

**IMPACT EVALUATION OF  
SURVEILLANCE CAMERAS  
PLACED IN THREE VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL  
CENTERS**



*Program Development and Evaluation Unit  
Virginia Department of Corrections*

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## Executive Summary

In 2006, the Virginia Department of Corrections was awarded a Federal Sexual Assault Prevention Grant (GRANT #2006-RP-BX-0024) under the Bureau of Justice Assistance, U.S. Department of Justice's FY 2006 Protecting Inmates and Safeguarding Communities Discretionary Grant Program. This grant initiative has impacted approximately 3,000 women offenders currently held in three Virginia Correctional Institutions, and will continue to impact all other offenders who enter these facilities in the future.

Under this grant project surveillance equipment was installed in three women's prisons that currently lack adequate surveillance coverage. After months of decision making and initial preparation work the installation process began in the fall of 2007 and continued until completion in the spring of 2009. Cameras were placed in strategic locations throughout the interior and exterior of the facilities to insure complete coverage of all possible places sexual assault and abuse might occur. This project updated and expanded the older analog cameras originally installed at these facilities.

Cameras were installed or updated in the following areas:

1. all exterior entrances to buildings
2. housing unit corridors and entrances to dorm areas
3. inmate bathroom entrances
4. kitchen, commissary, storehouse and maintenance areas
5. entry doors to stairwells
6. corridors outside office areas

Note: cameras are not installed that look directly into cells or bathrooms. Cameras are monitored from a control center.

This grant project also provided for the examination of institutional infractions after camera installation. This report will measure these infractions by examining changes in Incidence Reports (IR's) for all three institutions. IR reports are sent from the institutions to agency headquarters after an incident occurs. These reports include PREA related incidents (as well as all other types of incidents) that occur in the institutions.

In addition, this report looked at institutional climate changes of offenders at one correctional facility (Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women) after cameras installation. This attitudinal information was gathered by surveys given to inmates at the Correctional Center during group therapy sessions. Because the installation process began prior to having PREA analyst staff in place, a preliminary survey was not given prior to camera installations, therefore a comparison of attitudes before and after the installations is not available. Questionnaires were also sent to two Wardens and one Superintendent at the female institutions.

The grant project began July 1, 2006 and was extended to June 30, 2009. Surveillance hardware and technology installation was directed by Matt Savino, who will continue to oversee the maintenance of the new surveillance camera system.

The goal of this project is to show that enhanced electronic surveillance at the three female prisons will result in fewer infractions and increase institutional security. These finding may be used to lobby for additional state funding of increased and updated surveillance hardware at other Virginia prison facilities.

The three women's facilities that received the cameras include the Virginia Correctional Center for Women (Women's institution), Fluvanna

Women's Institution, and Central Virginia Correctional Unit #13. A description of these facilities follows.

**Central Virginia Correctional Unit**, which opened in 1971, is a female field unit with a security level 1. This facility houses offenders with no charges of murder, sex offenses, or kidnap/abduction. Offenders can have no history of escape or any disruptive behavior for at least 24 months. The average daily population (as of May 2009) is 244.

**Virginia Correctional Center for Women** (VCCW) opened in 1931 and houses an average daily population (as of May 2009) of 585.

**Fluvanna Women's Correctional Center** houses offenders with long sentences including single and multiple life sentenced offenders. Offenders can have no disruptive behavior for at least the past 24 months before they can be considered for a transfer to any less-secure facility. This facility opened in 1998 and has an average daily population (as of May 2009) of 1,215.

## **Methodology**

Excel and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were used to run data analysis for the Fluvanna and Warden and Superintendent surveys. In addition, researchers created a database for the VADOC Inspector General's office to gather information which pertained to the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). These data were used to calculate the results of the camera installation. In addition, Wardens and

Superintendents were surveyed regarding the attitudes of the offenders and the correctional staff.

## Incident Reports

Incident Report forms (IR's) submitted by the facilities, capture the nature and description of incidents that happen in the institutions. They also record the actions taken against the perpetrators and victims that these incidents affect.

The IR forms were changed in 2008 to categorize incidents into four PREA categories which include: 1) offender on offender abusive sexual misconduct; 2) nonconsensual sexual acts; 3) staff on offender harassment and; 4) sexual misconduct. These changes allow for sexual assault and abuse data to be easily recorded.

The Incident Report's show that there have been no abusive sexual acts reported at the three facilities since 2005. Table 1 shows the number of nonconsensual sexual acts, staff sexual misconduct, and staff sexual harassment reported by the three facilities between 2005 and May of 2009.

**Table 1**

Totals for year	Nonconsensual Sexual Acts			Staff Sexual Misconduct			Staff Sexual Harassment		
	Founded	Unfounded	Inconclusive	Founded	Unfounded	Inconclusive	Founded	Unfounded	Inconclusive
2005				2	8	2		1	1
2006		1		9	2	3	1		1
2007	2		2	3	5	4		1	2
2008	1	1	1			1			
2009*					1				

\* denotes data taken between (January and May 2009)

The table data show that there were more staff sexual misconduct incidents reported than any other type of sexual incidents (2006 had nine founded cases). These incidents began to decrease in 2007, with only

three founded cases reported. By end of May 2009, there are virtually no misconduct cases reported.

### **Sexual Assault/Abuse Survey Results From Fluvanna**

Sexual Assault/abuse surveys were developed and administered at Fluvanna Correctional Center in December 2008 with eighty four completed surveys returned (12% of main population). The surveys were designed to gauge the attitudes of the females in the institute after the installation of surveillance cameras. Offenders were randomly chosen from the main offender population to complete the surveys.

Survey questions asked how safe the offenders feel regarding sexual assault or harassment; the most likely places for sexual abuse to occur; and whether or not additional video cameras would make them feel safer. They are also asked if these sexual acts actually do or do not occur at the facility and whether or not they regard the staff as efficient at their jobs. Figures 2-5 show the results of these questions.

**Figure 1**

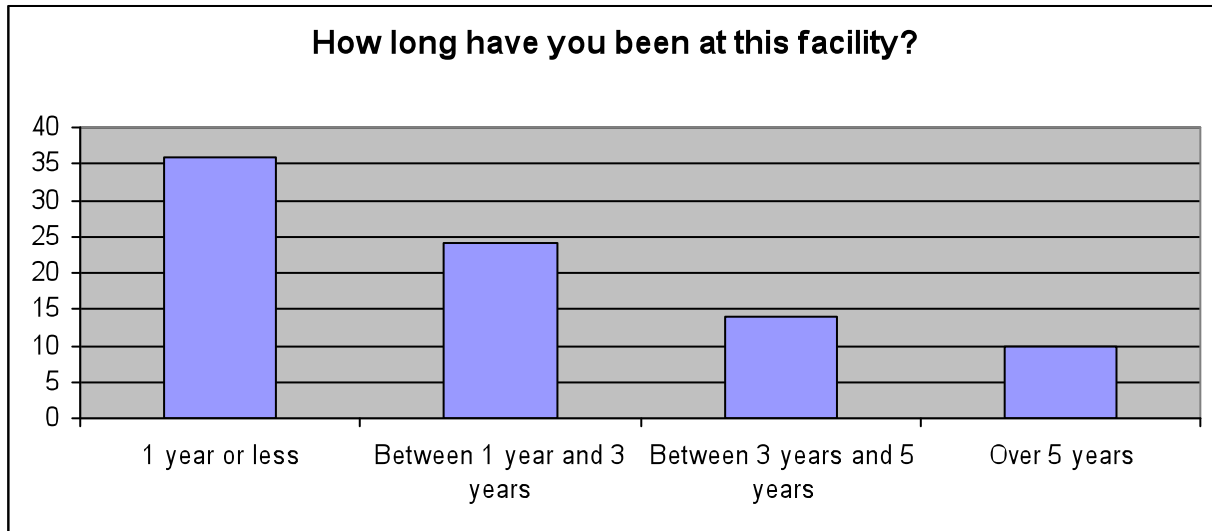
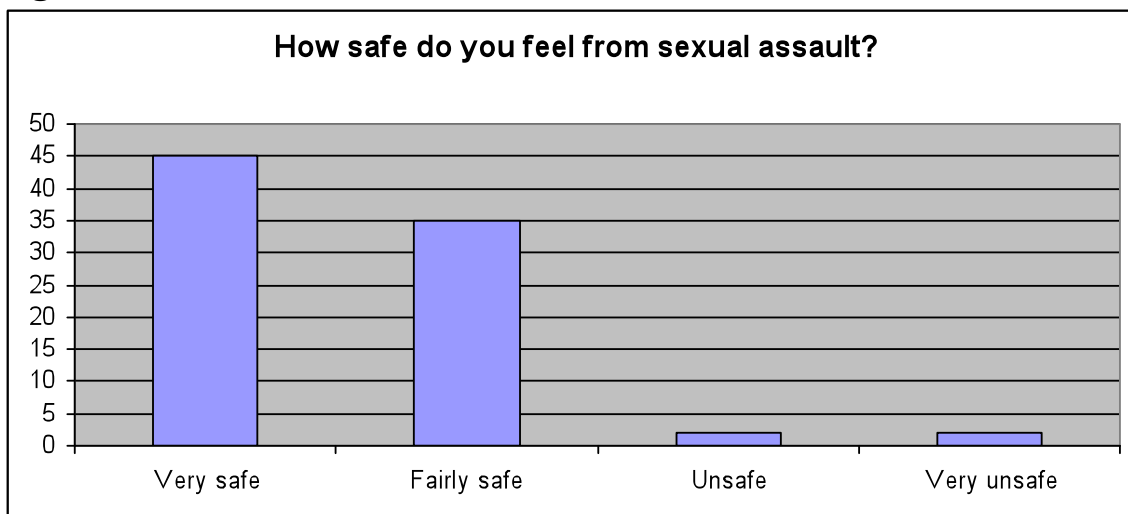


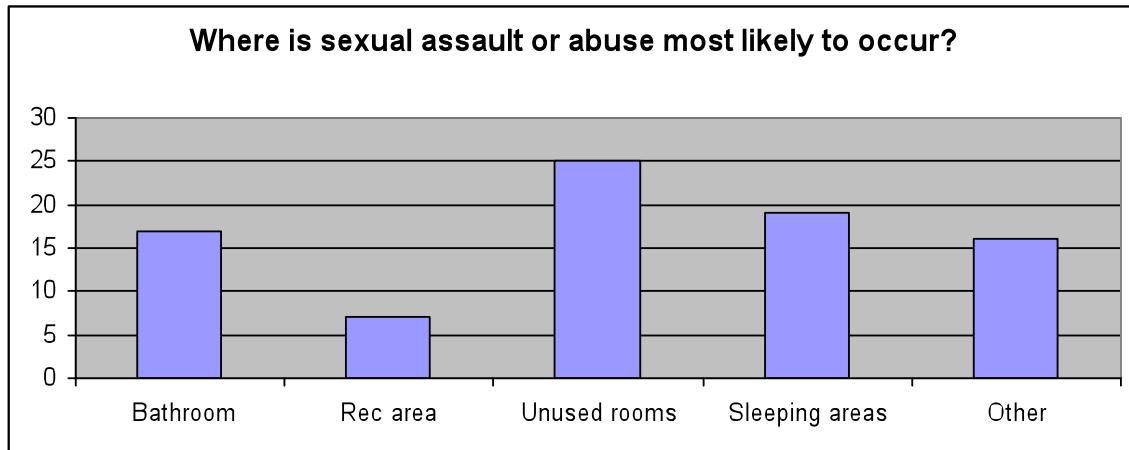
Figure 1 shows that sixty (60), or 71.4% of the offenders who completed the survey have been incarcerated at the Fluvanna Institution for less than three years. Ten (10) of the survey takers have been at this location for over five years.

**Figure 2**



A majority of offenders (95.2%) report that they feel very safe or fairly safe from sexual assault (Figure 2).

**Figure 3**



Several areas were listed as being places most likely to provide opportunities for sexual assault or abuse to occur (Figure 3). The most likely places are unused classrooms, meeting rooms, or offices (29.8%); followed closely by dorms and sleeping areas (22.6%), then bathrooms (20.2%). Other (unknown) areas was chosen by sixteen (16) offenders.

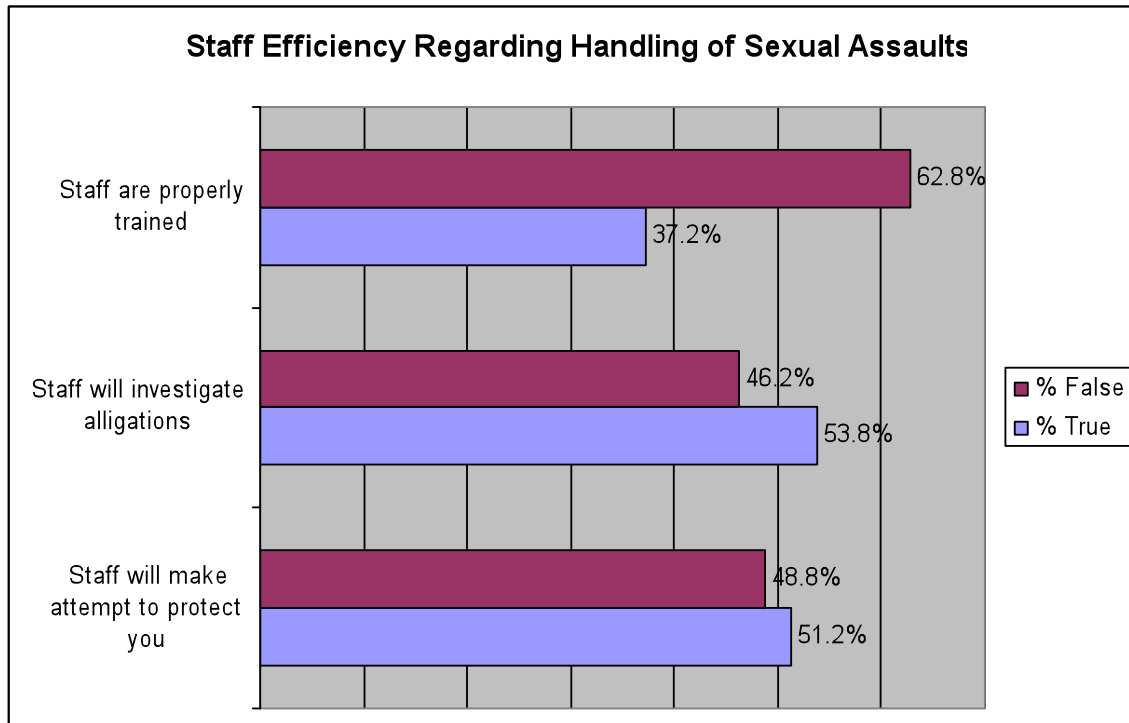
**Figure 4**



Figure 4 shows that a majority (72.6%) of offenders indicated no change regarding if additional cameras were installed at the facility.



**Figure 5**



(n=88)

Figure 5 shows the percentages of true and false responses given that questioned efficiency of staffs' handling of sexual assault cases reported by offenders. Results indicate that a majority of offenders (62.8%) do not feel that correctional staff are properly trained in handling and reporting a sexual threat or assault, and some respondents appear to question staff responsiveness. Some respondents believed that sexual assault occurs in the facility (15.5%), while 38.1% (32) responded "not often" or "not at all". Over half (51.2%) feel that staff at Fluvanna makes them feel protected from sexual abuse or harassment.

There were some discrepancies in the responses from offenders when length of time incarcerated is considered. For example, when asked "do you feel safe from sexual assault?", half of those with less than five

years indicated that they do not feel safe; while all of the offenders who had been at the facility for more than five years indicated that they do feel safe.

The survey asked one discussion question, “What could prison staff do to help you to feel safer from sexual assault or abuse”? Twenty offenders had no response to the question and six indicated that nothing would change with the installation of the cameras. Many offenders took the opportunity to voice their opinions, some of which were unrelated to sexual assault.

One respondent stated that “she would like to be told how she would be protected and how they (staff) would sexual handle assault and abuse cases”. This offender suggests “upon arrival, (staff should) allow people to read the information regarding PREA and then sign the form”.

## **Results of Wardens and Superintendents Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were sent to the two Wardens and one Superintendent who oversee the women’s facilities. The following section shows the results of these questionnaires.

### **Fluvanna Correctional Center**

Due to the fact that Fluvanna had cameras originally installed at their facilities, the offenders were used to having cameras in the housing units. Therefore, new cameras appear to have less impact on the offenders who were surveyed there. For the most part, the offenders often seemed to forget that the cameras were present.

Staff, on the other hand, are aware that cameras can be a good investigative tool. The cameras help provide

documentation to institutional charges, therefore giving them more credibility. The Warden at Fluvanna states that in the beginning some staff reported that cameras were installed to "catch" them doing something wrong; however, the cameras are generally ignored now during their daily supervision of offenders. The new cameras afford greater visibility of the entire facility since it now captures the exterior areas and areas that were not previously under surveillance. The cameras provide management the ability to document unwanted behaviors both inside and outside the facility as well as provide additional surveillance of the interior secured perimeter area.

For the most part, the new additional cameras have enhanced the ability of the facility to provide a safe environment for both staff and offenders.

### **Central Virginia Correctional Unit**

The Superintendent at CVCU feels that the cameras have made the offenders feel more secure, since they are aware that the staff are now better able to observe their activities. In addition, Staff appear to be more comfortable with being able to confirm or disapprove allegations made by offenders. The cameras make staff feel more secure because they know that the control center officer and/or supervisors are monitoring the cameras constantly. Staff are aware that offenders report incidents and that they can now observe many situations and can address these situations.

## **Conclusion**

Having the ability to document and confirm allegations allows staff to feel more efficient and creditable. In addition, staff feels that safety has increased due to the installation of exterior perimeter cameras. Incident reports have dropped since the initiation of PREA in the three institutions.

# APPENDIX

## Sexual Assault/Abuse Survey

# FLUVANNA CORRECTIONAL CENTER FOR WOMEN

## Sexual Assault/Abuse Survey

1. How long have you been at this facility?
  1. One year or less
  2. Between one year and three years
  3. Between three years and five years
  4. Over 5 years
  
2. Do you believe that sexual assault occurs in this facility?
  1. Yes, it occurs often
  2. I've heard rumors that it occurs
  3. It may happen, but not often
  4. I don't believe sexual assault occurs at all
  
3. Do you believe that sexual harassment occurs in this facility?
  1. Yes, it occurs often
  2. I've heard rumors that it occurs
  3. It may happen, but not often
  4. I don't believe sexual assault occurs at all
  
4. Do you feel safe from sexual assault in this facility?
  1. very safe
  2. fairly safe
  3. unsafe
  4. very safe
  
5. How well does staff protect you from sexual abuse or harassment in this facility? I feel....
  1. very protected
  2. protected
  3. unprotected
  4. very unprotected
  5. staff does not need to protect us from sexual abuse or harassment since it does not occur here
  
6. Where would you say is the most unsafe place in this facility in regards to sexual abuse/assault?
  1. Bathroom
  2. Recreational area
  3. Unused classrooms, meeting rooms or offices
  4. Dorms or sleeping areas
  5. Other

7. Would additional video cameras throughout the facility make you feel safer?

1. very much safer
2. slightly safer
3. less safer
4. no change

**True (T) or False (F): Put a check in front of T if your answer is True; check F if your answer is False.**

T  F If you report that you have been sexually assaulted, abused or threatened, the staff at this facility will make every attempt to protect you from harm?

T  F If you report that another person has been sexually assaulted, abused or threatened, the staff at this facility will investigate the claim and attempt to protect the other person from harm.

T  F Correctional staff are properly trained in handling and reporting a sexual threat or assault.

**Discussion Question:**

**What could prison staff do to help you feel safer from sexual assault or sexual abuse?**