

## Frequently Asked Questions: Visitation

In an effort to improve the experience for all visiting offenders under the supervision of the Georgia Department of Corrections, below please find a list answer to frequently asked questions regarding the visitation process:

1. **Is visitation a right?** No. While it is important for every offender to maintain connections with and the support of family and friends during incarceration, the safety and security of staff, offenders and visitors are critical. Therefore, visitation is a privilege afforded to offenders and should not be considered as a right.
2. **My family member is currently going through the diagnostic process at a facility. Can I visit?** No. Offenders will not be allowed to have visits while they are completing the diagnostic process. If the diagnostic process is not complete after 60 days, the offender will complete a visitation list containing the names of immediate family members. Once this list is completed, it will be reviewed for approval by the warden and/or designated facility staff. This list will be used for visitation at the diagnostic facility until the offender is transferred to a permanent assignment.
3. **Who can visit?** Members of an offender's immediate family, (for example, parents, brothers, sisters, spouse, grandparents, grandchildren, and children) may be requested by the offender for visitation approval. Individuals, who are not considered as "immediate" family members as described above (for example step-parents, step-siblings, in-laws, uncle, aunt, cousin, half-brother/sister, nephew, niece or step-son/daughter, friends, employers, pastors, and other relationships that have the potential for rehabilitative support ), may be considered as a *significant relationship visitor*. For individuals wanting to visit as a significant relationship visitor, the offender must initiate such a request. The offender will need to complete the "Significant Relationship Visitor Application for Visitation Privilege" form, which is then sent to the Warden/Superintendent for review. Once approved or disapproved, the offender will be notified and in turn, the offender is responsible for notifying the person seeking to visit as a *significant relationship visitor* whether the person was approved or not approved to visit. Supporting documentation needed to verify relationships may be required by the facility.
4. **How do I get approved for visitation?** Offenders must request that you be added to their approved visitation list. Offenders may request to add or delete a name on their visitor list by contacting their counselor and complete all of the necessary information on the

visitation list form. The counselor will forward this request to the Warden/Superintendent or designee, who is approves or disapproves changes to offenders' visitation list. Visitor lists may only be changed when offenders arrive at their first permanent facility or during the months of May and November, but no t any earlier than six months from the last change request. Approval or disapproval of a changed visitor list shall be completed and forwarded back offenders within fourteen (14) working days from the date of the requested. Please note that address changes for visitors shall not be subject to the six (6) month review criteria and all corrections shall be done when offenders provide this information.

5. **If I am an ex-offender can I be approved for visitation?** In order for offenders, ex-offenders, probationers, and parolees to visit, approval must be granted by the Warden/Superintendent prior to being placed on the approved visitor list. All former offenders must have clear Georgia Crime Information Center (GCIC) criminal history report for one year following their release from prison or since being placed on probation or parole. In addition, the procedures for being placed on an offender's visitor list as outlined in Questions # 3 above apply in addition to clearing the GCIC check.
  
6. **Can I visit once and not be on the approved visitation list?** Each offender may request a "special visit." Special visits are reviewed for approval on an individual basis by the Warden/Superintendent or designee. Under normal circumstances, special visits require a minimum of forty-eight (48) hours advance notice. Special visits will be reviewed on a case by case basis by the Warden or his/her designee, and will take into consideration the offender's institutional conduct when making the decision to approve or disapprove such a request. Please note that the Warden/Superintendent may depart from this requirement due to the urgency and/or time sensitive nature of the special visit request.

Other examples of special visits may include:

- Offenders, who have documented protective custody needs, may be required to visit at times when other potentially threatening offenders are not in the visitation area.
- When a family member lives far away, i.e. out-of-state, a family member is in the military on personal leave, a family member is unable to drive and must be driven to the facility for visitation by a non-family member, significant other, child advocacy groups bringing children, clergy, change in family that relatives want to inform the offender of, i.e. death, birth, marriage, extreme illness, incentive award programs may be developed to earn special visits.

- Special visits may also be utilized for offenders' immediate family that have recently been discharged from prison or that are on probation or parole. Special visits will be limited to no more than two (2) visitors at any one time.

7. **What are the days and times of visitation?** Normally, visitation occurs on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, and the duration of each visiting period will be for a minimum of six (6) hours. Because some facilities have smaller visitation areas than others, it is necessary to split the visitation schedule (i.e. offenders with a last name beginning with any letter A-K visits 9:00 AM – 12:00 PM and any offender with a last name beginning with any letter L-Z visits 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM). Please note that all State facilities and Private Prisons will observe those days proclaimed by the Governor of Georgia as legal state holidays. In addition, County institutions will observe legal holidays that are recognized by their local governing authority. For further detail of the specific visitation hours at the facility to which an offender is assigned, one must contact that facility to obtain more detailed information.

8. **Can I visit the whole day?** Normally, there will be no restrictions placed on the length of visits during the facility's established visitation periods. However, certain situations that may affect the length of time for a visit. Below please find a general list of situations:

- in order to have the offender in the visitation area during the mid-day count, visitors must arrive at the facility one (1) hour prior to the time that is designated by the Warden as the mid-day count. The mid-day count time shall be posted in all living areas and in the visitation room.
- the shift supervisor has the authority to adjust the length of visitation times allotted to individual offenders, or to terminate visits, during times of overcrowding.
- the shift supervisor may also terminate individual visits because of improper conduct or failure to abide by regulations.
- if an offender has more than one visitor on a given day, individual visitors may be limited to a time of less than four (4) hours.
- if overcrowding requires the termination of visits, offenders who had their visits begun first will normally be the first to have their visits terminated. However, such factors as relationships, frequency of visits, distance traveled, etc. will be taken into consideration.

9. **Where do I park when I arrive at the facility?** All visitors' vehicles will be parked in the facility's designated visitor parking lot. All windows must be closed and doors locked. Visitors will not park in any of the restricted areas, which have been marked. No persons or pets will be left in vehicles parked in the parking lot on the facility's grounds (considered State property) for any reason.

10. **What is the dress code for visitation?** Visitors are required to wear appropriate attire. Shoes are required at all times for visitors, including children if they are able to walk or stand. Male visitors will be required to wear shirts and full-length trousers. Females may wear trousers, or if a female visitor wears a dress, skirt or other similar garment, it may NOT be more than two (2) inches above the knees. Furthermore, all female visitors must wear foundation type garments such as bras, panties, and slip.

Inappropriate clothing shall include, but not be limited to:

- Dresses or tops with thin straps which expose shoulders or chest area in any manner;
- tube tops or halters of any type;
- any type of clothing which reveals the stomach or midriff area;
- any type of clothing that is made of sheer or transparent material;
- shorts of any kind or any kind of slacks that are above the knee (twelve 12) years old and under may wear shorts);
- Male visitors are not permitted to wear tank tops or short tops of any kind, nor see-through tops made of net or mesh webbing. Shorts are not permitted (children twelve 12 years old and under may wear shorts).
- Any other type of clothing that is suggestive or revealing in any way shall be prohibited.

11. **What type of identification do I need to have in order to be allowed to visit at the facility?** Visitors are required to present positive identification prior to their admission for visiting. A driver's license with picture, a picture identification card issued by the Department of Public Safety, or other acceptable photographic identification card will be required of all visitors age sixteen (16) and over. A temporary driver's license issued by the Department of Public Safety will be acceptable when accompanied by some other form of appropriate picture identification. Identification cards will be maintained in a secure area outside the actual visitation area and will be returned at the conclusion of the visit.

12. **What items am I allowed to bring to visitation?** Visitors can only bring into the facility items identified by the facility (i.e., identification card, car keys) No food or drink will be brought into the facility from the outside other than bottled formula or like store-bought products for babies. Visitors will be allowed to bring a maximum of twenty dollars (\$20.00) in coins to be used for the vending machines. Funds from visitors for offenders will be accepted only through the mail. Musical instruments, radios, pets, cameras, or tape recorders will not be allowed in the visiting area.
13. **Will I be searched?** All visitors are subject to a preliminary search of their person by electronic surveillance instruments (metal detectors, etc.). All items brought into the facility by a visitor will be searched by officers assigned to the visitation area. If correctional staff determine that there is reasonable suspicion of violations of department policies on contraband a more thorough search must be conducted. If this occurs, the visit will not be permitted without the visitor consenting to such a search, and then only after the search is completed will the visit occur.
14. **Can I visit another offender at the same facility?** No. One offender's visitors will not be allowed to visit with another offender or his/her visitors.