

# REPORT: CA WOMEN'S PRISONS – SEXUAL ABUSE RESPONSE AND PREVENTION WORKING GROUP

*Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition, California Coalition for Women Prisoners, Just Detention International,  
Justice First, Survived & Punished, and ValorUS*



## EXPEDITED RELEASE OF SURVIVORS

- Expedite the release of survivors of staff sexual abuse to support their safety and well-being, using pathways that exist both within the current authority of CDCR and by amending existing law.

## CULTURE SHIFTING

- **CDCR Staff Training and Services:** Adapt staff training to include facilitation by and more perspectives from formerly and currently incarcerated people. Increase mental health services and screenings for staff.
- **CDCR Policies and Practices:** Amend policies and procedures that are likely to retraumatize people who experienced abuse prior to incarceration in order to reduce harm and allow for greater self-determination.
- **Community-Building:** Prioritize community-building activities to address the animosity and lack of community between incarcerated individuals, which decreases reporting of abuse and affects retaliation.
- **Staff Leadership Development:** Prioritize the recruitment, training, and support of the wardens and Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) staff at CIW and CCWF. Expand the roles and responsibilities of PREA staff.

## SERVICES

- **Services for Survivors:** Adopt best practices for collaboration with Rape Crisis Centers (RCCs). Ensure access to remote emotional support services. Promote mutual peer support for incarcerated individuals.
- **Hotlines and Remote Trauma Services:** Ensure universal access to confidential RCC emotional support hotlines in prisons.
- **Increasing Presence of Onsite Crisis Centers:** Ensure access to meaningful in-person support from RCC victim advocates by increasing program funding and protecting the privacy of survivors during services.
- **Access to Community Resources:** Ensure access to community-based organizations (CBOs) as a support and prevention measure, empower incarcerated people to identify supportive CBOs, and increase program funding for CBOs to provide more supportive services. Ensure survivors have expedited access to legal support and access to confidential communication to RCCs and designated supportive CBOs.

## INVESTIGATION/REPORTING PROCESS

- **Reporting Methods:** Ensure that the reporting process is adequately accessible, private, anonymous, and confidential so that individuals reporting abuse are less vulnerable to retaliation and negative attention.
- **Independent Reporting Process:** Provide the option to report abuse via an independent, external body. Create a regulatory system to monitor the processing of reports, an accessible report tracking system for survivors, and a formal role for independent support persons who can oversee individual investigations.
- **Independent Investigations and Determinations:** Identify or create an independent, external investigatory and oversight body to increase confidence in an unbiased, thorough investigation process. In the short term, strengthen existing policies that improve the impartiality of investigations of staff sexual abuse by taking investigations out of the hands of local prison staff.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Whistleblower Protections:** Alter policies like strip searches and housing transfers that are frequently manipulated and misused for the purpose of abuse and retaliation by limiting use, introducing safeguards, and providing adequate oversight. Update existing practices for tracking retaliation to increase efficacy.
- **Body-Worn Cameras:** Ensure that body-worn cameras (BWCs) are not inappropriately deactivated, that incarcerated individuals have adequate access to BWC footage, and that BWC policies are adequate and consistent across all facilities and staff roles.
- **Institutional Accountability:** Ensure the efficacy of the Office of the Inspector General's (OIG) monitoring of CDCR. Identify a body external to CDCR and OIG that can be responsible for following up on OIG audits to ensure that CDCR is held accountable for addressing the concerns of this oversight office.