PVS PRISONER VISITATION & SUPPORT

Visitor Resource and Orientation Manual

PVS PRISONER VISITATION & SUPPORT

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Thank you for joining PVS.
You are needed.

This manual will help you make a difference.

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) is a volunteer visitation program for 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 help them cope with prison life, encourage personal growth, and prepare for successful reentry into society.

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 provide qualified visitors to fulfill all requests for visits by prisoners in every federal and military prison.

PVS PRISONER VISITATION & SUPPORT

I. Welcome to PVS!

You are about to enter into a world where your compassionate presence will make a difference in the lives of the prisoners you visit and in your own. For the prisoners you visit, you may be their only reliable personal contact with the world beyond the prison walls. Going inside a prison may cause you some anxiety at first, but experienced visitors can tell you the procedures will soon become routine.

Even though your experience is sure to include challenges, know that the hours you spend are appreciated not only by the prisoners but also everyone in PVS who shares your commitment. The prison administration also values your service.

This PVS Visitor Resource and Orientation Manual is your passport and guide to becoming a PVS visitor. It will help you get started on your journey and help you develop your skills as a visitor. It will also serve as a reference for periodic review and when questions arise. Your friends at PVS wish you long and satisfying service as a PVS visitor.

Why We Visit

Because visiting makes a difference.

Since 1968, PVS has been providing a service that no other organization offers. We visit prisoners who request visits without any agenda or program other than to provide the benefit of personal human interaction. We visit prisoners even if they are in restricted housing (formerly called solitary confinement) or on death row. We visit the prisoners who need us most, most of whom have no other visitors.

Many prisoners write the PVS national office to tell us what the visits mean to them. Listen to some of their voices:

- *I am concluding a ten-year sentence for marijuana charges. I do not have any friends or family that are able to visit with me. My visitor has been instrumental in helping me to build the foundation to not only overcome, but to break through a lengthy period of adversity. I cannot tell you how much these visits mean to me or how much they have helped me to*

cope with my circumstances. It is nice to be treated as a human being and not just inmate # XXX. Thank you and keep up the good work. God bless you all!

- *Words cannot express how much PVS means to me. My visitor makes me believe people still care and treats me like a human being instead of an inmate. He is not judgmental and helps me brainstorm towards positive ways to be successful when I am released.*
- *Being in here, you forget about all the good people who exist in the world. I don't know where you guys find the passion for your work, but it's a beautiful thing! Looking forward to the visit. Thanks.*
- *My visitor was not only a great person and motivator, but a wonderful role model who has inspired me to push harder to achieve my goals in life.*
- *I feel like I'm not in prison. I feel normal when I talk to my PVS visitor. I feel I could become part of the community again.*

Former prisoner Jim Marren walked into the PVS national office soon after his release and asked how he could help. He's been an invaluable member of our team ever since. Here is what Jim has to say about his experience with PVS:

Ramona Brant and Jim Marren, Visited by PVS.

In August 2020 I celebrated 15 years of freedom since being released from federal prison. Reflecting on my 20 years behind bars, I know in my heart that I would not have been able to serve my time and become a productive member of society without the visits every month from Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS).

My first visit in 1990 was from a PVS visitor named Ev. Ev was a retired Anglican priest with a Doctorate in Divinity from Harvard. Ev truly changed my life. He asked me what I have come to see as the most important question anyone has ever asked me. He asked: "Jim, have you ever considered serving your sentence with a monastic mind set?" Ev became my friend and spiritual advisor as we embarked on a spiritual journey together.

A few years later, I was transferred to a prison in Florence, Colorado where I met Joe. Joe was a PVS visitor who had been a special forces mechanic in Vietnam and had become a lawyer after leaving the military. Joe was also on the PVS Board of Directors. He visited with me consistently for 39 months and we developed a deep friendship.

I was then transferred to a prison in Leavenworth, Kansas. Jean, a professional author, became my PVS visitor. Jean encouraged me as I participated in the Reentry Life Connections Program at that prison.

Since my release from prison, PVS has become my family. I have served on the Board of Directors and have helped to recruit new visitors by sharing my story. I have also become a visitor myself, each month going into the prison in Philadelphia to give support to those still in prison and to share my experiences with them.

Visiting also makes a difference in us.

Despite the inevitable challenges that arise, visitors experience life-changing relationships themselves, opening windows in their lives and hearts. The simple act of talking together is a communion that we share. We give each other the gift of our own humanity.

Longtime former visitor Jeannie Graves remembers:

I was afraid I wouldn't be good enough. After all, what did I have to offer these people? I learned over time that what I had to offer was presence. I would be there for them every month and I found that they valued that. Later I came to realize that what they offered me were their own heart-breaking stories and these helped soften my heart.

Letitia Booth reflects:

I am close to tears when I leave the prison. It is humbling that a few hours of my time mean so much to the prisoners. I feel lucky to be leaving, and I'm happy that I went. I feel like I am doing my part for humanity, that I am trying to make a difference, and that I connected with my fellow man.

Another visitor tells us:

I get as much out of visiting prisoners as the prisoners do, if not more. Visiting has enriched my life enormously — it keeps me grounded, connected, and in the present. It helps me to identify with the humanity in others and provides relief from the bondage of self. To borrow from Winston Churchill, "We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give." That has been my experience with PVS.

Many experienced visitors have contributed to an invaluable resource called ***"Visitors' Wisdoms,"*** which you can find in the Visitors section of the PVS website. Entry requires a password, which your local coordinator will share.

Visitors and prison staff on a prison visit to FCC Lompoc during the 2016 conference in Santa Barbara, CA.

Visiting makes a difference for communities and families.

Most prisoners return to their communities. Unfortunately, too many do not succeed in making the adjustment and return to prison, at great cost to all of us. A 2018 study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that 5 out of 6 state prisoners released from 30 states were arrested at least once in the 9 years that followed.[1] Although we cannot track what happens to each prisoner we visit on release, we do hear anecdotally that many of those who have received our visits feel more ready to resume life "outside."

Some studies have tried to gauge the impact of visits in general, and many of them have concluded that visiting does in fact reduce recidivism. Here are some encouraging findings:

- Visitation "reduces and delays recidivism."[2]
- Prisoners in Minnesota who received regular visits from community volunteers were 13% less likely to commit new felonies.[3]
- Prison visits give inmates access to social ties that can offset social isolation and help inmates cope with the transition back into society upon release.[4]
- A 2016 meta-analysis of studies on the impact of visits concluded that in-person visitation in prison reduced the likelihood of recidivism by 25%.[5]
- Prisoners value having a safe place to talk. Visits help them cope with life in prison and build relationships critical for successful re-entry.[6]

The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) has a policy that prohibits visitors from reaching out to the prisoners they have visited after they have been released. PVS has been blessed, however, to have had continuing relationships with a few prisoners who have contributed their life experiences to inspire and support the PVS mission and educate PVS about transition issues. The late Victor Buono, who appears in a 1994 PVS video and attended several PVS conferences, often reminded visitors that we were the "keyhole" through which he saw the world beyond the prison. Jim Marren, also a former prisoner who received PVS visits for many years, has been a stalwart resource at our training conferences over the last decade and served on the PVS Board.

PVS visitors had a rare chance to celebrate the freedom and accomplishments of former prisoner Ramona Brant, whom we had visited for 17 of the 22 years she was in prison. She had been sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole because she had been present at drug sales – though never convicted of selling drugs herself. In 2016, she was released after having been granted clemency by former President Barack Obama. She spoke at the 2017 PVS visitor's conference about how much her PVS visitors meant to her and shared her vision that every formerly incarcerated citizen would have a safe home, livable wage employment, and a welcoming community. She was passionate that unjust sentencing and reentry challenges must come to light.

1. Alper, MI, Durose, M.R. (2018). 2018 Update on Prisoner Recidivism: A 9-Year Follow-up Period (2005-2014). U.S. Department of Justice Special Report.
2. Bales, W. D., Mears, D. P. (2008). Inmate social ties and the transition to society: Does visitation reduce recidivism? Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency 45, 287-321.
3. Duwe, G., Clark, V. (2013). Blessed be the social tie that binds: The effects of prisoner visitation on offender recidivism. Criminal Justice Policy Review 24, 271-296.
4. Cochran, J. C., Mears, D. P. (2013). Social isolation and inmate behavior: A conceptual framework for theorizing prison visitation and guiding and assessing research. Journal of Criminal Justice 41, 252-261.
5. Mitchell, M.M., Spooner, K., Jia, D., & Zhang, Y. (2016). The effect of prison visitation on reentry success: A meta-analysis. Journal of Criminal Justice 47, 74–83
6. Duncan, H. E., Balbar, S. (2008). Evaluation of a visitation program at a Canadian penitentiary. The Prison Journal 88, 300-327.

Ramona Brant (center) with two of her visitors, Vanessa Emem and Linda McWhorter.

Few knew of Ramona's own challenges in finding housing after her release. She traveled about the country, often speaking as the keynote at conferences, but returned to Charlotte to sleep in a homeless shelter because she was denied housing in her community. Ramona helped rewrite the laws in Charlotte to protect returning citizens from being discriminated against when trying to find housing, and after a very long fight, she eventually was able to get housing herself. She passed away suddenly in February 2018. She was working on re-entry services in Charlotte, NC at the time of her death. We still feel illumined by her shining presence with us.

About PVS

Our mission

PVS is a volunteer visitation program for 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 help them cope with prison life, encourage personal growth, and prepare for successful reentry into society.

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 provide qualified visitors to fulfill all requests for visits by prisoners in every federal and military prison.

Our core values

We value and practice the following:

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

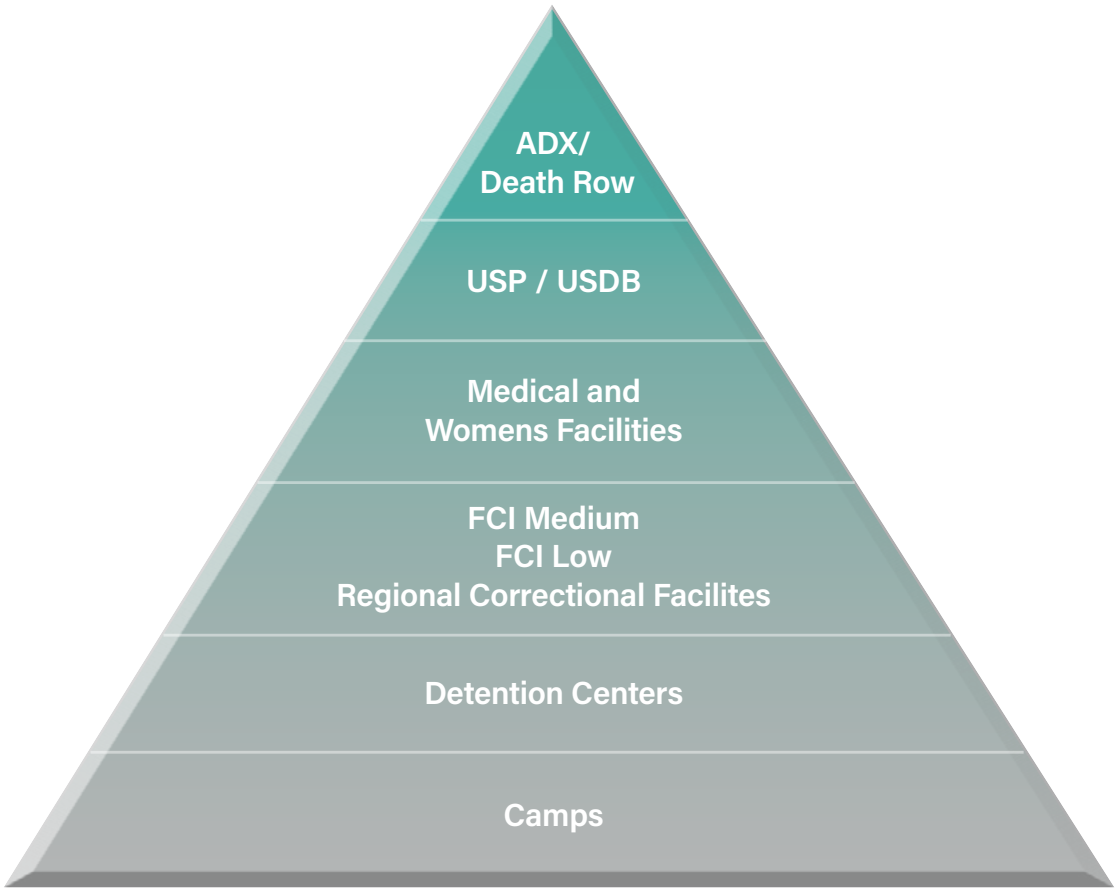
Our guiding principles

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.

Program approach

Above all, PVS seeks to maintain a program of high value and integrity. We accept as many carefully-chosen and well-trained visitors as we can support and who can be accommodated by the physical limitations of prison visiting facilities. We do our best to respond positively to as many requests for visits from prisoners as possible.

Our priority for recruiting and placing visitors emphasizes high security prison units first, then works down through lower priority categories as follows:



Categorical priority for recruiting and assigning PVS visitors, in descending order.

Looking back, looking ahead...

This introduction has put your visiting in context. You've heard the voices of other visitors and prisoners, and you have a better sense of how your service can make a difference in people's lives. You've also had a chance to review PVS's mission, guiding principles, and vision, so you know us better. The next chapter will explain how PVS will orient and support you as you become a seasoned visitor.

II. Becoming a Visitor

You are joining an organization with more than 50 years of visiting experience. This chapter will explain how we select, train, and support visitors like you – the heart of the organization, without whom there would be no PVS.

How PVS Selects and Appoints Visitors

Visitors are selected based on our assessment of their ability to be effective with and nonjudgmental of prisoners. Patience, carefulness, and self-control are essential qualities. Visitors must also demonstrate an understanding of PVS's philosophy and goals. For example, persons who seek to impose their religious, political, or philosophical beliefs on others are not suitable PVS visitors. Our selection process is designed to ensure that the candidate understands our mission and is willing to work within the framework of BOP and DOD rules and procedures to fulfill that mission.

Visitors come from a wide variety of backgrounds and experiences. Friends and associates of current PVS visitors are the most frequent source for finding new volunteers. Others come to PVS through contact with groups that sponsor PVS, religious congregations that see PVS as a way of fulfilling their call to service, or civic clubs. Some individuals find PVS through their own quest (often on the internet) for a way to serve the prison population.

Each prospective visitor who contacts PVS completes an application that provides PVS with personal background information (hence the application is called a "PBI"). The application asks about employment and education history, family, and a statement of interests and what motivates the candidate to apply. In addition, it asks for some personal references. This information provides the basis for a progressive series of conversations and interviews with the individual as both the candidate and the designated PVS interviewer seek to discern the candidate's interest and suitability.

During the interview process, the PVS interviewer will ask if there is anything of potential concern in the candidate's background that might be revealed in the background check required by the prison. If this is the case, this does not automatically disqualify the individual from becoming a visitor. However, PVS needs to know of any such issue in order to be fully informed and properly evaluate the record. An example of an issue might be a conviction for drug use or possession. Knowing how the candidate handled the issue can be a valuable example and benefit to prisoners. If PVS decides to nominate a visitor, it will stand behind the candidate and advocate for the appointment. The warden at the institution, however, makes the final decision about any appointment.

Once the interview process is complete and PVS finds the candidate ready to proceed with training, the visitor receives a copy of the PVS Code of Conduct to sign and the PVS national office prepares an appointment letter to the prison where the volunteer will visit. This letter launches two parallel processes. One process includes screening and training by the prison and the other involves the intensive PVS orientation that prepares the volunteer to visit. Both of these processes need to be successfully completed before the volunteer can visit. The PVS Board officially approves all new visitors.

The BOP Screening and Training Process

When the prison receives the appointment letter, it starts its own screening process, which requires the visitor to complete an NCIC (National Crime Information Center) Criminal History Check form authorizing a background check, which is form BP A0660.

Prison training

As specified in the BOP Volunteer Policy[7], all institutions require volunteers to attend an initial training before they can begin visiting. They also require volunteers to attend a refresher training every year. Your ability to serve as a volunteer visitor depends on keeping your training current, because the prison may suspend volunteers who do not fulfill the requirement. Pay attention to the training schedule issued by the prison. Note that as a volunteer, you will be signing on to follow the same code of conduct as prison staff.

The prison training will cover important matters that the prison administration wants all volunteers to know, as well as rules and policies they expect everyone to respect. Various staff members may be brought in to present the material on topics such as:

- suicide prevention,
- how to report sexual abuse of prisoners as required by the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA),
- the Employee Code of Conduct for interactions with prisoners, and
- contraband (forbidden items).

7. Federal Bureau of Prisons Program Statement 5300.22 Volunteer Services. A copy can be found online at *https://www.bop.gov/policy/progstat/5300_022.pdf*

Bureau of Prisons policies and rules are the umbrella under which the PVS visitation program operates. PVS's training supports and adheres to this framework. Section IV of this manual will address how these policies and rules are applied in the context of PVS visiting. For now, it is enough to say that your PVS mentor will further explain these issues and how the PVS process responds to the requirements set by BOP.

Because the content of the BOP training is designed for all volunteers (most of whom are not visitors but are religious program volunteers), some procedures will not be relevant to your role. Just listen attentively and address any questions you may have with your local PVS coordinator or PVS staff after you take the training.

One question usually comes up during this training. BOP policy statements forbid prisoners and volunteers to correspond. However, the PVS practice of sending an advance notice of visit is an approved exception to this rule. You do not need to raise your hand and ask about sending this notice.

At the training session, BOP will require visitors to complete personal data and emergency contact information forms and to be fingerprinted and photographed so that a badge can be issued. The badging process usually takes a month or two to complete.

PVS Visitor Orientation and Training

After the visitor's appointment, PVS's own orientation and training process begins. While the interview process has already provided a good introduction to the requirements of being a visitor, there is much more detail to learn. At this stage, new visitors will be given access to this visitor's manual to study and access to an online review tool. Also, a mentor is assigned to help orient the visitor as they prepare to begin visiting. Preparatory training by PVS will usually take place before the prison training session discussed above. This section presents an overview of the training sequence and resources employed by PVS.

This manual

The PVS Visitor Resource and Orientation Manual is this document that you are now reading. The latest edition will always be the one available on the PVS website (*www.prisonervisitation.org*) under the tab named Visitor Resources. It can be downloaded and printed if desired. The main function of the manual is to orient the new visitor and help the visitor master visiting rules, learn techniques for solving problems, and become and remain an effective PVS visitor. Each new visitor must study the manual and use the online review tool (discussed below) to ensure that he or she understands the basic rules and procedures before proceeding with orientation.

The answer to many a question is: **Read the Manual.**

Support from seasoned visitors

A PVS visitor is not a lone ranger sent out on a solo mission to visit in prison. You are not alone! PVS promises to accompany you on this journey. You will be guided into what you need to learn and know by another experienced visitor who will be assigned to you. This person may be

the local coordinator for your prison or another seasoned member of the PVS team to which you are assigned. If you are the new pioneer visitor at a prison, PVS staff will arrange for this support.

Before you begin visiting, your mentor will sit down with you and go through the manual in detail, filling in the generalities with specific examples. Each PVS visitor embodies a wealth of knowledge and concrete experience which they are happy to share with you. As the visiting process unfolds, the assigned local coordinator or seasoned visitor will be your personal resource for answering any questions you may have.

It will not take long to become familiar with the routine of visiting. But walking through the process with someone who is experienced is helpful to most visitors, who are then usually able to navigate the entry process on their own after the first guided visit. At some institutions, PVS visitors visit in groups, while in others it is the practice to go in separately on different days. Whatever the style at your particular prison, you will not be left to visit on your own until you are comfortable doing so.

On-line training tools

PVS is developing computer-based on-line training tools to help teach and reinforce the basics of visiting. One of the tools tests how well you have learned the principles contained in this manual. You will need to answer all the questions in the quiz successfully before you make your first visit.

The quiz questions are designed to pose real choices that a visitor might have to make and to stress critical information each visitor should know. If you choose the wrong answer, then return to the manual to study the relevant section and revise your answer. If the quiz process raises questions for you, call your mentor or another PVS contact to seek clarification. Bear in mind that the aim of the tool is to help you master the principles so that your response in an actual situation will flow naturally as second nature from what you have learned.

Regional and other training opportunities

Periodically, PVS will organize opportunities for visitors in a certain region to meet and learn together. These may be in-person meetings or, since some of our visitors live far apart, they may be offered via the internet. We may gather specific groups of visitors, such as local coordinators or those who serve on PVS committees, through conference calls or internet meetings. PVS seeks to nourish the connections that bind us as an organization, to support and learn from each other, to provide guidance and refresher training, and to help support two-way communication with visitors. If you have an idea for a training event or a speaker, don't hesitate to share it with the PVS national office, the local coordinator, or a member of the training team. We're listening!

PVS conferences

Visitor training conferences are a favorite method for delivering training and introducing visitors to the inner core of the PVS visiting experience. PVS expects new visitors to attend a training conference within two years of their appointment and at least every five years thereafter. Many visitors have found the conference to be such a rich experience that they attend as often as possible.

Training conferences are held in varying locations around the country to enable as many visitors as possible to attend. National conferences usually take place near a large federal prison and include a visit to the prison. Most visitors find this experience instructive, since it provides them a

New visitor orientation at the 2019 PVS conference.

different view of visiting from the prison where they volunteer. For some visitors, the prison tour offers the first glimpse of prison life beyond the visiting room.

These national training conferences typically last from Thursday night to Sunday noon. In addition to the opportunity to visit a federal prison, the agenda typically offers practical discussions, role plays, and other presentations about visiting issues. One of the most valued parts of the conference is the opportunity to share stories and experiences with other visitors. A visitor writes:

> *Training [at the conference] typically involves a group visit to a nearby prison, reviewing the dos and don'ts, discussing and sharing experiences and observations, and drilling on the intricacies of being a caring PVS visitor while adhering to both BOP and PVS rules.*
>
> *It is a productive time of role-playing, intensive rules review, helping one another solve our current visiting challenges, and feedback from those with years of PVS experience. And all of it is enhanced with delightful bonding among some of the nicest people from across the nation.*

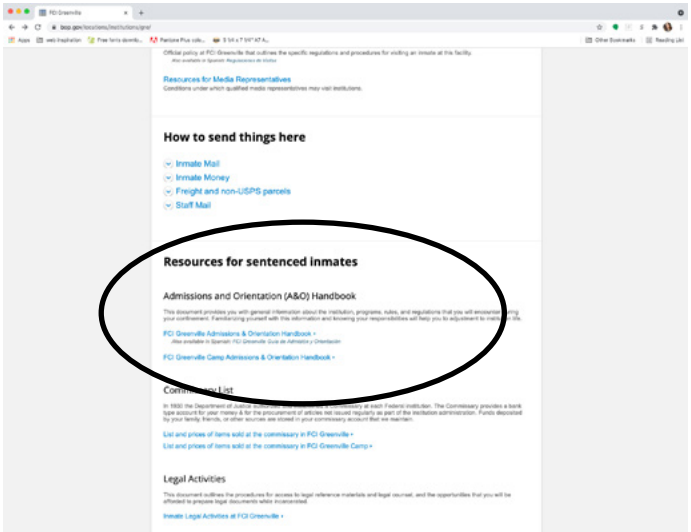
PVS also plans to offer "mini-conferences" or regional conferences in targeted areas where there are significant concentrations of visitors. These sessions, typically a day in length, are designed to reach clusters of new visitors who have joined PVS and to provide a broader perspective on the PVS visiting program. Local coordinators will also be able to use PVS's Zoom account to facilitate local online gatherings.

The reputation and continuation of PVS depend on the delivery of quality training. Becoming a member of PVS means committing to maintaining consistent quality in our service. Your growing experience and natural talents may lead you to volunteer to help the PVS Training Committee as it plans and presents training events and programs

The prison handbook

PVS recommends that you review the Admissions and Orientations Handbook for the prison where you are visiting. The handbook will give you a helpful picture of the rules and procedures and resources that govern the lives of the prisoners you visit. It is easy to find this helpful resource on the internet:

- Go to this address on your computer: *https://www.bop.gov/locations/list.jsp*
- Select "prisons" in the third column as the facility type.
- Click on the prison you are visiting.
- This will bring up a website where you will find "Resources for Sentenced Inmates." Here you will find the Admissions and Orientations Handbook for the prison.



The Admissions and Orientation Handbook is given to prisoners. It will help you get a sense of prison life.

Looking back, looking ahead...

You now know more about the training and support you can expect from PVS as you become familiar with PVS, learn from other visitors, and get to know the prisoners for whom you will serve as a "keyhole" into community life beyond the prison environment. Now for the nitty-gritty. The next chapter will discuss what we're all about: visiting!

III. The Visiting Process: *How it Works*

Let's get down to why we're here: to visit. This chapter explains how you visit and should answer most of your logistical questions. Realize that some details may be different at the prison you visit, and your local coordinator will be able to brief you on those differences. However, the information that follows is generally applicable across the federal prison system.

Your PVS Local Coordinator

At prison facilities where there are a number of PVS visitors, one person is designated as the Local PVS Coordinator (LC) for the group. This visitor is the point of contact for scheduling visits and other matters dealing with the prison staff. (In situations where there is a large cadre of visitors, some tasks may be assigned to assistants.) The LC has been selected for their experience and leadership abilities. This person is often the one who handled your initial training and orientation as a new visitor and may have accompanied you on your first visits and talked with you afterwards to help you process and learn from your experience. You should have every confidence in discussing any concerns or visiting issues with the LC, given their seasoned experience and wisdom.

If you visit alone – or if you are the Local Coordinator

If you are not fortunate enough to visit with others and do not have a local coordinator to turn to – or if you are the local coordinator – you may want to reach out to a seasoned visitor you met at a PVS conference or training event, or, if no one comes to mind, call the national office. Staff will either match you with someone who can discuss your concern or provide listening ears themselves.

Your Commitment

Visit regularly, once a month

The PVS practice is to ask visitors to see three to five visitors on each monthly trip to the prison. These prisoners have all requested PVS visits. PVS does not recommend taking on more prisoners, since an overload may cause visitors to burn out. PVS also does not want visitors to become overly involved with prisoners by visiting more often or by visiting only one prisoner.

Experience teaches that setting aside a regular day of the month for visiting works best for consistent scheduling. It is easy to remember and block out a regular time. For example, "The (first, second, or whatever) Saturday is my PVS visiting day every month." This makes the commitment easy to remember so that it becomes a regular and valued habit of one's life. Having a regular time is also helpful to prisoners, especially if they work on Saturday or if a family visit is expected.

Take time to build relationships

PVS visitors commit to visiting for a minimum of two years when they sign up. Prisoners come to rely on having a regular visit every month; for many of them, this is the only visit that they get. It helps them count down their time and gives them something to look forward to each month.

Relationships of trust take time to build. The conversation evolves and deepens over the months and years of visiting regularly. Both the prisoner and the visitor can experience development and progress as time passes and stories are shared. This is part of the magic of visiting.

It may be tempting to use a search engine to find out what crime a prisoner committed. In our experience, however, doing so interferes with the development of a positive relationship and may block it altogether. As you begin the relationship, try to offer a clean page where the person may reveal who they are, what they are struggling with, and who they are becoming. It is the PVS custom not to ask why a person is in prison. The person may reveal something about the crime voluntarily at some point. Accept what you hear without judging.

What if other plans interfere?

Having a set day to visit usually helps minimize schedule conflicts. But life happens: there is a wedding in the family, or a graduation, or a plan to take a major trip. Usually such plans are known far enough in advance for you to reschedule your visit date. But it may be necessary to skip a visit if rescheduling would make visits fall too close together. Prisoners will understand if told of the change in advance.

Bad weather, illness, or car problems can arise and present unforeseen obstacles. If possible, call the front lobby and advise that you will not be able to make your PVS visit that day. Do not expect that this information will get to your prisoners. If you miss a visit unexpectedly, send the prisoners you visit an extra postcard apologizing for the missed visit. Most prisoners prepare for your visit carefully and eagerly await your arrival. While they may be aware of a lockdown or bad weather conditions, they will not learn of any other reason why they were not called to the visiting room. They may be disappointed or concerned about your wellbeing. The courtesy of an extra postcard helps maintain a trusting relationship.

It is a recommended practice to check the prison facility web page before you go to make sure visiting has not been cancelled. You will find this page on the Bureau of Prisons website at this address: *https://www.bop.gov/locations/list.jsp*. This has now become the standard way for the prison to post unexpected changes in status. It is not uncommon for a prison to go on lockdown, and it can be very frustrating for visitors who have driven a long way. Always check! Realize, however, that you might still arrive at the prison and find that visiting is closed due to a sudden lockdown situation. It is also a good practice to check the prisoner locator on the BOP site to see if any of the prisoners you are visiting have been transferred.

Visiting: From Scheduling to Reporting

Before you visit

Key points of contact for scheduling. Under current BOP policy, the Reentry Affairs Coordinator (RAC) is designated as the program manager for the PVS visitation program. The RAC oversees the institution's clearance, approval and training requirements for volunteers and also provides the required entry memos. The task of preparing memos at your institution, however, may be delegated to another point of contact, such as the warden's secretary, executive assistant, or possibly a chaplain.

The best practice is for the PVS local coordinator to serve as the point of contact between the team of PVS visitors and the RAC to address any issues or problems that arise with the visitation process. Some local coordinators also schedule all monthly PVS visits for the group. At other institutions, each individual PVS visitor schedules his or her monthly visit directly with the RAC. Email has become the standard mode for communicating with prison officials for arranging visits.

Notify the prison. To enter the prison, PVS visitors need a memo signed by the Warden or designee. The memo is prepared by the RAC or the person acting on the RAC's behalf. The local coordinator for PVS (or whoever is taking on this role) must request this memo from the RAC (or whoever is designated to act for the RAC) at least two weeks in advance so it can be routed for signature or distribution. Work with your local coordinator to get the names of the prisoners you are assigned to visit and to arrange any changes in schedule. Only one memo is issued for the time period, and last-minute changes cannot be accommodated.

Address medical issues. If you need to take prescribed or other essential medication during your visit, discuss this with your local coordinator. The Notification to Visitors form (BPA0224) that you will fill out at the front desk has a space for declaring any medications you need to take in. However, the prison may have rules about how medicine needs to be controlled and accessed in the visiting room. Your local coordinator can help discuss this with the contact person at the prison to determine the proper protocol to follow. If the need for medication is ongoing, the agreement with the prison authorities might be included in the official memo. It is advisable to have this notification worked out in advance rather than catch staff unaware.

If you use a metal prosthetic, it will activate the metal detector you must pass through to visit. You will likely need to have written verification that you have this device and present it to the correctional officer as you enter the prison. Before you visit, discuss with your local coordinator or another seasoned volunteer what procedures or documentation are required at the prison.

A note on the practice of sending PVS "postcards" for advance notification

> Since the early days of PVS, visitors have sent postcards notifying their prisoners of their upcoming visit. However, since 2017, various BOP facilities have been piloting different mail-handling procedures to counter the suspected use of correspondence to introduce drugs into the prison environment.
>
> To date there has been no change in the general BOP policy (5265.14) regarding correspondence. However, local practices for what is allowable mail or how it is handled and distributed to prisoners now vary widely. There is now no uniform practice ...

> … Some prisons have forbidden postcards and allow only mail on white paper. Some allow postcards but only provide the prisoner a photocopy of the original. Some institutions allow postcards but tear off self-adhesive stamps. Sticker labels are often not allowed.
>
> For the purpose of this manual, any use of the word postcard shall mean *whatever form of advance notification is allowed at a particular facility.* Your local coordinator will advise you of locally accepted practice.
>
> Rules about correspondence are the BOP's domain. PVS visitors follow the rules as directed.

Notify the prisoners you visit. About two weeks before your scheduled visit date, send an advance notice to each of the prisoners on your list to notify them of the date of your planned visit. Write or print legibly. Mail delivery inside institutions is notoriously slow, especially in high security facilities, so do not underestimate the time it takes for the mail to reach the prisoner. Even if your visit is on a regularly recurring day each month, your notice will still be a welcome reminder.

Before the first time you are to meet a prisoner, you will want to send a letter or postcard that introduces yourself and lets him or her know what to expect. You will find some sample text here.

As you get to know the people you visit, you will become aware that certain times are more convenient for individual prisoners to be called out than other times. If it works at your facility, you can sometimes let prisoners know when to expect your callout. But often you will not be able to plan the order of visits and will not be sure exactly when you will see a particular prisoner.

Address language Issues. If you are unable to communicate with a prisoner because you do not have a language in common, notify your local coordinator of the issue. Ideally, another visitor who knows the prisoner's language can be assigned to visit with the prisoner. Contact the PVS national office if you need further guidance.

Federal holidays. Visiting hours on federal holidays are typically during the daytime (8:00 AM-3:00 PM) and replace any regular evening visiting hours. If a holiday should conflict with your normal evening visiting schedule, you will need to reschedule your visit. Note that holidays are often busy visiting days.

Visiting day

For easy entry into the prison, follow these recommendations.

What to leave in the car: Leave your handbag, wallet, house keys, cell phone, chewing gum, cosmetics, lip balm, and reading material. Most prisons do not allow you to wear a watch. Store these items securely in your car.

Most prisons have small lockers to store outer garments.

What to bring inside:

- Bring your driver's license or other government photo ID.
- Bring a pen or pencil and a piece of paper, if your prison allows it, to jot notes to help you remember or follow up on something important shared by a prisoner. (These notes will also be useful when you file the required report on your visit.) Your LC will advise you if pen and paper are not allowed. It is helpful if your pen has a clear barrel showing the innards, and does not have a metal clip.

- Bring your request to visit or, if you have one, a copy of the official memo authorizing your visit from the prison. These will include the prisoners' names and register (prisoner identification) numbers for reference. The back of this memo can serve as your notepaper. Sometimes it may be necessary to give a copy of the memo to an officer for reference.
- Bring your car key. Some institutions may require you to lock the key in a locker and leave your driver's license as security. Otherwise, you can keep it in your zip-lock bag (see below).
- Know the license plate number of the car in which you arrived. You will need to list the license number and description of the car on the entry form you fill out at the lobby desk.
- You may choose to bring a clear zip-lock plastic bag containing some currency ($1s, $5s, maybe a $10, and coins, possibly a roll of quarters, (no pennies) for vending machines. Some institutions may not allow folding money. (About $20 is a reasonable maximum amount to bring. Some vending machines may not handle a $10 dollar bill.) Put your pen and paper, if allowed, in the bag to clear the metal detector.

To date at least one prison has converted to a chip-reading card vending system. This requires visitors to buy and load a vending card in the lobby, as cash will not be allowed in the visiting room. If applicable, your LC will explain how the system works.

What to wear. Wear clothing that is appropriate for a large gathering of men, women, and young children. Business casual is a safe bet. Wearing clothing that is considered provocative, tight or revealing may result in your being denied visitation.

Do not wear athletic clothing (sweatshirts or sweatpants, or items made from similar material), hoodies, shorts, sleeveless shirts or tops, tank tops, sheer clothing, wrap-around or full-buttoned skirts, hats, or shoes that expose toes or heels. Avoid clothing with logos or messages.

The color of clothing is another big issue. No solid color that remotely resembles prison clothing will be allowed. This generally means no khaki, no solid green, no orange, no white or gray, and no camouflage patterns. In general, it is safest to wear blue and black colors. Your local coordinator will coach you on what is acceptable attire.

The temperature in the visiting room can be hotter or colder than you expect. Usually a pullover sweater is allowed (but not one with zippers or a hood). If you wear a sweater inside, you generally must keep it on and not take it off. Rules about allowable outerwear can be very site specific and variable.

Each prison posts its visiting regulations in a document on its website that you can consult for more detail. You can reach the relevant BOP web page easily:

- Go to this address on your computer: *https://www.bop.gov/locations/list.jsp*
- Select "prisons" in the third column as the facility type.
- Click on the prison you are visiting.
- This will bring up a website that will include that prison's visiting regulations.

Also, check the lobby for signs about acceptable visitor dress code. The posted sign may be more specific for your site. If there is any ambiguity, the correctional officer on duty may make a judgment call. If this occurs, there is no arguing. If some article of clothing is prohibited, you can return to your car to put on an alternative covering or wrap, go to the closest store to purchase a replacement, or go home and miss your visit.

Since you will have to pass through a metal detector, avoid wearing items that might set it off. Women should not wear an underwire bra as it will set off the metal detector. (Sports bras are a good alternative.) Jewelry, buckles, and shoes with built-in metal components are also frequent offenders. If you set off the alarm, you will have to remove the suspect item and go back through until you do not set off the alarm. You may also be wanded. As noted earlier, if you have any metal prosthetic parts, you need to advise the officer and should have some documentation to present.

In summary, bring only:

- A government-issued photo ID (e.g., driver's license) and your car key
- A copy of your request or the official memo for entry (if you have one)
- Note paper and pen or pencil, if allowed
- A clear plastic bag with money as allowed

A checklist for your visit ...

- ☑ For any new prisoners who have never had a PVS visitor, send an introductory postcard or letter.
- ☑ The PVS local coordinator, or whoever is fulfilling this role, must provide the monthly visit schedule to the prison's Reentry Affairs Coordinator (or designee) and request an official memo. This needs to be done 2 weeks before the intended visit. Clarify who is responsible for this. Confirm with PVS local coordinator or whoever is handling your request to visit that the request for an official memo has been submitted.
- ☑ Send prisoners postcards to let them know on what date you plan to visit and approximately when you expect them to be called to the visiting room.
- ☑ Ensure that both prisoners and the prison are notified if you must change the date.
- ☑ Address any unique needs, such as needing permission to take medications into the visiting room or documentation verifying the existence of metal prosthetics.
- ☑ Check your prison's guidance for visitors and dress accordingly: *https://www.bop.gov/locations/list.jsp*
- ☑ Bring only: government-issued ID (e.g., driver's license) and your car key, a copy of your letter or memo for entry, and a clear plastic bag with money, note paper, and pen or pencil.
- ☑ Plan to arrive early.
- ☑ Relax!

The entry process

When you enter the prison lobby, you can announce yourself to the Lobby Officer at the desk, "Hi, I'm here with PVS for visiting. There should be a memo for my visit."

The following paragraphs describe the standard set of steps that all visitors must complete to gain admission to the Visiting Room. But the arrangement or order for doing them may vary from one lobby to another. Follow the cues. You will soon get used to the pattern at your prison. The Lobby Officer is in charge of maintaining an orderly process. If the officer seems uncertain of some steps, you can discreetly suggest what is usually done to process a PVS visit.

Fill out a Notification to Visitor Form (BP-A0224). Usually you will need to fill out multiple forms, one for each prisoner on your list. (Depending on the prison, you may only need to fill out one form.) In some lobbies, these forms may be located at a different counter to be completed before approaching the desk. Some prisons will allow the visitor to complete the form in advance and simply sign it at the desk. The form gives your consent to being searched. Because it asks about contraband items, it is also sometimes called a contraband form. The form identifies whom you wish to visit, declares that you are not bringing in any contraband items, and identifies you and your vehicle in the parking lot. If you need to bring in any medication, there is a place to list that on the form.

Present your ID with the forms to the Officer. Follow whatever identification control protocol your prison requires. The officer will check your ID against the memo. Your driver's license or government ID may be returned to you or it may be kept as security for giving you a locker key, it may be kept by staff who accompany you, or it may be given to the control station to keep track of the fact that you are inside the prison. PVS visitors may need to wear volunteer badges. If you have a badge, you can remind the desk officer that you have a badge. Sometimes the badge may be kept in the control booth. Badges tell the prison staff that you require an escort inside the prison and eliminate the need for the front desk to take a photo of you. If the officer searches the computer to see if you are on a prisoner's visiting list, you can suggest that PVS visitors are usually not entered on that list as your visit is covered by the memo. Whatever the protocol, follow the instructions of staff. It is their job to follow security procedures.

Sign the log book. Ask the desk officer if you need to enter information for each prisoner you intend to visit or can sign it just once. If there are different logbooks on the counter, ask which one you should sign.

Pass through the metal detector. See the description of this process in the earlier section on "what to wear."

Get stamped. An officer will stamp the back of your hand or the underside of your wrist with invisible ink and a coded marking. This stamp will usually be checked at a control booth before entering, and will definitely be checked on exit. Do not wash the area of the stamp while you are inside to avoid any security issues on your exit.

Drug testing. Entry officers may at random select a visitor for drug screening by an ion spectrometry machine. The officer will take the visitor aside and pass a small wand with a sample pad over the visitor's body. The sample pad is then inserted in the machine for analysis. Rarely is there any false positive issue with the current testing system. If this does occur, comply with instructions and report the event to PVS.

As a precaution, it is generally advisable to avoid wearing heavy perfume or using lotions, which could conceivably cause a problem. If you should fill your car with gas on your trip, wash your hands afterwards. Paper money sometimes retains traces of drugs. Be cautious and wash your hands if you handle money.

No memo at the front desk? An official entry memo, the internal product of your submitted request to visit, should be available to the lobby officer at the front desk, but sometimes problems happen, or the officer is unfamiliar with the process. If this occurs, follow these procedures.

First, if you have a copy of the official memo, you can show it to the officer. The memo will list the names of authorized PVS visitors on a particular date and the names of the prisoners they are visiting. It is unusual for a visitor to receive a copy of the official memo, however. If you have your copy of your request to visit, you can show that to the officer, but remember, it is not the official memo.

If you did not receive a copy of the official memo, which is common, you can politely suggest that some other station may have a copy of the official memo, for example, the visiting room or control room. If that does not help, you can suggest that the officer contact the Lieutenant or even an Associate Warden. On weekends, executive functions are handled by the Duty Officer, so you can suggest calling the Duty Officer. Step back and politely let the officer do his or her job of following procedures without pressure or interference. Basically, the officer is trying to resolve the issue and satisfy procedural requirements by looking for someone to authorize your entry.

Should the officer inform you that you will not be allowed to enter, politely review the escalation steps once again, saying that there should be a memo for PVS visits somewhere, but that anyone from the executive staff can authorize your entry without the memo. Executive staff tend to be more familiar with the PVS program and can accommodate your entry. If that is unsuccessful, you can return to your car and call the PVS national office.

Leave a message if no one is in the office; staff are notified when there is a voice mail and someone should respond soon. PVS staff will review the situation with you. Note that the staff may not be able to reach anyone to resolve the issue on the spot, but will follow up with the institution to identify the problem and correct it for the future. It is helpful if you take note of the names of officers you dealt with. (This is one reason we carry pen and note paper.) If the problem cannot be resolved promptly, you will need to leave prison property.

During the visit

Be escorted to the visiting room. An officer will escort a small group of visitors to the visiting room. Depending on the prison, this may involve stopping at a control point to verify identity credentials and check your handstamp. You will pass through one or more gates, locked doors, or "sally ports" (a double-gated system, also called a "mantrap"). Follow instructions.

Negotiate your visit plan. Present your visiting forms to the Visiting Room Officer at the desk inside the visiting room (VR). (Sometimes the escort officer or the front desk may retain control of your papers.) Identify yourself to the VR Officer as being with PVS and explain that you want to call out your prisoners one at a time for about an hour each. Advise the officer of your

desired order for the callouts and discuss with the officer how he or she would like you to coordinate the callouts. Sometimes the officer will keep your papers or ask you to present them one at a time to make the next call out.

Generally, it is your responsibility to manage the timing of the visits. If possible, position yourself so you can see the clock in the visiting room. If there is no clock, then you will need to ask for the officer's assistance in keeping track of time so that you can see everyone on your list. If the officer wants you to notify him or her when it is time to call the next prisoner, make your request some twenty minutes beforehand to allow time for the next prisoner to arrive. Note that if a prisoner arrives early, you may need to end a visit already in progress earlier than you had planned unless the officer allows both prisoners to remain. In that case, let the new prisoner know you'll visit with him/her in a few minutes.

If you are visiting on a weekend and have to work around the morning count, a practical routine is to call for your first prisoner to visit over the count period, call the next when count clears, and then call subsequent prisoners about an hour each thereafter.

Ask the officer where he/she wants you to sit. Wait for your prisoner to appear. Relax. It may take some twenty minutes – or even longer – for the prisoner to arrive.

Do not drive yourself crazy trying to visit more prisoners than can be reasonably accommodated. Stay relaxed and let visits and callouts take their natural course. You will soon learn the rhythm and timing for making the best use of your visiting time and energy.

At some higher security institutions, it may be necessary to let staff determine the order in which they will bring out prisoners. If the VR Officer tells you that one or more of your prisoners is in the Special Housing Unit (SHU), this may affect your planned visiting order as escorted movement is required. Prisoners in SHU are generally kept separate from the open visiting room. Generally, they will be confined in a secure SHU booth in the VR or possibly in another location. Your visit will likely then be through glass and over a phone connection. Sometimes the visit must be conducted via a video connection.

PVS visitors are usually allowed to visit with prisoners in SHU or on other restrictions. If there is some objection to your visiting a prisoner in SHU, you can ask the VR Officer to refer the request to the Lieutenant or the Duty Officer. If you are denied the visit, accept the decision amicably but include this in your report to the PVS national office.

Typically, PVS visitors can keep visiting with one prisoner until the next arrives. However, this may not apply with SHU visits. If an officer tells you that your prisoner must leave before the next arrives, you can politely explain the usual practice. Remember, however, that you are not in charge and there may be issues you are not aware of. If you are not allowed to visit until the next prisoner arrives, note that in your after-visit report. A call to the prison from the PVS national office sometimes can clear up the issue.

Delays and refusals. If your prisoner does not arrive after 15-20 minutes, go back to the VR officer and ask how the callout is progressing. Depending on what the officer tells you, you can either decide to wait longer or to proceed

with calling out your next prisoner. The officer may inform you that your prisoner "refused." Often the VR officer knows no reason, only that that is what he/she has been told. Refusals can be disconcerting. We do not immediately know what is meant by a refusal. We only know what we are told, nothing more. You may learn later that the prisoner was ill, grieving a loss, busy with some other activity, or did not hear or get the call. Move on to your next visit.

If several prisoners are sent out. The PVS program intends for us to visit with prisoners one-on-one. But sometimes several prisoners may come out at once and you have to figure out how to juggle the visit. If you decide not to visit with all the prisoners who were sent out, discuss how to handle the situation with the VR officer.

Group visits do not work well as they do not allow one-to-one privacy. You can try to visit with both together for a while and then negotiate how to proceed, suggesting that one wait while you visit with the other, then switch off. Try to arrange physical spacing so that your visit with each will be as private as possible. Crowded conditions in the VR, however, may make this difficult. Do the best you can with the awkward situation. Afterwards, you can explain to the VR officer that you intended to have each one come out separately. Include this situation in your visit report.

Beginning and ending a visit. At the beginning and end of a visit, stand and offer the prisoner a handshake. Hugs and other forms of greeting are not appropriate.

If this is a first visit with a prisoner, there are several things that are important to establish at the outset so that the prisoner will know what to expect from a PVS visit. Explain that you are a volunteer visitor with PVS and that you will be able to visit for about an hour and that you will need to watch the time. You can explain that as a PVS visitor you have no agenda for the visit, that you will talk about whatever the prisoner wants to talk about. State that your visits are confidential and you do not discuss your visit with staff or with other prisoners. (However, all visits are monitored and may be recorded.) At some point during the visit you might mention that sometimes you may write yourself a brief note to jog your own memory. Finally, you can advise the prisoner that visiting in the visiting room is all we can do.

Things to Cover on a First Visit

- Time allowed for the visit
- Frequency of visits
- Visits are confidential unless their life or someone else's is in danger
- The prison is monitoring the conversation and possibly recording it
- PVS visitors ONLY visit
- What the prisoner hopes for and expects
- PVS visitors have no agenda

If you have visited with a prisoner before, they will already have a pretty clear idea of how the visit will proceed, so you can take up where you left off the last time.

When the next prisoner enters, it is time to say goodbye to the prisoner you are visiting. You can remind him or her that you will be back to visit next month. Then you can greet the arriving prisoner and begin the next visit.

Conversation. The primary role of the PVS visitor is to be a good listener. Since the prisoner sets the visiting agenda, relax and follow the prisoner's lead about what they want to talk about. Many prisoners will do most of the talking. You, as the attentive listener, can then use the techniques of "active listening" to show that you understand what the person is saying. Listen for facts, feelings, and values and let your observations reflect back what you hear the prisoner trying to express. Such techniques support the prisoner in going deeper into what he is exploring with you.

Some prisoners may seem shy and uncertain at first. It is okay to be silent and let them observe the surroundings, as this may be their first time in the visiting room. There may also be mental health factors that affect their attention. Some questions that can help prime the conversation are: "Tell me how you are?" Or, "Where are you from?" That latter question often opens an inviting door for the prisoner to walk through. If those gambits don't work, ask about other topics that might be of mutual interest, such as sports, books, or movies. Ask open-ended questions with the aim of priming conversation, not conducting an interrogation. An open-ended question is one that cannot be answered with a simple yes or no, such as "What do you like to watch on television?" Telling a story of some interest to you might help draw out a responsive exchange. But be careful with your personal information; use generic labels instead of identifying details.

Since PVS is sometimes listed as a religious services program, some prisoners may think they have to talk about religion. If the conversation seems unnatural, you can explain that you are not there to give them a religious pitch. However, the prisoner might want to tell you about their religion. Follow their lead as best you can and engage in dialog as you are comfortable. After all, having a conversation is what matters most. Be yourself.

Vending machines. You will note that other visitors in the VR load up tables with lots of food and drinks for the prisoners they are visiting, as they may be staying for hours. It is okay to offer to buy a beverage, perhaps with a small snack for your prisoner. But it is also ok not to buy items for prisoners so that the focus remains on the visit. It may even be the consensus at your visiting location that no one buys food. However, what you do for one you should offer to do for all.

Set your own boundaries for buying food. Since vending machine food can be expensive, it is all right to tell the prisoner that you only have so much money. A snack is a treat for them and a friendly gesture for you, not an obligation. Most prisoners are very considerate of your generosity. Do not let the promise of food be the reason for the visit. More secure facilities may have rules for opening food packages onto paper towels to keep everything in the open. For health and security reasons, do not share food items with prisoners.

As noted earlier, at least one prison facility has switched from cash to a card vending system.

Terminating a visit. If you decide that you need to terminate your visit with a particular prisoner because of inappropriate or unacceptable behavior or some other problem, advise your prisoner politely of your decision and say that the visit is over. If necessary, you can inform the officer that the visit has ended and the prisoner needs to go back, but you do not need to explain to the officer why you have terminated the visit. It is important to maintain the confidentiality of the visit. Inform the local coordinator of what happened and explain whether you feel the situation might be remedied or if, instead, you want to drop the prisoner from your list. You are never required to put up with an abusive visiting situation. If needed, your local coordinator will provide you with the name of a different prisoner to visit.

Interaction with staff. Be courteous to staff at all times. Always refer to them as "officers." Do not use the term "guard." Treating all staff with politeness and respect when you make a request will facilitate their cooperation in your visiting. Expressing your appreciation for their help in making call-outs or expediting your entry helps maintain a good working relationship for future visits and for other PVS visitors. Remember, prisoners are observing how you interact with staff. Avoid being overly personal or chummy with staff. Be a model of respectful behavior to all.

After the visit

When it is time to leave, make sure you have all your belongings with you (plastic bag, pen and paper, badge). Dispose of all unconsumed food items and packaging in a trash bin in the VR before you leave, as nothing you purchased inside can be taken out with you. (Remember: "nothing in, nothing out." We will have more to say about this in the next chapter!) You will be escorted back to the lobby and your handstamp will be scanned at the final sally port to confirm that you are not an escaping prisoner. Sign the log book with your exit time and return your badge if you were given one. Collect your belongings from the storage locker and return the locker key. Make sure you are given back your own photo ID as mistakes can happen.

Do not discuss your visits with prison staff and do not debrief with other PVS visitors while on the prison grounds. If you meet up with other visitors in a public place to discuss your visit, be discreet and alert to who might be able to overhear your conversation. Remember that PVS wants you to keep your visits with prisoners as confidential as possible. Do not discuss the details of your visits outside of PVS.

Keep records for your own reference. You should keep good records of your visiting to maintain the continuity and history of your relationship with your assigned prisoners. Reporting your visits to the PVS office is a requirement of the program. But your reports to the office may be minimal, stating only that you visited a list of prisoners on such-and-such day. To aid your memory and as a reference for future visits or a resource for answering questions about the history of your visiting, it is a PVS best practice to jot yourself a short note summarizing your visit with each prisoner, noting topics of conversation, any concerns, evolutions in the prisoner's situation, etc. Do this as soon as convenient after you leave the prison before your memory fades. Keep a file of any notes you make so that you can refer back to them. Some visitors find it helpful to look at their recent notes before the next visit to jog their

memory in order to resume a conversation where it left off. For example, you may have written yourself a reminder to look up some movie or story the prisoner mentioned so that you can discuss or comment on it. Your notes will also help you prepare your report to PVS and remember any issues that should be highlighted.

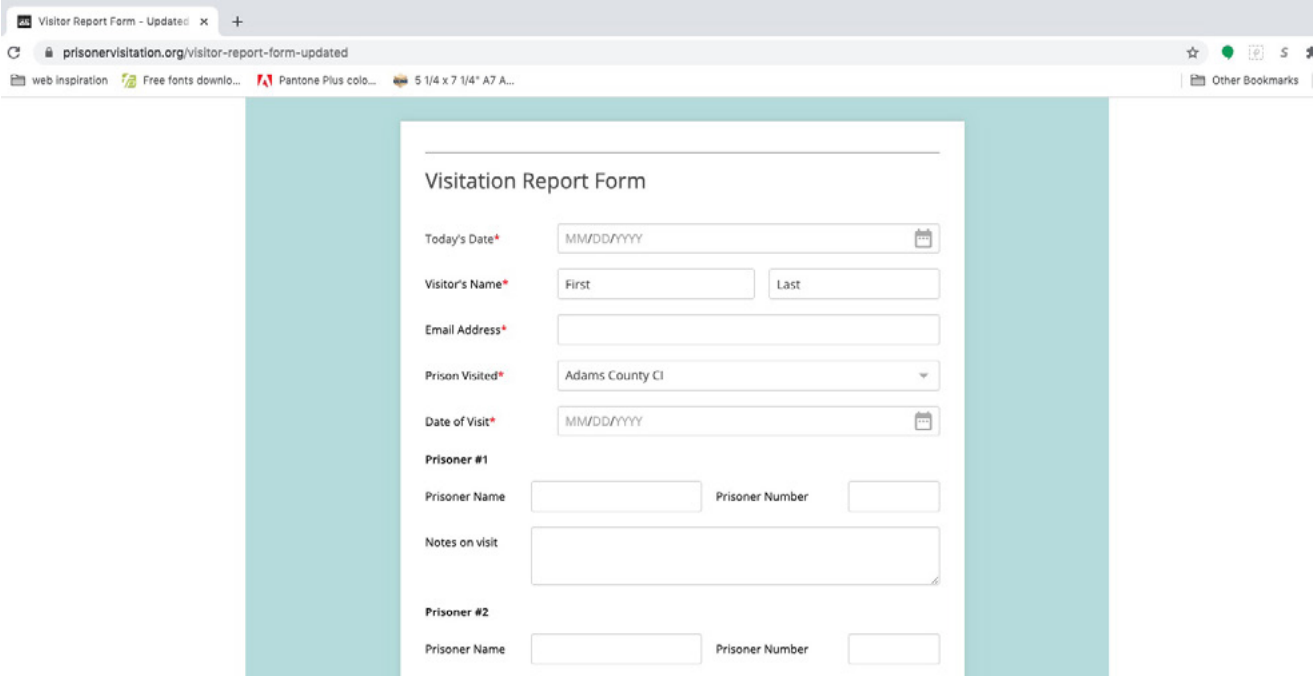
File your report to PVS. The easiest way to submit your report to the PVS office is to use the online report utility on the PVS website. Go to prisonervisitation.org and click on the Visitor Resources button. Your mentor or the national office staff will give you the password to the report area. Click the Visitation Report Form button.

The report tool will guide you through required fields: visit date, prisoner name and number. You can enter a brief comment about each prisoner visit, as well as note any issues you may have experienced. The online system will send a copy of the submitted report to your email address.

Your report is for the PVS records database and may not be reviewed immediately. If you have any issues that need immediate attention, call the PVS national office. Although the report form may request follow-up, do not wait for a response to report content if it is urgent.

You can use the general notes section to report that a prisoner has been transferred or released. The PVS national office will be able to track where the prisoner has gone and notify the coordinator at the new location to add the prisoner to the PVS visiting list at the new prison.

If you do not have access to a computer, you can submit your report on paper. If you have trouble with the on-line form, you can email your report. Follow the guidelines above. The attachments in this manual include guidelines for preparing your report and a sample report you might generate using the online system.



Most visitors find the online visitors report, located on the visitors portal on the PVS website, is the easiest way to submit the required reports after each visit.

Why Does PVS Need Your Report?

Reports are a critical tool for PVS staff. They are necessary in order to:

- Document the number of visitors and visited prisoners within a period of time, as well as the number of visits (important information for funders!)
- Recognize and resolve issues.
- Determine problems with following procedures and rules.
- Remain in touch with visitors.
- Determine who is not visiting and should no longer be authorized to visit.

Follow up with prisoners you were unable to visit. Send a postcard (or note) to the prisoners whom you were unable to visit. Say that you were sorry to miss the visit for whatever reason (weather, refusal) but that you will be back next month and hope to visit then. Do not comment on the reason for a refusal, as this is not the place to discuss this. We do not know what lies behind a refusal, although we may learn later in direct conversation. If the prisoner has refused a visit for the second or third time, advise the prisoner that you are placing him or her on the inactive list so that someone else can have a chance to receive a visitor. Assure them that if they want to resume visits, they can contact the PVS national office.

When there are too many prisoners who want visits. The local coordinator at your prison will keep the waiting list of prisoners desiring visits. If you learn of a new name from a prisoner you visit, give the name and number to your coordinator. The local coordinator is responsible for informing prisoners that their name has been added to the waiting list and that they will be assigned a PVS visitor when a slot becomes available.

Staff member Emily Cashell-DeSilva reviewing a visitor report.

When the waiting list becomes exceptionally long and waiting time for the prisoners to be assigned to a volunteer has become lengthy, the local coordinator may arrange for visitors to visit some of the prisoners on the waiting list in addition to their regular list. There are various ways this situation can be handled. Although rotating lists is not an ideal solution, you can explain to prisoners that you are attempting to give others the chance to have an occasional visit. Most prisoners will understand and accept that having some visits is better than none. You can help alleviate the situation by talking with those you know about the need for more visitors and what visiting has come to mean to you. Recruiting more visitors is the best way to reduce the waiting list backlog.

It is important to let prisoners know how their request is being handled. Examples of notification can be found here.

When there are too few prisoners who want visits. There are several ways to invite more prisoners to participate in the visiting program. You can ask those you visit if they know any other prisoners who might need or like a PVS visit. Many referrals come from those who value their PVS visit and can explain the opportunity to others. Other ways of inviting more participation include:

- The local coordinator can contact the PVS point of contact at the prison and request referrals.
- PVS can provide brochures explaining the PVS program for distribution through the chapel.
- PVS can provide a simple poster inviting prisoners to sign up that can be placed in housing units, the chapel and elsewhere throughout the prison.
- The local coordinator may suggest to the Reentry Affairs Coordinator that the availability of volunteer visitors be mentioned at prison staff briefings.
- The PVS program is sometimes listed as a resource in the Admissions and Orientation Handbook given to arriving prisoners and available to all. Discussions about internal briefings or documents will probably proceed through the Associate Warden (AW) for Programs.

Ending your service as a visitor. If you should come to the decision that you are unable to continue serving as a visitor, inform your local coordinator and the national office. They will work with you individually on how to end the relationships with your prisoners.

Looking back, looking ahead...

This chapter was rich in important information about how you visit, and perhaps it seems as if you'll never be able to remember all that you've read! Soon, though, it will become easy and instinctual routine; you won't have to think about it, and you will know whom to call to resolve issues if something unusual comes up.

Now we're moving on to something equally critical: the prison rules and PVS policies that you are expected to follow. We have grouped those that are closely related together to make it easier to remember each one and understand its purpose. Take time to learn and understand each one so that following them becomes second nature.

IV. Prison Rules and PVS Policies

Following prison rules is critical. While this document reviews some basic rules that generally apply to all federal prisons, as well as some universally applicable PVS policies, individual prisons may have different procedures and guidelines that must be followed. Your local coordinator will inform you of any differences.

The Basic Rule of PVS: Follow the Rules

Prison rules are spelled out in various prison policy documents and explicit training directives. Most rules set common sense boundaries for appropriate conduct and help maintain the safety and good order of the prison.

Breaking the rules can result in the termination of your visiting privileges and may endanger the entire PVS program. You don't want the PVS Executive director on the phone with a prison warden or a Bureau of Prisons official because you broke the rules. No matter what you think about a particular rule, you must follow it so that PVS can maintain access to prisoners who need us. We are counting on you to help make sure we are allowed to visit for another 50-plus years!

Thus, the Basic Rule of PVS is:

Follow the Rules.

Prison Rule: Nothing in, Nothing Out

Nothing in, nothing out is the first and most basic visiting rule. Another way to put it is, "give nothing, take nothing."

Never give anything to a prisoner

All that a visitor should bring into the Visiting Room is a pen and paper stowed in a clear plastic bag with coins and/or a limited amount of currency. (See the discussion on what to bring with you in the previous section.) Thus, the visitor has nothing to give the prisoner beyond a handshake and conversation. Bear in mind that the prisoner will be strip searched before and after each visit.

Remember:

- All personal items brought into the Visiting Room (for example, paper, pen, or money) must be kept under one's control at all times. Do not let the prisoner handle any such items.
- Do not give the prisoner a note on a scrap of paper. It may be tempting to jot down a quotation or something else that seems helpful, but this is not allowed.
- Any food items purchased in the Visiting Room for the prisoner or oneself must be consumed in the Visiting Room.
- Do not share any food with the prisoner.

Never take anything from a prisoner

Refuse any item a prisoner attempts to give you. DO NOT ACCEPT IT. DO NOT EVEN TOUCH IT. Explain that it is against the rules. Accepting anything could terminate visiting now and in the future. It might even put the PVS program in danger.

Nothing Means *Nothing.*

Sometimes a prisoner may bring out a scrap of paper with the name or number of another prisoner wanting a visit. You may discreetly transcribe the name or number on your own notepaper. But do not take the note.

Or a prisoner may bring out and attempt to give you some other information, such as:

- an address of someone he or she wants you to contact
- a photo to share
- a document to research, or
- a letter.

ACCEPT NOTHING.

Why this rule is so important

Preventing the introduction of contraband is a key concern for prison staff and the reason behind the give nothing/take nothing rule. Accepting anything, however innocent, could also be viewed as circumventing prison security.

PVS Policy: Maintain Appropriate Boundaries at All Times

The Bureau of Prisons spells out its policy in precise terms to be crystal clear:

- Show no partiality toward, or become emotionally, physically, sexually, or financially involved with inmates, former inmates, family members or close friends of inmates or former inmates.
- Do not offer or give to or accept from an inmate or a former inmate or any member of his/her family, or to any person known to be associated with an inmate or former inmate, any article, favor, or service that is not authorized [within the normal bounds of visiting in the Visiting Room].

The above statements are adapted from the Bureau's Program Statement 3420.11 Standards of Employee Conduct - Section 5.b and c.

Maintaining strict boundaries on conduct prevents manipulators from co-opting naïve volunteers to obtain favors that are not allowed. There is much you do not know about any individual. For example, a prisoner might ask you to supply the address of a family member with whom the person has lost contact. This person might actually be a gang member, a family member who does not want such contact, or even a victim. Following the rules at all times protects you from becoming compromised and vulnerable to the next "ask."

The rules are your shield. Let them protect you.

Focus on the visit itself

PVS visiting is a relationship that occurs within professional bounds.

If an action cannot be accomplished within the confines of the visiting room, in face-to-face conversation with the prisoner, then it probably is not allowed.

Keeping this boundary in mind will help you avoid temptations to "help out" with:

- Doing legal research
- Meeting financial needs
- Making outside contacts, or
- Sending books or any other items.

Handling romantic overtures

Occasionally, a prisoner will make an incorrect assumption about your relationship. If romantic overtures, suggestive comments, or inappropriate nonverbal actions occur during your visit, make your boundaries known to the prisoner and note this in your visit report. You are not expected to visit someone you are uneasy with or tolerate ill treatment from any prisoner.

If you receive a suggestive letter, send it to the PVS national office. A staff member will contact you to discuss the best course of action (for example, arranging to have another visitor see the prisoner if the behavior is not corrected, or removing the prisoner from the PVS visiting list until the prisoner agrees to proper conduct with visitors).

PVS visitors are listeners

PVS visitors listen – with compassion and confidentiality. They do not say "I can help you with that." While your companionship and friendship can provide an opening of trust that may let you share your experience even though you are not a counsellor, generally PVS visitors encourage prisoners to find their own solutions to problems with the resources they have available.

To summarize:
PVS visitors are *NOT*

- romantic partners
- pen pals
- counselors, or
- case managers.

Prison Rule: No Contact or Correspondence Outside the Prison Visit

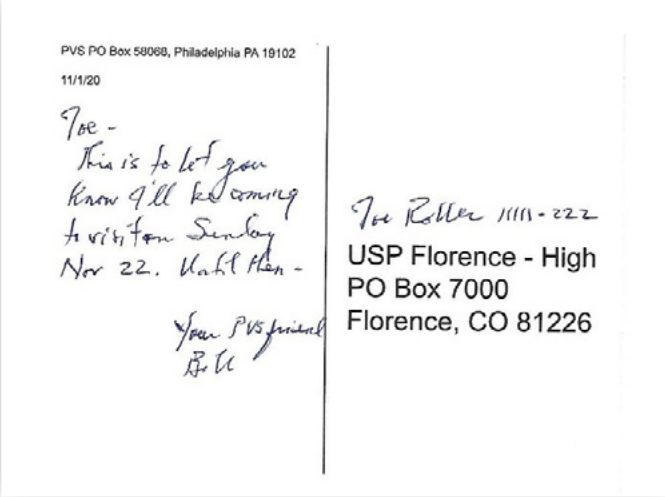
As you get to know prisoners you visit, it may seem natural to want to send them a book, a favorite quotation, or an encouraging letter. Currently, the BOP does not allow correspondence between volunteer visitors and prisoners outside the visit itself. (An exception was made during the coronavirus pandemic, when visiting was suspended. This was a special case.) If you violate this policy, it will almost certainly be noticed, and you may lose your visiting privileges.

Never give your home address, telephone number, or email address to a prisoner.

Protecting your personal information shields you and your family from unwanted contact. No matter how much you come to trust an individual prisoner, maintain this shield.

- Never mention your address or phone number or email. Prisoners are not allowed to write or call PVS visitors. And PVS visitors are not allowed to correspond with prisoners or any associated family or friends of prisoners.
- Sending regular postcards or notes announcing the next visit is an approved communication for PVS. This is not a vehicle for conveying any information other than about the visit.
- Use only the PVS national office as a return address on the postcard. This helps identify the source and purpose of the card. If a prisoner is transferred, it will be returned to that address.

Prisoner Visitation and Support
PO Box 58068
Philadelphia, PA 19102


PVS PO Box 58068, Philadelphia PA 19102
11/1/20
Joe -
This is to let you know I'll be coming to visit you Sunday Nov 22. Until then -
Your PVS friend
Bob

Joe Roller 1111-222
USP Florence - High
PO Box 7000
Florence, CO 81226

Always use the PVS address as your return address in correspondence with prisoners.

Please also be aware that many prisons do not allow you to have a photograph of yourself taken with the prisoner, though prisoners sometimes make this request. If you would like to say yes, first determine whether it is allowed.

If you are not sure it's allowed...

This list of "Nos" paraphrases the Bureau's policy in concrete terms. Any thought of how to get around a rule is bound to lead to trouble which could endanger your visiting rights or even the whole PVS program. Better to be safe than sorry. Just say NO.

NO correspondence. This means no letter writing back and forth with a prisoner and no exchange of information, either of a personal nature or in response to questions or problems.[8]

PVS postcards or notes are an approved communication practice for PVS. Keep the message simple by giving only the next date and time for your visit. No extraneous topics or other information should be included.

No email. If a prisoner attempts to email you, or if a prisoner's family member tries to connect with you on Facebook, inform the main office. Do not accept the invitation.

No phone calls. Do not accept a call from a prisoner under any circumstances and notify the PVS national office of any attempt to call you. You cannot call the prisoner directly and should not attempt to do so.

No money. Many prisoners are indigent or have very limited means to buy items from the prison commissary. They earn very little for the work they do and often have restitution to pay or families with needs. You can offer sympathy, but nothing else. Never attempt to send money to a prisoner.

If a prisoner should ask for some odd or unusual favor and you are not sure if the rules would allow this, the safe response is to say NO.

Leave no opening for repeated requests in an attempt to wear you down.

Requests to contact family members or friends sometimes come after a long preface about hardship, necessity, and a touching personal ask built on your relationship. For example, the prisoner expresses a heartfelt desire to be a good parent to a struggling child who wants to come and live nearby but needs to find a job and is interested in a field that you have experience in. Can you make a contact or referral to help? The answer is, "Sorry, no."

If you are not sure, the answer is probably "NO."

No correspondence ▪ No email
No phone calls ▪ No sending money
No outside contact ▪ No internet involvement
No physical contact beyond a handshake

8. The BOP allowed an exception to this policy during the COVID-19 pandemic, when visiting was suspended. Visitors wrote to the prisoners they visited in care of the Re-Entry Affairs Coordinator, who forwarded the mail to the prisoners. Prisoners who chose to correspond wrote to the PVS national office, which forwarded replies to the appropriate visitor. This was a special exception to the "no correspondence" rule.

What to do if a prisoner contacts you

Although PVS visitors do not provide prisoners their address, phone number or email, accidents happen that can disclose information. Some prisoners are resourceful enough to find information through public media. Prisoner attempts to make contact are not secret and are often known to prison staff. **To protect your visiting privilege,** follow the guidance below if contact occurs. Always inform the PVS national office that a contact attempt has taken place.

If you receive a letter from a prisoner:

Do not destroy any correspondence from a prisoner. If you receive a letter from a prisoner that does not come from the PVS office, report it to the PVS national office immediately. If the content of the letter seems inappropriate, also scan and email the letter to the office.

Whether or not the content is inappropriate, tell the prisoner the next time you see him or her that they are not to write you and that failure to comply may terminate your visiting relationship. The national office or the local coordinator will work with you on how to handle such a situation.

If a prisoner calls you:

Do not accept a phone call from a prisoner.

- If the call is collect and identified as coming from a correctional facility, refuse the call and hang up.
- Notify the PVS national office of the attempted call.
- Advise the prisoner during the next visit that you cannot take phone calls and that attempting to call may terminate visiting.
- If the call somehow comes in direct, tell the prisoner that you cannot take the call and hang up immediately.
- Call the PVS office immediately.

Remember that prisoner phone calls are tracked, recorded and monitored by prison systems. Calls are cross-referenced against volunteer phone numbers. If a connection is found, the prison may immediately suspend a visitor as a volunteer.

If you should receive an advisory message from TRULINCS soliciting consent for exchanging email with a prisoner, decline the invitation immediately and block any further contact from the prisoner.

Examples of inappropriate letter content include:

- passionate/romantic letters, notes or cards,
- offers by the prisoner to do something for you,
- requests by prisoner that you do a favor for him or her,
- suggestive or obscene writings or photographs,
- legal documents, or
- medical records.

If a prisoner emails you:

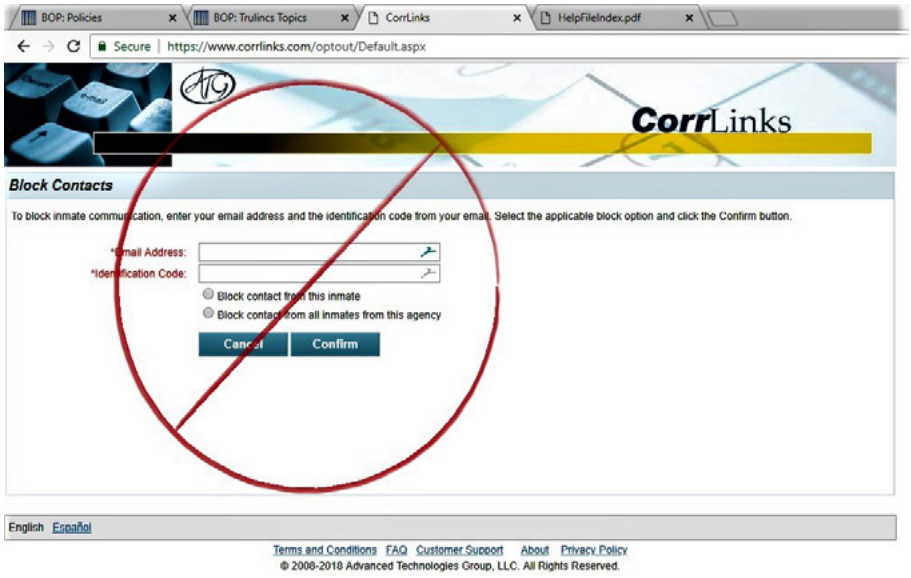
> Prisoners in some facilities have access to a secure email system called TRULINCS (Trust Fund Limited Inmate Computer System) for corresponding with family and friends. According to federal policy, "Each inmate must be approved to use the system and each person that an inmate wants to communicate with must give their permission to do so."

The TRULINCS system uses an outside service called CorrLinks provided by ATG (Advanced Technology Group). Emails may bear this name. TRULINCS also operates the inmate phone system.

- Inform the PVS national office of the attempted contact as a preventive measure to protect your visiting. Advise the prisoner at your next visit that you cannot accept email correspondence.
- Be aware that TRULINCS messages are monitored and actively screened.
- Review how your email address could possibly have been compromised. For example, if you brought in an email copy of your request to visit, it may have exposed your email address. Or some institutional email addresses follow a pattern and could be readily guessed. The prisoner had to add you to his contact list and had it approved before sending the invitation. The PVS national office may be able to inquire and have your name removed from the prisoner's contact list.

Even after the prisoner is released – it's still *"no contact"*

Contact with prisoners after release is not allowed. Consider the "no contact" rule to be indefinite.



Example of an email from a prisoner.

PVS Policy: Maintain Confidentiality

At the heart of PVS visiting is the idea that the visit stands outside the everyday world of prison life. The visitor holds open a safe space for the prisoner. Our conversation partner comes to trust us enough to surrender something of his or her life to us as a friend who accepts them for who they are. The prisoner can talk about things openly and explore things they would not share with fellow prisoners or staff. To preserve this trust, we maintain the confidentiality of our visits.

PVS visitors tell prisoners that we are not part of the prison system and that we do not discuss our visits with prison staff. We follow protocols to protect the confidentiality of our conversations. But there are also limits to what can be held in confidence.

No discussion with staff

Escort staff may try to make conversation, or they may be curious about what is going on with a particular prisoner and ask how your visit went. Be friendly and polite and simply say: "We had a good visit." There is often no need to say more. If the question is pressed, you can explain that PVS visits are confidential and we do not discuss them.

No discussing prisoners with other prisoners

Prisoners can easily observe or know about others who are getting a visit. They may be good friends with the other prisoner, or they could be enemies. If a prisoner says something or asks about another prisoner, simply say: "Sorry, I cannot discuss other prisoners. I don't talk about you with him (or her), and I don't talk about him (or her) with you."

Sometimes prisoners may know that someone you visit has moved on and ask where he went. Do not discuss what you may know about a prisoner's new location. This is for everyone's safety.

In high security institutions, it is not unheard of for Visiting Room officers to come and tell a prisoner not to discuss another prisoner. In other words, conversations may be monitored in real time.

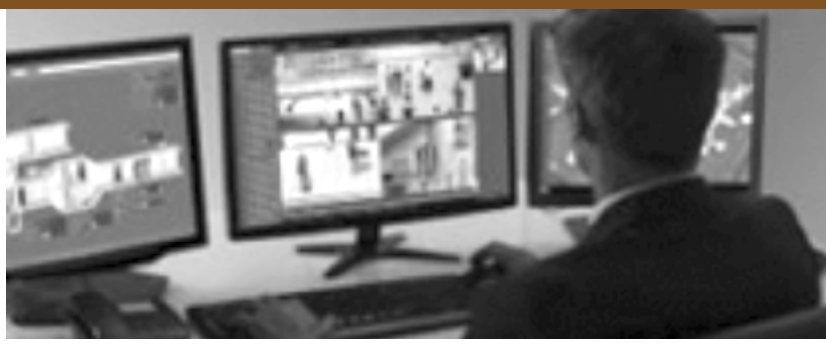
Be discreet in debriefing with other PVS visitors

PVS visitors are encouraged to discuss concerns or questions about their visits with other experienced visitors. These conversations should not occur on prison grounds. If you discuss your visits with another visitor in a public location, such as a coffee shop, go away from the area of the prison and always look around to make sure you are not being overheard. Be discreet with any information that could identify a prisoner.

Be aware that all your visits are subject to recording

Visits may be captured on video. Look up, and you may see cameras like this one. Nothing is "private."

Visits are subject to monitoring and recording



Signs like this one may be posted in the visiting room. In high security situations, monitoring and recording are almost a certainty. Sometimes you might want to remind the prisoner of this fact if the subject is sensitive.

Some situations must always be reported

One exception applies to confidentiality: some situations must be reported immediately. Section 8 of this chapter provides guidelines for handling emergencies and other serious situations.

PVS Policy: No Open Criticism of the Prison System

As PVS visitors and as an organization, we do not publicly express open criticism of the federal or military prison system and its operations, its institutions or its policies.

PVS can only function through its permitted access to prisoners. Any behavior or activity that threatens that privilege can risk suspension for an individual visitor and may also threaten the entire PVS program nationwide. Accordingly, all visitors need to avoid any public activity that could be deemed detrimental to maintaining our mission. While you are certainly entitled to whatever advocacy role you choose as an individual, do not let your identity as a PVS visitor be a factor when taking such a role. For example, demonstrating against the death penalty outside the prison where you might be recognized would violate this policy. When in doubt, contact the PVS national office prior to any such proposed activity.

PVS takes no position on issues

For the sake of maintaining our ability to visit, PVS has no opinion on outside issues and will not let itself to be drawn into public controversies. Our primary testimony, as an organization and as individual visitors, is to the inherent worth of each human being involved in the prison system, be they prisoner, family, staff or community.

Consider how things are perceived by outsiders

These days, no form of speech is completely private. Although we may have complex personal opinions about imprisonment, someone outside our web of deep empathy will likely misperceive any critical comment. And criticism of any aspect of the prison system, federal or not, could be misconstrued. Therefore, it is safer not to express any criticism of the prison system in public, to the press or on social media, as a PVS visitor. We can simply say we visit because the prisoners are there. It is our service. Anything more might jeopardize our program.

Some obvious DON'Ts

- Do not contact the media about a federal or military prison
- Do not contact a member of Congress about a prisoner or prison
- Do not take part in any demonstration at or about a federal or military prison
- Do not write letters to the editor about federal or military prisons

For the sake of preserving our visiting privilege, as PVS visitors we forego these rights.

PVS Policy: Manage Media Exposure with Care

What if the media contacts me?

Since we naturally share about our PVS experience with our friends and colleagues because we know its value to our prisoners and to us, it is not unlikely that someone in the media might get word that you know something about "Prison X" and approach you for background or insight.

- Refer the person to the PVS national office.
- Notify the PVS national office immediately about the contact.
- Remember: a casual comment from you could become a juicy quote taken out of context by the prison administration or others.
- Preserve the PVS program by not discussing the prison with or on any public or social media platform

What we can share with others

Our focus as PVS visitors is on the benefits of engaging in one-to-one human conversations with prisoners within the prison. We know from our experience how it helps the prisoner and how it has affected our own lives. The light from this encounter radiates everywhere in the prison yard, and out in the world. To extend the vision and mission of PVS, we can speak of what we know about this transforming encounter to our friends and to our supporting communities.

Local volunteers attend Texas Training Conference

ATTENDED CONFERENCE Three parishioners from Holy Innocents Catholic Church attended an annual training conference in October at Waxahachie, Texas for the volunteer program Prisoner Visitation and Support. Attending were, from left: Dan Struble, Vanessa Emem and Carl Pope.

Halcottsville — Three parishioners from Holy Innocents Catholic Church attended an annual training conference in October at Waxahachie, Texas for the volunteer program Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS). PVS volunteers visit prisoners in federal and military prisons throughout the United States with the primary focus on prisoners who do not ordinarily receive visits from family and friends while incarcerated and who long for contact with people outside the prison system. Vanessa Emem and Dan Struble visit prisoners in Brooklyn and Otisville, respectively, and Carl Pope gives support to the program.

PVS visitors provide friendship, encouragement, and a listening ear to prisoners, and help them maintain their self-esteem and encourage their efforts to improve themselves so they can live productive lives upon their release back into society. Founded in 1968, PVS is authorized by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Defense to visit all federal and military prisons in the United States. Although sponsored by many religious groups, including the Catholic Apostolic Church in North America, of which Holy Innocents is a parish, PVS visitors do not impose a particular religion or philosophy on prisoners. They accept prisoners as they are, and try to support their self-growth.

The theme of this year's conference was "Visiting Changes Everything – More Than We Ever Know," and included a tour of a women's medical facility to learn about services for prisoners. Research reveals that female prisoners receive fewer visits than male prisoners, and that prisoners who receive regular visits are less likely to end up back in prison. More information about PVS can be obtained at prisonervisitation.org.

An example of helpful publicity for PVS.

We can also tell our friends and neighbors how vital this service is to counter the indignities of incarceration and to help our fellow human beings re-enter our society.

Our enthusiasm to expand the work of PVS may bring us opportunities to speak to religious, social or civic organizations or submit an article about PVS visiting, inviting anyone interested to inquire about volunteering, or soliciting financial support for PVS.

- Focus on the mission and its benefits
- Ask a trusted mentor or PVS staff to review your submission beforehand.

Tip: If anyone should ask you to submit an article, the PVS national office has approved templates for articles to promote the work of PVS.

PVS Policy: Handle Emergencies According to Guidelines

Emergency procedures

The following situations are considered emergencies. If either occurs, use the emergency procedure described below.

1. **Escape plans or contact from escaped prisoner**
   If you learn of any escape plans, or if an escaped prisoner contacts you, do not assist in any way. Inform the prisoner you cannot be involved and follow the Emergency Procedure.

2. **Life-threatening situations**
   If you learn that the life of a prisoner or prison staff member is in danger (potential suicide/assault) follow the Emergency Procedure.

Emergency Procedure

1. Call the PVS national office: 215-241-7117. If you do not reach anyone there, leave a message. Someone will return your call as soon as possible.

2. Call the executive director on the director's cell phone. Currently, the PVS executive director is Molly Clifford and her cell phone number is 585-233-3699.

3. If you have not reached someone on the PVS national staff within four hours, call the prison and ask to speak with the executive assistant to the warden or the warden's secretary (during weekday office hours) or the duty officer (during evening and weekend hours). If you are asked whether your call is about a prisoner, just say you are calling about a PVS matter that needs to be dealt with immediately by the executive staff or duty officer.

Other serious situations

Sexual abuse or sexual assault. If a prisoner informs you that she or he has been a victim of sexual abuse or sexual assault, or if you yourself experience sexual abuse while visiting, notify the PVS national office immediately to receive counsel and assistance with the reporting process. As discussed earlier in the section about BOP volunteer training, volunteers are encouraged to report such matters immediately. It is PVS's experience that this requirement should be discussed and discerned with PVS staff before being elevated. This policy is in support or the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

Safety. If you are concerned about the safety of any person you encounter, discuss it with another PVS visitor and, if necessary, contact the PVS national office. Do not keep concerns to yourself.

Many concerns are not about rules or procedures, but how to handle a difficult situation with a prisoner. Visitors often find themselves dealing with negative or traumatic information and need to process the burden that has been shared with them. Visitors may also find themselves in a compromising situation and only gradually realize that they have been "played." Whatever your concerns, reach out and discuss them with another experienced visitor in confidence. If you are not fortunate enough to have seasoned visitors around you can talk with, pick up the phone and talk with the executive director or the visitor coordinator. We're all in this together, we're all committed, and we need each other to do this important work. Remember, you are part of the PVS family.

Looking back, looking ahead...

The critical information in this chapter, once committed to memory and consistently followed, will help ensure that you – and PVS – are able to continue visiting the prisoners who need our support and encouragement. You can find a concise one-page review of some key rules discussed here in the Attachment Section: "How to Lose Visiting Privileges."

Now that you've learned the basics of the visiting process and have studied the rules and policies that apply to each visit, let's step back and take a different perspective. In the next chapter, you'll learn about PVS's history, the critical staff who support you in our national office, and the many ways in which you, the individual visitor, are woven into the structure of this organization.

V. Beyond this Guide: You and the PVS Team

Neither this manual nor any training session can possibly cover every situation that may arise. Common sense grounded in the basic rules and your own life experience should be your guide in the moment. Always remember you are part of a team that includes many seasoned PVS visitors. This section of the manual presents some of the history of the organization you have joined and the small staff that is dedicated to supporting each visitor. It reminds you how to reach out, knowing you are part of a caring community with a shared mission.

Our History

The organization you have joined has a long history – over 50 years of service. Here are some of the key people who helped bring it to life and the events that shaped its expanding mission.

Our founders

Prisoner Visitation and Support 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.

Founding agencies included the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors and the War Resisters League.

Bob Horton and his wife Kay.

Bob Horton, a Methodist minister who had worked with AFSC, along with his wife, Kay, had been visiting and corresponding with imprisoned conscientious objectors as early as World War II. Bob and Kay also became affiliated with the Society of Friends (Quakers).

Fay Honey Knopp, a Quaker activist with a Jewish heritage, began visiting prisoners in 1955. During their visits, it soon became apparent that other prisoners needed visits as well.

Nationwide expansion

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.

Various religious faith traditions—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim—along with several secular organizations concerned about prisoners and social justice – became PVS sponsors. Over the years many representatives of these organizations have served on the governing board of PVS.

Keeping it going: financial support

PVS is a registered not-for-profit organization. It received its IRS 501(c) 3 tax-exempt status in 1976 and is governed by a volunteer board of directors.

Individual donors are the primary source of support for PVS, providing more than 80% of the PVS annual operating budget. Many of these donors are themselves visitors. Sponsoring religious organizations have been a bedrock of support for PVS over the years, and many faith groups whose members are visitors have become regular contributors to PVS.

In order to maintain independence from the prison system and to create trust among the prisoners we serve, PVS does not seek or accept funds from the government or from private prison companies. We do, however, receive donations from federal employees through the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). A copy of the PVS annual report is available from the PVS national office.

The PVS National Office is located at Friends Center in central Philadelphia.

PVS continuously works to develop funding sources through outreach to potential donors and visitors by:

- Enlarging the donor base
- Seeking grants from foundations and sponsors
- Giving presentations to potential funders and visitors
- Encouraging visitors to make presentations to local congregations and civic groups
- Providing newsletters and updates for donors and visitors
- Encouraging visitors and supporters who are federal employees to donate through the Combined Federal Campaign

PVS Timeline

1968
Prisoner Visitation and Support founded.

1972
Permission from the Federal Bureau of Prisons to visit all federal prisoners; visitor recruitment initiated.

1975
Permission from Department of Defense to visit all military prisoners.

1977
Eric Corson joined PVS as program secretary.

1994
PVS produced the video, "Reaching Behind Prison Bars."

2017
Eric Corson retired as executive director after 40 years of service to PVS.

2020
Molly Clifford became executive director.

PVS Board of Directors

PVS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors that is responsible for establishing overall policy and financial oversight for the organization. The board works through committees, which can include visitors who are not Board members. Examples of committees include Development, Personnel, Finance, Communications, and Training.

PVS Staff

Executive Director: The executive director is responsible for administering the PVS program under the authority of the PVS Board of Directors and for communicating with all PVS visitors as well as directors, wardens and other executive staff of the federal and military prison systems. The executive director is appointed by the Board of Directors.

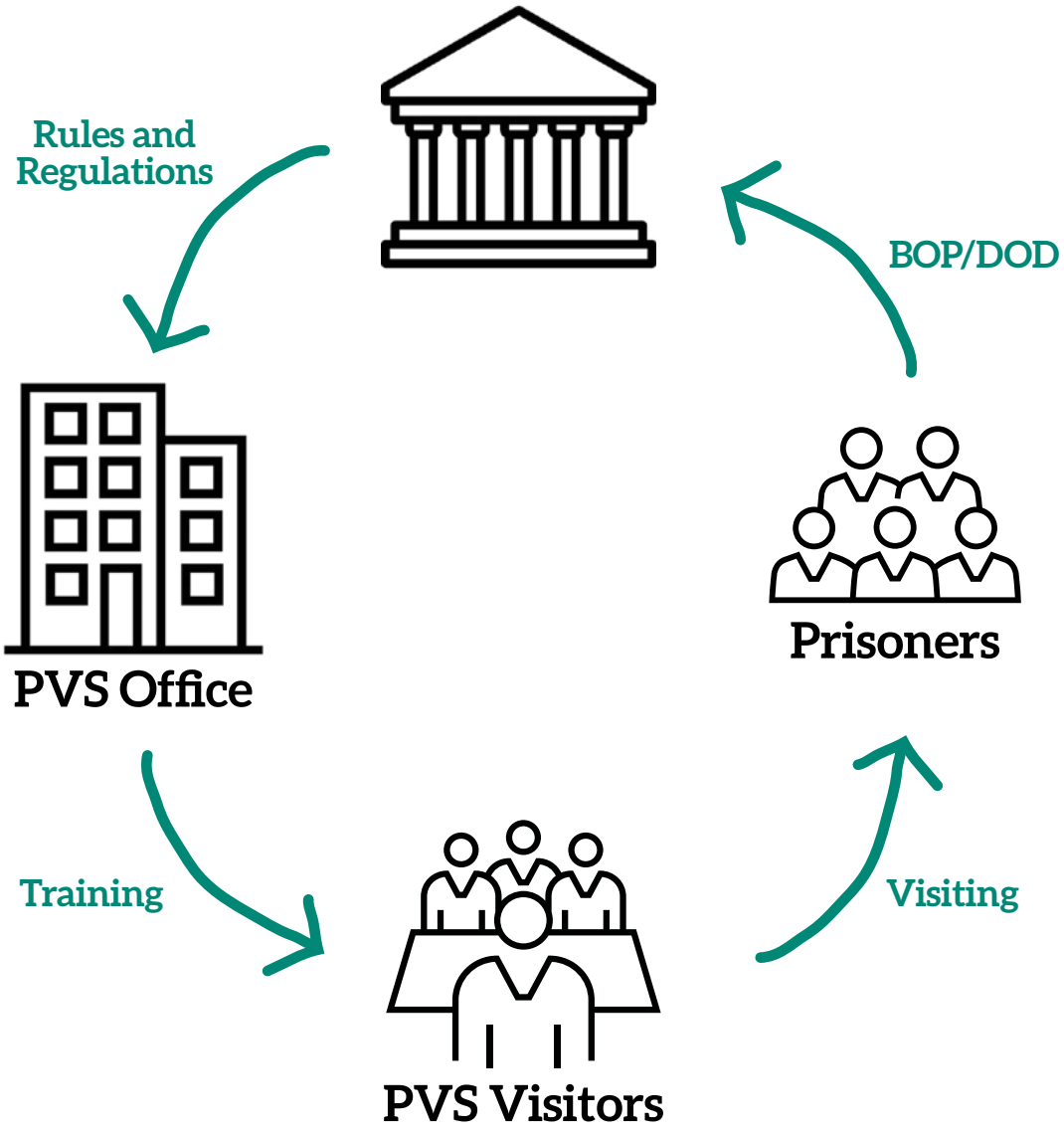
Visitor Coordinator: The visitor coordinator serves as the lead staff in volunteer outreach, recruitment, training and engagement.

Administrative Coordinator: The administrative coordinator is the main point of contact for the office, maintains donor data files and mailing lists, and performs administrative services.

In addition, PVS relies on the leadership of seasoned volunteers, who help by screening applicants, coordinating local visiting programs, guiding new visitors, helping deliver training, and letting us know what's happening at the grassroots level. PVS could not function without them.

You and PVS: What Ties Us Together

The graphic below shows how you, as a PVS visitor, are part of the PVS family. If you visit as part of a team of local visitors at a facility, you immediately know the support that comes from experienced fellow visitors. But you are not alone, even if you are the sole visitor at a remote institution. The PVS organization embraces you and supports your visiting with its care, with the wisdom and experience captured in this Visitor Manual, with communication and training, and through its ongoing connection with the Department of Defense and the Bureau of Prisons. In short, you will find that you are held and supported by the entire PVS culture of visiting prisoners. **We are all in this together.**



A key thread that joins visitors together is our shared approach to visiting, as described in this manual. PVS policies and guidance are aimed at providing a consistency across the prisons we visit. By following the procedures outlined in this manual, we can keep the trust of the Bureau of Prisons and the Department of Defense, ensuring our ability to keep visiting as long as prisoners need us.

Another family connection is formed by the experiences we share with prisoners and fellow visitors. Conferences, training events, and the fellowship of visitors who go to the same prison allow us opportunities to encourage, support, and learn from each other. Together we can grieve for difficult situations and celebrate events that bring us joy, while affirming our common humanity.

The reports you file after each visiting day are essential for the national PVS office to do its work and support all of us. They are read carefully by staff to appreciate the issues you face and know when they need to take action to address an unnecessary barrier to visits, provide support, or reinforce procedures that are not being followed. They also provide critical information about how many people are actually visiting and receiving visits – information that donors and foundations want to know.

Longtime visitor Virginia Rinella (left) receives a certificate of appreciation from Eileen Gilkenson in 2019.

Never forget that you are doing important work, though it is often hard. You and your fellow visitors – your compassion, your struggles, your tears, your smiles, your memories – are PVS. Through you, we are able to reach and touch and sometimes transform the lives of people who need us. They may have lost hope. They may have few positive models of what life might hold for them. They may no longer believe in their own goodness or anyone else's. Your presence can make a difference.

Thank you.

VI. Attachments

This section contains samples of some typical correspondence. You do not have to write your letters or postcards using these exact words. They are just examples that show the type of information to include.
[Note: the names and numbers below are examples, not those of actual people or institutions.]

Samples

Visit Arrangement Email

To: John Smith, Reentry Affairs Coordinator
Federal Correctional Institution (Anywhere)
From: Sara Visitor, PVS
Subject: PVS Visit Request for 6/14/20xx

Dear Mr. Smith:

I plan to visit FCI Anywhere on Friday, June 14, 20xx, arriving at 8:30 a.m.

I plan to visit with the following prisoners:

- Larry Jones #11111-222
- Tim Little #33333-444
- Jose Gomez #55555-666
- Abdul Admen #77777-888

Your memo at the front desk upon my arrival will facilitate my entry and will be much appreciated. Please include in the memo that I am allowed to bring in a pen or pencil and paper.

Thank you for your assistance. If you need to contact me, please call me at (123) 123-4567, or email me at abc@email.com.

Sincerely, James/Jane Doe
PVS Anywhere Visitor

Sample of a Local Coordinator's Request covering multiple visitors

To: Re-entry Affairs Coordinators, FCC Ironclad
From: David Visitor, PVS
Subject: Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) Visits to FCC Ironclad for January 2020
Request date 12/16/19

This request covers PVS visits to FCC Ironclad for 4 different dates in January 2020.

1. USP I Ironclad
   a. Hyman Roth will visit the following on Friday 1/3/20:

Seymor Richards	08888-211
Bobby Black	22445-220
George Sweetman	29999-320

   b. Eleanor Rigby and David Visitor will visit on 3rd Thursday 1/16/20
   Eleanor will visit the following men:

Tim O'Connor	000999-410
Burl Handy	77777-400
Billy Fisher	99999-500
Duane McNoon	00022-444

   David's visiting list:

Ken Whosit	55566-222
George Carton	44433-333
Kalid Kamer	44477-555
Bobby Loyal	44499-666

   c. Derrick Domino will visit on Friday 1/17/20:

Johnny Ketaro	45454-222
Darmaid Grayson	22299-666
Matt Drummer	11188-333

2. USP II Ironclad
   a. David Visitor will visit the following on Saturday 1/25/20:

Ibrahim Abdul	44444-111
Jules Vernon	68686-888
Sam Count	42424-33
Ford Perfect	22299-888

Please ensure that the official memo contains a statement saying that the PVS visitors are authorized to bring a writing pad and pen or pencil into the visiting room.
Postcards will be sent to the men on the list notifying them of the upcoming visit.
The order of visiting will be determined by ADX and USP staff. Priority should be given to men in the control unit.

If there are any problems, questions or updates to the visiting list, please do not hesitate to contact me. A confirmation that the visit memo has been arranged would be much appreciated.

Sincerely, James/Jane Doe
PVS Anywhere Visitor

Introductory Letter to Prisoners

PVS
PO Box 58068
Philadelphia, PA 19102
June 1, 20xx

Joe/Jane Smith #123455-678
FCI/USP Anywhere
PO Box 00000
Anywhere, Any State 00000 Dear

Joe/Jane:

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) has recently assigned me to be your regular monthly visitor. I have enclosed a brochure to familiarize you with our organization.

I'm looking forward to meeting you and to becoming your PVS visitor. I will send you a postcard in advance of each visit to let you know when I'll be there. Please note that PVS visitors do not need to be on your approved visiting list and that our visits do not count against other visits from family or friends.

My first visit with you will be on Friday, June 14, 20xx. I will ask the prison staff to alert you when it is time to come to the visiting room. See you then!

Sincerely,
James/Jane
PVS Anywhere Visitor

Introductory Postcard to Prisoner

Dear _____

Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS) has assigned me to be your regular monthly visitor. I'm looking forward to meeting you!

My first visit with you will be on _____

I will ask the prison staff to alert you when it is time to come to the visiting room. See you then!

John/Jane Doe
PVS Visitor

Introductory Postcards to Prisoner on Waiting List

Dear _____

We have received notification that you wish to have visits from Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS). At present, we have a waiting list for visits and have added your name to the list. We will assign you a visitor as soon as possible.

Be well. We care about you.

Dear _____

We still have you on the PVS waiting list until we have an available regular monthly visitor. In the meantime, I'll keep in touch and occasionally visit with you. I will be at the prison on _____

I will ask the prison staff to alert you when it is time to come to the visiting room.

I look forward to meeting you then!

John/Jane Doe
PVS Visitor

Notice to Prisoner Upon Transfer

Dear _____

We have been notified that you have recently been transferred to USP Ironclad. You are still part of the PVS family and we want you to continue receiving visits from Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS). We have you on a waiting list for visits and will assign you a visitor as soon as possible.

Be well. We care about you.

Postcard to Prisoners Who Don't Come Out to Visit

(For prisoner who has missed one or two visits)

Dear _____

I recently visited at the prison and had you on the call-out list, but staff informed me that you refused.

I'm sorry to have missed visiting with you and I hope to see you next time. During our next visit, please tell me if there is something I should know about your visiting, such as the best time of the day to call you out, or the best day of the week to visit with you.

My next visit with you will be on _____

Please be listening for your name to be called that day. See you then!

(For prisoner who is being taken off the list for missing several visits)

Dear _____

I recently visited at the prison and called you out, but staff informed me that you had refused.

Since you have not come out to visit more than once, and I've written to you before, I need to ask you if you still want PVS visits. Please inform me of your decision by writing to the PVS national office that you do want to receive visits. Unless I hear from the national office that they have received such a request from you, I will put you on the PVS inactive list.

Please know that you are welcome to resume PVS visits by contacting the PVS national office, whose address is listed on the other side of this card. Know that we care about you!

Note: Always use the PVS national office for the return address for correspondence: Prisoner Visitation and Support, PO Box 58068, Philadelphia, PA 19102

Reporting Guidelines

1. Report each month's visit using the online reporting form if possible. Remember, please call or email the National Office with any urgent items that require immediate attention.
2. If you cannot use the online tool, you can email, fax, or mail your report to the PVS national office, with a copy to your local coordinator, Send as soon as possible after your visit.
3. When using email, use the subject line to give a concise summary of the visit: where, when, what happened (e.g., no problems, transfer, prisoner needs medical attention). *Example: "PVS Visit – USP Florence – April 20 – Transfer."*
4. Respect prisoner confidentiality and refrain from including unnecessary personal information.
5. Maintain a roster of names and registration numbers of all the PVS prisoners you visit.
6. Essential information to report could include the following elements. Omit any items that may not be relevant to your visit:

- Whom you visited, including names and numbers of the prisoners
- Any problems?
  - Getting in, getting out, prisoner call-outs
  - Reported to you by prisoners – remember to always get the prisoner's permission to have any PVS intervention
  - Reported to you by prison staff
- Any requests?
  - From prisoners
  - From prison staff
- Any changes?
  - Prison rules and procedures
  - Prisoners transferred or released
  - Addition or removal of names to your list of prisoners

7. Finally, report anything else that you want the PVS executive director, Visitor Recruiters, or your local coordinator to know.

Online Reporting Form

Visitors, please note: If you are having issues with the form, please email your report to pvs@prisonervisitation.org. We would rather have a report via email than no report at all.

Today's Date	09/23/2019
Visitor's Name	David Visitor
Email Address	whoisthis@yahoo.com
Prison Visited	Grapetree FCI
Date of Visit	09/21/2019
Prisoner Name	John Nice Guy
Prisoner Number	21212-444
Notes on visit	Plans to step forward to organize next year's powwow. Discussed ideas for outside guests etc. May be experiencing some repetitive motion symptoms from Unicore job.
Prisoner Name	Simon Pound
Prisoner Number	222298-777
Notes on visit	Discussed advance preparations for special meal on Columbus Day. It was his suggestion to serve beef stew in bread bowls. His father is doing ok after pacemaker.
Prisoner Name	Ted Wilmon
Prisoner Number	66677-333
Notes on visit	Talked mainly sports. Also how to prepare striped bass. Has bid in to secure an address for release to Utah. Extended visit to 3 pm.
General notes on visit	Crowded VR. Staff helpful in getting me in.
Do you need someone from the National Office to contact you about anything in regard to this visit?	No

Entry ID: 3689

Sample Memo Authorizing Entrance into Prison

U.S. Department of Justice Federal Bureau of

Prisons Federal Correctional

Office of theWarden

FCI Grapefruit

January 22, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR FCI FROM: VISITING STAFF

B. Greilick, Warden

SUBJECT: Prisoner Visitation and Support Program (PVS)

The following PVS visitors are authorized by the Director of the Bureau of Prisons to visit inmates in our institution:

James Meister, Eleanor Rigby, Elmer Beacon and David Vorstel

On **Saturday, February 15th, Vorstek and Beacon** will enter to visit in the visiting room with:

Ted Wilmon	77777-777	Simon Pound	01010-111
John Nice Guy	88888-888	Ryan Warrant	02020-222
Daryl Newman	99999-999	Jorge Limono	03030-333

On **Friday, Feb 28th, Meister and Rigby** will enter to visit in thevisiting room with:

James Ironwood (FPC)	11111-111	Harold Glass	44444-444
Peter Papas	22222-222	Bryan Cupcake	55555-555
Desmond Friehof	33333-333	Don Geeman	66666-666

The visitors are authorized to bring a writing pad and pen or pencil into the visiting room.

In the event that an inmate fails to come to the visiting room to meet the designated PVS volunteer, the volunteer will be allowed to join another PVS volunteer who is meeting with an assigned inmate. Due to the number of men to be seen, the visitors are allowed to continue their visit with one man while the officers call and locate the next man.

These PVS visits are not to be counted against the inmate's visiting points.

The guidelines which prohibit inmates from being called for visits after 8:00 pm do not apply to the monthly PVS visits. Instead, visitors are permitted to call out or be admitted if they call out or arrive within 45 minutes of the end of visiting hours.

Note: PVS is authorized to visit men on restrictions.

Additional Information

Liability Insurance for PVS Visitors

PVS maintains insurance coverage for all PVS visitors through a policy with the Volunteers Insurance Service (VIS), an organization that designs and administers insurance for volunteers. Coverage includes:

- **Accident Insurance: Excess Accident Medical Coverage.** The policy will pay up to $25,000 for medical treatment, hospitalization and licensed nursing care, required as a result of a covered accident. The insurance applies while the volunteer is traveling directly to and from, and while participating in volunteer related activities. Initial medical expenses must be incurred within 60 days of the accident. They are then covered for a one-year period following the accident. This coverage also provides for repair or replacement of eyeglass frames or lenses damaged as a result of an accident. Accidental Death and Dismemberment Coverage "will pay... benefits for death or loss of limb or sight, occurring within one year after the accident."

- **Personal Liability Insurance.** "All registered volunteers (collectively) of an organization are provided with Personal Liability insurance at a limit of $1,000,000 per occurrence. This policy provides protection for a personal injury or a property damage liability claim arising out of the performance of the volunteers' duties. This coverage is in excess of and non-contributing with any other valid and collectible insurance the volunteer may have."

- **Excess Automobile Liability Insurance.** This is not included.

- **How to File a Claim.** If you have an accident while performing PVS volunteer activity that results in personal injury to yourself, you should contact the PVS national office, which has claim forms.

Supplemental Tax Information for PVS Visitors

Certain provisions of current IRS policy will enable some visitors to deduct certain expenses related to their volunteer work with PVS. Visitors who file a long-form (1040) return and itemize deductions may include the following items on their Schedule A list of contributions:

- Auto mileage at the current rate allowed by the IRS or the actual cost of other transportation used for your visits.
- Unreimbursed out of pocket expenses such as meals, travel, and lodging to attend a PVS conference.
- Unreimbursed expenses for meals and lodging necessary for any overnight trips required for PVS duties.
- Unreimbursed postage, telephone toll calls, parking fees, and road tolls related to your visiting activities.

In explanation of these expenses, you may wish to attach a memo entitled "unreimbursed volunteer expenses in service with Prisoner Visitation and Support, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization."

Charitable donations given to PVS may be deducted on your income tax.

Unfortunately, your valuable time is not considered deductible by the IRS, nor is the value of any income lost by volunteering.

Note: This document should not be construed as professional tax advice or counseling. It is always advisable to consult a tax professional before submitting tax returns.

PVS Visitor Code of Conduct

As a PVS visitor, I understand that I am continuing a tradition and privilege of visiting federal and military prisons that dates back to 1968. I understand that following both PVS and prison policies and rules is essential to the ability of PVS as an organization to support and maintain the mission of PVS with prisons operated by the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) and the Department of Defense (DOD) as well as my own access to visit in a prison.

I understand that PVS is a single-purpose organization that provides humanitarian visits to prisoners. A PVS visitor interacts with a prisoner solely at the prison, providing support through being present and listening attentively. A PVS visitor does not engage in religious proselytizing nor in advocacy involving federal or military prisons.

General Rules:

1. I understand that my activities as a PVS visitor are not about me; rather, I am part of PVS and its mission on a national scale.
2. I am committed to non-judgmental listening. I will be aware of my potential for biases regarding prisoners and prison staff.
3. I will never break prison rules.
4. I will never give anything to, nor accept anything from, a prisoner– even a piece of paper - "nothing in, nothing out."
5. I will not engage in legal advocacy of any kind on behalf of a prisoner whom I visit.
6. I will be respectful of the Federal Bureau of Prisons and Department of Defense staff.
7. I will communicate with the PVS national office by submitting reports to the national office soon after each visit. I will comply with any instructions received in response to my report.
8. I commit to attend a PVS training conference within two years of being appointed as a PVS visitor, and at least once every five years thereafter. If I am not able to fulfill this commitment, I will engage in alternative training as specified by the PVS Recruiter and/or the PVS Training Committee
9. I will always pay attention to any Visitor Alerts issued by the PVS national office.

Communications:

1. I will not provide a prisoner with my home address, email address, or phone number.
2. I will not exchange correspondence or provide inclusions in mail in any format with prisoners for any purpose other than those described in the PVS Visitor Orientation and Resource Manual.
3. I will immediately contact the PVS executive director if I receive any communication either directly or indirectly from a prisoner – such as email, postal mail, or phone call
4. I will inform prisoners that they should not send me by any means photographs, gifts, letters, or any other items.
5. I will assume that prison officials and other prisoners see cards and notes sent between me and the prisoners I visit. If these contain anything considered by the prison staff to be improper, I understand that I may be barred from further visits.
6. I will not destroy inappropriate communication received from a prisoner and will report any such incidence to the PVS executive director.
7. I will not be a pen pal nor recommend/arrange one for prisoners I visit.
8. I will not be involved in sending prisoners cash, money orders, stamps, books, magazines, photographs, or anything of value.
9. I will not accept telephone calls (direct dialed or collect) from prisoners. When notified that a call is coming from a prison, I will refuse it.

I have studied and understand this Code of Conduct which outlines key boundaries for a PVS visitor, I understand that if I violate any of these requirements, I am subject to suspension or termination by PVS and/or the BOP or DOD.

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____
(printed)

Return completed form to PVS office by mail:

PVS
PO Box 58068
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Or scan and send by email to pvs@prisonervisitation.org

How to Avoid Losing Visiting Privileges

Do not do any of the following for or with a prisoner:

- Send gifts
  - Books
  - Magazines
  - Articles
  - Stamps
  - Money orders
  - Legal materials
  - Or anything
- Accept something
  - Letter
  - Gift
  - Slip of paper
  - Photographs
  - Or anything
- Carry contraband (prohibited items) in or out of the prison
- Accept, copy and return items
  - Photos
  - Legal documents
  - Letters
- Accept a telephone call
- Reply in any way to an e-mail
- Arrange for a pen pal
- Start or become involved in a romance with a prisoner
- Participate, help create, give appearance of an inappropriate relationship
- Do something for a prisoner's family member or members
- Fail to inform the PVS national office of any of the above

Acronyms

Federal Prisons

ADX	Administrative Maximum ("Super-Max")
AW	Associate Warden
CCM	Community Corrections Management (halfway house)
CMU	Communications Management Unit
FBOP/BOP	Federal Bureau of Prisons
FCC	Federal Correctional Complex (several prisons on one site)
FCI	Federal Correctional Institution (low-medium security)
FDC	Federal Detention Center (pre-trial)
FMC	Federal Medical Center
FPC	Federal Prison Camp (minimum security)
FTC	Federal Transportation Center
ICC	Intensive Confinement Center (boot camp)
LC	Local Coordinator
LSCI	Low Security Correctional Institution
MCC	Metropolitan Correctional Center (pre-trial)
MCFP	Medical Center for Federal Prisoners
MDC	Metropolitan Detention Center (pre-trial)
RAC	Re-Entry Affairs Coordinator
SCU	Special Confinement Unit (death row)
SHU	Special Housing Unit (solitary)
SMU	Special Management Unit
TRULINCS	Trust Fund Limited Inmate Computer System
UNICOR	Federal Prison Industries
USP	United States Penitentiary (maximum security)
VR	Visiting Room

Military Prisons

DOD	Department of Defense
NCB	Naval Consolidated Brig
RCF	Regional Correctional Facility (short-medium sentences)
USDB	United States Disciplinary Barracks (long-term sentences)

Resources for Visitors

The Visitor Newsletter
A source of information about visitors, program developments and new books and articles on prison issues. Editions are sent to visitors as they become available.

Constant Contact Notifications
The PVS executive director emails visitors periodically with updates on BOP policy, actions by the PVS Board, trends that affect the lives of your prisoners, advice, and information about visitors like yourself.

It is required that all visitors remain subscribed to PVS communication.

The PVS Visitor Portal
As part of your orientation to PVS, you will receive the password to the visitors' section of the PVS web site, *https://www.prisonervisitation.org/*. Here you will find:

- The current edition of the visitor's manual
- The visitation report form
- A booklet containing the wisdom of other visitors
- A "let's visit" poster for your use in publicizing the work of PVS.

Video/DVD
PVS has an informative 20-minute video/DVD, filmed in six federal and military prisons and featuring prisoners and visitors sharing their experiences with PVS visits. Although produced in 1994, this prize-winning resource may still be useful in presentations you are giving about PVS to local civic groups or others.

Annual Report
PVS as a charitable organization writes an annual report that may be found on our website or by request to our national office.

Brochures
PVS has developed brochures for prisoners, visitors, and funders. You may request copies as needed from the PVS office.

Letterhead
PVS letterhead can be provided by email or in print if you need it. Your local coordinator may have a supply. If not, request it from the PVS national office.

PVS PRISONER VISITATION & SUPPORT