

Time Together

A Survival Guide

For Families and Friends

In Canada's Federal Prisons



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Time Together: A Survival Guide For Families and Friends In Canada's Federal Prisons

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This booklet is intended to help you understand a complex correctional system. It will help explain what you are experiencing and may help you to maintain your relationship with your incarcerated family member.

This booklet does have some limitations as it is impossible to describe everyone's experience in a few pages. Some parts of this booklet are important for couple relationships or if you have children. Other parts will be important if it is your child who is incarcerated. We apologize if some parts of this booklet may not include your experience or situation.

It is also challenging to explain all parts of the correctional system in great detail here, but we hope that this handbook still has important information for you. We have included internet links and printed resource material for further information on many of the topics and you can call Canadian Families and Corrections Network toll-free, confidential help line if you have questions.

Time Together

By the time you are reading this page, you may have already realized:

Others do not realize how hard it is for you. You will do the same amount of 'time' as your incarcerated family member, and usually harder time. You may be facing financial difficulties, emotional trauma, community stigma, and rejection from friends perhaps other family members. You have to deal with a correctional system that can feel intimidating.

It is difficult to maintain any relationship with the added pressures and stresses of being involved with the criminal justice process. Some relationships survive and some do not.

You may live in the hope that criminal activity will cease, or fear that it will continue. For some relationships, incarceration may be an end to a cycle of abuse. For those who are a victim of the crime, incarceration may be the start of a new chapter in your life.

The most significant needs of families are access to good information, support, and referrals to individuals or organizations who understand the unique family dynamics associated with a family member being incarcerated. You need accurate information on how correctional facilities operate, how to maintain contact with your person inside, and types and procedures for visiting.

You are separated from your family member on many levels beyond your physical separation. Both of you will experience a wide range of emotions and experiences related to this separation. Research on the effects of separation show that when the reason for the separation and the length of the separation are known, stress is significantly reduced. The experience of stress increases when there is uncertainty about the physical and emotional well-being of the separated person, their location, when their return is uncertain, or when the next visit with them (if at all) will be.

It takes about 30 days for a family to begin to restructure itself in order to survive the demands, decisions and obligations of the new roles and routines imposed on it. The wind keeps blowing, the river keeps flowing, and life continues.

You will change as well. Your incarcerated family member needs to understand that change will occur in their absence. For them, however,

time may feel like it stands still - incarceration is like being caught in a 'time warp.' This may be disconcerting for the entire family during incarceration.

It can also continue into family and community reintegration. Following the initial joy of reunion and reintegration, your returning person inside may want things back 'the way they used to be,' as if time hasn't passed and you haven't changed.

It will never be 'the way it used to be' anymore. Everyone grows and changes and everyone may feel both diminished and enriched because of the effect of the crime, incarceration and reintegration. You have been able to cope with situations and do things that you may not have thought possible.

Reunion brings hope, but if separations occur frequently, such as if your incarcerated person's parole is revoked, or if there is renewed criminal activity, then you will once again experience the stresses and strains.

Your incarcerated family member has to do their part to stop the behaviour that starts the roller coaster ride all over again.

Federal Prison Information

Federal prisons in Canada are overseen by Correctional Service Canada (CSC) and they are responsible for those who have received a court sentence of two years or more. CSC's mandate is, "to contribute to public safety by actively encouraging and assisting offenders to become law-abiding citizens, while exercising reasonable, safe, secure, and humane control". There are five regions of CSC – Pacific, Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic. CSC is led by a Commissioner of Corrections, who reports to the Minister of Public Safety Canada.

Upon transfer from a provincial jail, or court, individuals with a federal sentence are first sent to an Intake institution. For the next several weeks, they will be evaluated to identify their program and security needs which may include medical, psychological, psychiatric, correctional programs, employment, and educational assessments. They will be orientated to institutional life and part of the assessment determines the security level (maximum, medium, or minimum) they will be sent to.

Maximum - Individuals here are considered to pose a serious risk to staff, other prisoners, and to the community. The perimeter is a constantly

monitored fence/wall. Movement inside the prison is strictly regulated and supervised.

Medium - Individuals here are considered to pose a risk to the safety of the community. The perimeter is a constantly monitored fence/wall. There is greater movement and freedom of association in a medium security institution, but gates, barriers and supervision are still present.

Minimum - Individuals here are considered a limited risk to the safety of the community. A minimum-security institution usually isn't surrounded by a fence.

Each region within the Correctional Service of Canada has a maximum security psychiatric or psychological treatment centre. The Centres offer assessment, treatment and specialized programs.

A 'Correctional Plan' will be developed for them outlining what they will need to do during their time in prison. It may take time to set up phone calls from the Intake institution as everything gets set up and your person gets adjusted.

After Intake, the person may be transferred to their 'mother', 'destination', 'placement', or 'home' institution (different words are used across Canada) or they may stay at the initial Intake institution, which has all security levels.

Over time, the person may move from higher security levels to lower ones, depending on their sentence, behaviour, reintegration plan, etc. Canadian Families and Corrections Network uses the term 'steps of trust' to outline the movement to lower security levels, and the opportunities for escorted temporary absences, unescorted temporary absences, day parole, full parole, and reintegration. This gradual, planned release has been shown to be the most effective for individuals, allowing them be accountable, follow their correctional plan, and lower their risk for public safety.

You can take a Virtual tour of a federal prison at:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/csc-virtual-tour/index-eng.shtml>

The Emotional Cycle of Incarceration

The emotional cycle of incarceration (the emotional roller coaster ride that you experience) follows some predictable ups and downs. You and your family will progress through each stage in your own time and at your own pace.

Arrest, Trial, and Sentencing

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Grief and loss | One week to one year or more |
| 2. Detachment and withdrawal | One week to one year or more |
| 3. Renegotiation of relationship | Variable duration |

During Incarceration

- | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 4. Emotional disorganization | First 6 weeks of incarceration |
| 5. Renegotiation of relationship | Variable duration |
| 6. Family stabilization | Variable duration |
| 7. Anticipation of reintegration | Last 6 weeks of incarceration |

Parole Re-entry

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 8. Renegotiation of relationship | Variable duration |
| 9. Reintegration and stabilization | 6-12 weeks home, up to 1 year |

Arrest, Trial, and Sentencing

1. Grief and loss

This stage can stretch from the moment that you become aware of the criminal behaviour, through the arrest, remands, trial, and sentencing. You may have hoped that the courts will find your family member innocent and you may find it very discouraging when they do not. This stage may last until your justice-involved person is finally in the institution where they will commence their sentence.

The Grief and Loss stage is filled with the feeling of grief that accompanies any loss such as disbelief, anger, hurt, sadness, and depression. It is important to build your personal resources and to surround yourself with people who care and will support you. You will also find out very quickly who your friends are, and who is not. Continue to reach out for help wherever you can and look for new supports.

2. Detachment and withdrawal

Your family member was found guilty or pleaded guilty. You may find yourself avoiding your incarcerated family member. You may get into arguments for no apparent reason.

The detachment and withdrawal is because your 'emotional bank account' may be empty. So may your financial bank account. You may feel hurt and betrayed because of the criminal behavior of your family member. You may feel further hurt if this is not the first time you have gone through this. You thought that your family member might have learned the first time to get out and stay out and not hurt you. You didn't want to be hurt again.

This is the point where you make a choice to 'do your time' and continue the family relationship. Your incarcerated family member may not realize this. They do not have a choice about doing the time, but you always have a choice.

It may take a while before you are ready to make this decision. Many relationships end at this point, especially if the hurt is deep. Talk about your choices with someone who understands.

3. Renegotiation of relationship

So you've decided to do your time while your incarcerated family member does their time. You've decided to continue the relationship. You will find that you are stronger than you were before. You will need the extra energy for what is coming next – renegotiating your family relationship. You want some assurances that your family member will do what they need to do. This is important for you to know. You are doing what you need to do and so you need your incarcerated family member to do what they need to do. It's a two-way street. Your support requires them to be accountable.

During Incarceration

4. Emotional disorganization

Just when you thought things were OK, it feels like pieces of you are flying out all over the place. You may experience all the emotions that you felt during the arrest and trial all over again. This sets the stage for making it work and the changes that you will have to make in your life, whether your incarcerated family member chooses to do their part or not. Take good care of yourself first. If you don't take good care of yourself, you won't have anything left over for any of your relationships.

5. Renegotiation of relationship

During your family member's incarceration, you will ask yourself some tough questions about whether they are in the programs that they need to complete yet. You want to make sure that your family member is 'using their time', that they are learning to get out and stay out and not hurt anyone anymore – including you. You also want to know that your decision to 'do time' was not in vain.

If you haven't experienced it already, you will start to feel the high financial costs of maintaining relationships during incarceration. The cost of long-distance telephone charges and travel for visiting can be very high. Sometimes in their loneliness, incarcerated family members may want to call or request more than you can afford. It will be important to reach an

agreement around this and many other issues and then stick to the agreements.

Be careful if there are demands (self-imposed or by your incarcerated family member) that you should always be at home, in case the phone rings or for other reasons - you are not under house arrest. You need to have a life beyond the prison. This is a critical part of surviving as a family member.

6. Family stabilization

Congratulate yourself! The bumps don't feel quite as drastic anymore. You have found out who your friends are, and who aren't. You are into a new routine of family life and maintaining contact with your incarcerated family member by mail, phone, visiting, and perhaps through Private Family Visits. Your person inside needs to congratulate you on how well you are doing. It's tough out there, but you're making it work.

7. Anticipation of reintegration

You've talked about this, dreamed about this, and hoped for the homecoming. You may experience 'false homecomings' - parole decisions and completing of programs can shift release dates. It's not real until you see everything on paper, despite your hopes, dreams, and plans.

Did your person inside really change? Will they stay out of jail? You will be filled with a mix of emotions and you may ask yourself whether it is better if they don't come home right away. This is normal.

CFCN's offers '*Time's Up*' and '*A New Time*' – workbooks sent out for free that help you plan for family reintegration.

Have a personal safety plan ready for reintegration, just in case. Some relationships can become very rocky during reintegration, particularly if your returning family member has not done the necessary work for successful family and community reintegration. Family violence can happen – have a plan in place.

Parole / Re-entry

8. Renegotiation of relationship

They are finally back, even if it is to a halfway house! The roller coaster is about to begin again. Work your family reintegration plan. It will take negotiation and compromise. Don't forget that you have made it this far.

Things have changed. You have changed. Don't forget that the time warp in which your person inside was caught may not include or incorporate the passage of time. Be patient with each other. Search out help when you need it by continuing to use your resources.

9. Reintegration and stabilization

You finally made it. You deserve a little stability. Enjoy your life together. Keep building a positive relationship. Reintegration and a stable relationship may take a year. Keep working at your relationship.

Don't become complacent. You know the warning signs that might indicate relationship difficulties (or a return to the kind of activity that can lead to doing time again).

Visiting a Federal Correctional Institution

Legislation, called the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA)*, provides for visiting practices and procedures. Correctional Service Canada, guided by this legislation, places a value on the maintenance of prisoners' family relationships and on parent-child contact.

Visiting in a correctional facility is like visiting in a different world and maintaining family contact in a correctional facility can be intimidating. There are formal and informal rules and regulations that are often only learned by accident or experience. You may have concerns about fickleness or vindictiveness on the part of correctional staff and feel that rules are not easy to understand or don't make sense. You may fear that if you question rules and regulations or advocate for yourself or your imprisoned person, that the 'system' will exact some kind of retribution that will interfere with your visiting or with the individual's living conditions inside. You may also fear for the incarcerated person's well-being. You may travel hundreds of kilometres to be informed that you will be on a visit behind glass or that the visit is canceled because of a lockdown.

The behaviour of your family member within the institution also affects you and you may be under careful scrutiny or increased surveillance because of this.

Applying to Visit

The Correctional Service of Canada has 3 types of visits: in-person visits, video visiting, and Private Family Visits (PFVs). You must be an approved visitor for any type of visit and CSC requires all visitors to complete the following parts to a Visiting Application:

1. An *'Institutional Access CPIC Clearance Request'* (Form 1279)
2. A *'Visiting Application and Information'* (Form 0653)
3. A *'Child Safety Waiver'* (Form 0653-1), if you are bringing a child with you.

You can get copies of these forms from the Correctional Service of Canada website:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/family/003004-index-en.shtml>

What else do you need?

1. Two current photographs of yourself that contain a view of your **full face, head and shoulders** only (minimum size: 5cm x 3.5cm / 2in x 1 ½in). Passport photos from Walmart or Shoppers Drug Mart are ideal, but other photos will do as well).
2. A photocopy of two current government-issued identifications (ID). At least one of those must be photo ID (i.e. Driver's license, Health card, etc.). You will need to provide this ID when you come for the visit. Government issued photo ID is not required for children.

Where do I send the applications once they are filled out?

Do not send in the Visiting Application if your person has not arrived at the institution yet. Applications and photographs are to be mailed to the Visiting and Correspondence (V&C) department of the institution your incarcerated individual is in. Mailing addresses for the institutions can be found here:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-en.shtml>

What happens after I send in the Visiting Application in?

1. You will be notified by mail once your application has been approved. This is usually 2 weeks after the institution receives your application, but can take longer. Your incarcerated family member is also informed and you can now call into the V&C and reserve a time to visit.
2. **Visiting forms are valid for 2 years from the time they are filed.** You can re-apply to be a visitor once they expire.
3. When your person is released from prison, your visiting form is no longer kept on file. To become a visitor again, you need to re-apply.

What else do I need to know?

1. Children over the age of majority in your province can apply and visit by themselves.
2. Visiting is by reservation only. To make your reservation, please phone the institution's V&C Department at least 48 hours prior to the day that you hope to visit. Some V&C's have a toll-free number and some do not. Others have an email system. Call your institution or ask about the process after they tell you that you have been cleared to visit.
3. When booking your visit remember to ask for a confirmation number and bring it with you to ensure your visit goes as smoothly as possible.
4. You will need to carry identification with you to identify yourself at the main entrance to the institution. You and your personal belongings may also be searched. Bring in only your ID and car keys.
5. The institution at which your family member is incarcerated as well as any suspicion or prior conviction of your introducing contraband into the institution will determine if you have Open visits, Closed visits, Private Family Visits, or if your visits are terminated.
6. You can bring change in for vending machines, usually \$8.00 per person or a maximum of \$20.00 and in coins only.
7. You can bring diapers, baby food, drinking cup, wipes, and a change of clothes for small children.
8. If you have questions about the visiting forms or visiting process, call CFCN and we will help you.

The best guide is **'nothing in, nothing out'**. For example, you are not allowed to bring in or out food, beverages, board games, cards, books, toys, papers, pens, or colouring books. Anything you bring to the institution that is not allowed will be locked up in a locker at the main entrance to the institution.

Entering the Institution



What is it like to visit a family member or friend in a federal correctional institution?



All visitors, as in airport security, walk through a metal detector.



Cell phones and purses should be locked in your car. Personal items are scanned through an x-ray machine.



Some items are swabbed and tested for drugs with the Ion Scanner. After a positive hit on the scanner the machine will be reset and staff will change their gloves.



Drug dogs, on a collar with a dog handler, may also be used. The drug dog is not a friendly pet but a working dog you must not touch.

Drugs in an institution put everyone's safety at risk.



A positive indication by the Ion Scanner or drug dog leads to a 'Threat Risk Assessment' interview which can lead to Closed visits, loss of visits, or criminal charges.

Types of Visits

In-person Closed (non-contact) visit:

A visit in which you and your family member have a glass barrier separating you. You may be on Closed visits because your incarcerated person has not completed the assessment process at the institution, because of disciplinary restrictions on you or your person inside, because you have not yet received clearance for an Open visit, or for the protection of your person inside from other prisoners.

In-person Open (regular or contact) visits:

A visit in which you and your family member do **not** have a physical barrier dividing you. You are able to touch each other.

In-person Community gatherings (socials) or special visits:

Special visits are granted for unique family reasons, and are granted upon application. Family members may sometimes attend community gatherings or group socials occurring in the institution.



Visits are about 1-3 hours long, with different times during the week in the Visiting Area.

Contact your institution to find out what visiting hours are available.



In-person visits may be Open (contact), Closed (behind glass), or Private Family Visits (PFV's). Many institutions also have special seasonal family visiting.



Visits may be under audio or video surveillance.



Some institutions have a Children's Activity Area with a TV and a place where children can watch a movie.



Toys and games help to normalize a family relationship during a visit.



Some institutions have an outside visiting and play area.



Visitors can bring change to purchase food and drinks from the vending machines.



Playing together helps strengthen family ties and parent-child bonds.

Video Visit

A visit with you in the community and your person in the institution over video. Your person in prison will have to submit an *'Inmate Video Visitation Application'* before you can have a video visit. Once you have been approved for video visitation, you will be contacted with information on how to access the video visitation system.

You can read more about Video Visits here:

https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/family/003004-0001-en.shtml# Video_visitation

Private Family Visit (PFV)

Federal institutions have houses or trailers with two or three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, and washer/dryer where immediate family and individuals with whom the incarcerated person has a close personal relationship, including a common law relationship, can visit for up to 72 hours. There are several rules around noise, child supervision, cleaning, etc.

PFV's are about the most normal experience of being a family in prison that you can have during incarceration. A PFV can be reserved about once every two months, but depends on the number of PFV units and how many families are in the PFV program. Private family visits are not just for couples as mothers, fathers, and other relatives can also participate in the PFV program. People inside are also allowed to apply for a 'solo PFV' allowing for them to have some time alone.

You are eligible for a PFV unless your incarcerated family member is considered at risk for family violence, is in a Special Handling Unit, or has been granted unescorted temporary absences for family contact purposes.

PFV's can be an expensive oasis for you as a family as your incarcerated person is responsible for all food and other costs. PFV availability can be difficult to arrange with work schedules, school schedules, etc.

If you are involved in Private Family Visits, it is important that you have patience and understanding. Difficulties may arise simply because of the stress and anxiety of preparing for the visit, the trip to the institution, coming into the prison, searches, cranky children, and the list goes on. Some visits don't live up to expectations.

Sexuality is influenced by many physical and emotional components. This includes the ability to form good one-to-one relationships and the ability to get along well with others. That being said, the experience of sex and sexuality can be influenced by excessive anxiety and guilty feelings, excessive partner anger, if a relationship is already chaotic, fatigue, age, use of substances and medication, if there is an extramarital affair, or if there are some mental health issues. If there was a good sexual relationship before incarceration, then there will tend to be a continued good sexual relationship. Try to create a positive relationship atmosphere in the PFV and not put too much pressure on yourselves.

Your person in prison will have to submit an *'Application for the Use of the Private Family Visits Unit'* before you can have a PFV. The application process for the PFV program can take up to six months or more and will involve a new Community Assessment by a Parole Officer (PO). The PO will determine the names of all those who will be in the PFV, any previous criminal records related to drug or alcohol offences, any special visitor needs such as medication, and a discussion of safety concerns including concerns about family violence. Your incarcerated person will receive a written approval or denial of the PFV application, with a right to appeal to the Warden.

You can read more about Private Family Visits here:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/family/003004-0001-en.shtml>



Eligible families may have Private Family Visits – a visit up to 72 hours every few months.

Private Family Visits (PFV's) may be denied if there is violence in a past or current relationship, a negative Community Assessment, or security issues related to drugs or contraband.



PFV's have comfortable living rooms with a TV.



Families prepare their own meals in the PFV kitchen.



A typical bedroom in a PFV.



There are cribs and single beds for older children too.

Unauthorized Items (Contraband)

Regrettably, some visitors attempt to smuggle drugs or other unauthorized items into prisons. There have even been instances where children have been used to carry drugs in. The actions of these few family members affect every family's visits.

Visitors are searched for contraband at all institutions in the following ways upon entering the institution:

- Personal belongings go through an X-ray machine or are searched by an officer
- Testing with the ion scanner
- Walking through a metal detector
- Being scanned with a hand wand
- Being searched by a drug dog

Ion scanners are used to detect and to stop drugs coming into the institution. The devices are meant to stop visitors who are being forced into bringing contraband in. The devices are a non-intrusive test (i.e. there is no physical contact to your body) that detects trace amounts of drugs on personal belongings. Drug dogs are also used.

A positive reading on the ion scanner or from the drug dog will lead to a 'Threat Risk Assessment' (TRA) interview to assess a banned substance was indicted. If you think that you have had contact with anything that might lead to a 'positive hit' tell the Officer (e.g. if you or your children are on any prescription medication). You may want to carry a list of medications that you are taking with you.

If there is no reasonable explanation established by the Threat Risk Assessment, you may be placed on Closed Visits, be asked to leave the institution, be asked to submit to a strip search, or you may be held until police arrive.

If your family member respects you, then they will not pressure you to break the law and bring contraband to the institution. The result is almost always the arrest of the person attempting to smuggle something into the institution.

One person / parent in prison is enough!

A Visiting Preparation Checklist

You have a lot of preparations to make even before you get to the institution. Some suggestions to prepare for your visit include:

Before You Go:

1. Check your car's antifreeze/coolant level, oil level, and make sure you have enough money and gas to get there and back. If you are using a transportation service, make sure you know the departure times there and back.
2. If this is your first time to the prison, make sure you have good directions. If you don't know where the institution is, call the institution.
3. Before you leave, call the institution, to ensure that the visit is still happening. Unexpectedly the prison visit may need to be cancelled for security reasons.
4. Travel with a copy of the institution's address and telephone number and your visiting confirmation number if you were given one.
5. You may want to take extra clothing, shoes, and toiletries with you if you are staying overnight or get caught in bad weather.
6. If you are staying overnight or visiting over a weekend, reserve a space at a local hospitality house or hotel/motel before you leave home. Have a name and address of a nearby place even if you are not planning to stay overnight. Surprises or unexpected events happen.
7. Have money in the proper denominations for the coffee and vending machines.
8. Have proper and valid identification: Driver's license, Marriage Certificate, visitor authorization, Birth Certificates for children, and a letter from a legal guardian/lawyer if the children you are bringing to visit are not your own.
9. Small plastic baggies for vending machine change, a separate one for your identification, and another for other items is sometimes handy and will speed up your trip through the ion scanner.
10. Remember the diapers, wet wipes, and food for the baby.
11. If you are travelling with children, be prepared with some activity ideas for your children. They may find the trip and the visit long and you don't want to disturb other people's visits. Visits don't allow much privacy at the best of times.
12. Ask if you can bring money in order to deposit funds into your incarcerated person's institutional bank account. If so, bring a money order (not cash or a cheque). Give the money to the Correctional

Officer at the main entrance. Taking it beyond this point is considered contraband and may cause the termination of your visits.

Upon Arrival:

13. Bring in only your car keys and ID. Lock other items in your car.
14. Don't leave articles in your pockets.
15. Be prepared to wait.
16. Bring a positive approach to the visit. Knowing that you're loved and have support can make a world of difference to an incarcerated person.
17. Be ready for possible searches, drug dogs, or questions.
18. If you don't know something, ask.
19. Try to keep your sense of humor and don't expect too much or try too hard. Visits often don't live up to expectations.
20. Bring honest communication to your visit. Consider making a list of things that you want to share or discuss.
21. Physical contact during your visit in the visiting room is a 'touchy situation.' The institution may allow a hug and kiss at the start and finish of the visit and hand-holding in between. Anything more can result in a warning or termination of visiting. Some institutions discourage children from sitting on laps as well.
22. It is worthwhile for your first few visits to keep your eyes and ears open. Pick your associates wisely. You may have to make some difficult choices if you ask someone for a ride or give someone a ride.
23. Be aware that you may experience some depression and sadness immediately following a visit.

Should I Move Closer?

There is no simple answer to this question. It needs to be an individual decision based on your specific situation. It is important that you make the decision on what is best for you and your family, not on the basis of what your person inside desires or demands. It is up to you to ensure that you, and particularly your children, have stability and continuity. Moving to a new community means leaving existing family or community support systems, perhaps leaving a job, or accumulating further debt or financial difficulty. It means added stresses on school age children. You have already gone through a stressful and traumatic time during arrest and trial. Moving is an added stress. Hold off on making a decision until it is confirmed where your family member will do their time. It is important to remember that they will move from one institution to another throughout their sentence. Do what is best for you and your children, and that may be what is best for your incarcerated parent.

Sending Items, Mail, and Money to Someone in Prison

There are not many items that you can send into prison, due to security restrictions, but a few are outlined here. People in the Intake Assessment units are only allowed to receive mail, a TV, and money.

Mail:

Letters can be sent to the person inside. Make sure your name and address is clearly written as a return address in the top left corner of the envelope and direct your letters to the name of the incarcerated person, and the address of the institution they are in. Addresses can be found here:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-en.shtml>

Use regular paper or cards, but the following items are **not** allowed to be sent in/used (these items may cause your mail to be returned to you):

- Address books, writing paper
- Stamps, envelopes, pre-stamped envelopes
- Books, magazines, puzzle books, calendars
- Markers, crayons, highlighters, pens, pencils
- Marker/crayon-coloured pictures (use pencil crayons)
- Paintings or anything painted on
- Stickers, magnets
- Musical cards
- Telephone calling cards, plastic cards, laminated cards
- Anything glued or taped on
- Sexually explicit content, inappropriate content
- Revealing photos, polaroids, or photo albums
- Perfume, lipstick, lip imprints
- Jewellery, charms
- Computer discs, tapes, CD's, cassettes, DVD's
- Tattoo paraphernalia
- Dried flowers, seeds, or feathers
- Unknown substances
- Articles that violate copyright
- Material promoting hatred or gangs

If your person inside gets transferred and you're not sure where, you can write to them at one of CSC's regional offices here where you think they might be - addresses are here:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/institutions/001002-0001-en.shtml>

and CSC will send the letter forward to their location.

Money:

Your family member is provided most basic needs by the institution and receives a small amount of money to spend at the institutional canteen or commissary.

If you wish, you can also send in money that will be placed in your family member's savings account. Your family member can then transfer funds into their regular (current) account for their phone card, for other institutional purchases (snacks, hygiene and health items, stamps), and to purchase a Birth Certificate if they do not have their original one.

- Funds have to be in the form of a Money Order. You can get this from Canada Post or a bank. Do **not** send cash.
- If there is a spot on the Money Order to include the sender's name, this field has to be completed with your name or whomever is sending in the money.
- The money order should be made out to the incarcerated person.
- The envelope should be addressed to the person you want to send the money to. It must include the return address of the person sending in the money in the top left corner of the envelope.
- A photocopy of a government-issued photo identification of the person sending in the money **must** be included (e.g. Driver's Licence, Status Card, etc.)
- You need to be approved by the institution as having a verifiable legitimate relationship with the inside person. Your person inside is responsible for initiating this process through their Case Management Team.

Other Items:

Each individual will be provided with basic hygiene, bedding, and institutional clothing upon admission.

Within the first 30 days of admission to the institution after their intake (approximately the first 4-6 weeks), a person can receive a Personal Property Box (penitentiary package, or 'pen pack'). This is usually a maximum of 4 boxes, each box **must** be less than 16 x 16 x 16 inches in size and 50lbs in weight. You can call your person's institution to check with the Admissions and Discharge department, in case their rules differ.

- Boxes can be sent via Canada Post or a courier. You cannot bring them to the institution.
- All boxes are to be addressed to the incarcerated person and **must** have a return name and address on them.

- The following items are **not** permitted to be sent in: stamps, bedding, hygiene items, or craft items for beading, colouring, painting, scrapbooking, sewing, embroidery, etc.
 - Incarcerated individuals can have personal property totalling **no more** than \$1,500.00 at any time. Everything else will be put into storage or funds from the incarcerated person's bank account will be used to return them to the sender.
 - The list of allowable items will be given to the incarcerated individual. Talk together about what they may need. You can see the items on CSC's website: <http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/politiques-et-lois/566-12-cd-eng.shtml>

Health Care

Correctional Service of Canada is mandated by the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA), to provide essential health care and reasonable access to non-essential health care for those in custody. Health care professionals, who are registered or licensed in Canada such as physicians, nurses, pharmacists, psychiatrists, psychologists, occupational therapists, social workers, dentists, specialists, etc. are all included here.

CSC also recognizes that problematic substance use is a health issue and has prevention, harm reduction and treatments available. Some of these include the Prison Needle Exchange program, Overdose Prevention Service, Opioid Agonist Treatment, etc.

Just like in our communities, infectious diseases such as Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), Coronavirus (Covid-19), Tuberculosis, etc. can be problematic at times. As these issues arise, Correctional Service of Canada takes the necessary steps to keep people in custody safe. This may result in temporary lockdowns, changes in how many people can be together to move within the institution (cohorts), and visiting changes or restrictions.

Treatments for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Hepatitis C (HepC), or other infectious diseases are also available in federal prisons. If you are in a partnered relationship, it is important that you are aware of any risky behavior on the part of your incarcerated person that may put them, and you, at risk of contracting HIV, HepC, or other infectious diseases. This includes tattooing and body piercing, sharing of needles during intravenous drug use, and unprotected sexual activity with other partners.

Mental health is also a concern in federal prisons. Screening is done at the Intake institution and the prisons have inter-disciplinary teams of mental health professionals to provide services, supports, and interventions. Each region of CSC in Canada has a facility to provide intensive mental health care for those who need it.

What can you do?

- Don't share things that may come into contact with blood, such as body piercing tools, drug use paraphernalia, or tattoo equipment and ink. Do **not** share toothbrushes, nail clippers, tweezers, cuticle scissors, razors or any other personal care items that could come into contact with blood. Use condoms for sex.
- If you have any doubts that your partner may be engaging in behavior that places you at risk, discuss it with them.
- Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) has links to impulsive and behavior that can lead to criminal charges. While there is still much to be researched, one thing is clear - drinking alcohol during pregnancy may cause a baby to be born with FASD. This may cause the child to have learning and behavioral difficulties, look differently than other children, and have difficulties thinking, speaking, hearing or seeing. There is no cure for FASD and it does not go away with age. Only prevention is possible - **not** drinking during the pregnancy.
- Correctional Service of Canada is not allowed to discuss information about an adult in their custody, due to the Privacy Act in Canada, unless your person inside signs a '*Consent to Disclose*' form, permitting you access to their information.
- Follow Correctional Service Canada and Canadian Families and Corrections Network's social media and webpages to receive notifications of relevant problems and information.

Protect yourself.

Advocating for Yourself and your Person Inside

Families often require assistance to 'creatively complain' in order to resolve difficulties or to access information. Creative complaining means to constructively raise an issue and to reach a resolution. This is a skill – to describe the problem such that you are not seen as a problem simply because you raised the issue.

Your first task, in most cases, is to ask yourself a lot of questions before you ask someone else a question. Is this issue:

- Something that affects you?
- Something that affects your relationship with your incarcerated family member?
- Something related to your family member's incarceration or parole?

If the concern is something related to your family member's incarceration or parole, pause for a second. Some people who are incarcerated become dependent on others for things that they can do for themselves. Has your incarcerated family member done their own asking yet, or asked but didn't like the answer? Is your family member providing you with the correct or complete information (i.e. Is the file really sitting inactive on the Parole Officer's desk)? Are you being asked to chase down information that your family member can get, or to resolve a matter that your family member could resolve if they tried? Have you seen the court transcript, the list of parole eligibility dates, or the report? Is your family member using you as a lever to attempt to influence a decision maker (this may be OK, by the way, except for the 'using' part)?

You need to be an active and willing participant. Family support is important. You are an important part of your family member's life and have an important role to play. You still need to do it with eyes wide open.

You may quickly find that information cannot be shared with you by correctional staff if the sharing of information has not been authorized in writing by your family member. Your family member must complete a '*Consent to Disclose*' form. No one will be able to discuss anything with you without this signed consent.

If you have gathered enough information to make an informed complaint, then let's take a look at some steps that you can take next:

Step #1. Who do you need to talk to?

Consider who can help you - Visits and Correspondence, Parole Officer, Warden, Chaplain? You may want to phone ahead to find out who is the best person with whom to address your concern. Is that person available if you want to meet with them or can you resolve it on the phone? Make an appointment. This approach will save you telling your story to persons who may not be able to assist you. Most of what you are 'creatively complaining' about can get resolved quickly by knowing who the right person is to whom to talk, ask, or write.

Step #2. Be clear

Be clear about what your concern is and what you are asking for. Don't wait until you have a shopping list of complaints or concerns. Write down what you want to say. Ask for one or two things, maximum, because everyone, including yourself, can become confused if you ask for more. There will be other days. Rehearse what and how you are going to state your concern. Practice with someone else prior to speaking with the person to whom you will address your concern.

Step #3. Wait until you are ready

Creatively complain when you are motivated and have some extra energy to spare. Don't proceed when you are fatigued or overly stressed. On the other hand, don't wait until the concern becomes a crisis.

Step #4. Be calm

Don't confuse assertiveness with aggressiveness. Stick to the facts and avoid name calling, finger pointing, abusive language, swearing, innuendo, or ultimatums. What your listener will remember is your aggressiveness rather than your concern.

Step #5. Have a solution in mind

If you have a solution, then suggest it. You may have thought a long time about the concern and how to resolve it. Check out your solution with someone who you know will disagree with you, so you know if your solution makes sense. There will be a greater chance that your solution will get a hearing.

Step #6. Listen to the response

Give the person you are talking to the same opportunity that you want – for someone to hear you.

Step #7. Follow up your discussion in writing

Follow your discussion up with a letter that summarizes EXACTLY what was agreed to by all parties. Send a copy to someone else if you feel that you need to do so.

Step #8. If there is no resolution

If you are unable to come to a resolution or if you are not pleased with the final outcome, then the next step is to decide if it is a 'stand-or-fall' issue. If it's not worth it then let it go. There will be other days. If you want to continue to complain creatively, then creatively complain to the next person up the ladder, whether it is at the institutional or political level.

Contact a community resource. Contact legal counsel. Have your incarcerated family member contact the Office of the Correctional Investigator.

Step #9. Personal support

Join a support group organized by a local community agency. It may not address your particular concern, but you will meet with individuals who understand and are supportive. If you learn to support yourself first, then you will support your family member better. CFCN lists all the support group it knows about on our website and we have a Virtual Support Group as well.

Parole and Reintegration

Parole

Applying for parole can be a big decision. The application process and the many steps involved be challenging. To help, CFCN has created a Parole document that we can send to you. Call our toll-free line to get your copy.



Family support is important at parole board hearings. Whether the Parole Board hearing is face-to-face or a paper decision, letters of support are important. Send them to the Parole Board and to the Parole Officer weeks before the hearing so that they have an opportunity to read them. Take the opportunity to share your support for your family member now, and how that support will assist your person inside in maintaining parole and a crime-free lifestyle. CFCN's

Parole Book contains a lot of information about letters of support, what a Parole hearing is like, the application process, etc.

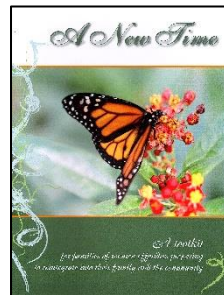
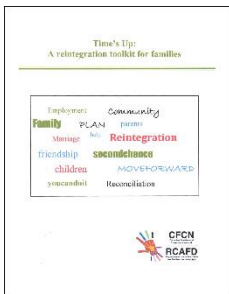
Your incarcerated family member can also request that you be present at Parole Board hearings as an observer. They may request a Parole Assistant come with you who will only be able to speak when called upon.

Some family members have had rude awakenings at Parole Board hearings. Your incarcerated family member may not have shared everything about the offence with you, and you may not have asked. Ask to see the court transcripts from the trial. Your person inside will have, or should have, a copy. It is better that you know beforehand.

Reintegration

Many couples rehearse or daydream during the empty spaces of doing time. In the happiness of reunion, some of these daydreams burst quickly. Struggles that were present in a relationship before incarceration may reappear upon your partner's return. Another example is that you have assumed most roles and responsibilities, and you have been succeeding. You may even feel a little uncomfortable about how well you are coping in your partner's absence. It does not mean that you love your partner any less. You have found a way to continue. Your partner needs to congratulate you for the job that you have been doing. Reunion will involve organizing family life again to include your partner.

There are many things that can extend the joys and reduce the stress of reunion. It will require patience as you talk through such things as needs, wants, making decisions, use of time, parenting, and resolving disagreements. Hang in there: you can get through it with support and understanding from your partner, family, friends and other available resources.



CFCN has two reintegration resources – toolkits to assist with planning for life in community and family reunification. Call our toll-free help line to ask for a free copy for you or your person in custody to be sent out.

For Parents: Children and Prison

Children's responses during the emotional cycle of incarceration may vary from aggression and acting out to withdrawal and depression. Your child's response will depend on many things: the child's age, their relationship with the incarcerated parent; if your child witnessed the arrest; the type of offence or crime committed; whether your child was a victim of the offence; if your child is lied to about incarceration; if your child experiences changes in care (new home or school, moving in with a relative, foster care, economic changes), and the degree to which the offence was publicized in the media.

Telling the Children

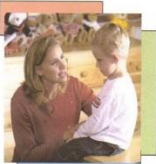
It is a difficult decision to tell children that a family member committed a crime and is incarcerated. While it is ultimately a parent's or caregiver's decision to inform the children, there are several issues that must be considered. Here are some thoughts:

- If children are not given an answer or a plausible explanation, they will come up with their own explanation to fill the information void. This includes blaming themselves or feeling that they did something wrong and caused their parent's incarceration.
- Children are smart. While they may be told that the incarcerated parent is in the hospital, away working, on vacation, or in school, the child may become mistrustful or confused by what they are told and what they experience. It is better for a child to find out that a family member is in prison from someone who loves them rather than in the school yard or from the media.
- When telling a child that a family member is in prison, it is important to keep the explanation simple and age-appropriate. This can include a statement about the incarcerated parent's love for the child and/or a statement that the incarceration is not the child's fault, but due to the incarcerated parent making a mistake. It can include how long the person may be gone, how they will communicate with the incarcerated person in the future, etc. It may help if the incarcerated family member is there as well (e.g. in the visiting area).
- Prepare the explanation in advance so you know what you will say. Allow plenty of time to answer your child's questions about prison, prison life, the crime, and the safety of the incarcerated parent.
- It's better to say, "I don't know" and to find the correct answer for your child than guess. Be prepared for silence - some children will not ask questions at the time of the explanation. They may need time to think.


- Children may act out, show anger, or regress in their behaviour. They are at a higher level of risk factors that affect their social, emotional, financial, and educational well being as they grow. Stay close and help them with their questions and feelings as they grow.
- Children may also need guidance in how to deal with stigmatization, teasing, or bullying that they may experience in the playground. If the child is told not to tell anyone that a parent is incarcerated, the child may need to be given a reasonable explanation to share. Children at school are aware and accepting of single parent families and it may be enough to tell your child to share with others that their parents are separated. The responses and concerns of children of incarcerated parents often bear a striking similarity to the responses of the children of separating and divorcing parents.
- As a parent or caregiver, you may need to be aware of any attitudes and behaviours that are passed to the children during the explanation. Prison and criminal behaviour should not be made to sound normal. You want to help your child process what is happening. It may be important for you to sort through the explanation that you will use with a professional.

Telling the Children

How to Talk to Children about a Loved One's Incarceration



And Strengthen Parent-Child Relationships

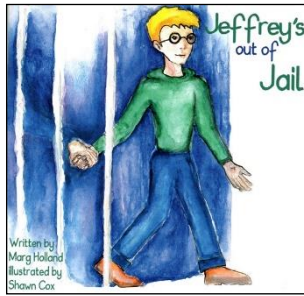
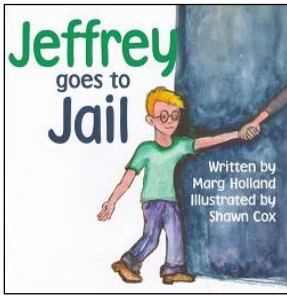
 Canadian Families and Corrections Network
 PO Box 35040 Kingston, ON K7L 5S5
 Toll free information and referrals:
 1-888-371-2326
 Website: www.cfcn-rcafd.org
 Email: national@cfcn-rcafd.org
 Registered Canadian charity number: 87542806208001

While not a predictor, research has shown that children with an incarcerated parent may be more likely to come into conflict with the law later in life. Telling the children the truth about crime and incarceration may start the process of preventing this.

Canadian Families and Corrections can help. We have a *'Telling the Children'* resource that you can call in and ask to have sent to you or it is available online on our website, Children's page.

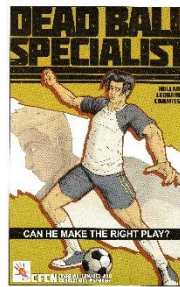
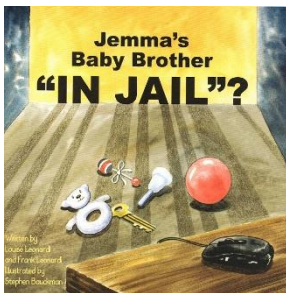
If you have children who are affected by parental incarceration, you can call CFCN for with your questions or for support, or join our Virtual Family Support Group.

Further CFCN resources for children include:



'Jeffrey Goes to Jail' – A storybook about visiting a federal prison, the metal detector, the ion scan, the drug dog, and finally being together.

'Jeffrey's Out of Jail' – A storybook about parole, getting out of jail, and family reintegration.



'Jemma's Baby Brother "IN JAIL"?' – A storybook about the challenge of having a mom in prison, the Mother-Child program, video visiting, and Private Family Visits.

'Dead Ball Specialist' – a comic for teens about coping with prison and the need for supportive friends along the way.

CFCN resources are sent free to family members. Ask about our Children's Letter-writing Kits too.

Other resources include *'Let's Talk About When a Parent is in Jail'* (Maureen Wittbold), *'Visiting Day'* (Jacqueline Woodson), *'The Same Stuff as Stars'* (Katherine Paterson), and *'Help for Kids: Understanding Your Feelings About Having a Parent in Prison or Jail'* (Carole Gesme).

Should Children Visit?

Maintaining a relationship and family interest is important both while doing time and for reintegration. That being said, school, traveling difficulties, and other commitments and activities may mean that you will visit without your children. If your person inside was close to the children before, your children may want to visit. A parent inside may want the children to visit and will want to be involved in decisions about their lives.

Prisons, however, are not 'normal' places to visit and can be a particularly difficult experience for children. Your children may display behavioural difficulties, restlessness, become argumentative or withdrawn before, during, or after a visit. Some institutions have a children's activity center to assist in keeping children occupied during visiting.

Some families choose not to visit during the course of a short incarceration or during a suspension. Children may still want to visit and it may be important to honour your child's wish to visit. While it is ultimately up to you as a family or caregiver, be as open and honest as possible with your child concerning the absent parent to lower stress, fear and anxiety.

One of the things that parents need to sort out is: **Who is the visit for?**

While the two of you may desperately want some time to yourselves, your starting point is that you are the parents and responsible for your children during the visit.

Your children will demand your time. Give it freely! 'A visit **with** the children is a visit **for** the children.' Children pick up very quickly on whether they are wanted or included. If your children are with you, then the visit needs to be for the children. All couples with children have a difficulty arranging for time as a couple. It is more difficult in the situation for you as parents coping with incarceration.

If you need time as a couple, consider arranging for a babysitter, bartering with a friend to babysit their children, arranging for a visit during school hours, asking a relative, or whatever other arrangement that you can make.

It can be a difficult task to keep active (or bored) children from interrupting others. Visitors at other tables may feel uncomfortable or intruded upon, and vice versa. There are often limited activities or toys in the Visiting Room.

CFCN runs Visiting Resource Centres in institutions where we can. We have staff and volunteers there to assist with questions, referrals to community resources, and activities/games for children to offer bonding experiences with their families. The intent is to strengthen the family unit by assisting in a normal family time without normalizing prison or crime. Prison is not normal, but being a family is.

If you are not able to visit often, you can encourage relationships by using the same strategies that parents of separation, divorce, or those at a distance use. For a child, emotional distance may be felt more sharply than physical absence - a child will feel loved by a parent a thousand miles away, but will feel rejected and abandoned by a non-involved parent who lives around the block. Here are some common connecting strategies:

For the person on the inside:

- Telephone calls (tell a bedtime story, read a poem, ask about their day)
- Ask for one of CFCN's Prison Letter-writing kits (write stories to the child, make a handmade birthday card, send a song)
- Join CFCN's Let's Read a Book Program to audio record a story to be sent to your child
- Tell your child you love and miss them
- Reassure your child that the incarceration is **not** their fault and tell the child, in age-appropriate ways, that you are addressing difficulties that brought you to prison

For the caregiver on the outside:

- Mail in photographs of the absent parent and family snapshots
- Ask CFCN for one of our Children's Letter-writing Kits (for drawings and stories of what they have done lately)
- Celebrate birthdays and special events through handmade gifts/cards
- Connect with Big Brothers or Big Sisters for your child

As a family:

- Watch the same TV programs or read the same book, to discuss together
- Download or ask for CFCN's Parent-Child Activity Sheets on CFCN's website, Children's page.
- Take care of yourself as a couple

Children and Reintegration

It is a tough job being a parent. Some of your considerations when the parent returns home may be:

- Younger children/infants may feel insecure and want reassurance that the returning parent will not leave immediately. The child may cling to either parent or become anxious when the reintegrating parent leaves the room. Feelings of fear and anxiety may cause the child to withdraw from or avoid the returning parent. The child may treat the reintegrating parent as a stranger in the house. Some lingering anger may lead to aggressive behaviour.
- Older children may feel anxious at the changing roles in the family upon reunion. There may be feelings of competitiveness between the oldest male child and a returning father. Older children may suddenly have behavioural or educational difficulties. There may be a testing of limits or playing one parent off against the other when a family restructures. Feelings of jealousy may be felt toward the remaining parent and siblings for the returning parent's time. A child may be jealous of the reintegrating parent who is now spending time with the remaining parent.
- Paying attention to your child's behaviour will give you some ideas of the issues that you may need to discuss with your child. Talking to them may be the best solution for speeding the adjustment to the reunion. Active listening is always the best parenting skill you can offer. Allowing them to express themselves through play is also valuable.
- Sometimes fears and feelings present themselves in an occasional bad dream that is resolved with a hug and a glass of water. If bad dreams are persistent or intense, a first step is to talk with your child using your best active listening skills. Even young children can benefit from talking about their worries. It is helpful to use stories as discussion starters. Give yourself plenty of time to allow your child to share their feelings both about the story and their own experience. Two helpful stories are *'Bartholomew's Dream'* (Patti Farmer) and *'How to Get Rid of Bad Dreams'* (Nancy Hazby and Roy Condy).

Certain bedtime snacks may be associated with bad dreams in your child. A light snack that is low in sugar may be better than a heavy snack. Bedtimes are also times to avoid scary stories or exciting activities. A bedtime routine and schedule are helpful.

Dreamcatchers are an Indigenous craft, traditionally made from a small branch, sinew, beads and feathers. This simple craft can be made with your child as a focus activity to talk about bad dreams. It is hung in the window of a child's bedroom and bad dreams get 'caught' in the web of the dreamcatcher. The bad dreams evaporate when the sun comes up. Good dreams can find their way through the web and ensure a peaceful night. Another useful tool is 'monster spray', a simple plant mister filled with water that is left near your child for the night just in case they need the reassurance that they can 'spray' the monsters away.



If bad dreams are a regular and ongoing thing, seeing a health care professional may be an important and necessary step.

- Some nights, you may feel that you need a dreamcatcher in your window and your own bottle of monster spray. Take good care of yourself in order to take good care of your relationship with your children and your partner. If you don't take care of yourself first, you may have little left over for the important people in your life.

What if you are Separated or Divorced?

Perhaps your relationship with your partner is over and continued contact between your former partner and children is not acceptable. You may require legal advice to limit contact.

Perhaps you don't want to see your family member but the children do. Your former partner who's incarcerated, may be granted access through a court order or legal agreement to see the children. While continued contact may not be your first choice, you do not have to attend or supervise the visit. You have a number of options, depending on the court order or legal agreement.

Some mediation services, counselling services, or community agencies provide supervised access. This assistance is made available to separated, divorced, and in some cases incarcerated couples, where a court order or legal agreement has limited or required supervised access by either partner for a variety of reasons.

You may have to bring your child to the supervision office (so the professional will take the child to the institution and then back to you). While the supervising agency carries liability insurance, you may need to sign a waiver allowing the agency to act on your behalf during the supervision.

Guardianship means giving someone permission to care for another person. This can be done through a ‘*Guardianship Agreement*’ – a private document which is often used for temporary care issues and can be changed. **Custody** refers to the legal right to make major decisions for a child. It is granted through a ‘*Custody Order*’ made by a court or as part of a written agreement.

If you choose to have a relative bring your child to the institution for visitation, the institution may still require you to sign a waiver stating that your relative is acting as the child’s guardian during the visit. The waiver may require notarization by a notary public or lawyer. This ensures that visitation is not occurring without your, or the court’s, prior knowledge and acknowledgment. The family member who is acting as the child’s guardian will need to complete a Visitor Application form and be approved prior to reserving a time for the visit.

If a child is of the age of majority in your province (usually 18 or 19 years or older), the child can complete their own Visitor Application form and visit on their own.

Your institution may have other suggestions or programs if you do not want to supervise the visit between the children and your former partner.

Children and Violence

Two researchers, Robinson and Taylor, found that one in three federal male prisoners had indicated that they had been violent toward their family member. Almost half had repeated the violence with more than one partner.

There is a detrimental effect on a child that is a victim of violence or a child that has witnessed violence within the family. A child who has witnessed family violence may be at risk for continuing the cycle of violence in their relationships later in life. Incarceration may bring an end to a cycle of violence within the family.

Children Helping Children (Telia Smart)

My name is Telia Smart and I've grown up with a unique perspective on life, having to go through unique and trying times.

*As a child of barely seven years old, **the unimaginable happened**. A man I loved, and, who was the only man who stepped up to the role of a positive and caring father figure, was put on trial and imprisoned. He was taken away from me and I didn't know why. I couldn't understand how a man who brought so much love and joy into our family would ever be put in a prison. That's where the bad guys went, not him.*

*I am 17 years old now and I'll be turning 18 in two and a half months. I still visit my step dad and **have never left his side**. Even though my mother had only been dating him for one year before he was incarcerated, we decided as a family that he was a part of our family and we would stand by him through it all. In some ways we're grateful for this experience because it has brought us closer together, and stronger as a family. **You learn to communicate, a gift not all families share, because in a visit room setting it is all you have to do.***

There are many things that still surprise me today. A child going through such a devastating experience as incarceration of a parent should not be subject to questioning, ridicule, and/or be outcast over a situation that is not of their doing.

Children are not guilty of the crime their loved one was convicted of. Many people seem to forget this fact.

I can guarantee the following statements will go hand in hand if people in the community hear about a child with a parent or loved one who has been incarcerated. People like to ask as many questions as they can, to find out about that person's case, making it a very difficult and stressful situation for a child to be faced with. Others are curious to know what it's like to go inside a prison and what sort of things go on in there.

*One of the questions that may upset a child the most, because they visit someone on the inside, is if any sort of criminal acts have been forced upon you. **These questions are understandable if asked by police officers, lawyers, or judges. But when it's your neighbours, teachers, classmates, and friend's parents, it is not acceptable.** Questions like these can make a child feel intimidated, and worthless. As a child, you feel you have no voice*

against an adult. They are the ones in charge and you have to listen to what they say, and talk to them even if you don't want to.

Ridicule is another factor that comes into play. Many people will try to sway the child to hate the person that's incarcerated and disapprove of the parent bringing you up to the prison to visit them.

This can make a child feel like there's a boundary up between the society and their family, because of a prison wall. A child shouldn't have to feel like they live in a prison themselves. Other people may make crude jokes and taunt them about the child's family, or situation as a whole. Both child and family may be perceived as something below "proper society level" because they choose to remain a constant support for a loved one.

To be outcast is a difficult issue for anyone to deal with, but **imagine a child who has lost a loved one by imprisonment and that has been outcast for that reason - and that reason alone.** An example of this is when other mothers will distance their own children from the children who's family member is in prison, because they feel that they must be bad, and do not want such an influence like that on their own children.

In the visiting area a child has to learn some proper prison etiquette very quickly. These are some things a child should never have to learn, but they must know for visiting inside the prisons. They must always be cautious of what they say; perhaps a meaningless joke can lead to separation of their loved one because their visits have been revoked. You learn who sits where and you never sit at someone else's table. You don't whistle and you do not talk about other people's cases unless you have permission from them. I know some of these examples may seem like minor things, but if you don't follow these rules, it may be taken as a hostile act and may result in threats of physical harm toward the person who is incarcerated.

A child who has to live through this life feels very alone and cautious of everyone around them. They may feel that society is teaching them that to love and support someone who's done something wrong is not proper and will have consequences. It can build strong emotions such as depression, anxiety, rage, regret, guilt and a sense of worthlessness.

Society is only beginning to see the possible harmful effects that having a loved one in jail can bring a child. So they are beginning to bring in programs for children who have a loved one in prison: counsellors, youth care workers, and summer camps. There are also other programs to help support

*the family with care packages on occasion and some newly developed programs for families as a whole, or just spouse relationships support groups. **These ideas are a good step in the right direction.** As a child going through this for almost eleven years now, I have taken part in some of these programs and have found that they are good ideas but are somewhat inadequate. I have needed someone who understood me, and what I was, and am still going through; those workers have no experience with this kind of life and so there was no way they could understand where I am coming from.*

*I am glad that more and more services are becoming available to children, but **I don't believe any true healing will begin until children of similar situations can be brought together to heal each other.** The foundation of such a program would be run by adults, with the involvement of young adults who have gone through this sort of experience during their childhood and have ideas that can help children feel safe, wanted, comfortable, and able to communicate about how they feel. The programs can be overseen by children (ages 16 and up) who have experience with incarceration. This program would be about children with more experience helping younger children; but even the older kids would meet others of their own age and start healing themselves as well. A healing and informative process for everyone.*

From life and self-experience I have realized that children will often share their feelings and get to the roots of issues if they are just talking to other kids. This program can be proven to be a very calming and informative process. Perhaps a committee can decide events a group of children may be able to do together such as: movie nights, games night, arts and crafts night and a night where you can receive help for your homework. These are just example ideas of some of the things that could be done to help bring children together.

People are always saying that children are our future. Well it takes a community to raise a child, let's not leave any of them out. To better ourselves, and our community, we must better the situations for our children. We all share a role, what will yours be?

For Couples: Maintaining a Partnered Relationship

If a relationship is to work, it takes work (and play). It is difficult to maintain a relationship with the added pressures and stresses of incarceration. Research on maintaining a happy relationship, regardless of age, has shown that the primary factors are love, respect, consideration, communication, loyalty, and trust. For partnered relationships, sexuality is also included (but rarely as first) among those factors already listed.

In some ways each of these factors is a form of multilevel communication made up of feeling words, thinking or belief statements, and through action or behavior.

Take ‘love’ as an example. How can I tell my family member that I love them in a way that they won’t misunderstand or misconstrue? Try something like saying, “I love you. I think that you’re a special person.”, then give your partner a hug. There is no mistaking the communication of ‘love’, particularly if it lines up with other parts of the relationship. Notice how the verbal statements use ‘I’ language. Using I think that ..., I feel that ..., etc. instead of ‘you’ language helps with miscommunication, stops us from hurting others with our words, and limits blaming language.

Discussions need to be open and frank. Sometimes there are ‘mixed’ messages in communication. It is difficult to believe that someone loves you if they say, “I love you”, and then ask you to do something that you don’t want to do or they do something that doesn’t speak of love. Listen on all of the levels – words and actions.

Communication cannot be underestimated, particularly in a relationship affected by incarceration, even if there is little privacy in letters, phone calls, or visiting rooms. Good communication needs to continue. It is important to share what is going on and not shield your family member from family realities. You may fear that you might ‘make their time harder’, but life events are realities nonetheless. Talk about the difficulties at work, financial difficulties, the children’s grades, car troubles, or whatever.

Sometimes it helps to make a list before a phone call or a visit so that you don’t forget important things to discuss. Make some of your discussions a ‘hopes and dreams’ discussion as well.

Intimacy will also be a topic of conversation/concern. In the visiting room, the most that is allowed is a hug and kiss at the beginning and end of the

visit. Anything more will bring an immediate response from the officers in charge. Respect the other people having visits around you, especially children.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network runs a Virtual Support Group that often discusses communication, boundaries, relationships, etc. Call our toll-free, confidential help line for more information.

Family Violence

Family violence can take many forms other than physical violence, including economic abuse, using threats and coercion toward you or your children, intimidation, emotional abuse, minimizing and blaming, destruction of property, and restricting your movement or associations with others.

It is important for you to know that family violence does not stop unless there is outside intervention. Ask for help.

Have a personal safety plan ready – just in case. Here is some information to help:

<https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/cj-jp/fv-vf/help-aide.html>

For Parents: If your Child is Incarcerated

Mothers and fathers of someone who is incarcerated face many difficulties and challenges. This includes wrestling with questions like, "How could this have happened?" or "Did we do something wrong?" There is often no answer to the first question, but the answer to the second question is that most parents do the best that they can with the resources that they have. Parents are not to blame. However, mothers, fathers, partners, even children, are sometimes held responsible or blamed by members of the community. Family members are hurt first by the criminal behavior of the offending family member, then by this community attitude. Family members did not commit the crime that sends an individual to prison.

Dear Son (Linda Love)

I will always remember the day you were born. It was a beautiful fall evening in 1971, and your father and I, your grandparents, and family and friends waited for the wonder of your arrival. You were our first child and your birth made us a family. I could not believe that something so wonderful and joyous could come from such pain.

You truly were a child of love. Wonder and delight marked your early years. The birth of your sister was as joyous for you as it was for the rest of us, and in every way, you were her big brother. You watched over her and you loved her with the same gentleness and care that you displayed to the world around you.

As you grew into a young boy, you continued to bring joy to all of us and we revelled in the gift of being a family. I have often looked back to those early years and questioned whether it was really as wonderful as I remembered.

Have the events of the last decade caused me to view the past through rose coloured glasses? I do not think so. Our memories are true and they are real. We were a family who cherished our life together.

***So the inevitable must be asked.
Where did it go wrong for you, my son?
When did our love and our joy
in being a family stop being enough for you?***

In truth, my search for answers has ceased. This is now my reality. Your teen years took you away from us, from the values we had instilled and from the circle of protection we fought so hard to surround you and your sister with. It was not enough for you. You wanted to try it all, have it all and live in the moment. You could not wait until you were grown and you made choices and took risks you were not ready to handle. You chose not to listen, to heed our counsel and that of others and we all live with the consequences of your choices.

The day I came to accept that you had committed murder, taken the life of another human being, will forever be the day a part of me died. My head knew that the murder was real long before my heart came to accept the truth. You were my child. You were not just the fruit of my womb; you

were the child of my heart. If part of me could commit this heinous act, how could I go on? How could I still love you? I have never been able to put myself in the place of the mother of your victim because to go there is to know the end of all that I believe and love of life.

The long trial, the camera crews who chased us down the street and recorded our tears, the daily front page newspaper stories and the curious who judged me with you, have forever changed the way I view the world. The harshness and indifference of the legal process has caused me to be cynical and I do not trust. I remember crying in the Remand Centre at seeing you behind glass, dishevelled, confused and frightened. I remember the man who told me to get used to it. I would be judged as a criminal because you were a criminal and you were my son. You gave me these gifts but I do not thank you for them.

Somehow, we survived those first years, we fought to keep you alive and to bring you to prisons closer to home. We didn't know how to do anything else. You were our son and our love for you did not die the day you committed murder. The first five years you spent in prison were about survival. You surviving being in prison and us surviving you being in prison.

***I have learned
humility, patience and perseverance
and I have given up things like
dignity, arrogance and judging others.***

We learned "the system" and how to use that system to get what we wanted: having you in a place where we could provide the support needed if you were to come out of prison a whole person. We learned about which prisons were the worst and which were better. We learned what it would take to get you closer to home and we used every lesson and all the resources we had to do what we believed was best for you. We learned that our life will forever look different from that of our friends and their families. We do not make new friends because we do not trust what will happen when strangers learn about you. We plan our weekends around visiting hours at the prison. It has been a long eight years in prison for all of us.

Through it all we knew that we really had no more control now, over what you were doing, than we did when you were a teenager. Ironic, isn't it? If you had accepted our support and help when you were a teenager, perhaps you would not need it now.

But really my son, we do only what little we can and we know that you are really the one who does it all. While all around you, ugliness and hurt prevails, you make the best of the worst. You continue to grow and learn despite the best efforts of the world to keep you down. You take every opportunity to continue to become the wonderful whole human being you have always had the potential to be. You have not lost your gentleness and your wonder with life. You have accepted responsibility for your actions and you are moving forward. You challenge yourself to reach higher and grow stronger. You continue to amaze us with your openness, your willingness to risk and your self-evaluation. You do not always choose the easy road.

It may seem strange to many, but I am proud of you. You are a person worth knowing and I am glad that you allow me to be a part of your life. Who would have guessed that again, something so joyous and wonderful could come from such pain?

*I love you son,
Mom*

One Day at a Time (Linda Linn)

What's getting me through the experience of having my son incarcerated? My faith in the God of my understanding that He will not give me more than I can handle.

Our lives were changed forever on May 7th, 1997. My oldest son came into the bedroom early in the morning, almost on his knees. He had heard on the radio that my third son "L" had been involved in an armed robbery the previous night and two women had been murdered in the prairies. Sources informed us that my son was still at large and there was a manhunt going on. Even the "sources" couldn't get it right. I called the RCMP in my hometown and they said they didn't know anything; I was to call the radio station where it was reported.

We learned later that my son had surrendered earlier the previous night and the co-accused was still at large. My thoughts and feelings were all over the map. I was angry that "L" had lied to me the previous weekend. "L" was supposed to be going to Vancouver Island to look for work. How did he land up in the Prairies? How could one of my children take another life? He wasn't brought up that way. Where do I start to find out where he is? I needed to talk to him. I wanted to know that he was okay.

I found out over the next few days who were my friends and who weren't. I had over 200 phone calls in 2 days, from friends and family who were expressing their support for our family and a few who didn't. People sent cards and food. Most people didn't know the whole story. People believe everything they read in a newspaper. That was a really big lesson for me. Now I read the paper with the blinders off. I had to finally grow up and find out what "unconditional love" was all about. I had rediscovered my faith a few years earlier and I feel today that I was being prepared for that day. I wasn't filled with shame; I could hold my head high as I knew I had done everything I could to help my son.

An RCMP officer was assigned to the case in our hometown. There were search warrants, and interviews. There were meetings with Government officials to review the case, as my son had been involved with Youth and Family Services. Where had Youth and Family Services broken down? What didn't I do? "L"'s father was living out of the country but he had heard about the incident before I did and was on his way home. The questions kept coming.

I was on a research mission. Who do I talk to about what was happening with my son? What were my son's rights and what was I allowed to do? I did not want to jeopardize my son's case so I spoke to lawyers in my hometown. I asked for releases from my son so I could speak directly to the doctors, nurses and lawyers involved in his case. The more questions I asked the more I learned about the Justice System. I feel that I was able to cope with people because I immersed myself in the case. I feel that I was my son's advocate. "L" had never been in trouble with the law and we learned some very hard lessons. Everything you say will be used against you in a Court of Law. No one could give me a book to read.

*The Victims Services Program has **nothing to support the accused families**. Since I was out of the province they provided a female worker during the trial, but couldn't explain what was in store for me. When my son was sentenced, it was recommended that he be moved to his home province. It took a year and a ½ before he could be moved "home". I had a Private Family Visit with "L" while he was out of the province. It felt "normal" for us except for the head counts. When he was transferred, he was so happy to "come home". We were ecstatic. We could see him more often. I hope to be able to move to the Lower Mainland so that I can be closer to my son.*

I've also talked to people who have been in my situation. They gave me information about what to expect when I go to visit; the questions I had were common. I went on the Internet, seeking information about Corrections Canada. I contacted the John Howard Society and they informed me about the Canadian Families and Corrections Network. I am a member and read the Newsletter regularly. I want to stay involved.

I have made it my priority to include "L" in our family. I write as often as I can when he doesn't call. I try to have contact at least once a week. I take pictures of our family, pets, and hometown to keep him involved. We still love him, and we need to show him. I travel hours to see my son, and I become anxious until I get there, as I don't want to disappoint him. He has had enough disappointment in his life. I pray to God every morning and thank him every night for my courage and strength to carry on.

For Families of Lifers

Life sentences are given to those who commit either first or second-degree murder, or other very serious crimes. Sometimes these individuals are called 'Lifers'.

Most of the victims of lifers are know to them and are often a partner, former partner, family member or intimate friend. Those in custody may have to face the victims of their crime on a continuing basis. Upon registering to receive the information, victims are notified of significant milestones throughout the sentence such as when the Parole Board considers judicial review, parole, temporary absences, work releases, etc. The long-lasting effects of the crime on others mean that there may involvement of victims throughout incarceration.

Your family member, as the saying goes, 'needs to do the time rather than the time doing them'. Doing the time does not mean 'kicking back'; it means taking charge of a life that has become out of control.

Building on your Supportive Relationship Network



Preparation for Reintegration

This pamphlet has been produced for incarcerated persons who are looking to start or build on relationships with family, friends and the community that can support them during their incarceration and after they have completed their sentence. Friendships are a basic give and take relationship that everyone needs to have a sense of belonging and to work with in times of difficulty.

No one can do it alone.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network
PO Box 35040 Kingston, ON K7L 5S5
Toll free information and referrals: 1-888-371-2326
Website: www.cfcn-rcacf.org
Email: national@cfcn-rcacf.org
Registered Canadian charity number: 875428062RR001

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There is often conflict within the family about providing support or visiting the lifer. Some family members may feel that support should not be offered, given the nature of the offence. They may be openly be critical and attempt to dissuade other family members from maintaining contact.

Doing life or being a long-term prisoner is a difficult journey of confronting themselves, the crime, and its consequences. It is important for you to encourage your family member inside to establish any supportive contacts right away. CFCN has produced a pamphlet on this topic that we share in our prison programming to help deal with relationships, incarceration, children, reintegration, and restorative justice.

Incarceration

During court sentencing, a person is given a Life Sentence with a Determinate sentence (has a fixed timeframe) or an Indeterminate sentence (no fixed timeframe and no end date. The Parole Board of Canada reviews the case after seven years and every two years after that). They may be eligible for parole although some sentences are 'life without parole'. Whether eligible for parole or not, those with a Life sentence will be under the supervision of the Correctional Service of Canada for their entire life.

The family and the lifer will maintain their relationship for at least two years within a maximum-security institution. Only after this two-year timeframe can a lifer be sent to an institution that has lower security. Nothing can change this - there is no fast tracking of lifers in the correctional process.

During incarceration, your family member 'knows' who they are: people know them by name, they have friends, they have status. Upon release, the structure and emotional protection provided by institutional life disappears. The world becomes impersonal. No one calls them by name and no one cares. Some lifers and long-term prisoners attempt to recreate their institutional world at home, even to the point of limiting furniture, darkening windows, locking doors, asking permission to check what is in the refrigerator. In the worst-case scenario, your family member searches out persons whom they knew from inside. These individuals may provide a sense of place and short-term support, but may not offer the kind of support that your family member needs to stay out.

While programs and skills training are available, these may only be offered later in the sentence. Your family member may find this discouraging and disheartening, as may you. While it is true that there may be plenty of time to complete necessary programs, the onus may be on family members to search out other possibilities and courses while they wait to get into their required correctional programs. This wait can impact their skills and job experience.

If you are in a partnered relationship with a family member who is a lifer or long-term individual, your relationship may have begun during incarceration. You need to go into your relationship with your eyes open. Consider reading the transcripts from the trial. It may prepare you both for

your relationship and for any publicity that may appear in the media at a later date.

For the family of someone who has taken another's life, the difficulties may be significantly greater. The consequences of the crime never go away for the lifer, for the victim's family, or for the lifer's family. Each one faces a sentence that never ends. You need to be prepared for the long haul. Here are some things to consider:

- Families of lifers are not a homogenous group - each family's experience is different because there are different types of lifers.
- Some individuals are lifers due to a 'crime of passion', in which a partner, intimate, former partner, another family member, relative or friend is the victim.
- Some individuals are lifers due to a mental health issue.
- Some individuals are lifers because of a criminal lifestyle or 'subculture' in which a life was taken in the course of another offence, for example a gang-related murder.
- In Canada, a person serving a life sentence for murder or high treason, has the possibility of applying to have their parole inadmissibility date reviewed, after serving at least 15 years. This is called the 'Faint Hope Clause'. Bill S-6 abolished this for anyone sentenced after December 2, 2011.

Lifers are held in a certain regard within the prison culture. For example, lifers who commit a crime of passion may be considered 'Square John's' or pro-social by other prisoners and thus in some ways exempted from understanding or participating in the prison culture.

However, those who commit murder in the course of a sexual offence, particularly against a child, are placed at the lowest rung of the hierarchy and sometimes their family bears this as well in the community. The stigma can extend into the institution among families who visit. A status or hierarchy, based on the type of offence, exists among families as well. Families may be instructed by their incarcerated family member to not associate with another family because of the offence that their incarcerated family member committed.

Lifers may experience something that could be called 'pain control'. While contact with family and the outside community is needed, visiting is often stressful for the lifer. This may be because of the security constraints or because of the emotional impact of visiting both on the lifer and on the

family. Some lifers and long-term individuals chose to terminate or limit visits and community contact to control the pain - it hurts too bad to have visitors or because of the pain that the lifer or long-term individual sees that their family is experiencing. They may not realize that while their pain may be lessened by decreasing visits, the family's pain continues, now complicated further by limited or no contact.

Community stigma experienced by the family may be high during the arrest, trial and sentencing and often diminishes and simmers below the surface during incarceration. The family may experience a return of the stigma as the media revisits the offence upon an application for judicial review, escorted or unescorted absences, or upon release into the community. While most lifers do not reoffend, the nature of the initial offence increases societal fears of the possibility of reoffending and its consequences on another victim.

Reintegration

The families of lifers and long-term prisoners face some serious choices and may need some assistance in making these choices. After 15, 20 or 25 years behind bars there are unique difficulties in reintegrating back into the community and into family life. The world keeps changing, but an incarcerated individual may not understand the scope or speed of change, even if they keep up with society's changes through TV or newspapers. There can be a culture shock similar to the experience of visiting a foreign country after reading all the travel brochures or viewing television specials.

You may also need to know that just as some partnered relationships don't survive arrest, trial and sentencing, some relationships don't survive release into the community. It may be many years before the test of life together in the community occurs for a lifer and their partner. Those who have entered into relationships during incarceration find that the relationship flourishes during the controlled and structured environment of an institution, but were not able to contain the discovery of undisclosed information or the difficulties of restructuring at release. This comment is not intended to say that a relationship begun in prison is doomed at release. It only means that you and your partner have some hurdles to overcome and these relationships need support upon re-entry, probably for up to one year or more, as the couple negotiates a relationship in the community. As one family member has said, they need to experience their relationship "in the Real World." This was an important insight for this family member, and perhaps for others as well - prison is not a normal place to maintain a

relationship and the testing of a relationship that happens at reintegration may be much greater than expected.

Kate King, in *'It Hurts so Bad: Comparing Grieving Patterns of the Families of Murder Victims with Those of Families of Death Row Inmates'* (Criminal Justice Policy Review 15, 2, June 2004, 193-211) takes the risk to comparing the experiences of the families of victims of murders with families of families on Death Row. While the reasons for the resistance to comparing these two very different groups are evident, King (p. 202) identifies three similarities between the two groups: "... self-accusation, social isolation, and powerlessness. Although it may seem more likely that family members of convicted murderers might feel guilty about things they had or had not done, in fact, those close to the murder victims also blamed themselves for what had happened."

In fact, it can be debilitating for the entire family: "The trial process is painful for the family of the accused, just as it is for the family of the victim. In the courtroom, they must listen to graphic testimony about the crime, view photographs of the crime scene, and sometimes endure the hostility of the victim's family. Many relatives of the accused are unfamiliar with the court process and find this time especially confusing and painful." (King, p. 200)

The 1991 Task Force Report on Long-Term Sentences by the Correctional Service of Canada identified four stages of prisoners serving sentences of ten years or longer. The stages have been used as a basis for the development of services and programs and the family's experience follows four similar stages:

1. Adaptation

Coming to grips with the reality of confinement - the effect of the offence on the structure of family, the crime's effect on other family relationships and family support, and the reality of the long-term incarceration of a family member, including initially in a maximum-security institution

2. Integration to the prison environment

Living within the context of that reality - maintaining (or developing) a relationship within the context of a life sentence with lifetime parole

3. Preparation for release

Preparing for release in a progressive manner - anticipation and excitement at the release with the potential of a reoccurrence of community stigmatization

4. Reintegration into the community

Assuring a coherent and continuous process leading to safe reintegration - renegotiation and stabilization of a relationship that has existed within a structured environment for successful re-entry into the family and community and within a context of life-long parole

It takes perseverance on both sides of the wall to see relationships succeed. Families may need the help of community organizations in their area or CFCN (toll-free, confidential help line, free resources, or our Virtual Family Support Group). The family of a lifer - mother, father, children, partner, grandparent, brother, sister or whoever the family may be, face many challenges. The family is doing life as well, throughout a sentence that never ends.

The Experiences of a Lifer's Wife (Sherry Edmunds Flett)

Executive Director of L.I.N.C., Abbotsford BC

In 1979, as a member of the Queen's University West Indian club executive, I went into Millhaven Institution to the inaugural meeting of B.I.F.A. (Black Inmates and Friends Association). Filled with trepidation and fear, I didn't know what to expect. I had never been in a prison before. Little did I know, but that meeting would change the course of my life forever.

I was born in Kingston, Ontario to a family that had lived in the city since 1800. Prisons have always been part of the area's social and economic landscape. Riots and other disturbances would be reported in the Kingston Whig Standard. Going into town from the farm, we would drive by Collins Bay Institution or Kingston Penitentiary. A photo taken in the 1950s of my parents playing baseball in K.P. hung on the wall of my dad's office at home. I never thought about the people who lived behind the walls. It was if they didn't exist.

The West Indian club executive - Angel, Pam and I - were met that first night in Millhaven by the Lutheran minister who had phoned and asked if we would come in. Our identification was checked at the little building at the front gate. I looked up and saw the gun towers as we walked through the two perimeter fences topped with barbed wire. Going down into the institution to the chapel where the B.I.F.A. meeting was to be held, I felt the curious stares and heard the catcalls as we walked past.

B.I.F.A. was founded by a lifer named Roni Grant. He envisioned B.I.F.A. as a group open to all that celebrated Black culture and was a political force in the institutions for people of African descent. B.I.F.A.'s first social convenor was another lifer. His name was John Glendon Flett. A good friend of Roni's and the only person inside that Roni ever introduced me to, Glenn and I hit it off immediately. We wrote back and forth and became friends over time. Eight years later on June 21, 1987, Glenn and I were married in the church at William Head Institution. I never thought I would ever get married, much less to someone in prison serving a life sentence! It has been an arduous, rewarding journey of highs and lows as with all marriages. Thirteen years later, I am glad we made the decision to marry. Glenn and I have, thanks to God, survived the separation of prison, the transition to the street and have created a meaningful life for ourselves.

To others who are in the same situation, there is hope. You can survive as an individual and as a couple. I would like to briefly share some recollections about what we did and how we made it thus far:

1. Educate yourself!

It is critical to know all that you can in order to make an informed decision - especially when you meet the person inside. Before Glenn and I got married, I knew about his crime. I had read the articles in the newspapers. He gave me permission to read his files so I saw his criminal record and knew about his institutional life. I met his family-his parents, his ex-wife, his children and his friends both inside and outside prison. It gave me a sense of Glenn as a person. His willingness to share his life with me (and vice versa) helped to establish open lines of communication that have held us in good stead.

Learn all that you can about prison through articles, books, C.S.C. regulations, and any available community support. This is important and assists you to navigate the murky world of prison. Know the names, telephone numbers, and meet wherever possible, the warden, the case management officer, the psychologist, the Chaplain/Elder, the Visits and Correspondence staff and the regional office of the National Parole Board. This also helps you to establish the fact that your partner has credible community support.

2. Don't isolate yourself.

Build a support network. Prison is a shaming experience for all concerned. The more you can name your experience and talk about what is happening to you with people you trust, the easier it is to cope with it all. Often people isolate and think that it is "us against the world." This is a recipe for disaster. Our support network has been a vital part of our relationship. Support is especially important when you are with someone who is serving a long sentence. When they are getting out, community support is crucial.

3. Get used to the fact that Life means Life!

Being married to someone who is serving a life sentence is both a blessing and a curse. Right from the start I knew that Glenn's sentence would last for the rest of his natural life and that he would always be under some sort of supervision. In 1992, when Glenn got full parole, there was a category called parole reduced. After five years of incident free behavior, he would be eligible to apply for once-a-year reporting to his parole officer by phone, letter or interview. But the category of parole reduced was cancelled. In its place, a lifer can apply to see his/her parole officer every three months (Glenn reports every month). Like lifters inside the institution, lifters on the street have concerns about continuity of supervision. Glenn has had nine parole officers.

Each one has had varying ideas as to how his risk should be managed on the street.

4. Don't think that when they are out that "it" is over.

A new chapter has just begun! Glenn used to tell me, and he still does, that a person is at their most ideal while inside prison. Unless someone is totally wild, they have taken programs and made substantial changes. After getting out of prison, this new way of life needs to be reaffirmed all over again. Out in the big, wide world and feeling uncomfortable, your partner will go back and forth as they try on their old skin but they will realize that they like their new self. Sometimes the awkwardness of the changes makes them long for life inside. I can remember when Glenn was out for a year. He said that he couldn't handle life on the street anymore and wanted to go back in. It wasn't until we were in the Ferndale Institution parking lot that he decided that he wanted to stay out.

5. Intense debate is the order of the day!

The longest ongoing argument in our house has been over space. As Glenn got out on escorted and unescorted passes, and then day and full parole, we began to notice that we were both very independent individuals who were set in our ways. While Glenn was inside, my lifelong habit of reading before going to sleep was not a problem. When he got out, however, I lost my side of the bed and Glenn wanted the light out so he could sleep! That Christmas, one of my stocking stuffers was a book light.

I am a messy but clean person. Glenn is very orderly. After twenty-three years in prison, he discovered that you feel better with a neat and tidy cell. As a result, our house is pretty clean even with our three-year-old running around. We have negotiated that Glenn makes the bed as soon as we are up and I file the piles of paper that appear periodically upstairs.

Glenn has a need for privacy, especially in the morning when he reads his Bible, prays and goes running like he did in prison. I took this as a personal affront. To me, his actions meant that he wasn't happy being around me. The meaning changed when I found out that Glenn needed a place to think. Our first home together was a one-bedroom house situated in an old apple orchard. There was a wood shed out back that I cleared out and cleaned up. I put everything that had been in his prison cell in the woodshed and put a lock on the door. This was Glenn's room. If I wanted to go there, I had to ask him. Woody, an American friend of mine from work at the time, when I told him about Glenn's 'cell', said that he had his bunker at home too. Woody was

president of an organization for Viet Nam veterans in Canada. He had survived two tours of duty in Indochina.

For anyone whose partner is just getting out, especially after a lengthy period of incarceration, I would highly recommend giving them a private space to process the experience.

Children of Lifers

It is a challenging reality that when one person kills another, it may be a partnered relationship, and there may be children left behind. One person that the children love has taken the life of the other person that they love. The shock and horror of the offence rocks the circle of family and friends as both parents disappear from the children. It is hard to avoid what has happened and they are left to face the consequences and repercussions.

There are radical changes in the relationship between the incarcerated person (a lifer) and their children. For some children, the emotional impact can destroy any wish for contact with the incarcerated parent and the relationship may be altered forever. Witnessing the murder or discovering the body can lead to lasting trauma. The surviving parent-child relationship may be irreparable and the lifer may not yet understand (or be ready to understand) the impact of the offence on the family and the children.

There are major changes in living arrangements. Children may move to live with grandparents or other relatives who are also coping with loss and impact of the offence on themselves. The children may not want to maintain contact with the lifer, or the grandparent or caregiver may not wish to foster or support contact based on decisions related to what is best for the children. "In cases where one parent kills the other, surviving children often feel revulsion, betrayal, and anger mixed with confusion and grief over losing both parents. These children may feel forced to choose between one parent and the other or may find themselves at the center of custody battles between opposing sets of grandparents. Some children may find themselves in foster care or given up for adoption. These stressors can be utterly debilitating." (King, p.196)

For some lifers it may be their parent who maintains a family relationship, including being the caregiver for their grandchildren. There is very little support for parents, and even less as they become guardians of the grandchildren. Often social support services are geared to a parent and child and not to a grandparent and child.

For Indigenous Families

Families of Aboriginal Inmates (Amy Smith)

Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Coordinator at the Katarokwi Native Friendship Centre

Approximately 15% of Canada's federal inmate population is of Aboriginal descent. Statistically, they are the most over represented minority group who is incarcerated within the Correctional Service of Canada. Aboriginal culture is one that is both unique and distinct from all other cultures, nationalities, and ethnic groups that make up Canada's diversity. This uniqueness reflects strongly on Aboriginal families who are involved in Canada's justice system: many issues faced by Aboriginal families are specific to them.

We must first differentiate the term "family" as often defined by an Aboriginal person. A family may go far beyond the immediate family of wife, children, siblings, and parents. A Native family often incorporates a whole community. A family consists not only of the immediate family, but also Elders, children of the community, neighbors, friends, and all others in between. Justice is often dealt with as a healing process for the community, rather than a punitive one strictly for the offender. The community works together to find solutions to problems and Elders conduct ceremonies that help the offender, victim, and the community as a whole to heal. When a crime has been committed that results in incarceration, the healing process is disrupted for that community.

A specific issue that Aboriginal families of inmates encounter occurs when visiting the offender. Sacred medicines, consisting of tobacco, sage, cedar, and sweetgrass, are burned by Aboriginal people for prayer. An Elder may bring these medicines into the institutions either for their own personal use or to give to the offender. These medicines are usually packaged as a bundle or within a medicine bag and considered are very personal. Although most family members are unable to bring medicines in for the offender, they may be carrying medicines or other sacred, person objects.

If a search of the medicines is required, it should be done with the assistance of a Native Elder or the Native Liaison Officer to ensure that they are being handled appropriately. Some correctional staff, perhaps because of lack of education on Native spirituality, mishandle the medicines and thus

interfere with the Aboriginal person's spirituality. The visitor feels disrespected and offended.

Although many Aboriginal people come from urban communities, we must also consider the large number of them who live in remote areas, either on or off reserves. The way of life for these families who live in a northern Native community, for example, is far different from what many consider to be the norm. Many speak their Native language, with little or no English. When this is the case, translation becomes a major issue when dealing with the correctional system. There are many different nations that make up the Aboriginal culture. The many languages make it difficult to find translators to accommodate visitors. This limits many Aboriginal families from visiting at all, or returning a second time due to the immense frustration at not being able to express their needs to C.S.C. staff. This may also be related to "culture shock" of entering a city, not to mention an institution. Frustration is related to the correctional environment as well as the people they encounter within this environment.

Many Aboriginal people (particularly women) are perceived to be very passive individuals. They often do not assert themselves in order to get their needs met. This is not to be considered a fault of Aboriginal people. It is a different way of presenting themselves related to their upbringing and values.

Across Canada, the Aboriginal population has the highest rate of poverty. This poverty often prevents travel for visits or relocation of immediate families to be closer to the offender. Many families live great distances away. Traveling expenses can become very costly and only those family members with the financial means can make these trips. This ultimately causes drifts between the family, the community, and the offender.

Within the Aboriginal culture, Elders serve as teachers, advisors, spiritual guides, and friends. Each nation is connected, but at the same time have their own specific teachings that have been passed down as learning tools. Families of inmates may require guidance and support from an Elder, as they receive at home, when visiting their family. It is often hard for the families to connect with an Elder from their nation in an urban area. Many times another nation is more prominent in that area and that Elder cannot give the family all of the support that they require.

In many Aboriginal communities, drug and alcohol problems and teen suicide rates remain very high. This may be even a greater risk for families and children of offenders, although this has not been statistically proven. Lack of resources and community support for Aboriginals and Aboriginal families may be a contributing factor for these ongoing issues within these communities.

Reintegration is far and beyond the most complicated issues for the Aboriginal offender and their family. Roles within the family must again be defined, as many Aboriginal communities and families incorporate distinct gender roles as part of daily living.

When an offender is being reintegrated back into their community or reserve, the healing process that was interrupted by incarceration must be completed within that community. All of the culturally specific issues mentioned above affect the healing process for the families and the communities of Aboriginal offenders.

Update:

The Office of the Correctional Investigator's Annual Report 2022-2023 states that the rate of representation of Indigenous peoples in federal prisons "stands at just under 33%, representing more than 4,200 Indigenous individuals. The steady and unabated increase in the disproportionate representation of Indigenous peoples under federal sentence is nothing short of a national travesty and remains one of Canada's most pressing human rights challenges". The over-representation of Indigenous women in correctional facilities, is now about 50% of all women in custody.

For Families of the Elderly in Prison

Crimes committed many years previously may lead to an elderly person being placed in prison. You and your family may have had no previous contact with the justice and corrections process. It may be particularly overwhelming for you. You may face significant difficulties in having your family member discussed in the media.

The harsh reality is that a person may grow old in prison and their life may include palliative care, or even death, depending on the length of the sentence. The Correctional Service of Canada is aware of this and it has led to geriatric and palliative care programs. The institution will ensure that the special needs of your aging family member are addressed, including appropriate housing, meals, exercise, and medical care for aging persons. There will also be ongoing assessments for health, safety, palliative care, and psychological well-being. More information can be found on CSC's website:

<https://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/publications/005007-1601-en.shtml>

For family members, this will be extremely sad and upsetting. This reality may lead to palliative care concerns and preliminary grieving issues around an impending death. It is appropriate for you to search out both personal and professional support in your community. It may also be beneficial for you to do further reading on depression and the elderly. Many elderly people experience clinical or situational depression, and the same is true for those who are incarcerated. If you have concerns that your family member is becoming depressed, contact the Health Care department of the institution.

The Parole Board of Canada (PBC)'s first priority is public safety. While older people are less likely to re-offend, the PBC wants to be shown that your family member is no longer a threat to others upon release into the community. The PBC will consider compassionate release programs or special needs parole for terminally ill and elderly, nonviolent prisoners.

There still may be treatment or programming that your family member must complete once released to the community. Your family member may also need to consider employment and vocational options. The challenges of being elderly and coming back into the community may be daunting for you and your family member. Whatever the difficulties, you can be a significant asset to your incarcerated family member.

For Families of Identifying Women in Prison

The family situation of those who identify as women in Canada's federal prisons is unique and has complex family issues. Many women inside need significant assistance with issues of parental custody, relationships, housing, and employment.

In 1990, *Creating Choices: The Report of the Task Force on Federally Sentenced Women* was written and all recommendations were adopted. The report identified five overarching principles that make up the foundation of a correctional strategy for women. These are:

- Empowerment
- Meaningful and responsible choices
- Respect and dignity
- Supportive environment
- Shared responsibility

For many years, federally sentenced women did their time at Prison for Women or at a provincial institution under an exchange of service agreement between the federal and provincial governments. This meant limited family contact. Family and family support may have been thousands of miles away. Many women were single parents before they were incarcerated and custody and access issues are a major concern. Often a relationship partner was a co-accused and the children ended up living with a relative or in the care of the Children's Aid Society or other care. The children are a concern for the women during incarceration and for reintegration planning. With regional facilities, some federally sentenced women have the opportunity to live closer to their family supports.

The Correctional Service of Canada offers the Mother-Child program. It is intended to keep children with their mothers, where appropriate, and to promote positive relationships and provide the a continuous, stable, supportive relationship. Women, including pregnant individuals, must complete the ' *Mother-Child Program Residential Application*'. This application can take time as there may be required assessments from psychiatric/psychological staff, child welfare (to determine if this program participation would be in the best interest of the child), external health care professionals, etc. and Community Assessments (to evaluate the support for this decision from the child's current caregiver).

The residential component of this program allows minor children to live in the institution, with their mother, full-time to their fifth birthday, and part-

time (usually extended weekend visits) up to their seventh birthday. Unaccompanied visits with minor children may be permitted as well, if the assessment process has been completed.

The non-residential component of this program to establish or maintain the mother-child bond may include escorted or unescorted temporary absences for family contact/parental responsibilities, Private Family Visits, use of video visitation, recording of stories, or the pumping and storing of breast milk.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network has run a Family Liaison Worker project inside Nova Institution for Women in Nova Scotia since 2008 offering support with Strengths and Needs Assessments, supervised phone calls, court attendance, escorts, the Mother-Child program, obtaining critical identity documents (e.g. Birth Certificates), workshops, parole, reintegration, etc.

If you are a family member of a federally sentenced woman, please contact CFCN for a copy of 'A New Time' toolkit for information on family reintegration for the families of federally sentenced women.

Resources

We sometimes like to keep up an image that everything is okay. We don't want others to know that we are having difficulties. The very thing we need, however, may be the thing we don't want - we need to ask for assistance when we feel stuck. It takes a lot of courage to reach out.

In the Institution:

You can call people in the institution for specific information or to state concerns. Be aware, however, that the people to whom you wish to speak may not be able to disclose that your family member is at the institution. They may not be able to discuss anything about your family member unless your family member has signed a '*Consent to Disclose*' waiver to authorize the staff member to discuss the issue with you. This protects the privacy of your person inside, but it allows room for **you** to talk about the situation and ask general questions.

Who can you contact?

- For information at the start of the end of the sentence: Admissions and Discharge (A&D) department.
- For information on visiting and visiting hours: Visits and Correspondence (V&C) department.
- For information or concerns about your inside person's institutional and parole status: Parole Officer.
- For a family crisis, emergency, or death in the family: Chaplain, Elder, Indigenous Liaison Officer, Black Offender Liaison Officer. After hours, the Officer in charge of the institution (Keeper).
- For complaints about your treatment by corrections staff: Warden, Office of the Correctional Investigator, Officer in charge of the Institution (Keeper).

In the Community:

Develop your community supports early in the criminal justice process, before hardship becomes overwhelming and social isolation becomes a pattern. The incarceration of a family member is a crisis touching every aspect of family life. Support should address emotional, economic, social, and spiritual needs and extend well beyond your person inside's successful reintegration into your family and the community.

Who can you contact?

- Support agencies who can link your family with local community services.
- Counseling, support groups, family networking, recreation services, information, referral, and advocacy, specific to the circumstances surrounding incarceration.
- Special attention should be paid to the provision of supports and services for the adolescents of those incarcerated.
- Advocates for your family if you face discrimination.
- Support from your religious community as you face the spiritual crisis of the incarceration of a family member.
- Budgeting and financial planning assistance for basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter and transportation.

The following list of community groups is not exhaustive, but these organizations will be able to assist you directly or refer you to the best person or organization for your particular struggle. More organizations are found in the Directory of Canadian Organizations Providing Services to the Families of Adult Offenders at CFCN's website. Helpful organizations include:

- Canadian Families and Corrections Network (CFCN) provides a toll-free, confidential phone line for families. It is not a crisis line, but a confidential service to help prisoner families with questions, support or to search for an organization, support group, or professional service close to the family. Information is available on our website as well. <https://www.cfcn-rcafd.org>
- The John Howard Society provides services to individuals in prison or reintegrating that identify as male, and their families. In some instances this includes court support, prison visitation, and family support groups. <https://johnhoward.ca>
- The Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies provide services to individuals in prison or reintegrating that identify as female, and their families. Services offered vary across Canada. <https://caefs.ca>
- The St. Leonard's Society also provides services to those in custody and reintegrating individuals and their families, including family support, half-way houses, etc. <http://www.stleonards.ca>

- The Salvation Army has a long-standing involvement with those incarcerated and their families. Their services to families include addressing your spiritual needs.
<https://salvationarmy.ca>
- 7th Step Society of Canada is a program for this in custody and reintegrating to change their behaviour and attitudes using a basic self-help philosophy. Its fundamental principles are realistic thinking and positive peer pressure.
<https://7thstep.ca>
- Catholic Charities, Catholic Social Services, and Jewish Social Services may also provide specific support for families in need.
- Local organizations vary, but look for support from such groups as emergency crisis line, churches and church organizations, community counselling centres, family clergy, family doctor, local Health Units, HIV/AIDS support organizations, hospitality houses/shelters, or restorative justice projects.
- For Indigenous families, the local Friendship Centre or Band office may be of assistance. Many communities have urban or reserve services and programs that will be helpful.
- Victims can register with the Correctional Service of Canada or the Parole Board of Canada to receive information about the person who has harmed them.

Don't forget that friends and other family members can be an important resource to help you through the difficult times.

The greatest danger in asking for assistance is waiting until options become limited or unavailable.

The greatest joy in asking for assistance will be discovering that you are not alone.

Glossary of Terms and Acronyms

Admissions & Discharge (A&D) - The department where new admissions are processed and for release processing. A&D also handles personal property boxes, fingerprinting, ID cards, and urinalysis testing.

African Canadian Liaison Officer (ACLO) - Staff that work with African Canadian individuals inside to address issues of race, systemic racism, and intergenerational race-based trauma as it relates to the individuals and their correctional plan.

Case Management Team (CMT) - A group of people who oversee a person in prison and look after their case, making recommendations concerning their correctional plan, transfers, parole, and release. The team may generally include Parole Officers, Health Care staff, Chaplains, Indigenous Liaison Officer, etc.

Chaplain - A religious/spiritual leader that helps the inside person observe their religious and spiritual practices and supports them to explore questions related to spirituality, religion, and life purpose. They also assist in organizing religious services and celebrations and inform prisoners about sickness, death, or difficulties in their family.

Community Assessment (CA) - A document that details relevant community contacts and community support. It's based on information from an investigation by a Parole Officer or by a private agency under contract to Correctional Service of Canada. Information sources may include family members, community organizations, support groups, and police.

Community Correctional Facility/Halfway House/Community-based Residential Facilities (CBRFs) - A community facility for Day Parole when you can attend a job, school, or appointments during the day but have to sleep in the facility at night. They have house rules and are a chance to learn the skills necessary for reintegration.

Contraband - Anything introduced into or found that is not permitted in the institution. This includes weapons, drugs, tobacco, alcohol, and some photos. If contraband is found, it can lead to a search, charges, and loss of visiting privileges.

Correctional Officer (CO, CX) – Staff that maintain the safety and security of the prisons through routine patrols, counts of incarcerated people throughout the day, supervising individual movement, escorts, searching cells, etc.

Correctional Plan - A document, created when a person enters prison, that outlines the approach to manage their risk of re-offending. It contains information about programming, education, employment, and supervision that connects the person’s crime, criminal history, and their risk of re-offending.

Correctional Programs (CP) - Programs that the person inside is required to complete to progress through the correctional system and to address difficulties as identified by the courts, treatment staff, Parole Officer, or the Parole Board of Canada. Programs may include anger management, substance abuse, family violence, academic, living skills, psychological treatment, etc.

Day Parole Eligibility (DPE) - The date when the inside person is eligible for day parole.

Escorted Temporary Absence (ETA) and Unescorted TA (UTA) - An absence from the prison for medical, court, a job/school, or family reasons.

Full Parole Eligibility (FPE) - The date when the inside person is eligible for full parole.

Healing Lodge - A residential facility with various security levels that offers culturally appropriate services and programs to Indigenous individuals, and those that choose to follow Indigenous programming and spirituality. Individuals are able to address factors that led to their incarceration and prepare for reintegration while incorporating Indigenous values, traditions and beliefs using interventions, including Elder services and ceremonies.

Homicide and Murder - Homicide is the general term applied to all situations in which one person causes the death of another. Justifiable or accidental homicide is not a crime. Culpable (blameworthy) homicide is a crime. It can be either first-degree murder, second-degree murder, or manslaughter. First-degree murder includes all planned and deliberate murders, as well as the murder of a police officer, prison employee, or any other person authorized to work in a prison while on duty. Second-degree murder is any murder that is not first-degree murder. Manslaughter is any

culpable homicide that is neither first nor second-degree murder. The judge may sentence a person convicted of manslaughter to any term deemed appropriate, from a number of months, to life.

Impact of Race and Culture Assessment (IRCA) - A pre-sentencing report that helps sentencing judges better understand the effect of poverty, marginalization, racism, and social exclusion on the individual and their life experience. They explain how the person's lived experiences inform their circumstances, the offence committed, and their experience with the justice system. These IRCA's are primarily used for the Black population.

Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) - A staff person who ensures that the Case Management Team understands the incarcerated individual's work with their Elder and that their Indigenous Social History is taken into consideration into their correctional plan.

Indigenous Social History (ISH) - A document that provides context on the background factors that may have impacted the individual and contributed to their current circumstances. The ISH will inform a risk management plan for the person who's incarcerated.

Judicial review - In the case of a first-degree or second-degree murder, where the convicted person is not eligible for parole for more than 15 years, the person may apply to superior court to have the parole ineligibility period reduced or terminated. The 15-year sentence must have already been served before the judicial review. Those who have committed multiple murders are not eligible to apply.

Offences - Schedule offences are offences contained in Schedule I or Schedule II of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (CCRA). Schedule I refers to indictable (chargeable) offences under the Criminal Code of Canada. Schedule II refers to indictable offences under the Narcotic Control Act or the Food and Drugs. Non-scheduled offence is an offence which is not contained in Schedule I or Schedule II of the CCRA.

If an offence is included in a schedule and the incarcerated person meets certain criteria, the Correctional Service of Canada may request that the Parole Board of Canada decide if the person should be held in prison to the Warrant Expiry Date.

Offender Management System (OMS) - A computer system to record, extract, and share information on the case files of those in custody.

Parole (Day Parole (DP) and Full Parole (FP)) - Two types of Conditional Release for which the Parole Board of Canada is responsible. They are controlled, gradual, and supported reintegration steps from prison to community before the end of a criminal sentence. Parole does not shorten a person's sentence, but allows them to serve the remainder of their sentence in the community. A day parolee is able to be in the community during the day, but returns to a minimum security, community correctional facility or halfway house at night. Full parole means that the person can live in their own residence, but reporting to a Parole Officer continues.

Personal Property Box (Pen Pack) - The personal belongings a person is allowed to receive from the community in the first 30 days after they are admitted to their placement institution (after their assessment period).

Parole Officer (PO), Institutional PO (IPO), Community PO (CPO) - Correctional staff that supervise and manage a caseload of people in prison or reintegrating into the community. They assess behaviours, risk to society and accountability.

Private Family Visit (PFV) - Allows the inside person and their family to spend time together. These can take place for up to 72 hours every 2 months unless otherwise stated. People inside are also allowed to apply for a 'solo PFV' allowing for them to have some time alone.

Record Suspension (Pardon) - The Criminal Records Act permits the Parole Board of Canada to issue, grant, deny, or revoke a pardon to those people who, although convicted of a criminal offence, have served their sentence and have proven to be responsible citizens. If a pardon is in force, a federal agency or department cannot disclose the information contained on file or in records without the permission of the Solicitor General of Canada.

Security level - Individuals in prison are placed in different levels of security to manage their risk to staff, other prisoners, and to the community. The three levels of maximum, medium, and minimum vary in terms of supervision, monitoring, movement, restrictions, etc. based on that risk. Each region within the Correctional Service of Canada has at least one Intake site and a Women's institution (both containing all levels of security), and a maximum security psychiatric or psychological treatment centre (offering assessment, treatment and specialized programs).

Social Programs - Programs offered to assist with institutional adjustment and community reintegration. These are generally facilitated by a Social Programs Officer (SPO).

Statutory Release Date (SRD, STAT) - After serving 2/3 of a sentence, those who have not been granted parole or who have not applied are released into the community to serve their remaining time on their STAT date.

Structured Intervention Units (SIUs) - Abolition of administrative segregation occurred in 2019 when SIUs began. A person in prison is transferred temporarily into an SIU when they cannot be safely managed within a mainstream population. It offers interventions to address their specific needs and risks. They have the opportunity to spend a minimum of four hours a day outside of their cell, and two hours a day of meaningful human contact.

Visiting and Correspondence (V&C) - The department responsible for scheduling, searching, and supervising visits. They handle incoming mail, manage the phone call lists, and review visiting applications.

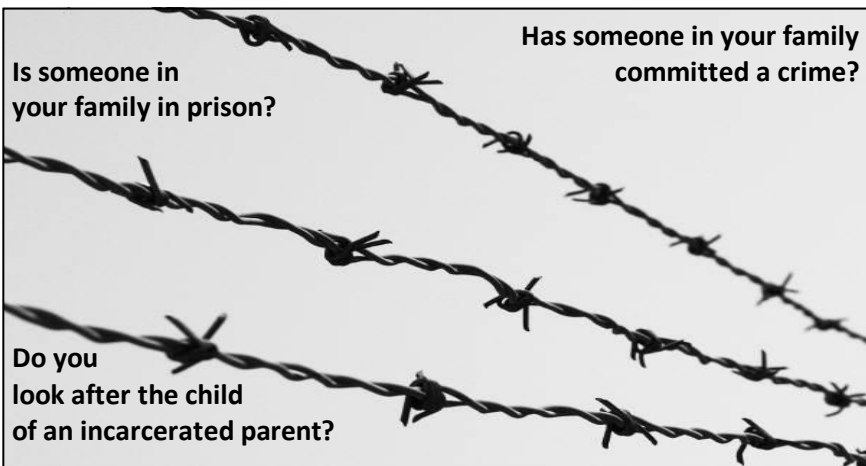
Visitor Review Board (VRB) - A regular meeting within the institution that includes V&C staff, the Security Intelligence Officer, Correctional Manager, and other Case Management workers to review and approve all decisions related to visits.

Warden (Institutional Head) - The Warden is the individual ultimately in charge of running the prison. The warden makes day to day decisions on operations within the prison, but is bound by the rules and regulations governing the Correctional Service of Canada.

Warrant Expiration Date (WED) - The last day a person can be held in custody or under supervision. This is the end of a person's sentence as set by court.

Women's facilities - There are 5 institutions for Women across Canada (with all levels of security) in Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia and a Healing Lodge (medium and minimum security) in Saskatchewan.

Women Offender Correctional Programs (WOCP) - Correctional programming for women.



If you answered “yes”, you may be on a difficult journey that feels like an emotional roller-coaster.

It can be hard to find answers and support.

Canadian Families and Corrections Network

is a nationally incorporated Canadian charity that offers support and information to families affected by criminal behavior.

Address: PO Box 35040 Kingston ON K7L 5S5

Toll-free, confidential support line:
1-888-371-2326

Email: info@cfcn-rcafd.org

Web site: www.cfcn-rcafd.org

