



HEAR FROM HER

Hannah Overton

System Impacted Women Speak Series
Brought to you by the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

On September 7, 2007, I was convicted of capital murder and sent to a maximum security prison for life without the possibility of parole for a crime I didn't commit.

This would leave my husband at home to care for our 5 children. After seven years in a maximum security prison, I was exonerated and all charges were dropped.

Due to my charge I was not allowed to have contact visits at all with any of my children, for the 7 years of incarceration. We talked through Plexiglas.

Due to the distance (300 miles each way), my husband wasn't able to bring my 5 kids like we would have liked. Because my Church family paid for gas, he was able to bring them once a month.

At first no phone calls were allowed. I could, however, request a 5 minute call every 90 days. This was more torture than help, because each child would cry, getting less than 1 minute to talk.

Once the phones were allowed and set up, the cost severely limited the amount of time we could talk. Communication through phone calls, and even letters, is still a huge issue for those without money.

I think contact with children should be allowed, even in child cases, but the visit should be carefully monitored. I lived in a maximum security prison for 7 years. Most, if not all of the women I encountered, would never be a threat in a visiting room. When deciding which unit to place a woman in, I think the distance from her children should be considered. Phone calls should be affordable, so everyone has access, and I believe the phone system should be much easier to set up, since the current system is often difficult for the families to understand.

Was access to feminine hygiene products an issue in prison?



Yes! The feminine pads we were provided (24 per month) were so cheaply made that they would last an hour or two. We were only given 6 tampons. Even if we could afford more at commissary, they were often out of stock.

I had to resort to begging those who no longer had a cycle for their products, which is technically against the rules and could result in a disciplinary case for trafficking and trading.

For more information about women in Texas' criminal justice system, visit TexasCJC.org/Womens-Justice