

PRISON

If someone in your family is going to prison you might want to check this information out

WHAT?

THERE ARE 14 PRISONS in Victoria that are minimum, medium and maximum security levels. Your mum or dad will live in a shared unit and are likely to share a cell with at least one other prisoner. They will have been assessed as to which prison best meets their needs and the needs of their sentence. This includes things like their health, their safety, the seriousness of their crime and also what they might need to spend their time doing while in prison.

They will have access to nurses, doctors and psychologists as well as being able to meet with people from the outside like lawyers and family.

AND?

THEY MIGHT GET employed to work in the kitchen, gardens or some type of industry such as cabinet making. They may be able to do a TAFE course or other types of study. They might have to attend 'programs' that are about their offence such as Drug & Alcohol or Anger Management.

There are also other programs they can choose themselves such as parenting and creative arts. Not all programs are available at every prison.

VISITING & OTHER STUFF

YOU CAN WRITE AND RECEIVE letters from your mum or dad but they may get read by prison officers. They can make short phone calls to you but these may be listened to.

Everyone must be approved to visit a prison and you will need to be with an adult unless you are over 16. You cannot take anything into the prison with you except coins to buy food and there is usually not a huge choice. You usually cannot go to the toilet once you are inside the prison or the visit will be cancelled.

THESE FACT SHEETS ARE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 12 YEARS AND OVER

WHAT THE?

THE THOUGHT OF MUM OR DAD in prison can end up making you feel guilty for lots of reasons. You have your freedom! Maybe you were too difficult? You mustn't have noticed when things weren't going well! You might feel sad thinking about how long they could be in there and how much you actually miss them.

On the flipside, if things have been a bit tough lately you might actually feel relieved that things can settle down for a while. All of this is pretty standard.

OMG, EVERYONE'S TALKING ABOUT IT!

IF YOU ARE STARTING TO FEEL like a freak you need to remember that you are not the only one in this situation. Each time you go out to visit the prison, have a look around at all the other kids visiting. Do they look weird or normal, scary or scared, confused or relaxed? Probably any of these, just like at school.

This is a rough time for you and your family and you probably feel like you have been on a roller coaster, but you should still get on with your life.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

IF SOME OF THESE FEELINGS don't go away, it probably means you need to talk to someone.

Brothers, sisters, grandparents, uncles and aunties might have different thoughts and feelings about what has happened.

Even if you disagree, you are all in the same boat so it can still feel good to just let it all out. They need to do it too. Otherwise you can talk with someone at VACRO.

WANNA KNOW MORE?

- Need to understand what's going on?
- How can I get my life back?
- What else can I do?
- Want to ask some questions about what we do?

Contact VACRO 'a community organisation providing information and support for those involved with the criminal justice system' on 9605 1900 or freecall 1800 049 871 or look at other factsheets on our website for more info:
<http://www.vacro.org.au/youth/index.html>