



April 7, 2017

Report on NAWJ Visit to New BOP Women's Facility in Danbury, CT

On April 5, 2017, I participated in a visit, organized by the National Association of Women Judges, to the new low security women's facility at Danbury, which is still under construction. Our delegation of approximately eight state and federal judges and a physician from Yale was hosted by Warden Kim Williams; Thomas R. Kane, the Acting Director of the BOP; Michael Carvajal, the Northeast Regional Director of the BOP; Alix McLearn, the Administrator for the Female Offender Branch of the BOP; and Kristie Breshears, the Regional Executive Assistant. We also met other institution staff, including Dr. Parr, the full-time on-site psychologist, two other female staff who oversee programming, and Ms. Mitchell, the unit manager.

The FSL (Federal Satellite Low) Danbury comprises two large newly built shed-style buildings within a fenced-in area that is outside of the FCI Danbury complex (now all-male) and across from the Camp facility (still in operation and still all female). One of the buildings is completed and currently houses 78 inmates, who were transferred from the MDC in December, as well as temporary recreation, dining, medical, visiting/program, and law library facilities (including some computers for email and research). The library does not have a copy of the "Jailhouse Lawyer," but the staff promised to add it. The kitchen is in a temporary trailer, as are the entry security and some ancillary spaces. When the second building is completed (August 2017), the building that we saw today will be a dormitory for 196 inmates, and all of the dining, visitation, library, and most program activities will be centered in the second building. We were told that a running track will be constructed outside of the building and exercise equipment is available.

The interior dormitory space is large, windowed and high-ceilinged, with bays of one or two bunkbeds divided by office cubicle-type fabric covered panels that afford some privacy. We saw a large bathroom with approximately 10-12 separate toilet stalls with doors and the same number of shower enclosures, each with a door and a private dressing area. Several sinks each had a large mirror. This, we were told, is an unusually innovative design affording higher privacy; they are trying to balance privacy and security and will see how things go. There will be three of these large bathroom areas for the 196 inmates when the facility is fully functional. The facilities include wheelchair-accessible stalls, and I saw one inmate who used a wheelchair. There is a large laundry room with 10-12 self service washers as well as dryers.

The temporary medical area is one room, which is staffed by a nurse practitioner daily, with visits weekly (or more frequently as needed) by a physician, who is an OB/GYN. Visits with other medical specialties take place in the main (male) FCI facility and require shackling and strip-searching as the women travel between the facilities. NAWJ representatives will raise with the BOP the question of whether the other specialists can come up to the FSL to examine the women on site. We understand that there are some inmates who have foregone medical treatment to avoid the indignities of shackling and strip searching.

The permanent medical facility is larger and will include mammogram and sonogram machines as well as a dental treatment room, a pharmacy room, examination rooms and counseling areas. The permanent kitchen is large and will be well equipped to provide ample cooking facilities and training for inmates who wish to learn food service. There are currently US Department of Labor certificated apprenticeship programs in Cooking/Food Preparation, Housekeeping, Legal Secretary, Career Counseling and a couple of other disciplines; an inmate staffs a Career area for several hours daily, prepares resumes for women who are nearing release and has information regarding various programs and other resources. The women can go outside as they wish. A very talented inmate is decorating the walls with bright tropical-themed murals. I have attached a copy of a small brochure, including current and future program information, to this memo.

The FSL is a low-security facility. Other low security facilities include Hazelton, WV, Aliceville, AL, Tallahassee FL, and Carswell, TX.

Women who give birth while they are incarcerated who wish to spend time bonding with their children (i.e., who are not giving the children up for adoption or placing them in the care of relatives right away) have two choices, both of which involve leaving Danbury at least temporarily. A "MINT" program is a 3-12 month program in a half-way house setting in Hazelton, where the mother and child live together in the half-way house. The other is called the Residential Parenting Program and is in a secure facility in Washington State, where the mother and child can live together for 30 months.

The overall program is a new model called FIT (Female Integrated Treatment), which is a first for the BOP. The entire inmate population is a therapeutic community, with an RDAP, a Mental Health Step Down Program, a Resolve (trauma treatment) Program, and a Peer Support Program, and the staffing will ultimately include 3 psychologists and 4 masters-level Treatment Specialists. The program is designed to "offer female inmates a unique, evidence based, integrated treatment community to help foster change and assist with their reentry into the community." There is a brief description of the program in the short brochure that is attached to this memorandum. A copy of a brochure that provides a more extensive description is also attached.

The BOP officials and staff were knowledgeable and concerned, responding to our many questions. An Associate Warden told us that staff are instructed that their job is “customer service.” We were afforded time for group and private discussion with the inmates outside of the presence of facility and BOP personnel. The women were glad to be out of the MDC and were generally positive about the new facility, including the staff, outdoor access, and the food. Their concerns tended toward desires for more and better reentry preparation, especially computer literacy and vocational training, additional visitation time frames and Skype visitation¹, immigration law information and preparation for ICE proceedings once their sentences have been completed, and “incentives” (the ability to earn benefits) for participating in programming, including opportunities to earn more telephone time.² There were also some complaints about the pay scales.³ Some of the women raised individual issues.

After our time with the women, we reconvened for further discussion with the BOP and facility officials, who were receptive to our feedback and suggestions, were able to give us context for some of the individual problems that had been raised with us, and specifically undertook to follow up on some of those problems.

Concerns that will be followed up with the BOP by NAWJ representatives include how robust programming can be provided if current federal budget freezes impede full staffing at planned levels, how women who don’t wish to engage in the therapeutic aspects of the program will be handled, and whether Spanish-speaking facilitators can be provided to assist Spanish-speaking inmates in participating in programming, which is currently provided only in English.

Issues on which the Danbury warden and staff are open to help from outside groups include:

- Facilitation of family travel for increased visitation (they would generally be willing to coordinate visiting arrangements if a charity were to organize trips for groups of family members).
- Volunteer lawyers to provide immigration-related information and advice (there is a new arrangement with ICE, which sends representatives to speak with women who are slated for deportation proceedings about the process from the agency’s perspective, but no other source of information about navigating the process).

¹ Currently there are weekend visiting hours only. Apparently visitation to female prisoners is low in general, and visiting traffic has been slow thus far. There are, nonetheless, capacious visiting areas in the current building and the new facility, with play areas for young children. The warden and staff are open to suggestions and help from charitable programs for increasing visitation. Skype visitation, which is already available for male prisoners in the FCI, will be available for the female prisoners once the second building is completed.

² The women are limited to 300 minutes a month, which makes distance parenting very challenging.

³ There is no UNICOR program at Danbury and the Regional Director does not anticipate having the ability to add one.

- Facilitation of access to college and vocational programming, including computer literacy, particularly on a free or subsidized basis (the inmate who works as a career counselor mentioned that, although they are allowed to take correspondence courses, the available courses charge fees of \$40-\$70 per month and most inmates cannot afford them).

Respectfully submitted,

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United States District Judge (SDNY)