

LAWMAKER GUIDE:

FAMM

Making The Most Out Of Your FAMM #VisitAPrison

Thank you for participating in the #VisitAPrison initiative! Here are some tips and questions to ask to get the most out of your visit to a prison.

Activities to Include in Your Visit – And Areas to Investigate

Whether your visit is a surprise or planned in advance, don't miss this opportunity to dive deeper and interact with those living and working at the facility. Below are some areas to investigate and questions to ask.

Visitation and Family Ties: Ask to see the visitation rooms during visiting hours, and speak to some of the family members there about their visitation experiences.



Questions to ask the people living there and their families:

1. How often do you get to visit each other in person here at this facility?
2. How far did you have to travel to get to the facility for this visit?
3. What are some of the challenges and difficulties of doing a prison visit?

Tips from family members:

Families often have to travel hours to see their loved ones. Because their time with their loved ones is so limited, they may not be interested in speaking with you. Please politely ask for their time and consent to discuss their experiences with you and consider asking them after they've met with their loved ones.

Incarcerated People's Backgrounds and Family Impacts: Ask to meet with people incarcerated there and ask them about their experiences in the criminal justice system, their backgrounds and rehabilitation, and the impact of incarceration on their families.

Questions to ask people incarcerated at the facility:

1. How has prison impacted or changed you personally, for better and for worse?
2. How has prison impacted or changed your family or your relationships with your family?
3. What hardship has being in prison caused your family? (for example, financial, emotional, relational, and mental health)
4. How long is your sentence? How long have you been here?
5. What do you think accountability should look like?
6. What changes have you made since your incarceration? And what are the challenges you are facing in rehabilitation? Who were you upon arrival at this facility, who are you now?
7. If you had an opportunity to be released, what would you do? What are your goals? Are there programs that would be helpful for you to meet those goals?
8. What are your concerns or worries about reentry?



Tips from family members:

Incarcerated people fear retaliation (and may experience it) for speaking negatively about their prison experience. Keep this in mind as you ask questions and listen to their answers. Please respect people's privacy and don't publicly share the names of anyone you meet without their permission.

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Health Care: Ask to see health care facilities and speak to some of the staff and patients about their experiences with medical care in prison or jail.

Questions to ask incarcerated people and medical staff:

1. How long do incarcerated people have to wait to receive an appointment with a doctor?
To receive dental care?
2. What is the quality of health and dental care like at this facility? What should be done to improve it?
3. Are there enough medical and dental staff to meet all the needs of incarcerated people?
4. **Does the prison have sufficient and up-to-date medical equipment to address serious health conditions like COVID-19, cancer, dementia, and HIV/AIDS?**
5. When an incarcerated person is very ill or elderly, do medical staff notify incarcerated people of the availability of medical or geriatric release or parole, or notify the prison that a person might qualify for such a release or parole? If not, why not?



Rehabilitative Programming and Education: Ask to sit in on a rehabilitative program or class and judge for yourself whether people are receiving quality treatment or education to help them rehabilitate themselves.

Questions to ask incarcerated people and staff:

1. What is the most helpful or transformative class or program you have taken while in prison? How will it help you after you are released?
2. What programs, treatment, or classes would you like to see added here?
3. What resources does the prison need to create or improve more programs?
4. Are there sufficient staff and properly qualified staff to run programs?
5. Do programs have waitlists? How long are they?



Correctional Officers and Staff: Ask to meet with staff and talk with them about their working conditions and concerns.

Questions to ask staff:

1. What are your top needs or concerns working here at the prison?
2. What programs, treatment, or classes would you like to see added here for incarcerated people?
3. What resources does the prison need to create or improve more programs?
4. Are there sufficient staff and properly qualified staff to run programs?
5. What new or additional resources would help staff who work here?



Food Safety, Availability, and Quality:

1. Ask to eat a meal in the prison cafeteria and experience incarcerated people's daily diet.
2. Ask to see the prison commissary and the food items available there – many incarcerated people eat many meals from items bought at the commissary.

