

**Tecumseh State Correctional Institution
Family Council Meeting
April 27, 2016 and April 28, 2016**

Facilitator: Warden Brad Hansen, Deputy Warden Scott Busboom,
Acting Associate Warden April Bulling-June

Recorder: Deputy Warden Secretary Jennifer Jepsen
Unit Administrator Secretary Lisa Schmidt

Welcome: Everyone was welcomed to the meeting and given a brief overview of purpose of the meeting.

- Visitors are allowed to come in for the Family Council meeting even if they do not have a visit the day of the meeting.

Issues Discussed:

- Staffing at Gatehouse:
 - Comments were made that visits have improved over the last two years, staff are more pleasant and they don't stop processing the visitors when staff comes in.
 - Visitors have seen a positive change and more positive attitudes.
 - There have been times when only one person was at the front desk trying to get everyone through.
 - *This can be an issue at times and TSCI is working on this.*
- Money/Change machine in the entrance vestibule:
 - It takes too long to get money refunded.
 - Something else needs to be done to get money refunded sooner.
 - Some don't have a lot of money anyway and they have to wait 2 to 3 weeks for a refund.
 - *We have addressed this with the vending company and they are working on a solution.*
- New Schedule – Effective June 1, 2016:
 - What is backing the times? Why is Tecumseh still different from the other institutions?
 - *Facilities are different. TSCI has the largest amount of protective custody inmates and they can't be mixed with general population inmates. This limits some options.*
 - Is there room to incorporate Mondays into the visiting schedule?
 - *Currently there has been no talk of adding additional days, but this can be revisited.*
 - Can there be more night visits on weekdays?
 - *Weekend visits are very busy and we are hoping for more visitors to come during the week.*
 - Visitors are good with the new schedule and glad to see it.
 - Back to back sessions are great – inmates won't have to leave and come back.
 - Trying to add more of an incentive to visit on the weekdays with the new schedule.

- Clothing:
 - Many complaints of jeans being too form fitting.
 - Visitors say they have been able to enter one time and then not allowed the next time.
 - Staff need to be consistent with the dress code.
 - If staff do not see the visitor's clothing in time for the visitor to change if necessary, a warning has been given.
 - Visitors like to look nice for the people they come to see.
 - If the attire is not provocative, why are staff so fearful of letting visitors in?
 - *Visitors can request to speak to a supervisor and staff are reviewing the current dress code to establish more consistency.*

- Processing Visitors and Inmates:
 - Inmates are still arriving late.
 - The biggest complaints received are from weekend visits.
 - Staffing issues also adds to the timeliness of processing.
 - There can be a breakdown in communication.
 - Everyone is searched before coming into visiting. Is there any way this meeting can be done once or twice a year in the Housing Unit so visitors can see what it is like where they live?
 - *Due to security issues, we cannot hold these meetings in a housing unit.*

- Vending Machines:
 - The machines are taking money.
 - Can the inmates be allowed to go to the vending machines?
 - *AW Bulling-June will check if it would be acceptable to place a red line behind the row of tables.*
 - Visitors would like to view a list of items that can be provided in the vending machines.
 - Visitors would like healthier choices in the vending machines – fruit, vegetables, salads, yogurt
 - Inmates have commented they would like water offered in the pop machines.
 - *We will check to see if the vendor can place a bottle beverage dispenser in visiting. Cans are less expensive.*

- Visiting Room:
 - Visitors appreciate the microwaves.
 - Plates need to be kept in stock.
 - Visitors like having the tables to eat at.
 - There is a possibility of getting more tables.
 - More comfortable chairs were requested as three hours is too long to sit in these chairs, but the table at the back is okay.
 - *All institutions have the same type of chairs in their visiting rooms.*

- Activities in Visiting room:
 - More games are needed, not just cards.
 - More engaging activities are needed for the family/youth.

- Donations are not accepted.
- Items have to be purchased through inmate welfare.
- The importance of children's books is understood, but various versions of the Bible were requested so scriptures can be read together. Bibles cannot be brought up with visitors.
 - *Warden Hansen said this would be discussed.*
- Puzzles and memory games were suggested in addition to the books.
 - *There could be an issue in keeping all the puzzle pieces together.*
- What can families do to make the visits better?
 - *Continue to visit. We are looking into ways to open visiting up. Staffing can be an issue and we are struggling, especially on Saturdays, but it is being worked on. We realize things can get frustrating, but your input is valuable to us. Trust that it will come, but it is not easy or fast.*
- Correspondence:
 - Email photos are not going through. It is easier to email than to develop and send them in.
 - One visitor stated they had befriended an inmate and that he needs to write them and tell them that he wants them to write him. They wanted to send something to one inmate and one friend, but both were sent back. The money order was stamped with the department's stamp and they had a hard time getting their money back out of it.
 - One visitor wires money to her daughter and to her "guy" and it is red flagged. She visits every week and thinks that this rule should be bent. She stated that she would send him money one way or another anyway but hopes this rule will change.
 - *Warden Hansen stated that we need to be careful about bending the rules and believes he has seen something on this situation. This is sometimes out of our hands.*
- Property:
 - Department has a work group working with the Fire Marshal on property limits.
 - Inmates have been told not to purchase a foot locker.
 - This decision was made by the Fire Marshal, not the Department.
 - There are still a lot of things to work out.
- Can inmates purchase their own mattresses or pillows?
 - *No – they have to have a certain fire rating and meet other logistics. The mattresses must be made of vinyl material for sanitation reasons. If a state mattress is damaged, the state will replace it. Cornhusker Industries makes these mattresses so this provides jobs.*
- An inmate lost clippers during the 5/10 disturbance but cannot order a new pair because he cannot get them off his property list and he can't get reimbursed for them.
 - *AW Bulling-June will check into this.*
- The boots cause some inmates blisters. Can they get tennis shoes to wear to work instead of their boots?
- Email photos are not going through. They are easier to email than to develop and send in.

- Phone time:
 - The phone time is not long enough.
 - There was a price increase in phone time.
 - *Unfortunately, the economy is the cause of this. The surcharge was taken away. We make no money off the phone calls, as do other states. All vending money goes towards inmate welfare. For example, the proceeds are helping to build the HU#1 mini-yard.*
- Will there be softball or baseball this year?
 - *A&R will have leagues within the housing units. We will not be able to have teams combined from other housing units.*
- Programming:
 - The goal is to provide more programming.
 - Possibly there will be more college courses eventually.
 - There may be self-help classes eventually.
 - Some classes need to be taught by Mental Health staff.
 - Violence Reduction Program (VRP) – Two approved Mental Health staff are needed for VRP and it is in discussion to offer at TSCI.
 - Inmates need help when they come into the system, not just two years before they discharge.
 - *Currently programming is done based on time sentences. This is being looked into regarding getting programming earlier.*
 - Currently GED, MRT, 7 Habits and SAU are available.
 - The mindset needs to switch to rehabilitation.
 - The current Director is looking to change the direction, but it will take time.
- Employment Opportunities:
 - There will be a garden to work this year.
 - Off unit jobs are a premium.
 - The woodshop is expanding.
 - The Health Porter program is a great program with 11-12 porters.
 - NSP has a dog program. Would this be an option?
 - *A K-9 program is being discussed for TSCI.*
- Can there be some incentives for inmates?
 - *Incentives are currently being reviewed. This was tried with the Walking Leagues. One issue lies with some inmates earning it and others just want it given to them without having to earn it.*
- Inmate Councils:
 - Inmates ask to be on and the Unit staff will make recommendations.
 - These are to get inmates to speak their mind but not take the meetings over with their own agendas.
 - There is a balance on the councils of races, ages and gangs.
 - Positions will only be rotated if there are concerns.
 - So far, the meetings have gone well.

- Other comments and concerns:
 - Is there a calling system that could be set up to notify family if something like last May happens?
 - The website is getting better about being updated.
 - It is nice to have good interaction with staff.
 - Is there protocol to notify someone when staff doesn't treat visitors well?
 - *Call or write the Wardens*
 - There are issues with Diabetics having to wait for shots/medical because of PC. Can there be a separate hub for PC because of health issues with Diabetics?
 - *A new procedure has been put in place for PC Diabetics.*
 - Family members like the Family Council meetings and feel they are beneficial.
 - Thank you for this positive experience. It is long overdue and everyone treats us great.