



# PRIVATE FAMILY VISITS

## STANDARD OPERATING PRACTICES (SOPs)

(700-12)



Issued under the authority of the Commissioner  
of the Correctional Service of Canada

2002-06-03

## **Authority**

Sections 59, 60 and 71 of the *Corrections and Conditional Release Act*

## **Cross-References**

Commissioner's Directive 770 – Visiting

Commissioner's Directive 566-7 – Searching of Inmates

Commissioner's Directive 566-8 - Searching of Staff and Visitors

Commissioner's Directive 566-9 - Searching of Cells, Vehicles and Other Areas of the Institution

## **Overview**

- 1 The Private Family Visiting Program provides eligible offenders and visitors with extended private visits within the institution to enable them to foster personal relationships in home-like surroundings. The program is more than a conjugal visiting program as it seeks to enhance the offender's capacity to pursue his/her Correctional Plan.

## **Objective**

- 2 To encourage offenders to develop and maintain family and community ties in preparation for their return to the community and to lessen the negative impact of incarceration on family relationships.

## **Eligibility – Offenders**

- 3 All offenders are eligible for private family visits except those who are:
  - a) assessed as being currently at risk of becoming involved in family violence;
  - b) in receipt of unescorted temporary absences for family contact; or
  - c) in a special handling unit or are awaiting decision or have been approved for transfer to a special handling unit.

## **Eligibility – Visitors**

- 4 The following family members are eligible to participate in the program: spouse, common-law partner, children, parents, foster parents, siblings, grandparents and persons with whom, in the opinion of the institutional head, the offender has a close familial bond, provided they are not inmates. Inmates are not eligible to participate in private family visits with other inmates.

- 5 Commissioner's Directive 770, Visiting, defines "common-law partner" and addresses other persons who may qualify for a private family visit. It should be stressed that CD 770 sets out minimum criteria which must be met before a Private Family Visiting Program can be approved. The burden of proof for meeting these minimum criteria rests with the offender and his or her visitors.

### **Duration and Frequency**

- 6 The duration and frequency of private family visits shall normally be up to 72 hours per offender, once every two months. However, special circumstances may dictate other periods or frequencies at the discretion of the institutional head.

### **Procedure**

- 7 In preparing recommendations to the institutional head with respect to Private Family Visiting Program participation, the Correctional Officer II shall consider the eligibility of the offender and the proposed visitor(s), in conjunction with the value to the offender of maintaining ties with that person(s).
- 8 Upon receipt of the offender's application to participate in the Private Family Visiting Program, file information relevant to the application shall be reviewed. The offender is to be made aware of the eligibility requirements and program specifics, e.g., behavioural expectations, responsibilities, rules, etc. The visitor shall also be made aware of the rules and regulations prior to the commencement of the visits. Special attention shall be given to contraband control measures.
- 9 The most recent Correctional Plan Progress Report shall be reviewed and updated only if changes to ratings within it are required. An Assessment for Decision shall be prepared within 30 days of receipt of an offender's application for an initial private family visit, unless an up-to-date Community Assessment is required and is not yet available. In the case of the latter, the Correctional Plan Progress Report shall be prepared and request for a Community Assessment initiated. The Assessment for Decision shall be prepared immediately upon receipt of the Community Assessment. For subsequent requests for a private family visit, a Correctional Plan Progress Report and Assessment for Decision are not normally required unless there is a significant change in circumstances which would warrant a new report (for example, issues related to family violence).
- 10 Prior to a decision on the visit, the offender shall be provided with a copy of the Correctional Plan Progress Report, the Community Assessment, the Assessment for Decision and all relevant documentation.
- 11 In cases involving a negative decision, the offender and the visitor shall be provided, in writing, the reason for the decision. The offender has the right to appeal this decision via the complaints and grievance process.

### **Refusal or Suspension**

- 12 Private Family Visits may be refused or suspended for any of the reasons set out in paragraphs 17 and 36 of Commissioner's Directive 770. Annex 700-12A to these Standard Operating Practices sets out the content of the report to be submitted for decision on such suspensions.

Commissioner,

*Original signed by:*

Lucie McClung

**ANNEX 700-12A  
CONTENT GUIDELINES**

**Assessment for Decision**

**Purpose of Report**

- Self-explanatory.

**Eligibility of Visitors**

- Confirm the eligibility of the proposed visitor(s).
- Include comments from the Institutional Preventive Security Officer about any security concerns (document date of consultation and whether or not concerns were raised).
- When the visitor is not a family member but is a person with whom the offender has developed a significant relationship during the current period of incarceration, outline the nature of the relationship and document how that relationship is suitable, stable and beneficial to both parties.

**Eligibility of Offender**

- Confirm the eligibility of the offender.
- Provide a statement as to the risk of family violence. If the Family Violence Risk Assessment (FVRA) was conducted for the offender, refer to its results. If no FVRA was conducted, in assessing the risk of family violence, the following factors shall be considered:
  - any present or past conviction for a violent crime against the family member;
  - history of violent behaviour against other persons;
  - history of childhood victimization or having been a witness to violence in the childhood home environment;
  - abusive, threatening or controlling behaviour towards family members during telephone calls, general visits and/or private family visits;
  - information from the offender, the offender's family and/or other reliable sources such as the police, which indicate that the offender has been abusive with family members;
  - family violence has been identified as a factor in the Correctional Plan and the offender has not yet addressed it;
  - integrate pertinent information from psychological or psychiatric assessments, General Statistical Information on Recidivism (GSIR) score and other actuarial information where appropriate;
  - other factors related to family violence or abuse (this may include participation in family violence programming and the offender's motivation).

***Note: The presence of one of the above risk factors alone does not necessarily indicate that an offender is at risk for family violence.***

**Dissenting Opinion**

Specify any differences of opinion and the underlying reasons.

**Assessment for Decision – Update**

If an update is required in the wake of significant changes regarding the offender or the visitors or of the suspension of private family visits, only the elements relevant to the decision shall be discussed.

In such cases, it is not necessary to update the Correctional Plan Progress Report.