



Visiting prison

Visits from family and whānau can help people in prison cope with their sentence and prepare for their return to the community.

Know your stuff

Before your visit, check that you know the rules and regulations about visiting prison.

You can:

- » check the Corrections' website for prison locations and phone numbers
- » phone the prison you are visiting to ask about local arrangements.

Generally, you will need to find out:

- » if you are an approved visitor
- » how visits are booked
- » any identification you'll need
- » what you can and can't take into the prison (including your own medication, if needed).

At the prison

All visitors have to go through security, including a metal detector. Prisons may also have drug detection dogs working. Remember the rules are there to protect you as well as staff and prisoners. Prison staff are the best people to ask for information and help.

Tips

- » Your car can be searched while on prison grounds.
- » Leave jewellery at home, dress simply.
- » Check your pockets before you leave your car.
- » Leave cellphones and cigarettes and lighters in the car.

Avoiding trouble

Visits are a privilege, not a right. If you break the rules you can face serious consequences including having your visits stopped, or being charged yourself. If you need help with these issues contact Pillars for support.

Visiting with children

Visits can be a helpful way for children to remain in touch with a parent in prison. Sometimes taking children to visit a person in prison will not be in their best interests. If an offence was committed against the child by the person in prison they may not be allowed in by prison management.

Visiting prison can be overwhelming for children. It can help if you have a visit first on your own so you can help prepare them before they go. Encourage children to visit the Justus website, which has a walk-through of a visit to prison to help prepare them.

Encourage your children to think of some stories to share with the person they are visiting about things that have been happening at home or at school. Check in with children about how they feel about visiting. Allow them to change their mind too.



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Ka Pou Whakahou





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Children of Prisoners"
Breaking Cycles of Crime



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Visits areas

Visits areas are open plan and you will be among other prisoners and visitors. Your physical contact with the person you visit will be limited.

If you are visiting with children think about having another adult with you who can take them out when they have had enough. This gives you uninterrupted time with the person you are visiting.

Some visits are booth visits, where you are separated from the person you are visiting by a glass partition. This is usually because someone has been found in a drug-related incident in prison or for visitors caught trying to bring prohibited items in.

Other ways to keep in touch

If it is difficult to visit often, you can write or have the person in prison phone home instead. Some prisons can arrange 'virtual visits' where you can go to a local Corrections site in the community, and visit your family member through video conferencing.

Complaints

If you feel you have been unfairly treated, you have a right to complain and there is a process to follow. Talk to prison staff first. A Pillars support worker can help you work out what it is you are complaining about and to focus on the issue.

Let prisoners handle their own complaints. They may not want an issue raised or may not have given you all the information.

Saying goodbye

Try to make the goodbye a pleasant experience and don't linger with the children. It's not unusual to feel low after a visit so be kind to yourself and try to plan something relaxing to do for the rest of the day.

Who can help?

Pillars has a range of services including a free and confidential helpline for anyone who is affected by the imprisonment of a close family member or friend.

Pillars - Ph 0508 PILLARS (0508 7 45 527) or visit www.pillars.org.nz

Department of Corrections - Find information for families and friend of people in prison on the website www.corrections.govt.nz