

Frequently Asked Questions

Do you know where your loved one is located?

If not, please call the Information Enquiries Line at Corrections Victoria on (03) 8684 6577.

Can I visit? - Are you on the visitors list?

Each prisoner can nominate at least 10 people they wish to have visit them. All approved visitors need 100 points of identification to be able to visit. Please call the relevant prison to confirm that you are an approved visitor.

If you have a Correctional Reference Number (CRN)?

You need to get the Governor's approval to visit. If the prisoner is moved to a different location, you will need approval from the Governor at the new prison. You may have a CRN if you have been-

- in prison*
- convicted of an offence*
- on a Intensive Community Order (ICO) or Community Based Order (CBO)*

Do you know the visiting hours of the prison?

Please call the prison or Corrections Victoria 8684 6600 for details.

What will happen to the prisoners clothing and personal belongings?

The prisoner's personal belongings will be stored by the prison. If a prisoner is transferred to a different location their belongings will also be transferred. All belongings will be returned upon release.

Will I be told in advance when the prisoner is transferred to a different prison?

No, due to privacy issues you will not be told the day and time the prisoner will be transferred. When the prisoner is at the new location, he/she can contact you from there if you are on their phone list.

Can I drop off property for the prisoner?

Yes, however the type of permitted property varies between prisons.

Can I leave money for the prisoner?

Yes, however the amount of money you can leave for a prisoner varies between prisons. You will also need to specify whether you are leaving money for their phone account or for their private spending money.

Can I call the prisoner?

No, however if you are on the prisoners phone list and they have money in their phone account they can call you.



Supporting Offenders and their Families

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF OFFENDERS

Please Take One

For further information on anything in this booklet
please contact VACRO:
(03) 9605 1900
Freecall: 1800 049 871

VICTORIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE CARE AND RESETTLEMENT OF OFFENDERS

First Floor, 116 Hardware Street, Melbourne 3000

POSTAL ADDRESS: P.O. Box 14093, MELBOURNE, VICTORIA 8001

Email: info@vacro.org.au

WHAT NEXT?

1. **Legal advice:** Contact Law Institute 9607 9311
2. **Where your relative may be held:**
 - ◆ A 'holding cell' at the local police station
 - ◆ Melbourne Custody Centre at 520 Lonsdale St Melbourne.9628 7888
 - ◆ Melbourne Assessment Prison: 317 Spencer St Melbourne 9321 4111
 - ◆ Dame Phyllis Frost Centre for **women:** Deer Park 9217 8400
3. **Court Support:** Court Network can provide information on court processes and offer emotional support 1800 681 614

Inform relevant organisations of your change of circumstances:

4. **Centrelink:** You may now be eligible for increased or different payments. If you are caring for the children of a prisoner, these include Family Tax Benefit A, Family Tax Benefit B, Child Care Benefit, Parenting Payment, and the Double Orphan Pension. Contact: 13 2850
5. **Office of Housing (OoH):** Your rent may be reduced if you were sharing with your relative, or encourage them to contact OoH to ask about a hold on their lease or on their wait list.
6. **Debts:** If your loved one has outstanding debts, encourage them to inform the business/organisation that they are in custody and unable to make payments. Families should seek professional advice from financial counsellors and/or legal representatives around outstanding debts and ongoing bills. Contact your local Financial Counselling Service
7. **Travel to Visit Victorian Prisons:** VACRO has a limited Family Travel Assistance program and an Aboriginal Family Travel program.
8. **Support:** This can be a stressful time so it is important that you take care of yourself and your children's needs. Counselling and support is available at VACRO or contact a local support agency

PARENTS AND PARTNERS

Parents: You may experience strong and conflicting emotions about your child's situation

- ◆ It may be helpful to separate what your child did from how you feel about them as a person. It is possible to disapprove of their behaviour, but still love them.
- ◆ Set a boundary around what you are prepared to provide (E.g. money).

Partners:

- ◆ Reassure your partner that the relationship is important to you.
- ◆ Talk about your limitations with your partner and arrange a realistic visiting / support plan together.
- ◆ Set a boundary around what you are prepared to provide (E.g. money).

Carers/Grandparents:

You may be stepping into the role without much choice or preparation.

- ◆ Ask the council about local activities for children such as playgroups
- ◆ Maintain regular contact between the child and their parent
- ◆ Maintain your own friendships and take advantage of offers to help

CHILDREN

What to tell them

Figuring out what to tell the children about a parent's absence can be a difficult decision, but it is important to give them an explanation as early as possible. What to tell children depends on the age/maturity of the child.

- ◆ It is generally best to tell children the truth as you have some control over the quality of the information and its emotional impact
- ◆ If you choose not to; pick a scenario that will last and make sense, even to a young child. Remember that children need answers to questions like 'why can't I see them?'
- ◆ Ensure the child that they are still loved and secure in the family, that the other parent/carer will not be taken away and that the police are not bad (children need to understand who is available to protect them).

Changes: After the initial experience of grief and separation most children will move through to a stage of acceptance, however for those children who feel traumatised by their experience they may exhibit some of the following behaviours: Physical symptoms: headaches, injuries or illnesses, withdrawing from participating in social relationships, showing anger/aggression or increased disobedience and defiance at home/ school.

- ◆ Decide if it would be helpful to inform adults such as teachers/child care workers to be aware of the child's circumstance
- ◆ Consider if counseling is required for your child (see support)