



After Freedom Caucus Erupts, Wyoming DOC Changes Tune On Transgender Inmates

After the Freedom Caucus blasted the Wyoming Department of Corrections over its policy letting a committee place transgender inmates, the state prisons system walked back its statement and said male inmates aren't in contact with female inmates.



Clair McFarland

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After a group of state Republican lawmakers are challenging the Wyoming Department of

Corrections (DOC) over how it accommodates transgender inmates, the DOC walked back statements on the policy, saying the language is just in place to honor federal law, and that male inmates don't have contact with females.

DOC spokeswoman Stephanie Kiger told Cowboy State Daily on Tuesday that male-to-female transgender inmates "can be housed" at three prison facilities for females, and female-to-male transgender inmates "can be housed" at any of the facilities for males.

She also sent along the department's new transgender inmate policy and its preceding policy. Cowboy State Daily reported on both the policy and Kiger's statements. But information on where transgender inmates were housed was not immediately available, said the spokeswoman.

A screenshot of an email from DOC spokeswoman Stephanie Kiger stating that transgender inmates can be housed in cross-sex facilities. More information on where Wyoming's 10 transgender inmates reside was not immediately available, Kiger added. (Cowboy State Daily Staff)

Firebrand Blast

The Wyoming Freedom Caucus, a group of socially conservative Republican legislators who typically unite their efforts, dispatched a scathing statement early Thursday, saying DOC's policy "raises questions as to whether Wyoming taxpayers will now be footing the bill for gender mutilation treatments within our state prison system."

It goes on to say that, "It is wrong to force female inmates to share spaces with males. Men cannot become women, and women cannot become men."

The Wyoming Freedom Caucus called on DOC to reverse "this egregious policy decision."

The policy does not mandate that males stay in female facilities or vice versa; a committee is appointed to make those decisions on a case-by-case basis.

No Males With Females

The Wyoming Department of Corrections dispatched a clarifying statement Thursday afternoon, saying it does not permit contact between male and female inmates at the facilities.

There are cases of females in male facilities, such as women in a separate medical ward in the Torrington Medium Correctional Institution.

The DOC also called the Freedom Caucus' "gender mutilation" comment "factually misleading."

"All medical care provided to (Wyoming) DOC inmates is provided under the professional direction of contracted licensed medical staff," says the department's statement.

The department's policy says "specialized treatment" may be authorized for transgender inmates if it is "medically necessary."

Cowboy State Daily inquired Thursday which treatments qualify as medically necessary. The DOC indicated it would grant that information but has not yet.

Because, The Feds

The department's statement says its policy on transgender and intersex inmates exists "to comply with Federal Statute" in the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The law prohibits the department from making blanket policy statements on managing transgender and intersex inmates, the statement says, adding, "The WDOC is simply complying with the federal requirements."

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