



EXTENDED FAMILY VISITS IN PRISON

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EXTENDED FAMILY VISITS

- Defined as a prolonged visit in an area apart from the inmate population
- Visits must involve the inmate's child and another immediate family member
- Visits last 24 hours
- DOC directives set general program rules but individual prisons can adopt additional rules

QUESTION

Provide information on extended family visits in Connecticut prisons, including whether conjugal visits are allowed.

SUMMARY

We did not find any statutes governing extended family visits (EFV). But Department of Correction (DOC) directives describe the program. According to the directives, an EFV is a prolonged visit in a designated secure area separate from the inmate population. To participate in these visits:

1. inmates must meet certain criteria, such as having good disciplinary records and not being subject to higher security requirements;
2. the inmate's minor child (under age 18) must participate, accompanied by an authorized adult family member or Department of Children and Families-authorized adult; and
3. either the inmate's spouse, child's legal guardian, or inmate's parent must participate.

Other permissible visitors include the inmate's sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or legal guardian (DOC Directive 10.6).

According to DOC, an inmate can have up to four EFVs per year but they must be at least 90 days apart. Although DOC states that an EFV is not a conjugal visit program, but one that promotes family visits with children, inmates remain in the program after their children become adults.

DOC states that these inmates need to reapply for admission to the program if they stop participating or were removed for disciplinary reasons. To re-apply, the inmate must satisfy the eligibility criteria which requires participation by a minor child.

GENERAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Under DOC directives, an inmate can participate in the EFV program if he or she:

1. is not on restrictive status (a status which imposes more restrictive conditions and supervision than those imposed on the general inmate population);
2. is not in level four close custody (inmates and facilities are classified as levels one to five, with five requiring the most security);
3. is not a member of a security risk group, such as a gang;
4. does not have a class A disciplinary offense in the two years, or a class B disciplinary offense in the 12 months, prior to the request to participate (the York Correctional Institution unit administrator can waive this requirement at that facility)(DOC classifies disciplinary offenses as A, B, or C, with A being the most serious);
5. undergoes a test for tuberculosis and any socially or transmittable disease deemed necessary; and
6. pays a \$10 program participation fee (DOC Directives 3.12(6) and 10.6).

An inmate's spouse must provide a copy of an annual test for tuberculosis by a licensed provider or medical center. The facility must provide pre- and post-test counseling for both the inmate and spouse. The inmate and all appropriate visitors must sign a waiver of state responsibility before the visit. A spouse cannot participate if the inmate and spouse were not legally married before the inmate's current incarceration.

Visitors must be on the inmate's approved visitation list, which requires visitors to apply for approval and undergo a criminal history and warrant search.

GENERAL EFV RULES AND EFV UNIT DESCRIPTION

According to information provided by DOC, EFV visits last 24 hours, beginning at 8:30 AM on a Saturday or Wednesday and ending at 8:30 AM the following day.

Visitors must arrive early so staff can check their identities and inspect any items they bring. Staff then escort the visitors to the EFV unit before bringing the inmate to the unit. The inmate must wear the appropriate inmate uniform and can only enter and exit the unit with authorized items. Correctional staff do not remain in the unit during the EFV. When the visit ends, staff escort visitors to their cars, bring the inmate out of the unit to conduct a strip search and take a urine sample, and return the inmate to his or her regular housing unit.

We asked about a typical EFV unit and DOC provided us with information about a room at the MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution. This unit is similar to a two bedroom apartment, with a bathroom; kitchen; dining area; living room with a TV, DVD, and VCR; and space for a desk. The kitchen includes items such as a refrigerator and freezer, stove and oven, microwave, coffeemaker, toaster, utensils, pots, and pans. The room also includes games such as Jenga, dominoes, Stratego, and Yahtzee and two decks of playing cards. Attachment A shows the layout of this unit, as provided by DOC.

FACILITY RULES

In addition to the general rules, DOC directives require individual facilities to adopt specific rules for EFV programs and create an application, approval, and scheduling process (DOC Directive 10.6). We asked DOC for an example of a facility's rules and DOC provided MacDougall-Walker Correctional Institution's visitation rules.

Inmate Eligibility

At MacDougall-Walker, inmates must:

1. be incarcerated at the MacDougall facility for at least 90 days;
2. have been a sex offender treatment score below three (inmates are scored from one to five, with five requiring the most serious treatment);
3. have favorable work reports and program performance evaluations;
4. have no community release, transitional supervision, or parole violations in the past 24 months;
5. have no escapes within the past two years;
6. not be on high security status;
7. if an out-of-state inmate, have served at least one year at a DOC facility;

8. if guilty of a class C disciplinary report, have waited 90 days for reinstatement consideration;
9. complete, participate in, or be on the approved waiting list for a program in parenting, family time, or embracing fatherhood; and
10. have no disciplinary offenses for assaulting a DOC employee for a period determined by the unit administrator (Unit Directive 10.6).

Requirements for Visitors

DOC Directive 10.6 allows a unit administrator to determine how many people are allowed on an EFV at the same time. At MacDougall-Walker, no more than five people, including the inmate, are allowed in the EFV unit. MacDougall-Walker also has the following additional rules for visitors:

1. Visitors must be free of any criminal supervision, such as probation or parole.
2. Victims of an inmate's crime cannot participate.
3. A step-parent can participate if he or she was legally married to the inmate's parent during the inmate's formative years.
4. No one from another prison or under DOC supervision can participate until one year after discharge from his or her sentence.

Only one inmate can participate in an EFV at a time, and brothers, fathers, and sons cannot combine visits.

MacDougall-Walker restricts visitation by children to (1) those born during a legal marriage; (2) step-children between ages seven and 12, if there is a confirmed, long-term parent-child relationship with the inmate during the child's formative years (ages 7 to 12); and (3) step-children who were under age seven at the time of the marriage.

For a child to participate, the facility must receive:

1. a certified copy of the child's birth certificate showing the inmate as the biological father,
2. a written document from an authorized visitor stating that he or she will accompany the child, and
3. consent to the visit in a notarized letter from the child's legal guardian.

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Attachment A: MacDougall-Walker Correction Institute Extended Family Visit Unit

MWCI EFV Unit #1: Not to Scale

