

**STATE of
CONNECTICUT**

Department of Correction

HANDBOOK

FOR VIPs

VOLUNTEERS

INTERNS



And

PROFESSIONAL PARTNERS

State of CT-DOC
Volunteer Services Unit
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide basic information about the roles and opportunities available for Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners (VIPs) with the Connecticut Department of Correction.

This handbook presents the mission of the Department, a review of appropriate conduct for citizen involvement, general security information with a listing and map to locate our facilities.

While this information is not intended to answer every question concerning responsibility and commitment, this handbook addresses those areas of interest most expressed by past and present VIPs.

It is important for you to read this handbook carefully and to use it as a reference guide. If specific questions or issues arise which are not covered, you may speak with the Supervisor of the VIP Unit or any one of our designated facility or parole VIP Coordinators.

Please note that the Department of Correction reserves the right to remove or deny a VIP access to an institution without provocation or cause.

***Volunteering for the Connecticut Department of Correction is a Privilege
Not a Right.***

We will make every effort to inform you of policies, program changes and opportunities.

We trust that your involvement with the Department of Correction will support staff and offender services, and that your experiences will be personally or professionally rewarding.



Connecticut Department of Correction

VISION and MISSION

STATEMENT

Vision: Recidivism is reduced by providing offenders the tools and resources to make positive changes for a successful transition back into the community.

Mission: The Department of Correction shall strive to be a global leader in progressive correctional practices and partnered re-entry initiatives to support responsive evidence-based practices aligned to law-abiding and accountable behaviors. Safety and security shall be a priority component of this responsibility as it pertains to staff, victims, citizens and offenders.

Guiding Principles

- Provide Individualized programming, education and skills training for participants
- Shared economic, community, social and collaborative partnerships
- Research and best practices
- Provide learning opportunities for hands on experiential learning

To complement the overall mission of the Department of Correction, the VIP Services Unit continuously seeks Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners (VIPs) in order to compliment the CT DOC overall mission.

The VIP Services Unit currently offers a wide variety of opportunities for approved Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners to support agency staff in the provision of:

- ▯ **Addiction Services**
- ▯ **Chaplaincy Services**
- ▯ **Education/Programming Services**



The Goals of the VIP Unit are to:

- Develop a welcoming climate for Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners
- Establish standards and guidelines for organization and administration
- Provide insight, information and technical assistance to develop activities
- Recruit, train and supervise program staff working with Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners
- Plan and implement the orderly expansion of resources
- Serve as a liaison to other public and private agencies
- Provide information to the general public about VIP Services
- Provide experiential education opportunities through internships

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT IN CORRECTIONS

VIP Programs and Services broaden and enhance the work done by corrections staff. VIPs strengthen formal treatment programs, supplement education and assist in reducing recidivism. Individuals contribute in varied areas such as:

Offering support services

- Developing offenders' decision-making or problem-solving skills
- Organizing and coordinating specific activities and events as outlined in Memorandums of Understanding.
- Facilitating offender recovery, restoration and re-entry into the community
- Providing recidivism reduction based curriculum and workshops
- Building bridges between the CT DOC and Community Partners, supporting victim empathy and restorative justice.
- Facilitating fitness/wellness activities
- Supporting religious services
- Serving as facilitators for 12-Step substance abuse groups
- Developing Parenting skills and supporting family engagement

While this list is not complete, it illustrates that VIPs serve as a key component in our effort to help offenders make choices that may result in more effective community re-integration.

AS YOU BEGIN

As you prepare for working with DOC staff you need to examine the opportunities available, listed on our website.

Once you have filled out a VIP Application Form and completed the screening process (background check), **you will need to attend a VIP Safety and Security/PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) Orientation before you are fully authorized to contribute your time to a facility or community-based program.**

The Safety and Security/PREA Orientation will include a site sensitization (tour of the facility). You will be given information regarding the Department, its policies and procedures, offenders, rules and regulations, information about dress code, expected behavior and general assistance to help you adjust to conditions within a restrictive environment.

Safety and Security/PREA Orientation is provided to help VIPs better understand and manage risk that is inherent in working with people incarcerated or being supervised because of criminal activities. This training will enable you to function effectively within an institutional or restrictive environment. You will learn:

- The rules and why it's important not to compromise rules and regulations
- How to contact your designated Volunteer Coordinator
- Policies, procedures, and proper protocols to interact responsibly
- The importance of proper appearance, hygiene and good health
- Contraband and why VIPs are strictly prohibited from bringing them in. Contraband is identified as any items that are not authorized. Examples will be given at orientation



TRAINING/ORIENTATION

The Department of Correction requires that you attend in-service training sessions as scheduled. These training sessions will provide the information, techniques and skills necessary to work confidently and successfully with the offender population. Your willingness to share your time and abilities, which are invaluable, affect the lives of those who are incarcerated and supports the Department's goal to reduce criminality and recidivism.

An annual background check is also required. This takes place on or about the time you were initially cleared each year. You will receive an email with instructions and you must return the form or your status will be inactivated.

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS

VIPs are expected to use good judgment when confronted with a new or unusual situation within the correctional system. When there is any doubt as to a course of action, you should consult with your Volunteer/Program Coordinator or in their absence the facility Shift Supervisor.

As a VIP you must assist in this endeavor by reporting any action or condition which could compromise that responsibility; for example, information about offenders' behaviors/actions that could lead to escape, riot, suicide, sexual misconduct or damage to individuals or property

RULES FOR VIP's

VIPs in Connecticut Corrections must adhere to the following:

- Park appropriately. Lock all personal items in vehicle or leave in lockers (to include keys) provided at facility entrance.
- Always sign in and out when entering and leaving facilities.
- Masks are optional for all VIPs, Staff and Inmates. Medical masks only, no fabric or homemade permitted
- Take nothing, including cell phones, letters, personal items or other materials into a correctional facility. Absolutely NO unauthorized items will be allowed. Cameras, laptops, tablets, watches, DVD players, unauthorized DVDs/CDs, flash drives, recording or electronic devices, including games are strictly prohibited.
- When you leave the facility, leave nothing behind for an offender to use, even if you had permission to bring it into the facility.
- If keys or personal items are lost within a facility, report such a loss to your supervisor immediately.
- Do not take photographs or recordings on institutional property without prior permission.
- Do not affix or post a sign on institutional grounds without authorization.
- Please contact the facility if unable to attend on scheduled days.
- When within the secure perimeter of the facility, do not move around without staff escort unless given specific authorization to do so.
- Do not give anything to offenders without explicit permission. Materials or supplies may be given to offenders **by staff only**. Any resources needed will be procured or authorized by a facility supervisor.
- Do not give offenders personal information (about self or others), including telephone numbers, home addresses or e-mail. Your personal safety and security could be compromised and you can be terminated for undue familiarity.
- Do not convey any letters or offender's possessions including artwork or creative writing for any purpose without explicit permission from the Warden's office or administration.
- Do not make personal telephone calls, correspond, or perform similar services for an offender, i.e. Internet searches, copies, etc. Do not communicate with offenders through letters or tablets or accept phone calls.
- Do not give gifts, loans, money, articles, books, candies, medication (drugs/alcohol) etc. to offenders or their friends or family. Also DO NOT take or anything from, or give anything to, an offender, the offender's friends, or family.
- Do not become personally involved with the private or family matters of offenders.
- Solicitation of donations from offenders or offender's friends/families is strictly prohibited. Helping raise money for an offender or offender's family/friends is also prohibited.
- Do not enter into a business venture with an offender.
- Do not write letters of recommendations or refer offenders for employment or volunteer opportunities this would constitute favoritism or undue influence.

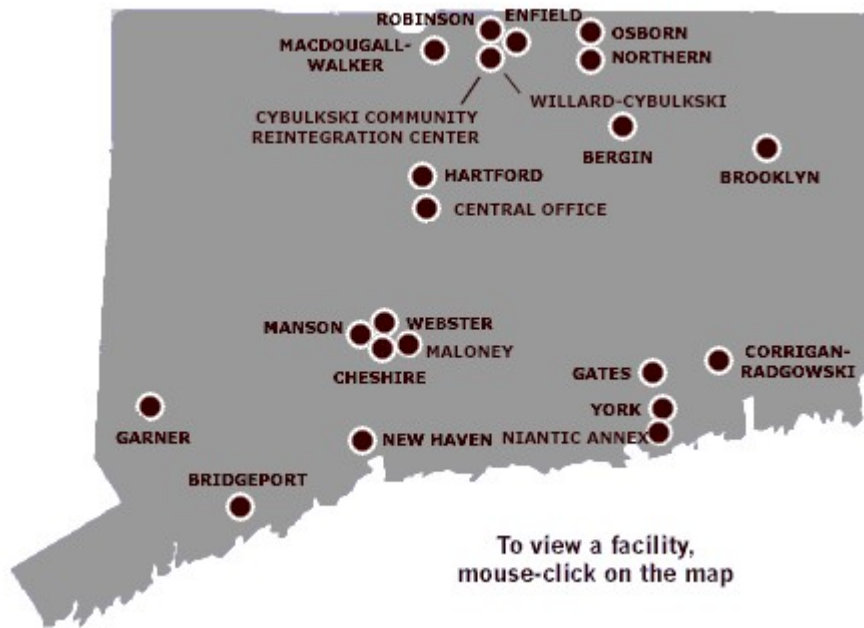
- Respect and maintain the integrity and confidentiality of records and other privileged information. Do not engage in gossip.
- Do not talk about staff, other volunteers or facility operations in the presence of offenders.
- Do not use indecent, abusive, humiliating, ridiculing, or profane language.
- Do not engage in activities that could compromise your integrity or effectiveness as a VIP; or any behavior which would reflect negatively on the Department of Correction.
- Conduct yourself in accordance with institutional/departmental rules. Follow all instructions from staff carefully and cooperate fully. If/when staff asks for information, communicate clearly and respectfully.
- Any signs of illness, accidents, or unusual behavior of offenders should be reported to the facility Shift supervisor or staff immediately.
- Immediately report to staff any expression or ideation about self-harm, suicide, threats, and damage to state property or misconduct including harassment.
- Immediately report to staff any inappropriate behavior or act of a sexual nature directed towards an offender by any other offender, any employee, contractor or volunteer, intern or professional partner. All sexual activity is inappropriate in any correctional setting. Your sign-off on the VIP application MOU binds you to compliance with the (federal and state) Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). **If you do not make every effort possible to detect, report, and refer for investigation any sexual misconduct you may be subject to criminal sanctions including prosecution.**
- Inappropriate signs of affection are strictly prohibited. It is imperative to maintain appropriate boundaries. Kissing, hugging, and/or inappropriately touching offenders is strictly forbidden.
- Do not engage in personal relationships with offenders. Please inform your volunteer coordinator if you have a family member or friend who is currently incarcerated or on parole to avoid potential conflicts of interests.
- You cannot be on an offender's visiting list at your current facility. VIPs who provide services to inmates may not visit inmates in a social capacity at facility locations where services are provided.
- You cannot use your VIP status to visit your family members or friends in any Department of Correction Institution.
- Professional Partners (AD 10.4) are not professional visitors and are not allowed to conduct Clergy Visits or provide services to offenders via Professional Visits (AD 10.6).
- Do not act in the capacity of a sponsor for an offender for any type of community release (i.e., any parole, transitional supervision, transitional placement, halfway house and/or any furlough, including reentry furlough) unless the offender is an immediate family member as defined by Administrative Directive 9.8, Furloughs AND when authorized by the Commissioner of Correction or designee.
- If you change your name through marriage, religious conversion, probate action, move to a new address or change phone number(s), remember to update new information to the facility VIP Coordinator in a timely manner.
- If arrested, given a Promise to Appear (PTA), or if you experience a significant personal hardship (to include illness or injury), you agree to report it to your facility supervisor and/or volunteer coordinator, and if appropriate, take leave from your VIP function until matters are resolved.

- Do not disseminate information to the press or on social media in regards to our agency.
- You are not authorized to do so. Please be informed that the Department of Correction has a specific division that handles public releases.
- If you are injured in any way while at a facility, report such injury to the Shift supervisor or staff immediately.
- Always be aware that as a VIP, offenders may expose you to injury or assault. In addition, VIPs are also required to complete a hostage card which will be filed in a secured area of the facility.
- Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners must understand and comply with staff to minimize risk, danger, possible injury, assault and the spread of infectious disease. Although every effort will be made to reduce your risk this is a shared responsibility.

Especially for Religious Services V.I.P.s

- You will maintain a relationship with a recognized endorsing Religious Institution or ministry organization.
- Please provide a letter of endorsement from your Religious Institution or ministry.
- If you are a Pastor, Priest, or Reverend, etc. please be informed that as a DOC VIP you cannot make personal visits to offenders that you know or who are members of your congregation.
- You will report to a correctional facility to conduct religious programming only when your group is scheduled.
- You will refrain from commenting on politically divisive issues.
- You will refrain from teaching and/or preaching dogmatic denominational or sectarian specific tenants that may instigate divisiveness in a collective service.
- You will refrain from using speech disparaging other religious groups.
- You will refrain from using sacred texts (i.e., the Bible, Quran, Torah) to address sexual orientation, including Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, and Queer lifestyles.
- You will refrain from using prayers that “deliver” or “release” someone from a sexual orientation or lifestyle.
- You will make efforts to align sermons and teachings to facilitate the goals of the agency, especially as it relates to reentry and reducing recidivism.
- You will maintain environmental/situational awareness at all times and not use voice projections in presentations such as yelling, wailing, and shouting that may be misread by custody staff as a cry for help.
- You will refrain from using ministry approaches that may be misconstrued as sexual in nature, such as the laying on of hands, anointing with any substances, and close proximity individual prayer.
- You will aim your ministry efforts at enhancing safety and security by sending offenders back to the units in peace, hope and joy, being careful not to stimulate or give rise to judgmental thoughts, attitudes, or discussions that may fuel conflict.
- You understand that you cannot be on any offender visiting or clergy visit list at the facility where you volunteer.
- You understand that your continuing Religious Services V.I.P. status is contingent upon attending the annual Religious Services V.I.P. reorientation

Connecticut Correctional Facilities & Locations



Directions to Facilities may be found on the Internet at: www.ct.gov/doc

Cheshire CI

900 Highland Avenue
Cheshire, Connecticut 06410

Brooklyn CI

59 Hartford Road, Rte. 6
Brooklyn, Connecticut 06234

Garner CI

50 Nunnawauk Road, POB 5500
Newtown, Connecticut 06470

MacDougall-Walker CI

1153 East Street South
Suffield, Connecticut 06080

Manson Youth Institution

42 Jarvis Street
Cheshire, Connecticut 06410

Cybulski CI

391 Shaker Road, POB 2400
Enfield, Connecticut 06083-2400

Osborn CI

335 Bilton Road, POB 100
Somers, Connecticut 06071

York CI

201 West Main Street
Niantic, Connecticut 06357

Bridgeport CC

1106 North Avenue
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604

Corrigan

986 Norwich-New London Tpke.
Uncasville, Connecticut 06382

Hartford CC

177 Weston Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06120

New Haven CC

245 Whalley Avenue
New Haven, Connecticut 06511

Robinson CI

285 Shaker Road, POB 1400
Enfield, Connecticut 06083-1400

PREA Standards

VIP. Prison Rape Elimination Act Training

For CT-DOC Volunteers, Interns and Professional Partners (VIP's), including Contractors and Researchers

On September '03 the Prison Rape Elimination Act (P.R.E.A.) was signed into law by Congress. P.R.E.A. standards were developed to curb prison sexual misconduct throughout the nation. Since its enactment, all Federal, State & Local correctional facilities are required to develop and promote "zero-tolerance" policies regarding sexual violence. This Law was followed by the development of standards for all staff, volunteers, contractors and offenders.

Prevention of sexual misconduct continues to be a top priority of everyone involved with the CT Department of Correction. Consequently, your review of this Handout and your awareness and compliance to three standards pertaining to VIP's will join all of us together to help eliminate the risk and incidence of sexual misconduct in any facility or contracted correctional component.

The three established P.R.E.A. Standards designed for Volunteers, Interns & Professional Partners (Contractors & Researchers inclusive) include:

- 1) Training to detect sexual misconduct;**
- 2) Reporting of any alleged incident of sexual violence or misconduct;**
- 3) Follow up with any investigation.**

By reading this Handout you are agreeing to work with us towards the goals of eliminating all sexual misconduct and violence in institutions/centers.

The key to implementing these standards is for you to understand the importance of using your best ability to discern, detect, and report observation, alleged behavior or witnessed act of a sexual harassment, misconduct or abuse offenders, visitors, employees, contractors or other VIP's. As you already know, it is the responsibility of all VIP's to maintain professional boundaries and to assist staff as joint supervisors of offenders participating in authorized voluntary/elective activities.

To provide you with a better understanding of the importance of these standards, please read the excerpts below:

Real change will only happen if we come together to better understand prison rape in the context in which any rape, anywhere, must be seen.

Sexual misconduct including rape is never about sex; it is about power and control. Rape is a tool, a weapon, a means of communication. Rapists are telling themselves and their victims who's in charge, and whose body is forfeit.

Rape is psychological warfare. In a sudden, violent moment an individual can be attacked, traumatized and lose faith and self-dignity in a single horrific experience. The victim is often left shattered and hopeless. It's important to realize that survivors' reactions are deeply personal, and absolutely not contingent on the message their attackers may have intended to send. Survivors need to know: "The assault does not define them."

Each moment and each person and each event is individual and complex — but the act, the act itself, the act of using another person's body for is simply about power and control wherever and however it happens.

Prison rape exists on a continuum that winds its way through our streets and our schools and our homes and our workplaces; only when we begin to recognize and champion respect and the protection of all people, especially offenders, no matter their gender, place in the hierarchy, or time served, will we begin to truly free ourselves of its evil.

Tips for detection of sexual misconduct and reporting to staff:

- ☐ Be observant at all times/ listen carefully
- ☐ Look at body posture, personal hygiene, note any differences in how any individual is interacting with you or others.
- ☐ If you "sense" a problem or issue, report it immediately
- ☐ If you get a sense of hopelessness or hear anxiety, confusion or suicidal ideation —these are clear indicators of something wrong.
- ☐ If staff determine that further investigation is necessary, remember to write down what you think/know as fully and clearly as you can.

Per PREA standard 115.77: Any VIP-Volunteer, Intern or Professional Partner, including Contractors and Researchers who engages in sexual abuse shall be prohibited from contact with offenders and shall be reported to law enforcement agencies, unless the activity was clearly not criminal, and to relevant licensing bodies.



SECURITY MATTERS

Appearance

:

Keep your appearance or dress simple and appropriate to the correctional environment. Pocket books and knotted ties are not allowed. Don't wear short skirts, shorts or any other clothing that exposes or accentuates body parts. Remove excessive jewelry. If you wear a tie, clip-ons (pull-offs) are practical (subject to approval per facility.)

Prohibited clothing includes:

- ❑ Clothing that closely resembles offender, staff, military uniforms or camouflage clothing
- ❑ Items that cover the face including hats and hoodies
- ❑ Clothing that exposes the midriff, back, shoulders, cleavage, thighs or other excessive skin
- ❑ Tight clothing such as spandex, leggings, tube tops, or tank tops
- ❑ Sheer or see-through clothing
- ❑ Clothing containing offensive language or images, or political content.
- ❑ No Smart Watches of any kind, facial piercings or hoop earrings

Professionalism

Appearance, conduct, language and attitude reflect the character and integrity of the individual. Demonstrate professionalism and you will gain respect from everyone. Know your program. Know your boundaries. Treat everyone equally. Follow staff direction and be respectful to staff. Treat offenders humanely and with respect.

Personal Parameters and Boundaries

Always address staff using formal titles, for example: Warden; Sir; Officer; Mr./Ms.; or Mrs., Captain, Lieutenant. Staff always go by last name and should never be addressed by their first name due to safety and security. You should not befriend any offender, rather, act as an aide, assisting offenders to learn ways to help themselves. Never give out phone numbers, addresses, email address, or personal information for yourself or any staff. Absolutely nothing should be taken in or out of an institution without specific permission from the administration. Safety and security is everyone's priority. Do not contact offenders or their representatives (including family, attorney, friends, etc.) outside of the institution, unless authorized and/or supervised by DOC staff.

Contraband

Anything not provided or specifically authorized by the institution is considered contraband or forbidden goods. Any items not specifically authorized will be confiscated. This rule is for the safety and security of everyone. Giving any item to an offender without permission will result in your dismissal and disciplinary action including loss of privileges for the offender(s).

Inappropriate Conduct

Some offenders may demonstrate a strong need for affection. Many offenders may view your expression of concern or ongoing participation in a program as a friendship or romantic signal.

Should you sense an inappropriate relationship building, you should report it immediately. If you continue developing a personal relationship, your VIP privileges will be terminated.

Many offenders have become experts at storytelling. Problems do occur. These situations are best handled by staff. Do not allow your integrity or purpose to be compromised. No favors should be accepted. Any compliments should be deflected.

- ▯ Do not let anyone convince you to mail letters.
- ▯ Do not let anyone convince you to carry correspondence between offenders in the same or different institutions.
- ▯ Do not let anyone convince you to bring packages from "families" in/out of institutions.
- ▯ Do not add money to offenders' accounts or setup or participate in an offender's GoFundMe or any other account.

Not all offenders are manipulative. One of the best ways not to get manipulated is never to say or do anything you would not want to be made public information.

Management of Aggressive Behavior

If an offender becomes hostile, the best advice is to back off and remain calm. If alone, gradually move to where staff can see you. Correctional staff will handle difficult situations. **Remember that offenders have been convicted or have pending charges for criminal offenses.** Physical intimidation and violence are a common occurrence for some. If any offender is hostile towards others, assaults staff or threatens any VIP, seek staff assistance immediately.

Emergency Procedures/Communications

If you hear a fire alarm sound, you will be expected to evacuate the area in accordance with posted emergency exit procedures. Listen to staff as they may direct you to another area. If the fire is in the immediate vicinity, you should communicate the problem to staff and depart the area. Always make sure you have signed into the facility properly. It is also your responsibility to view and understand the emergency evacuation plan in your assigned area.

Follow all instructions given by staff. Each facility has a "Control Center" that can be reached by dialing a designated emergency code number. Just tell the Officer where and what the problem is. If you find that it would be impractical to attempt to actually talk on the phone, then by simply knocking the receiver off the hook, the Control Center Officer may be able to identify the location of the problem and send staff to the scene without further action. If you receive a Body Alarm, be sure staff instruct you for the proper use.

Critical Incidents

In the event that an incident happens and you are in a dangerous situation, the best advice is to stay put until staff secures the area. Don't act instinctively, heroes can get hurt. Be cooperative with the antagonist. Take cover and hide if possible. Keep a low profile. Don't judge, condemn or

provoke. Do not make any threats or attempt to negotiate. Act naturally. Listen carefully. Be quietly observant and document what was witnessed as quickly after the incident as possible. Seek counseling when it is over. No one should have to be alone after an incident. Make sure you seek out your Volunteer/Program Coordinator and discuss what to do in an emergency.

Gangs and Security Risk Groups

Offenders have utilized programs and activities to conduct gang business. Gang activity, such as displays of color, hand signals, and exchanging personal notes should be reported to a Supervisor. Gang activities can result in people being hurt. If you witness any suspected gang activity, be sure not to react directly. Do not do or say anything that might compromise your safety. Be discreet! When you are safely apart from all offender contact, report what you saw or heard directly to the Shift supervisor or staff.

Infectious Diseases

It is important to realize that the Department makes every effort possible to control infectious diseases, including HIV, TB, Hepatitis MRSA, the Ebola Virus, COVID-19, and others. Every visitor should exercise caution because viruses, germs and contagious infections may spread quickly in institutional settings. A good rule of conduct is to presume that your health and wellbeing, and that of others, requires continuous attention and respect. Stay home if you are feeling ill. Contact your VIP Coordinator, Program Supervisor or Group Leader to let staff know you are sick and unable to fulfill your commitment. Everyone will be appreciative and understand.



CONCLUSION

For more information about the Connecticut Department of Correction, including policies and available resources, you may refer to the agency's web site at: www.ct.gov/doc.

For VIP Forms or an e-copy of this Handbook and a Directory of VIP Opportunities, click open "Volunteer Services Unit" from the Home Page of the CT/DOC Web site.

A directory of VIP Coordinators and contact information can also be located on this webpage to include emails addresses (preferred) and phone numbers.

Please contact the facility coordinator directly as all applications are to be submitted to the facility of your choice to determine if they will be able to accommodate you. Please contact the facility directly for any updates on your application.

It is the intent of the Commissioner, Wardens and Staff to make the time you invest with us rewarding and safe. With your continued cooperation we are sure that this can be achieved. If this has not been said already, we wish to thank you for your help in corrections!

Best Wishes!

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