

Jump in female inmates forces changes at jail

BY KEVIN DUGGAN • KevinDuggan @coloradoan.com • February 19, 2011

A sharp increase in the number of women jailed in the Larimer County Detention Center has forced officials to move around inmates and add temporary beds.

The female population of the jail is normally capped at 53, officials say. As of Friday, 75 women were in the facility.

To accommodate the women, a special housing unit that normally is used by men has been opened and some inmates have been released early, said Sheriff Justin Smith.

Cots have been brought in for inmates moved into temporary quarters. Jail employees have had to work mandatory overtime because to the overcrowding, Smith said.

"These are considered a short-term solution," he said. "You can only make people sign up for overtime for so long before it begins to be a morale issue. And you can bring in cots for a while, but over the long term, it's not a good management practice."

The jail is designed to house 533 inmates. But for budgetary reasons, the jail population has been capped in recent years at 460. During January, the average daily population in the jail was 493.

Inmates are eligible for early release after they have served 75 percent of their sentence and if the sentencing court approves.

The population fluctuates considerably during the course of a year, Smith said. Why the female population of the jail has risen 48 percent during the past year is not clear.

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