local community groups such as A New Way of Life (re-entry services), Homeboy Industries (work force development), and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition

(support network of formerly incarcerated persons) are among the local organizations that work with formerly incarcerated women and may offer guidance.

The Sheriff's Department should centralize oversight for all programs and services for incarcerated women in a single individual in a leadership role at the Sheriff's Department. This will ensure focused attention devoted to improving the gender-responsiveness of the jail system for women in Los Angeles County. As the convener of the Gender Responsive Advisory Committee (GRAC), the Sheriff's Department should strengthen this group by adopting a new operating structure, including formalizing membership, creating subcommittees, and improving consistency in its own leadership. Additionally, the GRAC should refocus on the purposes it was created for: planning for the relocation to Mira Loma and improving gender-responsiveness in the jail system. A separate regular meeting should be convened for CRDF service providers to meet and share programmatic information and receive policy updates from the Sheriff's Department.

III. County Jail Restructuring

A. Overview

Los Angeles County has approved at least two major changes of its jail facilities to be implemented in the next decade. First, the Men’s Central Jail (MCJ) will be demolished, and the site will serve as the location for a new Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility (CCTF) to open in 2028.² CCTF will house incarcerated men and women in need of ongoing behavioral and/or medical treatment. This plan, embodied in the Final CCTF Environmental Impact Report (EIR),³ was approved by the Board of Supervisors on June 19, 2018.⁴

Second, incarcerated women will be relocated from Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF) to a refurbished Mira Loma Detention Center (“Mira Loma”) in Lancaster projected to open in 2022.^{5,6} This plan was approved by the Board in September 2016.⁶ These changes are an opportunity to “change public perception of the jail system.”⁷ Both projects are motivated by multiple factors, including outdated facilities, local pressure, and state pressure.

B. Outdated Facilities

The current jail facilities are old, deteriorating, and becoming unsafe. Plumbing issues, elevator breakdowns, power outages, and ventilation problems are reportedly common occurrences at CRDF.^{8,9,10} Furthermore, the CRDF facility design is for a maximum-security population,⁶ not a population of women who committed minor offenses and have a high potential for rehabilitation. For example, women do not have regular access to the outdoors because of the maximum security design. They also eat, sleep, and attend programming all within their housing unit, meaning their movement throughout the facility and their variety of social interactions are over- restricted relative to their security classifications.⁶

C. Local Pressure

Another factor is that many Los Angeles County residents continue to struggle with homelessness, mental illness, and addiction. Often, the residents affected by these problems find themselves cycling through the County’s jail system. The plan for CCTF is an attempt to address these challenges for affected inmates.² In order for MCJ to be demolished and CCTF to be constructed, men must be relocated to other jail facilities. CRDF may be one of these facilities, and therefore the women housed there must also relocate.

D. State Pressure

A third factor is that AB 109 was passed in 2011 as part of California’s Public Safety Realignment initiative. It changed sentencing for some low level felonies so that time is served in county jails instead of state prisons.¹² Los Angeles County is now required to house AB 109 offenders, a special population which may have longer sentences and higher security requirements than the average person confined in county jails before AB 109 passed.¹¹ Realignment also led to funding opportunities for facility construction. The County received a grant from the State for \$100 million to refurbish Mira Loma.⁶ The total construction plan is estimated to cost \$136.6 million.¹³

IV. Mira Loma Detention Center

A. Location

Mira Loma is located in the city of Lancaster in the region of Antelope Valley. Lancaster is in the Fifth District of Los Angeles, which is currently represented by Supervisor Kathryn Barger. CRDF is in the city of Lynwood in South Los Angeles, which is in the Second District currently represented by Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas. Other sites like Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic and Sybil Brand Institute near Monterey Park were also considered as sites for relocating the women’s jail, but they were not selected for logistical reasons.⁶

Mira Loma is owned by the County and was a women’s jail from 1986 to 1992.⁶ It then served as a detention center for Federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement until the contract expired in 2012.^{6,10} It is directly adjacent to both the California State Prison Los Angeles County (LAC) and the Los Angeles County Challenger Memorial Youth Camps (juvenile detention center).¹⁴ The site offers a drastic increase in outdoor space and is a facility designed for minimum security, both improvements over CRDF.⁶ However, the remote location of the facility is an obstacle to accessing it.¹⁴ As noted by the County, “downtown Los Angeles is a central point for the County’s justice system, health facilities, and community support services.”¹⁵ Mira Loma is isolated from this central hub of services.

B. Distance and Transportation



The map in Figure 1 demonstrates the geographic impact of this move.¹⁴ The distance between Lynwood and Lancaster is up to 93.4 miles depending on the route and well over two hours during peak traffic. Any visitors traveling to Mira Loma from the First, Second, Third, or Fourth Districts face a lengthy commute with few public transit options. There is no practical public transportation from South Los Angeles; a one-way trip would require a minimum of 3.25 hours and four transfers.¹⁴ Even if a visitor was able to get to Mira Loma by public transit, they would not realistically be able to make the return journey the same day. From downtown Los Angeles, the journey is at least three hours and requires two transfers.¹⁴

At least two public transit lines run from downtown Los Angeles to Lancaster. One is the Metrolink Antelope Valley commuter rail. It runs back and forth from Los Angeles Union Station to Lancaster nine times per day on week days. The trip takes approximately 1.3 hours and costs \$11.50.¹⁶ The Lancaster Metrolink Station has an indoor waiting room, restrooms, and phones.¹⁷ The other line is bus route 785 operated by Antelope Valley Transit Authority nine times per day for \$9.25, and the journey

Figure 1. Travel Distance between Current and Proposed Women’s Jail Locations¹⁴

takes at least two hours.¹⁸

Once visitors arrive in Lancaster, the Metrolink train station is still six miles from the Mira Loma complex.¹⁴ Visitors can take a bus for twenty-five minutes to travel the six miles to the facility for \$1.50.¹⁴ But transit schedules are not necessarily coordinated, and there may be long layovers depending on the time of the day. Additionally, the Route 9 pick-up stop is one block from the Metrolink station and the drop off is at the edge of the complex, not in front of the building entrance.¹⁴ The amount of walking involved is not suitable for young children or visitors with disabilities.

Without solutions to the transportation obstacle, visitors will likely be discouraged from going to Mira Loma. There are no data readily available capturing the proportion of incarcerated women permanently residing in each district.¹¹ This makes it difficult to predict how the move will impact visitation and programming run by volunteers from non-governmental organizations.¹¹ However, given the anecdotal reports of low rate of visitation at CRDF, there is a risk that visitation will all but cease at Mira Loma.⁸ Families that can now visit CRDF in South Los Angeles because of shorter drives and public transportation may not be able to visit at Mira Loma. In addition to space and transportation accommodations, the culture around visiting incarcerated women must change in order to increase visitation.⁸

Several approaches to assisting visitors in accessing their loved ones at Mira Loma have been discussed. The approaches are not mutually exclusive and may all be adopted. One method is a video visitation program.⁶ Video visitation cannot replace in-person visits, but may be a helpful supplement. Another assistance program could be to provide public transit travel vouchers to visitors.⁶ This would be most helpful for able-bodied visitors traveling without young children and with access to a public transit hub due to the logistical barriers previously discussed. A third possibility is that a bus could run from Pitchess Detention Center complex in Castaic to Mira Loma to transport visitors.¹¹ The Sheriff's Department already contracts with a transportation service to provide a bus that runs within the Pitchess complex.¹¹ Castaic is also far north into the Fifth District and is served by few County bus routes. Therefore, this bus service would specifically benefit visitors traveling from that region of the County.^{14,20} Finally, the County may fund community-based organizations to provide private transportation to visitors.¹⁹ Mira Loma was a women's jail in the past, and privately funded buses provided transportation from South Los Angeles to Mira Loma at that time.⁶ (See also, Ride and Rebuild for a current example of a private community-based prison transportation service.²⁰)

Another consideration is that transportation to and from court dates will become more difficult after the move to Mira Loma. Family reunification in particular may be impacted by transportation to dependency court dates. Even now when women travel to dependency court from CRDF, they must wake up around 5AM.^{8,11} After the move, they may face a sleepless night before court, leaving them ill-prepared to appear in front of a judge.

C. Facility Design Process

The physical design for the refurbished Mira Loma facility is inspired by San Diego Sheriff Department's Las Colinas facility.^{6,9,11} Las Colinas opened in 2014 and serves as the primary women's jail in San Diego County.²¹ It is modeled after a college campus and has dorm style housing instead of

traditional jail cells, allowing women to move freely between certain parts of the campus. The model emphasizes programming and utilizes a reward system in which women can gain or lose privileges.⁶

The County began discussions and planning for the Mira Loma transition as early as 2012.²² In 2014, it hired the architecture firm DLR Group to draw the preliminary plans for the future Mira Loma campus.²³ The Department of Public Works (DPW) has acted as the construction project manager, and the Sheriff's Department has acted as the project client, providing operational input for the design.⁶ Within the Sheriff's Department, the project has been managed by the Jail Planning Team, which is housed under the Facilities Planning Bureau in the Administrative and Technology Operations arm of the Department.^{6,24} The team includes architectural and custody operations expertise. It gathered information about the needs of various Sheriff's Department Bureaus during the process of developing the Mira Loma plans, such as kitchen needs for Food Services and classroom needs for Education Based Incarceration.¹¹ The Jail Planning Team also provides updates to the Sheriff Department's Gender Responsive Advisory Committee (GRAC, discussed in more detail later in this report).⁹ DPW provides updates to the Board of Supervisors about the plans at times when Board approval is needed, at the Board's request, and when there is a major development.⁶

The public had an opportunity to comment on the County's Mira Loma plans through the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) process. This is a standard process when new construction projects are proposed by the County. The process is designed to gather and address *environmental* concerns about new construction, but not *social* concerns such as how the facility will be used after it is built.³ The draft EIR for Mira Loma was released in November 2015.⁵ The County responded to public comments on the draft in its final EIR, which was approved by the Board in September 2016.⁶ In addition to commenting on the EIR, some community groups have organized demonstrations to provide feedback to the County about social concerns related to the new facility.^{4,25,26}

Since the EIR was finalized, the County has been engaged in the construction contract bidding process for Mira Loma. The construction company that wins the contract will work with the County using a design-build project delivery method.⁶ In a design-build process, the contractor offers input to supply design details, including materials and specifications, based on its industry expertise.⁶ The contractor is also responsible for complying with all regulations for jail facilities, including Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) regulations.⁶ Because the design-build process requires industry expertise, the County used a two-part process to request bids. First, it screened out applicants with insufficient industry expertise. Then, it asked remaining applicants to supply their final bids.⁶ The process has been slowed by bidders dropping out in favor of other competitive non-government contracts. Currently, there are two qualified contractors that will submit bids for the County's final selection.⁶ The Department of Public Works anticipates spending 2019 working through the design phase of construction and supplementing and finalizing the details of DLR Group's original drawings. The build phase of construction is projected to span 2020 to 2021, with the facility opening to house and provide programming to women in early 2022.⁶

D. Current Proposed Facilities

The County's design for Mira Loma emphasizes environmental sustainability and flexible spaces that can be adapted by the Sheriff's Department as needed. The County will refurbish many of the pre-

existing buildings and only build a limited number of new structures. It will also use power generated by a nearby solar farm to keep all buildings air conditioned.⁶

1. Housing

Mira Loma will be refurbished to have a maximum capacity of 1,604 beds.^{6,13} In 2016, CRDF had an average daily count of 1,800.²⁷ There will be additional beds at the future CCTF for women requiring ongoing medical or behavioral treatment.³ The general population beds at Mira Loma will be located in prefabricated metal barracks (see “Housing Barracks” in Figure 2).^{6,13} Each barrack is a hall with a row of double bunkbeds down each side, tables with seats down the middle, and a section in the center with toilets, showers, sinks, and vanities. The Barracks will be paired off, with each pair having a newly constructed day room at the end to provide community space and a desk for custody personnel. The rows of paired barracks may also be grouped into different zones separated by a fence.⁶ Women will be able to move freely among certain zones and obtain passes to walk through others. Three larger dormitory-style buildings will function as a transitional housing zone for women who have earned the highest level of privileges or are about to be released (see “Transitional Housing” in Figure 2). Each dormitory will have a maximum of 128 beds and a classroom within the building.⁶

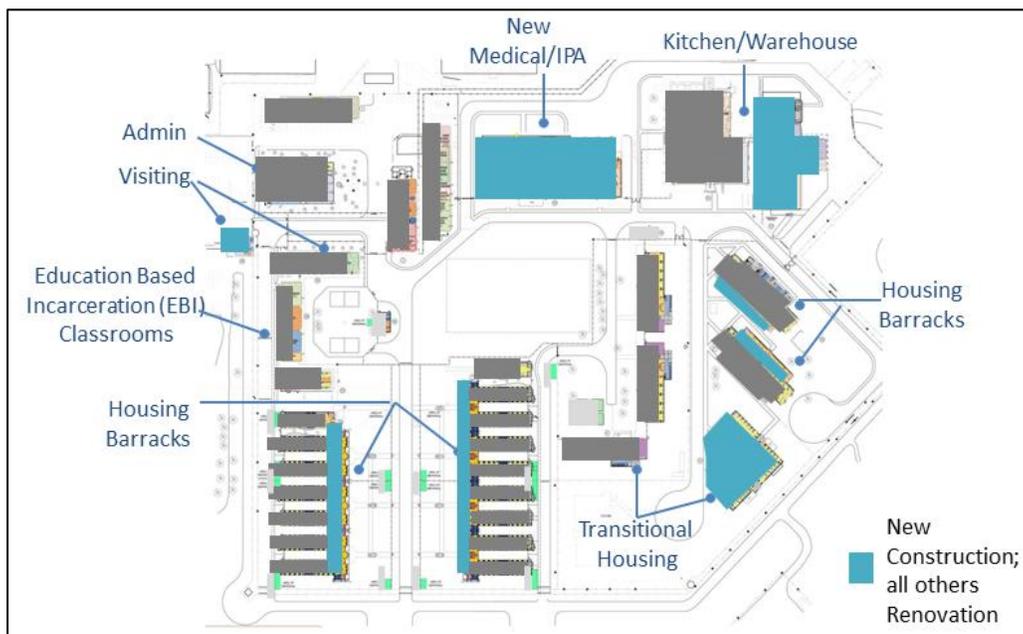


Figure 2. Los Angeles County's Conceptual Site Plan for the Mira Loma Women's Detention Center¹³

2. Programming

Evidence-based programming can reduce incarcerated women's risk of reoffending and improve their social outcomes. For example, evidence shows that education programs can lower participants' risk of recidivism by 13%. The same study found that participation was also associated with a 13% increase in the odds of future employment.²⁸ While Los Angeles County is home to many organizations that provide supportive services, the vast majority are based outside of the Fifth District where Mira Loma is located.^{15,19} To implement the best models of programs for incarcerated women at the new facility, organizations may need incentives to expand North.

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department hopes Mira Loma will have robust programming like Las Colinas in San Diego.^{6,11} The existing basketball courts and athletic field will remain in the new design. There will also be approximately eleven classrooms, including the three in the transitional housing zone.⁶ A large hall near the entrance to the complex will be subdivided into multiple rooms, including classrooms and a resource library, and function as a center for programming (see "Education Based Incarceration (EBI) Classrooms" in Figure 2).^{6,13} All women will be eligible to earn the privilege of moving among the various zones throughout the campus to attend classes.⁶ The current plans for programming include creating a location of America's Job Center of California funded through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.¹¹ There will also be a culinary skills center, with a kitchen located either in the main dining hall or the EBI classrooms.⁶

3. Visitation

Maintaining relationships with friends and family on the outside is challenging for incarcerated women, but having these relationships promotes rehabilitation. Incarcerated mothers who receive visits from their children are less likely to engage in violence and to recidivate.²⁹ Children of incarcerated mothers also have better behavioral outcomes when they can visit their mothers in jail. Most children of incarcerated mothers lived with their mother at the time of arrest.^{30,31} Maternal incarceration disrupts a child's home life and sense of security. Children under five cannot yet understand the concept of incarceration and may experience this disruption as parental rejection, believing their mother chose to abandon them, or as a total loss, believing their mother died.³¹ Mother-child visitation helps children across the age spectrum to emotionally adjust to their parent's incarceration, develop a realistic understanding of the separation, and refrain from modeling their parents' criminal behavior.³¹ Visitation is also associated with healthier outcomes, like higher IQ scores and higher scores for wellbeing.³¹ Visits should start as soon as possible after a mother is incarcerated to maximize positive outcomes for children.

Mira Loma facility plans include visitation spaces. There will be a new building at the entrance of the complex to function as a welcome center and waiting room for visitors. Another building near the entrance will be refurbished to host visitation sessions (see "Visiting" in Figure 2).^{6,13} Women at the jail will go through clearance at one end of the building and visitors will go through clearance at the other end. They will meet in the middle to visit. Visitation options will include video visitation for remote visitors, traditional non-contact visitation through glass or across a table, and contact visitation. The Sheriff's Department promotes contact visitation as the primary visitation form. Outdoor space immediately around the visitation building may also be used for contact visits.⁶

These spatial plans may be able to accommodate a higher volume of contact visitation compared with the current facilities at CRDF.⁶ As discussed in the Transportation section above, though, facilities alone are not enough to bring visitors to Mira Loma. Transportation, cultural, and operational barriers must also be tackled for space increases to have an impact on visitation. For example, the current contact-visitation program, Adults Bonding with Children or "ABC," is equipped to serve approximately ten women with their children in a single session. There are participation barriers due to space and staffing shortages, but also resource and cultural barriers faced by caregivers in bringing children to the facility. Mothers face the additional barrier of program eligibility requirements and children pay the price.^{8,9,31}

V. Programming and Policies for Justice-Involved Women

A. Gender-Responsive Criminal Justice

Research demonstrates that incarcerated women have better rehabilitation outcomes when jails provide programming in a manner that responds to their unique gender-based characteristics.^{1,30,31} Although reproductive health needs are a commonly cited gender-based difference between incarcerated women and men, gender-responsive programming acknowledges many non-physical differences as well.

1. Women Have Different Pathways to Crime

Women have different pathways to crime than men. A man's risk of recidivism is typically calculated by looking at his criminal history, but a woman's risk of recidivism is better predicted by her unmet needs than by her criminal history.¹ These needs commonly include financial instability, lack of work opportunities, inadequate physical and mental healthcare, underdeveloped parenting skills, and unsafe personal relationships.^{29,30} Incarcerated women benefit from rehabilitation services that address the history of abuse and neglect that most have experienced. Researchers have known for decades that the majority of incarcerated women have severe and cumulative histories of physical and sexual abuse, many that started in childhood.^{31,32} Cumulative trauma creates pathways to crime for victims, including crimes of poverty, crimes committed as a result of abuser coercion, crimes committed against abusers, and substance abuse crimes. Public safety is improved when women recover from abuse because it directly treats several pathways to crime.

2. Incarcerating Mothers Hurts Families More

Another way in which women are different than men is that maternal incarceration has a larger impact on families than paternal incarceration. Parenthood is more common among incarcerated women than incarcerated men.³⁰ Most incarcerated women were single parents living with at least one of their children at the time of arrest.^{29,30} Incarcerated mothers experience stress over not being able to support their children, difficulty securing visits with their children, and barriers to regaining custody after release.²⁹ These stressors are linked to misconduct during incarceration and recidivism after release.²⁹ Parenting classes, therapy, and regular contact visitation during incarceration can help prepare mothers to regain their children and improve their parenting abilities.²⁹ Additionally, mothers who are successfully rehabilitated are less likely to perpetuate the generational cycle of trauma and crime with their children because they model healthier coping skills and find legal means of supporting their family.^{29,31,32}

3. Women Pose a Lower Average Security Risk

Women pose a lower average security risk to custody officers based on their crimes.¹ Approximately 60% of incarcerated women are held for non-violent drug or property crimes, while more than half of incarcerated men are held for violent offenses.¹ The lower security risk means that women's facilities have an opportunity to deliver a wide array of programs without significantly increasing the safety risk to staff.

4. Gender-Responsive Jails Can Rehabilitate Women

Once involved in the criminal justice system, incarceration can exacerbate symptoms of trauma.³² For example, loud noises and feelings of powerlessness may remind women of previous instances of abuse, triggering panic or aggression. The reaction might be interpreted as defiance by correctional officers without training in gender-responsive interactions, leading to discipline.²⁹ Conversely, correctional officers with gender-responsive training may recognize women's reactions as symptoms of trauma and refer them to appropriate programming.

Women's jails and community supervision programs need to provide quality treatment for trauma and mental health, family reunification assistance, and resources to break out of the cycle of poverty in order to effectively help prevent women from committing future crimes.^{29,30} Each woman's episode of incarceration fits into a larger narrative of her life and experience as a member of her community. Interaction with the criminal justice system is one opportunity to transform her narrative from victim to empowered mother and community member.

B. Sheriff's Department

1. Early Gender Responsive Efforts

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department began making concerted efforts to revise policies and programming for women in jail to be more gender-responsive at least a decade ago. At that time, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) was working with the state prison system, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, on gender-responsive improvements. The NIC visited Los Angeles County and provided recommendations to improve gender-responsiveness at CRDF. This led to some changes, like increasing the number of pairs of underwear issued to women weekly.¹¹ The Sheriff's Department also designated funds for a Gender Responsive Rehabilitation Program (GRRP) and contracted with HealthRIGHT 360 to implement the program with 124 women at CRDF in 2012.^{8,33}

2. Current Programming

Several other current programs at CRDF support incarcerated mothers: MIRACLE Project provided through Families and Criminal Justice (pregnancy and post-partum support), MAMA's Neighborhood provided through the Department of Health Services (pregnancy and post-partum support), Incarcerated Parents Program provided through Friends Outside in Los Angeles County (parent-child visitation services), ABC provided through Sheriff's Department personnel (parent-child contact visits), and Mothers Behind Bars provided through the Harriett Buhai Center for Family Law (legal education).^{8,9} The American Civil Liberties Union of California has been monitoring women's confinement conditions in LA County on site at the women's jail for four decades.⁹ The Sheriff's Department is also improving compliance with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) regulations across all facilities, including appointing and certifying a PREA coordinator, training all investigators on PREA, and undergoing an elective audit by the non-profit Just Detention International.³⁴

The Inmate Services Bureau (ISB) of the Sheriff's Department is the primary program coordinator across all jail facilities. Within ISB, there are two units that serve in a program coordination capacity: Religious and Volunteer Services (RVS) and Education Based Incarceration (EBI). RVS screens and selects non-governmental programs and personnel for clearance to be delivered in county jails.⁹ EBI helps implement, oversee, and coordinate the schedules for all programs, whether they are funded

directly by the Sheriff's Department through the Inmate Welfare Fund, funded by other county grants and contracts, or through private funding.³⁶ When someone is nearing their release date, the Community Transition Unit (CTU) also plays a role. The CTU coordinates with community-based programs and county agencies working in the jails to help with planning for discharge and obtaining personal documents and benefits in preparation for release.^{8,9,11} Discharge planning happens on a case-by-case basis.^{8,11}

All three units work across all of the jail facilities.^{11,35} Leaders within RVS, EBI, and CTU are responsible for programs serving both men and women.¹¹ It appears that there is no single person in a leadership role within ISB who is centrally responsible for overseeing and coordinating programs specific to incarcerated women. After two months of research, it was still difficult to understand the array of programs and how they are coordinated. The network of programs seems to serve women in a piecemeal fashion, with some programs providing similar services. Many programs have limits on the number of women they can serve. The relationship between the gender-responsive work of the Sheriff's Department and RVS, EBI, and CTU is unclear. Lack of coordination and strategic planning within a complex network of programs and the absence of a dedicated person solely focused on women's programming are impediments to creating a gender-responsive system currently and for the future at Mira Loma.

3. Formation of the Gender Responsive Advisory Committee

The Gender Responsive Advisory Committee (GRAC) is a monthly forum hosted by the Sheriff's Department that has been meeting since 2015.⁹ On the second Monday of every month, CRDF providers, Sheriff's Department personnel, Board of Supervisors representatives, and other County agency representatives meet in Monterey Park to share an hour focused on issues faced by women in LA County's jail.⁹ Usually, this involves a feature presentation by a CRDF service provider and roundtable updates by representatives from other service providers, the Sheriff's Department, and other County initiatives in attendance.⁹ The GRAC has served in a limited capacity to help share information about ongoing activities at CRDF.⁹ It has also received regular updates about the construction plans for the Mira Loma facility from a member of the Sheriff's Department's Jail Planning Team since at least late 2016.⁹ Additionally, the Jail Planning Team provided a site visit and tour of Mira Loma to GRAC members in November 2017.⁹

The GRAC was originally created by the Board of Supervisors through a motion proposed on September 1, 2015 by Supervisors Hilda Solis of the First District and Sheila Kuehl of the Third District. The motion directed the Sheriff's Department to "establish a gender-responsive advisory board" to ensure that programming at Mira Loma is evidence-based and to investigate options for minimizing transportation burdens created by the distance.³⁶ Although, the motion ordered the Department of Health and Sheriff's Department to establish the advisory board, the Sheriff's Department has been the central leader of the effort.^{9,36} The three formalized GRAC positions are for the Commander, Captain, and Operations Sergeant of CRDF.¹¹ The Captain of CRDF leads the meetings.⁹ The Sergeant provides administrative support, including managing the meeting invitation list and notifications, taking attendance, and taking meeting minutes.¹¹ These tasks are among the many responsibilities the Captain and Sergeant have, the primary of which is their role overseeing custody operations at CRDF. When the Captain of CRDF changes, so too does the GRAC leadership. This has happened several times since the

inception of the GRAC, as personnel within the Sheriff's Department routinely transfer among divisions periodically throughout their careers.^{8,11} Inconsistent leadership has been a challenge for GRAC efficiency.⁸

C. Other County Initiatives

Several other County offices and departments supply additional initiatives affecting women involved in the criminal justice system. They are not formally connected or under uniform leadership, but they tackle many of the same issues. County efforts include, but are not limited to: the Women and Girls Initiative established by the Board of Supervisors,^{37,38} Women's Integrated Services Program (WISP) provided through the Office of Diversion and Re-entry,³⁹ Women's Community Reintegration Services & Education Center (WCRSEC) provided through the Department of Mental Health,^{40,41} and specialized court programs provided through the Public Defender's Office (Second Chance Women's Re-entry Court⁴² and Drug Treatment Court^{43,44}). The Office of Inspector General has also provided periodic reports to the Board about maternal services at CRDF.^{45,46}

VI. Recommendations

The women's jail relocation planning process would benefit from more centralized leadership, particularly related to transportation, visitation, and programming. Strategic planning is required to ensure that program providers and visitors are attracted to Mira Loma's remote location. The County has solicited little to no input from women in jail, their families, and organizations that serve them about the multiple impacts of relocating the women's jail.^{8,9,11} Additionally, there is little public awareness about Mira Loma planning efforts and opportunities.⁸ We believe that the following recommendations are manageable solutions to these gaps.

The Gender Responsive Advisory Committee (GRAC) is an existing body that is well-positioned to centralize planning efforts for Mira Loma, diversify input for the planning process, and report out key updates to stakeholders in the process. The GRAC does not have formal decision-making authority,¹⁹ but it does have the ability to discuss and examine issues, request information, track the various pieces of County systems affecting incarcerated women, gather and provide input, and provide external stakeholders with a more comprehensive picture of the Mira Loma relocation plan. The GRAC has been functioning as a meeting for exchanging information about current CRDF programming, but it should return to its original purpose of gender-responsive system planning, specifically as it relates to the future at Mira Loma. Regular meetings to coordinate services at CRDF are extremely important for efficiency and quality improvement, and should happen in a separate forum. The implementation of the following recommendations depends on their adoption by the Sheriff's Department. The Harriett Buhai Center believes that to ensure the success of these recommendations, they should be implemented in time for the first GRAC meeting of the new year in January 2019.

A. Recommendation 1: Centralize Oversight for Programs Serving Incarcerated Women

The Harriett Buhai Center strongly believes that the Sheriff's Department should identify one person to fill a new full-time position as the Women's Program Coordinator and Developer. This role could be integrated into the office of the Chief for Specialized Programs under the Custody Services

Division of the Sheriff's Department. The Women's Program Coordinator and Developer should have a system level perspective of issues faced by incarcerated women and decision making power and accountability to implement GRAC recommendations and other improvements. She should have primary responsibility for all programs serving incarcerated women in Los Angeles County, including coordinating their efforts, enhancing communication between them, identifying solutions to weaknesses in the current network, streamlining referral and discharge planning processes, and leading program planning for Mira Loma. The Women's Program Coordinator and Developer should have supervisory authority over the GRAC Chairperson.

B. Recommendation 2: Strengthen the Gender Responsive Advisory Committee

1. The GRAC Should Refocus on its Mission

Vision and mission statements provide committee members, including Sheriff's Department personnel, with a common goal and direction. The GRAC has a formal written description that includes the following vision statement:

"To ensure that people, regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation or incarceration status are protected from violence, defend against injustice, and are supported with respect."¹¹

The written description also includes a committee purpose to "assist the creation and implementation of gender responsive strategies," including developing a gender responsive strategy for Mira Loma.¹¹ This mission statement should be expanded to provide more detailed direction to the committee. The Harriett Buhai Center proposes that the Sheriff's Department and Board of Supervisors adopt the following mission statement for GRAC:

To advocate for gender-responsive improvements to the Los Angeles incarceration system, coordinate Los Angeles County public and private initiatives that serve incarcerated women, and design implementation mechanisms for improvements in order to build a culture that responds to gender-based needs.

The vision and mission should be emphasized at meetings (for example, through printing it on agendas, including it in meeting invitations, etc.) and reviewed every few years. Mission drift is a significant problem for many organizational committees. Emphasizing the mission and vision will help link GRAC actions to its ultimate goals.

2. Stabilize GRAC Leadership and Resources

The GRAC is the central forum in Los Angeles County for addressing systemic issues and developing a gender responsive system for incarcerated women, including planning for Mira Loma. Its structure needs to be fully established. The GRAC needs a Chairperson with a written job description. Turnover of GRAC leadership and competing responsibilities for GRAC leaders have been problematic for committee efficiency. This role merits substantial resources, including staff time. The Chairperson should be appointed by the Sheriff's Department, and the GRAC role should be accounted for as an important part of the person's full-time responsibilities. The Chairperson should manage GRAC

meetings, coordinate subcommittees, and oversee a GRAC Administrator. She should also regularly communicate GRAC recommendations and progress updates to the Women's Program Coordinator and Developer, report back to the GRAC about resulting Sheriff's Department decisions, and respond to Board of Supervisors' requests for information. It is essential that the Chairperson serve her full term (at least one year), renewed at the Sheriff Department's discretion.

A GRAC administrator should also be appointed by the Sheriff's Department to serve in one year terms. The GRAC Administrator should assist the Chairperson in running the committee by managing the member listserv, handling member notifications about upcoming and canceled meetings, keeping records of the meetings, and sending out meeting agendas and summaries. This person should also assist the Chairperson in creating periodic GRAC reports and drafting responses to Board requests for information.

3. Expand and Formalize Membership

Right now, the GRAC is primarily composed of Sheriff's Department personnel and CRDF program representatives. Invitations are extended informally to new members, usually upon referral.⁸ Membership should be formalized by asking members to sign a pledge to support the mission and vision of the GRAC, attend at least 75% of the monthly meetings, and join one of the subcommittees discussed in the subsequent section.

The Sheriff's Department should formalize the appointments of County government representatives on the committee. There should be at least one representative from each of the following groups: Facilities Planning Bureau, Community Transition Unit, Education Based Incarceration, CRDF, and Court Transportation Services Bureau. Each Board of Supervisor's office should have a GRAC representative. The Department of Children and Family Services, Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, Probation Department, Department of Health Services' Office of Diversion and Reentry, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, and Women and Girls Initiative should also have an appointed representative. Los Angeles City government may also want to appoint a representative, perhaps from Mayor Garcetti's Office of Reentry.

Community stakeholder groups who are not represented on the current committee should also have the opportunity to formally appoint representatives. Specifically, community organizations that work with formerly incarcerated women are a group of stakeholders that have been absent from the GRAC. The Sheriff's Department should recruit organizations like Homeboy Industries, A New Way of Life, and the Anti-Recidivism Coalition to join the GRAC.

4. Increase Participation through Subcommittees

Subcommittees will help focus attention on important topic areas, segment work into manageable tasks, and provide a mechanism for GRAC members to hold one another accountable for substantive participation. Each subcommittee should have a mission, a regularly updated workgroup project timeline, and an elected Chairperson who serves for one year. Each Sub-Committee Chairperson should have a written position description so expectations and responsibilities are clear. These responsibilities should include providing subcommittee updates at GRAC meetings and a written progress report once per term for inclusion in the annual GRAC public report.

The Harriett Buhai Center recommends the following three initial subcommittees to strengthen current CRDF operations and plan for the Mira Loma move: Programming, Transportation, and Visitation. After they are implemented, the GRAC should start meeting quarterly, so that subcommittees can meet once per month in between GRAC meetings. The subcommittees should each start by designing one section of a single survey or interview guide to be administered at CRDF to assess incarcerated women's needs across the three focus areas.

i. Programming Subcommittee

The Harriett Buhai Center proposes that the GRAC adopt the following mission statement for its Programming Subcommittee:

To support all public and private providers of programs for women in Los Angeles County jails to advance a gender-responsive system, to coordinate with one another for efficiency, and to plan for the programmatic transition to Mira Loma.

The subcommittee's first step should be working with the Women's Program Coordinator and Developer to catalogue all programs currently serving incarcerated and recently-released women in Los Angeles, including but not limited to those provided at CRDF. The Sheriff's Department published a helpful guide to its Education-Based Incarceration programs,³⁶ but this guide provides a high-level overview of programs across all facilities in Los Angeles. The subcommittee and Women's Program Coordinator and Developer should create a detailed written inventory of programs to be finalized and shared with the GRAC by June 2019. The inventory should include program staff contact information, program purpose, the number of women it is equipped to serve, eligibility requirements, and plans for continuing services at Mira Loma.

This subcommittee should also help plan for programming at Mira Loma so that it meets the specific needs of incarcerated women in Los Angeles. In order to select programs that will best rehabilitate participants, the subcommittee should perform a needs assessment and gather input from women currently or formerly incarcerated in LA County. Women are the experts on their own needs, and as previously mentioned, unmet needs are frequently pathways to crime. Organizations such as A New Way of Life, the Anti-Recidivism Coalition, and Homeboy Industries may aid in collecting input.

Programming at Mira Loma should also utilize best practices from across the nation. This subcommittee should research and review various models for potential implementation. Program models should be selected first, and then a suitable provider identified. Convenience should not be the chief criterion for selecting programming for Mira Loma. Programs that do migrate from CRDF should have a demonstrated record of success and may need substantial assistance with implementation. The move to Mira Loma is an opportunity to transfer the best programs, improve less effective programs, and replace some entirely with better models. The Sheriff's Department may need to create incentives for providers to administer selected programs in the remote Mira Loma location.

Discharge planning to meet post-incarceration needs should also be an important part of rehabilitation planning to carry forward efforts made while women at Mira Loma. The Programming Subcommittee should review best practices for robust discharge planning and preparation for release. Mira Loma may be a quiet sanctuary away from the urban sprawl of South and Central Los Angeles, but

it will seclude women from the communities they will return to as well. Women may face increased hardship setting up housing, employment opportunities, healthcare, and family reunification services prior to their release when they are far away from the community they will be returning to. The Programming Subcommittee and the Women's Program Coordinator and Developer should start reviewing and improving discharge planning now for further implementation at Mira Loma.

ii. Visitation Subcommittee

The Harriett Buhai Center proposes that the GRAC adopt the following mission statement for its Visitation Subcommittee:

To build a culture where the majority of women are visited by their family and friends while they are in jail.

The first step for this subcommittee should be to understand the factors contributing to a low visitation rate at CRDF. The subcommittee can do this by taking concrete actions such as building relationships with and interviewing personnel from the County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers (LADL), Children's Law Center (CLC). DCFS, LADL, and CLC are experts in incarcerated parents and children's rights. They can help identify ways to improve incarcerated mothers' access to court-ordered visitation. The subcommittee should also solicit input from community groups that work with women in LA County who are transitioning out of incarceration and back into the community. They will have the most accurate and up-to-date knowledge about the barriers and opportunities their clients face in maintaining social support relationships while incarcerated.

This subcommittee should also try to gather quantitative baseline data from CRDF about visitation, including characteristics of the women who receive visitors, how frequently visitors come, their relationship to the women they are visiting, and where they are travelling from. If the data cannot be extracted from CRDF's records, they could be collected on site by surveying a representative sample of visitors and incarcerated women during visitation sessions. Finally, the subcommittee should also assist the Sheriff's Department in its current efforts to expand contact visitation through the ABC program.¹¹

iii. Transportation Subcommittee

The Harriett Buhai Center proposes that the GRAC adopt the following mission statement for its Transportation Subcommittee:

To plan for and meet the need of transportation to and from Mira Loma for the women and their visitors.

An individual from the Sheriff Department's transportation division should be the first subcommittee chairperson. First steps should include conducting a survey of women at CRDF, their families, and other visitors to learn about how transportation impacts relationships during incarceration and how a visitor might travel to Lancaster. The subcommittee should explore all options for assisting visitors in traveling to Mira Loma. For example, it should engage with county transportation providers about the possibility of setting up a free or discounted program

for visitors. It should also engage with community-based organizations to explore the possibility of funding private transportation for visitors.

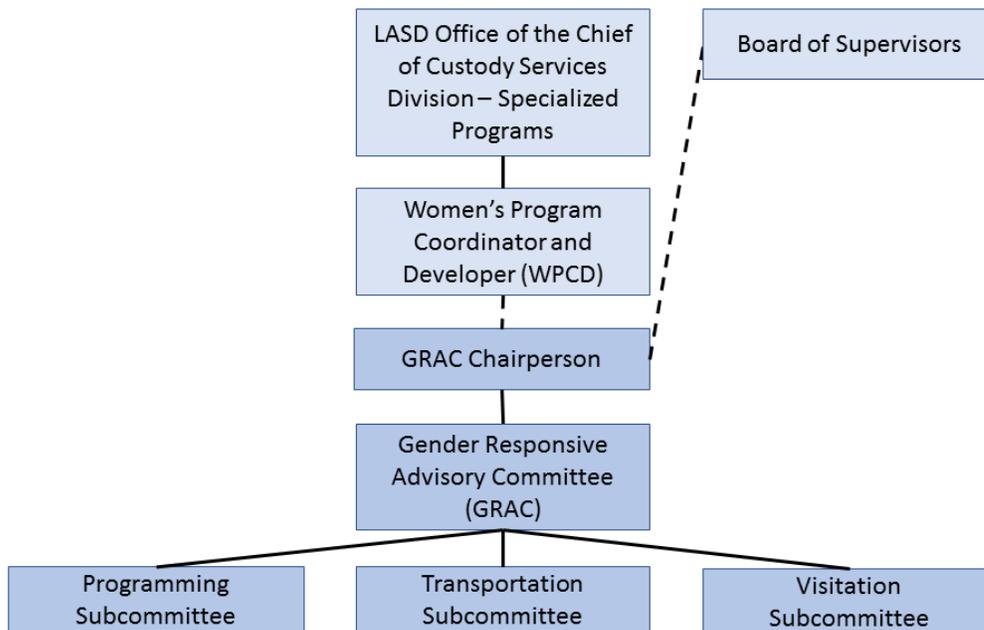


Figure 3. Summary of recommended structure for GRAC

C. Recommendation 3: Implement a Regular Ongoing Meeting for Coordinating CRDF Providers

There is a palpable need to give current providers at CRDF a forum to share information and discuss operational issues. The GRAC was not intended as this vehicle. The Sheriff’s Department should immediately create a regular quarterly session for all CRDF providers. This will allow all providers working with incarcerated women to provide feedback on current systems, receive regular administrative updates and training from the Sheriff’s Department, and network with other providers. The Captain of CRDF or her designee should set the agendas and manage the meetings.

D. Recommendation 4: Increase Transparency and Opportunities for Input in the Planning Process for the Mira Loma Relocation

As the central forum for planning for Mira Loma and gender-responsive initiatives, the GRAC should be tasked with periodically providing information about its efforts to the public, including stakeholders and policy makers. This could be done through a mechanism such as a published annual GRAC report.

VII. Conclusion

Los Angeles County is home to the largest women's jail in the country.¹⁰ The needs of incarcerated women are different than the needs of incarcerated men. Gender-responsive approaches to meet these needs must be strengthened for successful rehabilitation. The move to Mira Loma has brought certain pre-existing issues to the forefront, including opportunities to improve programming and low visitation rates for women. It has also created new issues to solve, like providing transportation assistance to visitors and incentivizing service providers to implement new programs. Planning to address these issues must start now and have robust resources dedicated to them so that the move represents progress toward a gender-responsive system. There needs to be a centralized leader with decision making power who is fully dedicated to incarcerated women and the programs and services provided to them. The Gender Responsive Advisory Committee is positioned to help provide input and recommendations, but it also needs additional structure and leadership. Current CRDF providers have an immediate need for an information sharing forum to strengthen existing programs.

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