

# **Mercer County Jail**

## **PREA ANNUAL REPORT 2021**

The Mercer County Jail is pleased to publish its 2021 Annual Report. This report reflects a tremendous amount of change this past year as we continued to move forward in complying with the national standards promulgated under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). We are committed to keeping those in our custody safe and free from harm and have zero tolerance for sexual assault and harassment of offenders under our jurisdiction.

### **PRISON RAPE ELIMINATION ACT (PREA)**

In September of 2003, President Bush signed the Prison Rape Elimination Act. In August 2012, the PREA standards promulgated by the United States Department of Justice went into effect. The standards were established to address the problem of sexual abuse and sexual harassment of persons in the custody of U.S. correctional agencies. Major provisions of PREA include the development of standards for detection, prevention, reduction and punishment of prison/jail rapes. We continue to enforce zero tolerance on all issues pertaining to sexual abuse and sexual harassment involving inmates and are working continuously to implement new policies, training requirements for staff and inmates, and developing standards for detection, prevention, reduction and punishment of rape.

### **PREA COORDINATOR**

We have assigned a senior staff person in the responsibility for overseeing PREA activities. The PREA Coordinator has been appointed to lead our efforts in achieving compliance with PREA standards.

During this past year these staff, and others, worked to develop new and revise existing policies and procedures to support compliance with PREA standards and protect inmates from sexual assault and harassment.

### **PREA INVESTIGATIONS**

It is our policy to thoroughly investigate all complaints of sexual abuse or sexual harassment no matter whether inmate-on-inmate misconduct or employee misconduct, to properly determine whether the allegations are valid or invalid, and to take appropriate follow-up action.

Facility investigators have been properly trained in sexual harassment and sexual abuse investigations. Whenever an allegation has been in violation of a criminal offense, the matter will be investigated by the Mercer County Sheriff's Office.

## **TRAINING**

Throughout the year staff utilized online resources offered by the PREA Resource Center.

In addition all new inmates were provided training on their rights to be free from sexual abuse and harassment and how to report any incidents of sexual abuse and harassment.

All new staff attended in-depth training on the facilities policies and procedures relating to PREA and all existing staff received in-service training.

## **POLICIES**

Operation of our facility consistent with PREA requirements is guided by policy. Policies relating to PREA requirements are as follows:

Mercer County Sheriff's Office General Order C-270, which is available on the Mercer County Sheriff's Office website.

([http://www.mercercountynd.com/image/cache/PREA\\_POLICY\\_2018\\_1.pdf](http://www.mercercountynd.com/image/cache/PREA_POLICY_2018_1.pdf))

## **VICTIM ADVOCACY SERVICES**

We entered into an agreement with Women's Action Resource Center to provide advocacy services to our inmates. They can be contacted at 701-873-2274.

Rape crisis and sexual assault centers provide all or some of the following services for victims of rape and child sexual abuse and their families:

- 24 hour crisis hotline
- 24-hour medical accompaniment
- Accompaniment to police interviews
- Legal advocacy
- Courtroom accompaniment
- Professional counseling for survivors, family, and friends

- Referrals to counseling and other services
- Community education and prevention programs

If you would rather contact a crisis center, information is listed below.

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE and [online.rainn.org](https://www.rainn.org)) in partnership with more than 1,100 local rape crisis centers across the country and operates the [DoD Safe Helpline](#) for the Department of Defense. RAINN also carries out programs to prevent sexual violence, help victims and ensure that rapists are brought to justice. RAINN has links to many other state sexual assault organizations.

<https://www.rainn.org/get-help/local-counseling-centers/state-sexual-assault-resources>

## **PREA AUDIT**

A PREA Audit was performed by a Department of Justice certified PREA Auditor, Candy Snyder, on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.

## **DATA COLLECTION**

In compliance with *Section 115.88* of the PREA Standards, senior staff have reviewed data collected and aggregated pursuant to *Section 115.87* and incident specific data in order to assess and improve the effectiveness of its sexual abuse prevention, detection, and response policies, practices, and training, including:

Identifying problem areas;

Taking corrective action on an ongoing basis; and

Preparing an annual report of its findings and corrective actions.

Also, in compliance with *Section 115.89* of the PREA Standards we will make all aggregated sexual abuse data readily available to the public at least annually by publishing data in a report and posting the report on our website.

## General Definitions

*Sexual Contact includes –*

Physical contact for the purpose of sexual gratification of one or more of the parties involved.

*Sexual abuse includes—*

(1) Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by another inmate, detainee, or resident; and (2) Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, includes any of the following acts, if the victim does not consent, is coerced into such act by overt or implied threats of violence, or is unable to consent or refuse:

- a. Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
- b. Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;
- c. Penetration of the anal or genital opening of another person, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument; and
- d. Any other intentional touching, either directly or through the clothing, of the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks of another person, excluding contact incidental to a physical altercation.

*Sexual abuse of an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer includes any of the following acts, with or without consent of the inmate, detainee, or resident:*

- (1) Contact between the penis and the vulva or the penis and the anus, including penetration, however slight;
- (2) Contact between the mouth and the penis, vulva, or anus;
- (3) Contact between the mouth and any body part where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- (4) Penetration of the anal or genital opening, however slight, by a hand, finger, object, or other instrument, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- (5) Any other intentional contact, either directly or through the clothing, of or with the genitalia, anus, groin, breast, inner thigh, or the buttocks, that is unrelated to official duties or where the staff member, contractor, or volunteer has the intent to abuse, arouse, or gratify sexual desire;
- (6) Any attempt, threat, or request by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer to engage in the activities described in paragraphs (1)-(5) of this section;
- (7) Any display by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer of his or her

uncovered genitalia, buttocks, or breast in the presence of an inmate, detainee, or resident, and (8) Voyeurism by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer.

*Sexual harassment* includes—

(1) Repeated and unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or verbal comments, gestures, or actions of a derogatory or offensive sexual nature by one inmate, detainee, or resident directed toward another; and

(2) Repeated verbal comments or gestures of a sexual nature to an inmate, detainee, or resident by a staff member, contractor, or volunteer, including demeaning references to gender, sexually suggestive or derogatory comments about body or clothing, or obscene language or gestures

Voyeurism -- An invasion of privacy of a inmate by staff for reasons unrelated to official duties, such as peering at an inmate who is using a toilet in his or her cell to perform bodily functions; requiring a inmate to expose his or her buttocks, genitals, or breasts; or taking images of all or part of a inmate’s naked body or of a inmate performing bodily functions.

Substantiated allegation -- An allegation that was investigated and a preponderance of the evidence determined the allegation to have occurred.

Unfounded allegation -- An allegation that was investigated and determined not to have occurred.

Unsubstantiated allegation -- An allegation that was investigated and the investigation produced insufficient evidence to make a final determination as to whether or not the event occurred.

Informational—An allegation or report of sexual activity, while a possible institutional rule violation, the incident was determined not to involve sexual abuse or sexual harassment.

2019	Inmate Sexual Abuse	Inmate Sexual Abuse Touching	Inmate Sexual Harassment	Staff Sexual Abuse	Staff Sexual Harassment	Total
Substantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unsubstantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unfounded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

2020	Inmate Sexual Abuse	Inmate Sexual Abuse Touching	Inmate Sexual Harassment	Staff Sexual Abuse	Staff Sexual Harassment	Total
Substantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unsubstantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unfounded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

2021	Inmate Sexual Abuse	Inmate Sexual Abuse Touching	Inmate Sexual Harassment	Staff Sexual Abuse	Staff Sexual Harassment	Total
Substantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unsubstantiated	0	0	0	0	0	0
Unfounded	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	0	0	0	0	0	0

## DATA COMPARISON

With the completion of the successful PREA Audit on June 3, 2021, we have gained insight and experiences towards maintaining ongoing compliance with the PREA standards within our facility. The addition of the Anonymous Reporting Memorandum of Understanding was established jointly between Mercer and Mclean County to provide additional safety for inmate reporting within our facility. Staff training and education for inmates and staff will continue. Data collection and PREA monitoring will continue as well. We are firmly committed to our pursuit of compliance with the PREA standards and protecting inmates from sexual abuse and harassment. Comparing the data collected from 2020 and 2021 shows a 0% change.

## REPORTING A PREA INCIDENT

If you or someone who you know have experienced sexual assault in our facility please report the incident to the PREA Coordinator for Mercer County Jail (701-745-3333). You can report information anonymously by mail to:

Mercer County PREA Coordinator  
P.O. Box 39  
Stanton, ND 58571