



**TEXAS**

**Department of Family  
and Protective Services**

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*Child Protective Services*

**Incarcerated Parents  
Resource Guide**

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## INCARCERATED PARENTS

CPS values the role of parents in a child's life regardless of whether they are incarcerated or not. Generally, incarcerated parents are afforded the same rights and duties as parents who are not incarcerated.

For related policy, see [6351](#) Incarcerated Parents.

## TYPES OF INCARCERATION FACILITIES

### Correctional Centers (Private)

These are privately operated correctional centers that house Correctional Institutions division (CID) offenders.

### County Jails

County jails are managed by the county sheriff or designee. The county jail facility's primary role is to hold defendants awaiting trial or those who have been convicted and sentenced to county jail.

### Federal Prisons

Federal prisons are managed and run by the U.S. government. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is responsible for the centralized administration of federal prisons. Federal prison inmates have been convicted for violation of a federal law.

### State Jail Facilities

State jails house individuals who have committed certain kinds of felony crimes (primarily property crimes and low-level controlled substance offenses) that have a maximum sentence of two years and a mandatory term of community supervision. Some state jails are privately operated and house state felons as well as CID transfer offenders.

### Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)

TDCJ is the agency which manages the overall operation of the state's prison system, parole, and state jail systems. The agency also provides funding, training, and certain oversight of community supervision.

### Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD), formerly The Texas Youth Commission (TYC)

TJJD promotes public safety by operating juvenile correctional facilities. It also partners with youth, families, and communities to provide a safe and secure environment for youth in the agency's care and custody. These youths receive individualized education, treatment, life skills, employment training and positive role models to aid in successful community reintegration.

## LOCATING A PARENT WHO IS INCARCERATED

Parental incarceration is a unique challenge facing families and the caseworkers that serve them. At the beginning of the case, the child's caseworker determines if the parent's location is unknown or if either or both parents are incarcerated. If a caseworker learns that a parent is incarcerated in any of the types of facilities described above, the caseworker takes the following steps to locate the parent.

To locate a parent in a Texas Department of Criminal Justice Facility (a Texas prison or State Jail) contact the Office of Classification and Records in Huntsville, Texas at:

- 1-936-437-6564 or 1-800-535-0283;
- visit the [Texas Department of Criminal Justice](#) website; or
- look for the Quick (Link) box and use the list just as the TDCJ website has it.

### Parents Not Under TDCJ Supervision

The parent the caseworker is seeking may be in a confinement facility other than TDCJ, in which case the caseworker contacts that facility directly. The following links may be useful:

- [Federal Bureau of Prisons \(BOP\)](#) (contains online inmate locator). The BOP Office of Public Affairs is 202-307-3198 or you may e-mail them at [webmaster@bop.gov](mailto:webmaster@bop.gov).
- [Victim Information and Notification Everyday](#) (Vine Link) to locate a parent who may be incarcerated in another State.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice for other [U.S. State Departments of Corrections](#) and other [Texas Law Enforcement Agencies](#).
- Texas Department of Public Safety [Crime Records Service Public Site](#).

The following are some additional links not supported or endorsed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice:

- [Prison Search Ancestor Hunt](#)
- [Corrections.com](#)

### **GUIDELINES FOR CASEWORKER VISITATION TO AN INCARCERATION FACILITY**

It is best to call the incarceration facility before attempting to meet with the parent, to determine if there are any special visiting times or other rules associated with visiting an inmate. When visiting an incarceration facility the caseworker should:

- know the name of the incarcerated parent;
- always have proper identification when visiting a facility;
- know the facility's visitation policy, including procedures and restrictions (such as, all visitors must be on the offender's visiting list);
- dress appropriately when visiting the incarceration institution; and
- communicate any safety concerns with the facility staff; for example, if a caseworker is facilitating a visit and overhears a discussion among inmates and visitors that may lead to violence, or if the caseworker thinks the physical location of the visit presents a safety concern for the child.

### **ENGAGING AN INCARCERATED PARENT**

Engaging a parent in service planning and building or maintaining a healthy relationship with the child can be more challenging with an incarcerated parent. Just like parents who are not in a locked facility, incarcerated parents must be involved in case planning and receive a copy of their child's and their own plan of service, as well as be updated about the case on a regular basis. Here are some guidelines the caseworker can use to engage the parent:

- Meet with the incarcerated parent face-to-face if the location of the facility is within the region. If not, seek assistance from CPS staff housed in the facility's region. If that is not possible, obtain input from the incarcerated parent via mail. When sending a letter to the incarcerated parent, include a self-addressed postage paid envelope so the parent can respond.
- Explain the CPS process:
  - inform the parent of the timelines associated with a CPS case; and
  - provide the brochure appropriate to the stage of service (INV, FBSS, and CVS).
- Use a strengths-based case management approach to effectively engage the parent and child in visitation planning. For example, a parent can use his or her incarceration to encourage the child to excel in school or the parent can communicate to the child about making healthy life choices.
- Obtain input from the incarcerated parent about what he or she wants for the child.

- Make every effort to obtain the identity of relatives and fictive kin of the incarcerated parent (see the [Services to Kinship Caregivers Resource Guide](#) for the definition of a fictive kin), as support for the child, support for the incarcerated parent, and as potential placement options for the child.
- Ask for the parent's input on the child's plan of service.
- Discuss the different types of contact currently available and permitted between the child and parent.
- Share with the parent any issues that may initially affect the quality and quantity of the contact (such as CPS recommendations, restrictions imposed by the courts, facility rules and regulations, and so on).
- Assist the parent in talking with the child and answering difficult questions about their relationship, the incarceration or other appropriate topics.
- Assist the incarcerated parent in working through feelings of fear, shame, isolation, rejection, anger or depression concerning the restrictions or lack of contact with the child during his or her incarceration.
- Explain that sustained contact with the child is behavior-driven, and the importance of appropriate and timely notification is critical when the parent is not permitted visits as a result of disciplinary sanction, reasons of facility security, and transfer to another facility or conditional or unconditional release from a facility or program.
- Address special challenges and issues facing the parent or the child, including literacy, learning disabilities, physical or mental disabilities, or indigence.
- Ensure any letters written to the parent are written in a way that the parent can understand them.
- Find out what services are available to the incarcerated parent in their facility and incorporate them as appropriate into the parent's service plan and encourage participation.

## **SERVICE PLANNING FOR THE INCARCERATED PARENT**

See [6242](#) The Family Plan of Service (FPOS).

### **Services for the Incarcerated Parent**

To find out what services are available to the incarcerated parent contact the facility.

For state correctional facilities, a designated chaplain is assigned to the inmate. The chaplain can advise or assist the caseworker in determining what services are provided at the correctional facility or unit.

Contact the Department of Chaplaincy 1-936-437-4965 to locate the chaplain for a specific facility.

### **Guidelines for Visitation Between Parent and Child in an Incarceration Facility**

See [6351](#) Incarcerated Parents, under Contact Between a Child and an Incarcerated Parent.

If, after careful consideration, the caseworker and supervisor determine that face-to-face visits should occur, the caseworker contacts the individual jail or prison unit to set up and coordinate the visit. In doing this, the caseworker:

- contacts the correctional facility about the facility's visitation policy, including procedures and restrictions (such as all visitors must be on the offender's visiting list);
- determines if there is a social worker or chaplain who can help with arranging visits; and
- asks about any special family visitation programs such as the MATCH/PATCH program.

The MATCH/PATCH Program stands for Mothers And Their Children and Papas And Their Children. This program helps incarcerated parents to become better parents. The [Classification](#) program screens inmates who apply to be in this program. Once in the program, the inmate has to attend classes during the week. The inmate also has to exhibit good behavior to be able to get a one hour visit with his or her child and to stay in the program.

**Guidelines for Ensuring Successful Contact Between the Child and the Incarcerated Parent**

To best prepare for successful contact between the child and the incarcerated parent the caseworker should take the following steps:

- Talk with the parent before the visit to help him or her focus on the purpose and benefit of the visit. This will help the parent and child use visits productively. For example, the parent calms the child's worry and lets the child know he or she is fine (this is positive interaction between the child and the parent).
- Prepare the child and caregiver for what it will be like to visit a jail or prison. This will depend on the facility and the facility's rules. Some examples of things to make children aware of are:
  - a lot of people waiting to visit their loved ones;
  - a glass partition between the child and the parent;
  - the child and parent may need to talk on a phone; or
  - the child and parent will not be able to touch or hug.
- Be prepared for the possibility of resistance from the child's caregivers.
  - If met with resistance the caseworker should discuss the importance of visitation with the parent and how that can help maintain connections, allay children's anxieties about where their parents are, and so on.
  - Caregivers may want to protect the child from the parent and from the prison environment, citing the child's behavior and mood before, during, and after visits as a reason for discontinuing visits. The caseworker needs to be prepared to help the caregiver better understand that it's natural for children to have emotional reactions to visiting their parents no matter where the parents are, because they miss them, worry about them, want to go home, and so on.
  - After the visit the caseworker should take time to discuss the child's reaction to the visit with the child and the child's caregiver.