

Private Family Visiting

The Private Family Visit (PFV) was established by the Correctional Service of Canada to encourage offenders to develop and maintain family and community ties in preparation for their return to the community and to lessen the negative impact of incarceration on family relationships. The PFV is more than a conjugal visit as it seeks to enhance the inmate's capacity to pursue his/her correctional plan.

If they meet certain criteria, inmates have the opportunity to use special units within the confines of a correctional institution. Most units are simple two-bedroom structures with a combination kitchen and living area.

DURATION AND FREQUENCY

The duration and frequency of private family visits shall normally be up to 72 hours, once every two months. However, the number of inmates participating in the PFV and the availability of the units may dictate other periods or frequencies at the discretion of the institutional head.

ELIGIBILITY OF INMATES

All inmates are eligible for private family visits except those who are:

- a) Assessed as being currently at risk of becoming involved in family violence;
- b) In receipt of unescorted temporary absences for family contact; or
- c) In a special handling unit or are awaiting decision or have been approved for transfer to a special handling unit.

ELIGIBILITY OF VISITORS

The following family members are eligible to participate in the program: spouse, common-law partner*, children, parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents and persons with whom, in the opinion of the institutional head, the inmate has a close familial bond, provided they are not inmates. Inmates are not eligible to participate in private family visits with other inmates.

- * Common-law partner means a person who, at the time of the inmate's conviction, lived with the inmate for at least six months, was considered as the inmate's partner in the community in which they lived, and who manifested an intention of continuing to live with the inmate permanently even though they were not married. The burden of proving that the above condition existed for six months prior to the inmate's incarceration rests with the inmates and/or their visitors.

PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of the inmate's application to participate in the private family visit, the inmate is made aware of the eligibility requirements and participation specifics.

The visitors will also be made aware of the rules and regulations prior to the commencement of the visits.

When a private family visit is requested, the inmate's file is examined and an assessment is made of any prospective visitor. A parole officer from the community interviews each prospective visitor and makes a recommendation.

VISITORS RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the visitors to arrive at the institution on time and to provide their own transportation to and from the institution.

The institution provides the food for the visit; however, the costs for meals supplied to the visitors are paid for by the inmate or his/her visitors. Visitors must send the funds to the inmate at the institution prior to the visit.

The inmate will be charged for restitution for any damages to the unit during the visit.

It is the responsibility of the inmate and his/her visitors to clean the unit at the end of the visit. The unit will be inspected by an officer at the end of each visit.

VISIT

Before arriving for a private family visit, visitors are told what items constitute contraband or unauthorized item. Visitors, as well as their personal belongings, will be searched thoroughly. Attempts to smuggle in contraband may result in the inmate losing private family visiting privileges and possible criminal charges against the visitor.

The final decision on all items to be allowed in the unit (such as children's toys) rests with the institutional staff. Unauthorized material will be held for the duration of the visit. Some examples of the types of items which should not be brought to the institution for use during a PFV are the following:

- Nail polish, nail polish remover;
- Glue of any kind;
- Hair spray and hair colour preparation kit;

Each unit has a telephone with a direct line to a security control unit in the institution. This allows two-way communication at all times.

During a visit, staff members have regular contact with the inmate and his/her visitors, to ensure their security and safety. Prior notice would normally be given and contact should be the least disruptive possible.

At the end of the visit, visitors and their belongings will be search. At this time, visitors can pick up items held for them during the visit.

REGULATIONS

A visit may be ended at any time during the visiting period at the request of either the visitors or the inmate. Institutional staff may also terminate a visit at any time for the security and safety of the institution, the inmate and visitors.

A visit may be suspended if believed that it may jeopardize the security of the institution or the safety of an individual; or if believed that a criminal offence has been planned or committed. However, the inmate and the visitors will receive written notification of the reasons for any decision that is made, and given an opportunity to present their case.

If found guilty of committing an offence involving a family member during a private family visit, or for introducing contraband materials into the institution through the program, an inmate will have his/her family visits withdrawn for a period specified by the institutional head, reasonable to the nature of the offence.

Family violence is not tolerated by the Correctional Service of Canada. Certain forms of family violence are criminal acts and will be treated as such. Other forms of family violence that are suspected or occur during a visit will be reported according to various provincial statutes.

The infractions described above may also lead to criminal charges.

The unit will be visited daily by a correctional officer and be logged. The purpose of these visits are:

- To ensure the presence and well-being of the visitors;
- To monitor care of visiting facilities;
- To offer assistance if problems such as with the facility, supplies, etc. are being encountered;
- To facilitate requests for presence of

other staff such as Chaplain.

FOLLOW-UP

A follow-up interview with the visitors will be conducted by an officer. The objective is to identify any unusual incidents which may have occurred during a visit and to assess any changes in and/or benefits to the inmate participating in the PFV. If a problem is suspected, a report indicating the outcome of the interview shall be forwarded to the responsible case manager who will conduct a follow-up with the inmate and/or the visitors, if required.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further information about the private family visit, consult the following:

- Sections 59, 60 and 71 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*
- Standard Operating Practice 700-12 – Private family visits
- Commissioner's directives:
 - No. 770 – Visiting
 - No. 566-7 – Searching of Inmates
 - No. 566-8 – Searching of staff and visitors
 - No. 566-9 – Searching of cells, vehicles and other areas of the institution

This brochure is for information only.
See legislation for legal interpretation.

Cat. No. PS84-1/2004
ISBN 0-662-68196-7

© Public Works and Government
Services Canada, 2004