

Groundbreaking at Mitchellville Prison

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on July 15 at Iowa's only women's prison, Mitchellville, for the expansion and renovation of the facility. When completed, this facility will be updated to allow the Department of Corrections to address the medical, mental health, and gender-based treatment needs of female inmates that will give them the necessary tools to be productive citizens and reduce recidivism rates.

Countless studies have shown that female inmates have a higher rate of mental health needs than male inmates, and this renovation will add a medical unit with two floors devoted to inmates with mental health needs which limit them from living in the prison's general population. Once this unit is completed, the female inmates that are currently housed at Oakdale (Iowa Medical and Classification Center) will be moved to Mitchellville.

Currently both men and women are housed at Oakdale, and this is where all inmates, once being sentenced to serve at a prison, go for medical and mental evaluations. In the near future, female inmates will be able to get their evaluations done at Mitchellville.

Technology advancements will come into play at this institution in more than one way. Mitchellville will use electronic medical record transcripts and advanced telemedicine. Video visitation will be in the housing pods to allow for long-distance visitation, and video conferencing will also be used for long-distance learning.

Security will continue to be a high priority at Mitchellville, as well as maintaining safe interactions between inmates and officers. Another focus is on expanding the space for treatment programs. It is through successful completion of these treatment programs that the inmates are moved to lower custody levels.

Completion of the new buildings is expected to be completed in June of 2013, and renovation of existing buildings is expected to be completed in December 2013. The total cost of the project is \$67.6 million and is paid for with state gaming revenues.