



A Handbook for the Families and
Friends of
Pennsylvania Department of
Corrections
Prison Inmates



September 2013



This Handbook Originated from:

Katherine Hardesty, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at Slippery Rock University and a former correction counselor with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

Judith E. Sturges, Ph.D. is an assistant professor at The Pennsylvania State University - Fayette Campus and has had experience with the criminal justice system from the family's perspective.

This Handbook is updated and revised by Pennsylvania Department of Corrections personnel.

This Handbook was produced in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.
The Handbook is not Pennsylvania Department of Corrections policy.

VISITATION (DC-ADM 812)

Visitation by relatives and friends is encouraged by the Department. Visitation helps to keep the inmate's family together. A child needs to know that his/her mother or father is still a part of his/her life and that he/she will be able to see his/her parent. A husband and wife need to be able to share his/her daily struggles and joys with each other. Visitation is also important to the morale of the inmate. Research has shown that an inmate who receives regular visits readjusts much better once he/she is released from prison.

Facility officials realize that visits are important to inmates and family members. At the same time, they are concerned about security. Therefore, they have rules geared toward the safety of everyone in the prison, which includes the inmate and his/her visitor(s). This means you will have to follow specific rules.

The thing to consider is whether you are eligible to visit. The following categories of individuals will usually not be allowed to visit the inmate:

- A former inmate of any correctional system
- A person who is currently under parole or probation supervision
- A current inmate on pre-release status
- A Department employee
- A former Department employee
- A current, active volunteer for the Department
- A current or former contract employee
- A victim of the inmate

If you belong to any of these categories and have a good reason for wanting to visit the inmate, you may send a written request to the Facility Manager of the facility. The Facility Manager or a staff member acting on his/her behalf will review the request. The request will be approved or denied. You must do this and receive approval **before** you intend to visit.

Each facility has some differences in visitation hours. Before you visit, get information on the Department website or telephone the public information officer (you can also obtain this information directly from the inmate) to learn about the current visitation hours, rules and guidelines. **(See Attachment C for listing of SCI's)**. The inmate's counselor can advise you if the visitor's list has been submitted. The following three prisoner groups have very different rules:

- **An Inmate in the Central Diagnostic Classification Center** cannot receive regular visits during his/her first 10 days in the facility. Attorneys and spiritual advisors will be permitted. When the 10-day period has elapsed, the inmate will be permitted visits from persons on his/her approved visiting list.
- **At the Quehanna Boot Camp**, visiting is limited to Sundays and state holidays. It is the responsibility of the inmate to notify his/her immediate family when he/she may receive a visit, which is coordinated with the staff.
- **Capital Case visiting privileges are as follows:** A Phase I inmate is permitted one non-contact visit per week. Visits will be a minimum of one hour long. Extended visits may be approved based on how much space is available in the non-contact visiting area. The length of an extended visit must be pre-approved by appropriate facility staff. A Phase II inmate are permitted non-contact visits with his/her legal counsel of record, spiritual advisor and immediate family.

The Visiting List

You cannot visit an inmate unless your name is on an approved visitor's list. The inmate has to designate you as a person allowed to visit. Immediate family members are defined as spouse, children, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, or an aunt or uncle with whom the inmate has made his or her home. This relationship must be shown in the inmate's prison records. This list should also include the name of any minor child. Friends are permitted to be placed on the visiting list.

The inmate is the one responsible for filling out the forms for the visitor's list. When you visit your identification will be checked to see if it matches the visitor's list. If the inmate has not updated any changes to your name or address you will probably not be able to visit. So be sure that you give the inmate accurate and up to date information. In return, he/she needs to give you current information about visiting times or any new rules.

The staff is not permitted to tell you the names of people on an inmate's visitor's list. If you want to know who is on the list you will have to ask the inmate.

There are special rules for a child's (minor's) visit. A minor is anyone under the age of 18. These rules apply to every minor, including the inmate's own child(ren) and immediate family. At the inmate's request, facility staff will mail a written permission form (DC-313 or DC-313A) to the parent or legal guardian of the minor. This form must be completed and signed by the minor's parent/legal guardian and returned by mail to the inmate's counselor. After the form is received, the inmate may add the minor to his/her visiting list. The minor may then visit the inmate, accompanied by an adult who is also on the inmate's approved visiting list.

When giving permission for a minor to visit, the parent or legal guardian has to indicate in writing that he/she is aware of the charges against the inmate, that the proposed minor child was not a victim of the inmate, and that they approve the visit.

A contact visit may be allowed with a minor child who has been a victim of the inmate with the approval of the Facility Manager. You are not allowed to bring a minor child on facility grounds and leave him/her in the car while you visit the inmate. Staff check vehicles after you enter the facility. If a child is seen in your vehicle, your visit will be terminated.

The inmate can be approved to hold a small child during the visit. It's important that you keep your child under control. If you **do not** control your child, facility staff may end your visit early. Play areas are available for children in most visiting rooms.

Special Visits

Special visits can be arranged based on special circumstances, such as out-of-state family and/or friends traveling long distances or for a hospitalized inmate. These visits have to be arranged well in advance and approved by the Facility Manager. If you or someone you know would qualify for a special visit, write to the inmate and his/her counselor a couple weeks before your planned trip and ask if arrangements can be made for a special visit.

Contact Visits

If an inmate is in general population, you will be able to have visits in a relaxed setting, supervised by facility staff. These visits are held in a setting where you and your friend or family member will be permitted to have some limited physical contact. Both of you may embrace when meeting and departing. You may also sit side by side. If a small child is visiting, the inmate may hold the child on his/her lap.

You will also be able to eat and drink items that you can purchase within the visiting room area. It is important for you to follow the rules and regulations for visitation so that your visit is not suspended.

Identification

Make sure that you have proper identification when you arrive at the facility or you will not be able to visit. You will need either one form of photo identification or two forms of non-photo identification. One form of identification should provide your date of birth. The acceptable forms of identification are given below:

- **Photo identification:** Acceptable forms of photo identification include a **driver's license** or ID issued by a state or outlying possession of the United States provided it contains a photograph or information such as name, date of birth, sex, height, eye color, and address. **An ID card** issued by a federal, state, or local government agency or entities provided it contains a photograph or information such as name, date of birth, sex, height, eye color, or address. **School ID**, with photograph. **U.S. Passport. A Certificate of U.S. Citizenship** (INS Form N-560 or N-561) or a **Certificate of Naturalization** (INS Form N-550 or N-570); **Alien Registration Receipt Card with photograph** (INS Form I-688) or a **Temporary Resident Card** (INS Form I-688). **Any other form of identification that contains a photograph may be given to the officers.**
- **Non-photo identification:** Any two of the following are acceptable identifications: Voter's registration card, U.S. Military card or draft record, vehicle registration, U.S. social security card issued by the Social Security Administration, Certification of Birth Abroad issued by the Department of State (Form FS-545 or Form DS-1350), original or certified copy of a birth certificate issued by a state, county, municipal authority, or outlying possession of the United States bearing an official seal, U.S. Citizen ID Card (INS Form I-197), ID card for use of Resident Citizen in the United States (INS Form I-179), school record or report card, day-care or nursery school report, learner's permit or temporary driver's license, Native American Tribal document, **and any other document that contains information such as name, date of birth, sex, height or eye color, and address.**

Please be sure to sign in upon your arrival. You will be asked for identification so both signatures can be compared. If you travel by private vehicle, you will be asked to register the year, make, model and license number of your vehicle.

Clothing

When you visit the facility you need to be aware of what you are wearing. Remember that you will have to go through a metal detector. Clothing with metal snaps or other bits of metal can set off the detector, so you can speed up the process by not wearing clothing that may cause problems and delays.

You will want to spend as much time as possible visiting the inmate, so **do not** wear clothing that will keep you tied up going through security checks.

You are expected to dress appropriately. Each facility has a dress code that does not permit visitors to wear a bathing suit, an extremely short skirt/dress, shorts, halter-tops, or clothing made of see-through materials. Visitors are required to wear shoes. There are often limits on clothing that makes reference to obscene language, drugs, sex or violence. Failure to comply with the facility's dress code will result in your not being permitted to visit.

Security and Searches

A visitors may be searched before going into the facility. This search **may** include the use of an Ion Scanner and/or a K-9 dog search team. This is to make sure you are not carrying in any contraband. Cameras, tape recorders, radios, drugs, alcohol, weapons, pocket knives, food, sunglasses, wallets, cigarettes, lighters, gum, hats, hooded garments, coats, pagers, cellular phones, handbags and car keys are not permitted in the visiting area and are considered to be contraband. A good idea is to leave everything but the absolute necessities in the car.

A visitors are also subject to searches during and after visiting. If you refuse to comply with the search procedures, your visiting privileges will be suspended. If a visit is seen as a threat to the security and order of the facility, the visit will not be permitted or it will be ended if the visit has already begun.

If you have a metal medical implant, it may cause you problems with the metal detector. You should contact your physician for a statement that describes the device and its location. For example, some dialysis patients have titanium implants in their abdominal wall that they may not even be aware they have. If in doubt, contact your physician prior to the visit and ask if you have such a device. This will save time when you go through the metal detector.

The metal detector can also detect metal jewelry. If you have piercings, no matter where they are, you should remove the jewelry before you go to the facility. Do not bring any kind of gift to the facility, including money. Funds for the inmate, in the form of money orders or certified checks, will only be accepted by mail. You may take cash in small denominations and coins into the visiting room for the purpose of using the vending machines. These monies may be carried in a small "see through" purse type container.

Food may not be taken into the facility. Snack items and soft drinks may be bought and eaten where vending machines are provided. A dollar bill changer is available, however, it is recommended you bring change.

A visitors may bring up to three plastic bottles of formula or white milk, original unopened jars of baby food, three loose diapers, and factory-sealed baby wipes. These items must be hand carried or in a clear plastic bag only. All items are subject to search and all vacuum-sealed containers will be opened.

Remember, do not violate your visiting privilege by bringing unauthorized materials with you. If you have any questions about what you may or may not bring, ask the desk officer.

While visiting, use good judgment and discretion in dress and behavior so as not to embarrass others in the visiting area. Embracing is permitted at the beginning and end of each visit. You may be tempted to try to have more physical contact.

This is upsetting to other visitors who have children with them and can cause your friend or relative to be written up and your visiting privileges to be suspended. If you appear to be under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance, you will not be permitted to enter the facility.

What Happens If You Break the Rules?

Your visiting privileges can be suspended for violation of visiting rules or due to inappropriate behavior between you and the inmate. In addition, the inmate may receive a misconduct and could be placed in the Restricted Housing Unit. Since the number of misconducts affects whether an inmate is paroled or not, you may hurt his or her chances of getting paroled.

The Facility Manager will inform the visitor the reasons why visits have been suspended. A visitor whose privileges have been suspended or limited may direct concerns about those privileges to the Facility Manager. If they are not satisfied with the Facility Manager's response, they may write to the Regional Deputy Secretary.

Visitors may apply for reinstatement, appeal suspensions or banned visits by writing the reasons to the Facility Manager. A second appeal can be written to the Regional Deputy Secretary.

Some rule violations have more severe consequences. If you try to get into the prison with a fake ID, you can be banned from the prison. Any visitor, including immediate family members, who attempts to bring or does bring drugs into any Pennsylvania Department of Corrections facility will be permanently banned from visiting any Department of Corrections facility. You have to decide whether a quick "high" is worth not seeing your friend or family member again until his or her sentence is over.

If you are caught with contraband anywhere within the facility or on the grounds, you will be arrested and prosecuted. It is against the law to bring any form of contraband into a correctional institution.

Contraband includes:

- money
- implements of escape
- unprescribed drugs
- drugs which are prescribed but you are not authorized to have
- drug paraphernalia
- intoxicants or materials used for fermentation
- poisons
- weapons
- property of any other persons
- any item that you have that poses a danger to others
- any petition or other unauthorized writing which is apparently intended for distribution or circulation
- any item that has been altered from its original condition
- any item used to show a gang affiliation

The PA Department of Corrections' visiting procedures against controlled substances are as follows:

VISITORS TO PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS FACILITIES

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections trust that all visitors will support this agency's commitment to making all department facilities drug free. This will ensure a safer environment for all inmates, staff and public in the Commonwealth of PA.

We expect our staff to treat all visitors in a respectful, professional manner. We ask that all visitors extend the same courtesy to our staff. Abusive language toward the staff will not be tolerated and may be grounds for denial of entry into the facility.

Parking on facility property is a privilege. If you choose to park on grounds you are subject to a search of your vehicle with a K-9 Unit. Refusal to consent to a vehicle search will require that the vehicle be removed from facility property.

All persons entering the institution must pass through a metal detector. In addition, randomly selected persons entering the premises are subject to being scanned by an Electronic Drug Detection Device. This device detects the presence of drug traces on persons, property and clothing. If the presence of drug contraband is detected, the visitor will be given the option of removing an article(s) of outer clothing believed to be contaminated and washing his/her hands. A second test will then be performed.

It is the policy of the Department of Corrections not to conduct strip searches on visitors. If the second test is positive, the visitor may request a non-contact visit. A non-contact visit may be approved by the Facility Manager/designee upon his/her review.

The Department reserves the right to deny entrance to the facility to any persons believed to be a threat to the safety, security, or good order of the correctional facility. The Facility Manager will use the following guidelines when the visitor has tested positive with the Electronic Drug Detection Equipment:

1st offense—as outlined above

2nd offense—visiting privileges will be suspended for 30 days

3rd offense—(if within six (6) months of visiting privileges being reinstated for the second offense), visiting privileges will be suspended for 180 days.

4th offense—(if within one (1) year of visiting privileges being reinstated for the third offense), visiting privileges will be suspended for a minimum of one year. Reinstatement of visiting privileges will require the written approval of the Facility Manager.

5th offense—(if within one year of visiting privileges being reinstated for the fourth offense), visiting privileges will be permanently rescinded. Reinstatement of visiting privileges will require the written approval of the Regional Deputy Secretary or Secretary/designee

CHECKLIST FOR VISITATION

- Confirm that the inmate has not been transferred and has visitation privileges.
- Confirm that your name is on the visitation list and is accurate in regards to name and address. When you write or talk to the inmate, remind him or her to make any necessary changes before you visit.
- If this is a special visit, call before leaving to be sure that arrangements for your visit have been made and are in place.
- Check clothing and jewelry for problem items.
- If you are bringing a child and you are not the legal guardian or parent, have the notarized statement from the child's parent or legal guardian with you.
- Arrive on the designated day during proper visiting hours.
- Leave purses and wallets in your car, either in the glove compartment or in the trunk. Be sure to lock your car!
- Nothing that could be used as a weapon should be in your car, such as knives, scissors, or firearms.
- Nothing that could be considered contraband should be left in your car. All visitors' vehicles that are parked on facility grounds are subject to search. Remember, contraband includes money, implements of escape, unprescribed drugs, drugs which are prescribed but you are not authorized to have, drug paraphernalia, intoxicants or materials used for fermentation, poisons, weapons, property of any other persons, any items that you have that poses a danger to others, any petition or other unauthorized writing which is apparently intended for distribution or circulation, any item that has been altered from its original condition, and/or any item used to show a gang affiliation.
- Do not leave any minor children waiting in the car or your visit will be ended.
- Treat prison officials with respect.
- Do not have any contraband on you when you enter the facility.
- Do not bring anything to give to the inmate. Inmates are not permitted to take anything from the visiting area.