



# **Strategic Plan (2021-2026)**

**Approved November, 2021**

## 1. Executive Summary

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) was founded in 1968 by Bob Horton and Fay Honey Knopp, in cooperation with five national peace groups. Its primary mission was to provide visits and support to Vietnam War resisters in federal and military prisons. In 1972, Bob and Honey received permission from the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) for PVS to visit *all* federal prisoners. The Department of Defense (DOD) granted similar permission in 1975, allowing the organization to visit all military prisoners.

Today, its small staff – a part-time Director and Visitor Coordinator, and a full-time Administrative Coordinator – support a national network of approximately 400 volunteer visitors. For many years, meeting our budget and providing adequate support and training have been challenging. During the recent pandemic, we pivoted to emphasize letter writing since we could not visit in person.

The Board has participated in a variety of strategic planning activities since 2010. In June of 2021, we elected to move forward with a formal strategic plan that builds on these experiences and related documents (see Section 9). We identified four goals to guide our work over the next five years:

- **Goal 1:** Finances are sustainable and growing to meet our vision.
- **Goal 2.** The PVS Board and visitors are more diverse.
- **Goal 3.** Visitors and staff are of sufficient number, prepared, organized, motivated, and supported to carry out the mission of PVS with excellence.
- **Goal 4.** The impact of PVS and awareness of its work are enhanced through strong internal and external communications.

It is our hope that this plan will be a living one that we can all support, monitor, report on, and revise as we learn more about what is and is not working to help us fulfill our mission.

## 2. Process Overview

The current strategic planning process was initiated in January of 2021. A strategic planning task force was formed to guide the effort that consisted of Molly Clifford, Executive Director; Rachel Osborn, Board Chair; Dan Struble, Board Member and current visitor; Susannah Rose, Board Member and facilitator.

The effort began with a thorough review of relevant strategic planning efforts and related documentation (see section 9) and the selection of a strategic plan by Mary's Place Refugee Outreach as a model. A template for the plan was developed in the model format and populated with draft input from previous efforts. The ad hoc committee reviewed the plan

and revised goals and strategies together.

Board members and staff were invited to share their input on the four proposed goals and the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis prior to the April, 2021 Board meeting, and this input was integrated in the draft presented at that meeting. The Board as a whole fleshed out the SWOT section, then three small groups met in breakout sessions to work on assigned goals. (One group had two goals.) Small groups reported out briefly and met prior to the next Board meeting to refine their work and provide input to other groups on their drafts. Input from small groups was integrated in a new draft for presentation and review at the July, 2021 meeting. Members were asked to review the draft carefully prior to the meeting. At the meeting, sections were reviewed in plenary session to integrate final changes and address any concerns or comments.

This strategic plan was approved by the Board of Visitors on November 13, 2021 with the understanding that it will be reviewed annually and revised as needed (see Section 8).

### **3. Mission**

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) is a volunteer visitation program to federal and military prisoners throughout the United States.

Our *mission* is to provide prisoners with regular, face-to-face contact from the world outside of prison to encourage personal growth, help them cope with prison life, and help them prepare for a successful reentry into society.

Our *vision* is to provide qualified visitors to fulfill all requests for visits by prisoners at every federal and military prison.

Our *priority* is to visit those prisoners who:

- do not ordinarily receive visits from family and friends,
- want or need visits,
- are in solitary confinement,
- are on death row,
- or are serving long sentences.

Our *vision* is to recruit and train qualified visitors to satisfy all requests for visits by prisoners in every federal and military prison.

### **4. Our Guiding Principles**

1. Every person deserves respect as a human being with inherent worth.

2. PVS visitors support prisoners through their caring presence and active listening.
3. PVS visitors allow prisoners to set the agenda for their conversation.
4. Visitors are respectful to both prisoners and prison staff.
5. Visitors maintain the confidentiality of their visits with respect to staff and other prisoners.
6. Visitors offer friendship within the boundaries defined by their formal role as volunteers.
7. PVS regards its permission to visit as a privilege that must be preserved by all involved.
8. The safety and security of all involved in visiting is a preeminent consideration.
9. Training as a PVS visitor is a commitment to a continuous process.

## **5. Our Values**

We value and practice the following (presented here in alphabetical order):

Acceptance  
Authenticity  
Collaboration  
Compassion  
Inclusion  
Integrity  
Patience, and  
Respectful Communication.

## **6. Analysis**

### **a. Strengths**

Strengths are positive assets within your organization. Examples might include a talented group of volunteers or ownership of valuable intellectual property, such as a book or software.

- A successful, well-established organization with a mission its constituents believe in
- Compelling case for support, enhanced through prisoner, visitor, and warden testimonials and results of primary research illustrating the impact of visiting prisoners.
- Long-term staff, volunteers, and donors.
- Unique national mission (non-sectarian approach).
- Proven inspirational approach to training and bonding visitors.
- Longstanding cooperative relationship with the Bureau of Prisons and Department of Defense.
- Plentiful stories illustrating our impact and people who can tell them.

## **b. Weaknesses**

Weaknesses are negative aspects within your organization. Examples might include a shortage of volunteers or outdated technology.

- PVS is not well-known by the broader public, even by others within the prison industry and criminal justice nonprofit center.
- The brochures make the organization look tired. New layout and possible edits are needed.
- As a group, visitors and donors are older than average; with a view to sustainability, we lack diversity across desirable age groups.
- PVS cannot collect data about its own direct impact on prisoners' lives because of BOP regulations. Therefore, it relies on other research to show its impact.
- PVS has a small staff and Board.
- PVS's geographic service area footprint is vast.
- Fiscal policies and procedures need improvement and finance committee oversight.
- Financing, volunteer, and staffing resources are inadequate to fully accomplish our mission.
- The Board lacks high-profile membership.

## **c. Opportunities**

Opportunities are positive elements outside your organization. Examples might include a high demand for your services or availability of a grant in your topic area.

- People are more aware of mass incarceration and the humanity of prisoners than was once the case.
- Mainstream media are more interested in prisons and related issues.
- Technology offers new ways to address the challenges of the geographic footprint.

## **d. Threats**

Threats are negative elements outside your organization. Examples might include a competing nonprofit or the demise of a major funder.

- Many PVS donors are aging. In the absence of bequests to PVS, PVS's donor base may shrink. (various)
- PVS does not have sufficient resources in reserve to weather a "drought" in giving, for whatever reason. (various)
- Greater funding goes to prison advocacy/reform organizations.
- The ability to accomplish our mission successfully is dependent on the goodwill of

BOP and DOD.

## **7. Goals, Strategies, and Tactics**

The plan consists of four *goals*, several *strategies* to accomplish each of those goals, and *tactics* that will be employed to implement each strategy. For brevity of this summary document, tactics have not been included, nor has priority level.

### **Goal 1: Finances are sustainable and growing to meet our vision.**

1. Define the fundraising targets necessary to comfortably maintain our current operation, and the goals necessary to meet future needs as defined by this strategic plan (additional staff, etc.).
2. Increase the number of individual donors, sponsors, organizations, and grants that offer reliable sources of funding.
3. Maintain and enhance stories, correspondence, and boilerplate to facilitate the preparation of grant applications and make the case for donor support.
4. Build PVS endowment, a portion of which can supplement the annual PVS budget.
5. Expand fundraising capacity to meet organizational goals.
6. Enhance annual fund campaign.
7. Develop a major gift fundraising plan.

### **Goal 2: The PVS Board and visitors are more diverse.**

1. Increase the number and capabilities/skill set of Board members and diversify the Board to more closely mirror national demographics.
2. Increase diversity among PVS visitors to more closely mirror the demographics of the prison population and the specific demographics of the prison where they are visiting.
3. Increase diversity by establishing a welcoming Board policy on race, ethnicity, religion,

and national origin so that diverse visitors and Board members will feel at home in the organization.

**Goal 3: Visitors and staff are of sufficient number, prepared, organized, motivated, and supported to carry out the mission of PVS with excellence.**

1. Develop and maintain effective training methods and content, aimed at both hearts and minds, to strengthen our bonds and enhance visiting skills.
2. Expand the use of technology to reach and engage visitors nationwide.
3. Assess staffing of the organization necessary to carry out the mission.
4. Increase the number of visitors in underserved areas.
5. Reinforce the role of Local Coordinator as visitor team leader at each prison location.
6. Develop resources and support for visitors to help them promote PVS.
7. Support and retain qualified visitors.
8. Strengthen relationships with prison administrators to facilitate visiting.

**Goal 4. The impact of PVS and awareness of its work are enhanced through strong internal and external communications.**

1. Establish PVS communications committee. Over time, increase its participation, size, and impact.
2. Enhance communication between visitors and the Board.
3. Invest in building public awareness of PVS.

**9. Plan for Tracking Progress and Updating Strategy**

Many strategic plans become paper on a shelf instead of living documents. PVS is determined to make this one a helpful guide that remains current. We will do this in the following ways:

1. The Board will evaluate progress with the plan and make necessary revisions on an annual

basis.

2. Committees and staff will regularly report on their progress in fulfilling assigned tasks.

## **10. References**

- a) Board-identified priorities (collated from emails) – November, 2020
- b) Strategic priorities for PVS During Pandemic – May, 2020
- c) Board Workshop Report and Notes, Compiled by Louise Tritton – March, 2019
- d) Board listening session (input from volunteers at conference) – October, 2019
- e) Planning for the Future of PVS – January, 2016
- f) Strategic Development Plan, Schultz & Williams – October, 2014
- g) Notes from planning retreat – October, 2010