
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 788 (Quirk-Silva) - Prisons: facilities for female offenders

Version: May 23, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: PUB. S. 6 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Liah Burnley

Bill Summary: AB 788 establishes the Division of Female Programs and Services within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR).

Fiscal Impact: CDCR anticipates this bill would result in ongoing General Fund costs in the range of \$5-8 million, as well as one-time costs of \$5-7 million. AB 788 would require CDCR to create a new Director for Female Programs and Services, as well as a separate associate director for women's institutions. The bill articulates that this director shall utilize existing department functions to avoid duplication. While the department would seek to reduce as much duplication as possible, for example by using existing business services, the creation of a new director with policy- and fiscal-decision making responsibility would require significant staff to support that responsibility.

In addition, the bill requires the new Division of Female Programs and Services to have management and oversight of the women on state parole. Currently, Division of Parole Operations (DAPO) parole agents typically manage mixed-gender caseloads, with approximately 94 percent of supervised persons identified as male and 6 percent identified as female. If mixed gender caseloads are divided moving forward, such changes would likely reduce operational efficiency, increase costs for supervision of women on parole, and result in cost pressures in the millions of dollars for DAPO. The bill also expands academy training for staff working in women's facilities. The language currently is not precise about whether staff currently assigned to the women's institutions would be required to receive the 40 hours of training. Assuming current staff are required to receive the training, CDCR would anticipate one-time costs of approximately \$5-7 million. Ongoing, the department anticipates training costs of hundreds of thousands of dollars to \$1 million.

Finally, CDCR also anticipates significant costs, potentially in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, associated with establishing and administering the Gender Responsive Strategies Commission, which is required to meet quarterly; updating and maintaining the Female Offender Reform Master Plan by March 1, 2026, and triennially thereafter; and performing a comprehensive review of policies, practices, and other aspects of women-centered corrections mandates.

Background: According to the author: "California's prison system still fails to address the unique needs of incarcerated women. Women in our prisons face violence, trauma, and neglect, and too often they are forgotten. This bill, AB 788, is a declaration that incarcerated women will no longer be overlooked. It requires that the California Department of Corrections take action to ensure safer conditions, better policies, and

stronger leadership. This is about accountability, respect, and changing the future for women who deserve a second chance.”

Proposed Law:

- Establishes the Division of Female Programs and Services within CDCR, which shall be headed by a director appointed by the Governor upon Senate confirmation.
- Provides that the Director for Female Programs and Services shall be responsible solely for female adult institutions and community facilities housing female offenders. The director shall report to the undersecretary and shall have a minimum of five years of experience serving a female correctional population in a custody setting. This position shall have policy- and fiscal-level responsibility and decisionmaking authority and shall utilize existing departmental functions for services to avoid duplication of functions and responsibilities.
- Requires the Governor to upon recommendation of the secretary, appoint one subordinate officer, subject to Senate confirmation, who shall serve at the pleasure of the Governor to oversee female adult institutions.
- Requires the Division of Female Programs and Services to do both of the following:
 - Manage and provide oversight of adult female programs, including prisons, conservation camps, and parole and community programs; and,
 - Develop gender-responsive, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive approaches to program and policy development that will improve recidivism outcomes for the adult incarcerated and paroled female offenders
- States that the office shall be headed by a person who has relevant professional experience in planning and implementing recidivism reduction programs and services that are gender responsive and trauma informed.
- Requires CDCR to establish the Gender Responsive Strategies Commission to develop active partnerships, involving the community, treatment experts, and related agencies in its efforts toward gender-responsive practice. The commission shall be composed of representatives of community-based organizations, expert researchers, policy experts, legislators, union representatives, formerly incarcerated women, legal advocates, and incarceration reform advocates.
- Provides that the commission shall meet quarterly and publish minutes for each meeting on the department's internet website.
- Requires CDCR to, no later than March 1, 2026, and every three years thereafter, prepare and submit a report to the Legislature on the implementation of the Female Offender Reform Master Plan, including updated statistics

contained in the plan.

- Requires CDCR to maintain the plan, including all subsequent updates and reports, in consultation with the Gender Responsive Strategies Commission and with nationally recognized experts in gender responsive prison operational practices, staffing, classification, substance abuse, trauma treatment services, mental health services, transitional services, community corrections, legal advocacy, and incarceration reform.
- Requires CDCR to post the plan, any reports, and any updates to the plan to its website.
- Requires CDCR to develop training for staff at correctional facilities to include training at the academy and, for those working in a female prison, 40 hours of initial training with a curriculum specifically focused on working with the population within female institutions and an 8-hour annual training thereafter.
- Requires CDCR to perform a comprehensive review of office's policies and practices and other aspects of women-centered corrections developed to enhance safety and rehabilitative efforts. This review should engage collaboratively with internal experts, community-based organizations, medical and mental health experts, labor, incarceration reform advocates, and national consultants on best practices to improve all aspects of operational practice and treatment, with an emphasis on sexual safety and gender-responsive, trauma-informed principles.

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