

## **OVERVIEW**

ECO, Inc., a non-profit organization, has been serving offenders, ex-offenders and their families for 30 years. The organization began through a grant written by the North Carolina Department of Correction to help inmates' transition from prison to the community. The program grew to include families because of the changes they must make to survive in the community and support their loved one who is incarcerated.

In 1986, the North Carolina Legislature passed a bill introduced by Jo Graham Foster to allow ECO to provide housing for women nearing the end of their release from prison. This was in response to the closing of five residential facilities for women, including the one in Charlotte. These facilities provided a site close to home for women to complete their prison sentence and begin the transition back into their community.

In 1987, the ECO Center for Women opened under contract with the Department of Correction. It houses 20 women who are at Minimum Level III, which makes them eligible for work release. The primary program is work release. Other programs are offered at the facility such as study release, community volunteer leave and family leave.

The facility was at maximum capacity for 321 days in 2002-03. Days there were available beds was solely due to the time between a release and transfers for disciplinary or medical reasons and the assignment of a new inmate to the facility. Inclement weather, delaying transfers, contributed to some of the days there was a bed available. The cost per inmate, per day for the year was \$49.97. This cost comparable to other minimum-security unit costs.

In the past, recidivism was measured by the definition, "Did the woman return to prison? We were able to research this using the Departments database. In order to measure recidivism using the Legislatures definition, the Office of Research and Planning studied releases for 98-99. The study was for a 24-month period. ECO had seven (7) releases that year. Of the seven, four were rearrested. Of those seven, including those rearrested, none returned to prison.

A closer look into each situation showed that all arrests were for lesser offenses, two were for property crimes and restitution was made. One of the four was arrested on a combination of motor vehicle charges including, driving while license revoked, and driving under the influence. The fourth violated a protective order. All were released

from jail within 24 hours. These findings are considered to not be statistically significant since the group studied is so small.

The following annual report will provide more in depth information about the Center and the residents it serves.