

# DOCS, Correctional Association Boost Women's Health Materials

Improved self-help health care information for incarcerated women is on the way to facility libraries early this year. DOCS has been collaborating with The Correctional Association of New York (CANY) to develop a core collection of women's health resources. The new materials will enhance and strengthen existing collections in the general libraries at Albion, Bayview, Beacon, Bedford Hills, Lakeview and Taconic correctional facilities and at the Willard Drug Treatment Campus.

The new resources include more than 200 medical reference books, self-help guides, informational brochures and newsletters focused on everything from dental health and heart disease to emotional well-being and exercise. Some are in Spanish and some are intended for new readers. The books will arrive at the facilities pre-cataloged to ensure that they will be made available to inmates as soon as possible. The collection also includes some hand-out literature.

DOCS and CANY have been working on the project for about a year, led by a working group that evaluated prison libraries' health and medical holdings while examining publishers' and health organizations' current offerings. Bedford Hills Correctional Facility Superintendent Ada Perez hosted a joint visit April 17, 2007 at her prison. She oversaw a wide-ranging discussion of women inmates' health and medical informational needs by visiting CANY staff members, librarians from DOCS Central Office and Bedford Hills and Taconic correctional facilities, facility health care staff, inmate library clerks and inmates who serve as HIV/AIDS peer educators. Then, with the help and input of formerly incarcerated women, health care professionals, social service providers, advocates for the incarcerated, women's organizations and public librarians, the working group compiled a list of books, pamphlets and other media.

Tamar Kraft-Stolar, director of CANY's Women in Prison Project, said her group began pursuing the idea after hearing from female inmates during the regular prison monitoring visits CANY is allowed to conduct under state law.

"Health care is always at the top of the list that all incarcerated women, all incarcerated people face," Ms. Kraft-Stolar said. She noted that during facility visits, the desire for more information and additional up-to-date and accessible health materials was "one current that ran across all the comments. Patients need to be able to ask

the right questions, to know what to expect. This is an opportunity to empower people with information."

She said CANY had raised \$3,170 by early December toward the estimated \$15,000 to \$20,000 project cost, with donations by publishers expected to cover most of the rest. DOCS plans to contribute videos to be shared through an interlibrary loan arrangement.

"Ms. Tamar Kraft-Stolar and the members of the CANY Women in Prison Project and their colleagues in The Coalition for Women Prisoners are to be commended for their fund raising efforts to purchase the new resources," said Jean Clancy Botta, DOCS' Supervising Librarian. Ms. Botta also expressed appreciation for the group's dedication to obtaining valuable input from

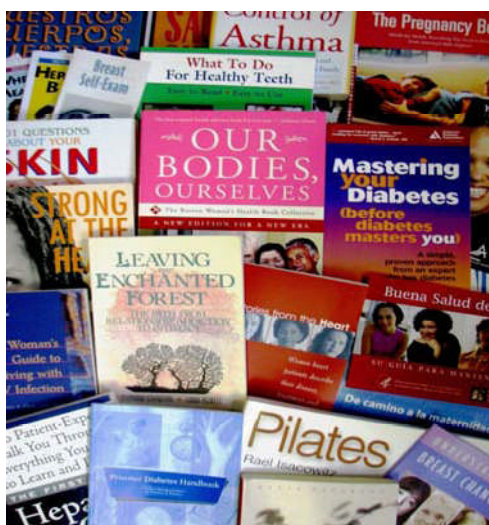
health care experts, library professionals and especially current and former inmates in developing these core library collections.

The Coalition for Women Prisoners, which is coordinated by CANY, includes more than 1,000 people representing social service providers, women's organizations, human rights organizations, city and state agencies and the formerly incarcerated. The group also includes academics and lawyers.

DOCS' general libraries, along with the care instructions inmates receive from facility medical staff, play an important role in helping incarcerated women understand their bodies and health care issues.

DOCS and CANY envision future collaborative projects, including development of a core health collection bibliography for the male correctional facility libraries.

For more information, contact your facility library or The Correctional Association of New York at 135 E. 15<sup>th</sup> St., New York, N.Y., 10003-3596.



- courtesy of The Correctional Association of New York Inc. **New health care materials such as these are scheduled to arrive at DOCS' women's prison libraries early this year.**