

The Inmate Family Council at Valley State Prison



Your family's connection with the California State Prisons

What is the IFC ?

Each prison has an Inmate Family Council. The IFC is a group of family members and friends of inmates who have volunteered and been approved by the Warden to:

- ❖ Establish effective lines of communication between institution, inmate families and significant inmate relationships.
- ❖ Promote better understanding regarding the correctional programming that affects family members and significant relationships.
- ❖ Promote better understanding by the institution of the effect that correctional programming has on maintaining family and significant relationships.

Article II, IFC By-laws

Why are Inmate Families Important ?

Visiting rules are an integral part of Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations;

“These regulations are made in recognition and consideration of the value of inmate VISITATION as a means of increasing safety in prisons, maintaining family and community connections, and preparing inmates for successful release and rehabilitation.”

15 CCR § 3170

How does the IFC Communicate ?

The IFC at each prison has different methods of communication. At a minimum, the IFC:

- ❖ Maintains a Bulletin Board located in Visitor Processing containing the minutes of past meetings and other helpful information for families.

The IFC at VSP also communicates via:

- ❖ The VSP IFC Website: www.VSP-IFC.org
- ❖ IFC Suggestion Box located in Visitor Processing
- ❖ IFC Members will wear their badges in Visiting
- ❖ At social events for families to interact with Council members
- ❖ IFC Blog on IFC website

What does the IFC do?

The IFC meets with the Warden monthly or bi-monthly. Subject to an agenda, the IFC, through its Chairperson, seeks to identify and recommend solutions to issues impacting inmates, families, and friends. With a cooperative spirit, the IFC helps to focus on finding solutions. While IFC discussions include health, education, vocational training, packages, books, and related issues, these discussions are generally about prison-wide issues, and not the problems of a particular inmate.

The IFC also raises funds for, and helps improve, visiting by identifying needs for the visiting room and providing games, books, and other activities.

Prison Family Bill of Rights

The Prison Family* has the right:

- ❖ To be treated with respect and dignity by any and all representatives of the prison system at all times.
- ❖ To be treated and integrated as a positive resource in the process of rehabilitation and reintegration preparation and parole planning of an incarcerated loved one.
- ❖ To receive consistency in the enforcement of rules; regulations and policies affecting a loved one's incarceration.
- ❖ To receive consistency in the enforcement of rules; regulations and/or policies affecting visitation and/or all forms of communication with an incarcerated loved one.
- ❖ To be informed in a timely, clear, forthright and respectful manner of any changes in rules; regulations and/or policies affecting visitation and/or communication with an incarcerated loved one.
- ❖ To be provided the current specific name or names and direct phone numbers of prison officials to contact for questions about their incarcerated loved one.

2012 National Prisoner's Family Conference

*The term "**Prison Family**" is defined as one who will serve as an outside contact on an inmate's behalf for relaying communication and/or making decisions on behalf of the inmate.

How Can You Help ? Apply to Join Your IFC!

Applications to join the Inmate Family Council can be found in the Visitor Processing Center below the Bulletin Board or it can be downloaded from the VSP IFC website at www.VSP-IFC.org

Note: all IFC members must be approved visitors and must be approved by the Warden.

Participate in IFC Efforts

Even if you do not have the time or interest in becoming a full-time member of the IFC, take the time to learn what they are doing.

Volunteers are needed to:

- ❖ Collect games, toys, books for the Visiting Rooms,
- ❖ Provide toys and movies for the Children's area of the Visiting Rooms or Family Visiting Units,
- ❖ Collect books to be donated to the Prison Library,
- ❖ Interact with local businesses to provide discounts to inmate families,
- ❖ Write blogs to be posted to the website with latest prison-related happenings in the State and Local area.

THANK YOU for everything you do!

"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

-Gandhi

When my Inmate has a problem What can I do?

Specific inmate issues can be raised with staff through appropriate written communication, phone calls, appeals, and contact with the Ombudsman.

Family members should become familiar with:

- ❖ California Code of Regulations, Title 15
- ❖ Director's Rules (also known as the "DOM" or Department Operations Manual.)
- ❖ Local Operational Procedures (OP's) determined by each local prison

Information can be found on the CDCR website at www.cdcr.ca.gov or at your local library.

Other Resources

Office of the Ombudsman:
www.cdcr.ca.gov/Ombuds/index.html

Friends Outside (site on prison grounds)
www.friendsoutside.org

Your State Senator or Assemblyman
www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html