



Correctional Service
Canada

Service correctionnel
Canada



SAFETY, RESPECT
AND DIGNITY
FOR ALL

LA SÉCURITÉ,
LA DIGNITÉ
ET LE RESPECT
POUR TOUS

Drugs in Prisons: A Dangerous Situation

A Visitor's Guide

At the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), we are committed to keeping our prisons, our staff and our communities safe.

Visitors play an important role in preventing the flow of drugs into our prisons.

What can I expect when I enter?

When entering a federal prison, you will be asked to sign in and put your belongings in a locker. Anything you bring with you will be X-rayed and may be scanned for drug residue. You will then be directed to walk through the metal detector. Each institution also has access to a detector dog; therefore you may see one walking around the entrance.

We recognize that these efforts to prevent smuggling are inconvenient and may seem as though we are suspicious of you. That is not our intent. These efforts are necessary to protect the health and safety of offenders and staff.

Almost 80% of offenders arrive at a federal prison with a substance abuse problem. Also, more than half were intoxicated when they committed the crime for which they are serving time.

Inmates' actions affect the community

Drug abuse interferes with rehabilitation and contributes to criminal behaviour. While in prison, inmates are provided with programs designed to reduce the risk of re-offending. Inmates who continue to use drugs or participate in drug-related activities don't always fully participate in their programs. This can affect their behaviour when they get out.

In addition, drug abuse by inmates can affect everyone's health. Practices such as sharing needles and using glass tubes to inhale drugs can increase the risk of being exposed to and spreading infectious diseases such as hepatitis and HIV/AIDS. Once released, inmates could spread these serious diseases to their loved ones and to the public.

Drugs endanger inmates

Drugs become very valuable inside prisons – sometimes increasing to more than five times their street value. Drugs become a source of power, criminal influence and are used as currency. Many incidents of violence can be attributed to drug trade activities. Inmates have been assaulted by other inmates because of drugs and personal belongings that can be traded for drugs. These activities could result in inmates being placed in segregation for their own protection or for disciplinary reasons.

Visitors play an important role in preventing

What is being done?

Our drug strategy aims to reduce:

Supply of drugs: We use state-of-the-art equipment and techniques including metal detectors, ion scanners and detector dogs to identify individuals who attempt to smuggle in drugs. Anyone caught trying to smuggle in drugs could be charged by local police and, if convicted, face a jail term or a heavy fine. Smuggling can result in a suspension or restriction of visiting status and may delay the release of the inmate involved.

We also regularly search cells, buildings, grounds and inmates. We have a program in place where we randomly select inmates to provide urine samples for drug testing. Inmates who have drugs in their possession or who are intoxicated can be charged with new offences, transferred to a higher security prison and can lose some of their privileges. Their chances for parole can also be affected.

Demand for drugs: We offer a range of effective substance abuse programs to help inmates deal with their addictions. We have specialized units for offenders dedicated to a drug-free lifestyle and methadone maintenance treatment for inmates addicted to heroin.

We also assist offenders to lead drug-free lifestyles when they return to the community on conditional release.

Are you being pressured?

Inmates may try to force visitors to smuggle drugs into the prisons, using manipulation, threats, violence and blackmail.

If you are being threatened or coerced into bringing drugs to a friend or family member, there is something you can do. We have highly trained and professional staff you can talk to and we can help arrange for your safety in the community.

If the person you are visiting is being threatened, we can arrange for increased protection in the prison or a transfer to a different institution. We can lay charges against inmates making threats and can transfer them to higher security prisons.

How can you help?

You can help us make prisons safer places for you and the people you visit by addressing drug issues with CSC staff.

If you'd like to talk to someone who can help, please contact: