Visiting A Friend or Loved One in Prison

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Introduction

Visiting a family member or friend who is in prison is an important way to maintain connections during incarceration and enhances the prisoner’s success both while in prison and after release. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) recognizes the importance of visitation and encourages families and friends to visit as often as their circumstances allow.

Nevertheless, visiting at a prison can be complicated and confusing, especially when visiting for the first time. This handbook is a useful guide for visitors, taking you through the process step-by-step, explaining the procedures and rules, and providing information and guidance on what you will need to do to visit and what you will encounter as you go through the process.

Preparing To Visit

A. Application to Visit a Prisoner

Any adult wishing to visit a prisoner must first obtain approval from CDCR. You must apply for approval to visit by completing a Visitor Questionnaire (CDCR Form 106). You obtain the Visitor Questionnaire by having the prisoner you wish to visit send it to you. The prisoner must sign the questionnaire before sending it to the prospective visitor; the signature confirms the prisoner’s agreement to have the applicant added to his/her visiting list.

It is important to fill out the questionnaire completely. The questionnaire calls for the applicant to list all criminal convictions and all arrests, even if the arrest never led to charges or conviction. CDCR will conduct a background check for arrests and convictions when processing the application and will deny approval to visit if the check indicates an arrest or conviction not listed on the questionnaire, so you should be thorough when completing the questionnaire. It is important to note that any contact with law enforcement may result in a record of the contact in the California Law Enforcement Telecommunication System, and may require clarification by the applicant. If you are unable to remember all the specifics about an arrest or conviction, be as specific as you can in providing the approximate date and the cause of the arrest.

Mail the completed questionnaire to the Visiting Sergeant and/or Lieutenant where the prisoner you want to visit is housed. Mailing addresses are listed at the end of this handbook (see Attachment 1) and are also on CDCR’s website www.cdc.ca.gov. Most prisons have different addresses for mail being sent to a prisoner and mail being sent to prison staff; be sure to get the address used for sending mail to prison staff, as the completed application should be sent to the attention of “Visiting” at the prison. Processing times for visiting questionnaires vary by institution based upon the volume of forms received and the number of staff approved to perform the review process.
If you are approved to visit, the prisoner is notified and he/she must notify you. Once approved, you are listed in the computer as being an approved visitor for the prisoner; you do not need to bring any proof of approval with you to the prison.

If you are disapproved, you will receive a letter from the prison setting forth the reason for disapproval; the prisoner will also receive notice of the disapproval but will not be given the reason. If you are denied approval to visit, you may reapply, you may appeal the denial and/or the prisoner may appeal the denial. If the reason for the denial is based on inaccurate or incomplete information on the Visitor Questionnaire, you may resubmit an accurate and complete questionnaire. Sometimes the reason for denial is that the prison requires additional information (for example, evidence that the applicant is no longer on probation); in those cases, you should resubmit the questionnaire and provide the additional information. If you do not agree with the reason given for the disapproval, you may appeal by writing to the Warden at the prison. He/she is required to respond to your appeal within 15 working days of receiving the appeal. If dissatisfied with the institution’s response or action, you may refer your appeal, with a copy of the institution’s decision, to the Director of the Division of Adult Institutions or his/her designee at: California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Adult Institutions, P.O. Box 942883, Sacramento, California, 94283-0001, Attention: Director, Room 351-N. A written response to appeals addressed to the Director shall be provided within 20 working days from the date of receipt. The prisoner may independently appeal the denial of approval by utilizing the normal prisoner appeal process within the prison.

Sometimes emergency or hardship visits are allowed before a person has been approved to visit. Such visits are at the discretion of prison staff (usually the Visiting Sergeant or Lieutenant) and are usually to accommodate an unexpected visitor traveling from a distance in excess of 250 miles. You should not rely on receiving approval to visit without going through the normal visiting application process. Whenever possible, you should plan ahead for visits and have each adult who might want to visit submit applications before they embark on a trip that will include a visit to a prisoner.

B. Locating a Prisoner

To find the location of the prisoner you wish to visit, you can visit the CDCR Website (www.cdc.ca.gov) and click on Inmate Locator. If you do not have access to a computer, you can call the Identification Unit at (916) 445-6713, or fax that unit a request at (916) 322-0500. If you call the Identification Unit, you will need to provide the full name and date of birth of the prisoner you wish to locate or his/her CDCR identification number. The Identification Unit will provide you with the prisoner’s current location and his identification number but is unable to provide you with any other information. The Identification Unit is available only Monday through Friday (excluding holidays) from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. It may take up to a week for housing information on a prisoner only recently admitted to CDCR or transferred between prisons to get in the computer system (and thus be available through the Identification Unit).
C. Prisoner’s Eligibility to Visit and Types of Visits

All prisoners are eligible to receive visits unless they have temporarily lost that privilege due to disciplinary action. There are, however, different types of visits.

Most prisoners are in the general population and may receive contact visits. Contact visits allow the prisoner to sit together with his/her visitors and have limited physical contact with them (a brief kiss and/or hug at beginning and end of visit, hold hands during the visit). These visits occur in a large visiting room, usually furnished with tables and chairs and usually shared with many other prisoners and visitors. Contact visits are restricted to five visitors at a time. Contact visits are not limited in duration except for normal visiting hours or terminations caused by overcrowding to allow other visits to begin.

Prisoners who are still in reception (recently admitted to CDCR or transferred between prisons) or who are segregated (i.e., Administrative Segregation, Security Housing Units, Adjustment Centers, pending specific rules violation report charges, or assigned to Behavior Management Units) are restricted to non-contact visits. Non-contact visits occur with a glass partition between the prisoner and his/her visitors. The prisoner is escorted in handcuffs by staff to the visit. The handcuffs are removed only after the prisoner is secured in his/her side of the visiting booth; thus, parents who do not wish to have children see the prisoner in restraints should wait away from the booth or glass partition until the prisoner is settled. Non-contact visits are restricted to three visitors and are limited in time (usually one to two hours, depending on the prison and the reason for the non-contact status of visits).

Prisoners on Death Row, often referred to as “condemned” prisoners, are housed either at San Quentin State Prison in Marin County (men) or at Central California Women’s Facility in Chowchilla (women). “Condemned Grade A” prisoners on Death Row may receive contact visits (meaning no partition between prisoner and his/her visitor) unless their visiting privileges have been restricted for disciplinary or security reasons. “Condemned Grade B” prisoners on Death Row may only receive non-contact visits. All Condemned visits are in a secured booth and involve the prisoner being escorted to visiting in handcuffs. Visits for all prisoners on Death Row are limited in time (usually one to two hours).

Some prisoners are eligible for “family visits.” These visits occur in private, apartment-like facilities on prison grounds and last approximately 30 to 40 hours. Prisoners on Death Row, with life sentences, with convictions for sex offenses, or under disciplinary restrictions are not eligible for family visits. Family visits are restricted to approved visitors who are immediate family members (parents, children, siblings, legal spouses, or registered domestic partners) of the prisoner. Family visits are further restricted by availability; usually one visit every three to five months. An eligible prisoner must put in an application for a family visit with his assigned Correctional Counselor I at the prison. This handbook focuses on regular (weekend and holiday) visiting and not on family visiting. Further inquiry about family visiting should be directed by the prisoner to his/her counselor or by the family to visiting staff.
In addition to the types of visits available, there are other factors which may restrict a prisoner’s eligibility to visit. Some of these factors require the visitor to check with the prisoner about his/her particular circumstances, while other factors require the visitor to check with the prison. Such factors include:

**The prisoner’s work or school hours:** Generally a prisoner may not visit during the hours he/she is assigned to a job or to school. Under limited circumstances, a prisoner may obtain permission to visit during work or school hours, but such circumstances are generally limited to family visits, a rare visit (visitor has not visited in more than six months), an emergency visit (death or serious illness of family member), or excessive distance (visitor comes from more than 250 miles and has not visited in the last 30 days). The prisoner must obtain prior written approval to visit during work or school hours by seeking Excused Time Off (ETO) from his/her supervisor.

**The prisoner’s criminal history:** Some prisoners may have restrictions to visit with minors based on their convictions. If the prisoner you wish to visit has been convicted of a criminal offense involving a minor, you should check with him/her if you plan to bring children (even if the children are the prisoner’s children) to visit.

**Medical quarantines:** Sometimes part or all of a prison is quarantined to control the spread of a contagious disease. When that occurs, visiting is not allowed for any prisoners housed in areas under quarantine. The 800 Visitors’ Information number (800-374-8474) will advise a visitor whether there is a medical quarantine and which parts of the prison are affected.

**Lockdowns or Modified Program:** Prisons are often placed on “lockdowns” or “modified programs” in response to threats to the safety of staff and prisoners or the security of the institution. These “modified programs” may be restricted to specific groups of prisoners, areas of the institution, or in the case of a lockdown, are applied to all prisoners in all area of the institution. The 800 Visitors’ Information number, noted in the preceding, will provide information regarding lockdowns and modified programs and which prisoners are restricted from visiting as a result. Since both lockdowns and medical quarantines can occur with very limited notice, it is wise to check the Visitors’ Information number just before leaving for a visit.

**Hospitalized Prisoners:** When a prisoner is seriously ill or injured, he/she may be hospitalized, in either a prison hospital or a community hospital. Visits with hospitalized prisoners are only considered for prisoners having life threatening or critical injuries or illnesses. These special visits are restricted to immediate family members with current approval to visit at the institution. Requests to visit at a community hospital must be approved by the Warden and attending physician. Visitors should make requests to visit by contacting the Warden’s office.

D. Visiting Days and Hours

Every prison has visiting on Saturdays, Sundays, and four holidays during each calendar year (New Year’s Day, July 4th (Independence Day), Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day). Visits vary by institution but usually begin between 7:30 a.m. and
8:00 a.m. and end between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. To find out the days and visiting hours for the prison you are going to visit, call the 800 Visitors’ Information number (800-374-8474) and follow the directions given on the recording to find the prison you wish to visit or visit the CDCR website www.cdc.ca.gov and click on Prisons and then Facility Locations. In addition to providing information regarding days and hours for visiting, the 800 Visitors’ Information number and website will also provide information on lock downs, medical quarantines, or other circumstances affecting visiting, addresses, and directions to the prisons.

E. Appointments to Visit

Some institutions schedule visitor processing times for the first two to three hours of visitor processing to reduce crowding in the Visitor Processing Centers. You should contact the institution you plan to visit for more information regarding visitor processing scheduling.

All visits with a prisoner restricted to non-contact visiting and all visits with a prisoner on Death Row require an appointment to visit. Those appointments are made by telephoning a specified number at the prison during specified hours during the week. The 800 Visitors’ Information number and the CDCR website have information regarding the making of such appointments.

F. Identification Required for Visiting

All adults must present identification when being processed to visit. Acceptable forms of identification must be valid and current (not expired) and include:

- A driver’s license (from any state) with photo;
- A Department of Motor Vehicle identification card (from any state) with photo;
- An armed forces identification card with photo;
- A United States Department of Justice Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) identification card;
- A United States passport with photo or a foreign passport with photo; or
- A photo identification issued by the Mexican Consulate.

Minors (children under 18 years old) are required to be accompanied by an adult who is an approved visitor. If the minor child(ren) is accompanied by his/her parent, the only paperwork necessary is a certified copy of the minor child(ren)’s birth certificate. If the minor is accompanied by his/her legal guardian, a certified copy of the minor child(ren)’s birth certificate and proof of legal guardianship is required. If the minor child(ren) is accompanied by someone other than his/her parent or legal guardian, in addition to the certified copy of the minor child(ren)’s birth certificate, the adult must also bring a notarized written consent authorization form (see Attachment 2) signed by the minor child(ren)’s parent or legal guardian expressly giving permission for the minor child(ren) to visit a prisoner. The written consent authorization form must include the name of the prisoner the minor child(ren) is allowed to visit, the name of the person who is authorized to
bring the minor child(ren) into the prison, and the date(s) of the proposed visit(s). The notarization must be on the original written consent authorization form and cannot be attached to it. The written consent authorization form to bring in a minor child(ren) must be updated each year.

G. Attire Restrictions

There are restrictions on what you may wear to a prison. In general, there are four rules to remember:

1. Do not wear clothing that resembles the clothing that prisoners wear
   a. Blue denim pants;
   b. Blue chambray shirts;
   c. Orange jumpsuits or Orange tops with Orange bottoms;
   d. Red tops (Pleasant Valley State Prison only); or
   e. Dresses that resemble prisoner muumuu (female institutions only)

2. Do not wear clothing that resembles what custodial staff wear
   a. Forest green pants;
   b. Tan shirts; or
   c. Camouflage

3. Dress conservatively and modestly; and

4. Do not wear any item that cannot be taken off and will not clear a metal detector (such as an underwire bra or clothing with metal buttons).

There are specific restrictions:

- No blue denim, blue chambray, orange jumpsuits or orange tops with orange bottoms;
- No forest green bottoms with tan tops;
- No camouflage unless identification shows active or reserve military personnel;
- No strapless, halter, bare midriff, sheer, or transparent clothing;
- No skirts, dresses, or shorts that expose more than two inches above the knee;
- No clothing that exposes the breast, genitalia, or buttocks area;
- No very tight, form-fitting attire;
- No wigs, hairpieces, extensions, or other headpieces except for medical reasons and with prior approval;
- No hats or gloves, except with prior approval or in inclement weather; and
- No shower shoes.
Prisons sometimes have their own local rules regarding visiting attire that is deemed unacceptable (i.e., “excess” jewelry, layered outfits, shoes without straps around the heel). It is wise to check with your local institution prior to your visit.

Most prisons have a Visitor Center that will lend you used but clean clothing if the clothing you wore is rejected by staff. The funding for these Visitor Centers is not always secure and thus the centers may not always be open. For these reasons, it is good practice to bring an extra set of clothing in the car in case you need to change.

If an officer tells you that your clothing is unacceptable but you feel that you have complied with the rules and your clothing is acceptable, you may ask to speak with the Visiting Sergeant or Lieutenant, who will make the decision about your clothing.

Although a minor must clear the metal detector, children under 36 inches are not subject to the restrictions related to colors of clothing or types of material.

H. Items a Visitor May Bring

Visitors are strictly limited in the items they may bring into the prison. Items allowed without prior approval are limited to the following:

- A $50 limit per adult and $20 limit per minor; only as dollar bills, dollar coins and quarters (change machines are usually available but they may be out of order or out of change);
- A small (generally 6” by 8”) clear, plastic purse or bag;
- Two keys on a ring with no other attachments. One key may be an electronic car keys;
- Identification (as previously specified);
- A comb or brush; non-metallic, no pointed end or detachable parts;
- A small unopened pack of tissues or a handkerchief; no bandannas;
- A pair of prescription glasses;
- Ten Photographs, no larger than 8” by 10”; photos may be shown to the prisoner, but must be taken out by the visitor at the end of the visit; photos cannot be Polaroid and may not include any sexual or gang images; photos will be viewed by staff during processing;
- Documents up to 10 pages, no larger than 8-1/2” by 11” (standard size typing paper); usually such documents will be either papers for the prisoner’s signature (for example, tax forms), information to share with the prisoner (for example, pages showing classes available through a correspondence course), or family papers (for example, a child’s report card, certificate of achievement, or drawing), but they can be anything that can be sent to the prisoner through the mail. Documents will be viewed and read by staff during processing and must be taken out by the visitor at the end of the visit;
- The following baby items are allowed when bringing in an infant or toddler: any combination of two factory-sealed single serving size, ready to feed
bottles of baby formula or two transparent plastic baby bottles either empty or containing pre-mixed formula/milk/juice/water; three non-glass containers of baby food in sealed packaging; one plastic spoon; six disposable diapers; one sealed package of baby wipes; one change of clothing; one small blanket; two searchable small toys; one transparent pacifier; one burp cloth; baby carrier; and clear plastic diaper bag (12” by 20”);

- Inclement weather gear that may include hoods, raincoats, hats, scarves, and gloves during the winter or sun hats during the summer. [Note: Prisons still vary on inclement weather gear; it is recommended you check prior to your visit.]

I. Medical Items Allowed

If you have a need to bring in items relating to a medical condition, you must have documentation from your doctor as to its need. The documentation must include the doctor’s name, address, telephone number, and medical license number and must be updated every two years. With such verification as to its medical necessity, the following are allowed:

- Prescription medications that are life-sustaining or condition-stabilizing, such as inhalers or nitroglycerin; medications must be in the original pharmacy container with the patient’s name, the pharmacy name, and the doctor’s name, as well as the medication’s name. Quantities of medication are limited to what may be needed during the visit.

- Mobility devices such as canes, crutches, and wheelchairs; some prisons do not allow personal canes, crutches, or wheelchairs to be taken into visiting but require the visitor to exchange his/her personal device for a prison-issue device and then exchange back after the visit.

- Hats with documentation that they are medically necessary.

- Seat cushions or backs with documentation that they are medically necessary.

- If you have an implant or prosthetic device that includes metal and will set off the metal detector, you must have documentation from a doctor specifying the nature and location of the implant or device. With such documentation, staff will use a wand to sweep your body instead of the metal detector to ensure security.

J. Religious Items or Clothing

If your religion requires you to wear a certain type of clothing that would otherwise be unacceptable by operating procedures, such as Muslim headdress or Catholic habits, you will be allowed to wear the clothing; however, you may be required to remove it for inspection in a private location with an officer of the same gender present before you are allowed into the visiting room.

Most visiting rooms have copies of the Bible, the Koran, and the Torah. If you wish to bring in the bible of your faith because a copy is not present in the visiting room, ask the Visiting Sergeant or Lieutenant for permission.
K. Other Accommodation Issues

Service animals (usually dogs specially trained to provide assistance to a disabled person) are allowed to assist a disable visitor. The visitor must have some form of documentation, harness, or markings identifying the animal as a service animal (although it need not be a license or certification from a government agency). The animal and the visitor will have to clear the metal detector, but disabled visitors will not be separated from the service animal at any time. It is the responsibility of the visitor to ensure that the service animal is properly controlled and behaved at all times.

Every visiting room has some furniture reserved for those needing accommodation. If you need some accommodation, ask visiting staff.

L. Visitor Centers

Most prisons have a Visitor Center. These centers provide some babysitting services, some transportation services (such as between a nearby bus or train stop and the prison), and some clothing assistance (when the prison has rejected the clothing worn by a visitor). Additionally, the staff at the Centers are an available source of information regarding visitation, mail, telephone calls, and other issues that may arise as family members and friends try to maintain connections with an incarcerated loved one. Some of these centers also provide informational training on issues including medical (e.g., HIV, STDs, and AIDS), children (e.g., how to help a child whose parent has gone to prison), or other concerns.

As noted before, the funding for these Visitor Centers is not always secure and their services may be intermittently interrupted. Nevertheless, you may find it helpful to visit the Center at the prison where you visit and check into its services.
Arrival for Visiting

A. Arrival

All prisons have specified visiting hours, usually starting between 7:30 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. and ending between 2:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. Both the Department’s website and the Visitor Information line have information as to the visiting hours at the prison you will be visiting.

Many prisons restrict how early a visitor may drive onto prison grounds for a visit; usually about an hour before the start of visiting hours. Some visitors will arrive before that time and line up in their cars directly outside the prison gates. As some prisons are directly off freeways, highways, or other very busy roadways, that can be potentially dangerous and, sometimes, in violation of traffic laws. All visitors should be very careful in parking outside the gates; and when driving on grounds be courteous and respectful of others as well as obeying all traffic laws. Visitors found to be in violation of traffic laws may be subject to warnings, termination, or suspension of visits.

B. Car Searches

Most prisons do not have staff at the gate, so visitors are free to drive onto grounds and to the visitor parking lot at the allowed time. Only a few prisons have staff at the gate. At those prisons, staff distributes visiting passes to be filled out by visitors for processing. Staff may conduct a visual inspection of the vehicle, including the trunk, and may also utilize “drug dogs” (Narcotic Detection K-9’s) to assist them by sniffing for drugs around the outside of the car. All visitors should understand that it is a felony to bring any weapons or any illegal drugs onto prison grounds, and will typically result in loss of visits and prosecution.

A visual inspection of the interior of your car from outside of the car is allowed anytime you drive onto or off of prison grounds or when you are parked on prison grounds. Additionally, a visual inspection of your trunk is allowed when driving onto or off of grounds. Any further inspection of the interior of your vehicle requires your consent, a search warrant, or reasonable suspicion of a visitor attempting to introduce or remove contraband or unauthorized items.

C. Parking

All prisons have parking available for visitors, in a parking lot separate from the parking lot for staff. Visitors should take care to park in the appropriate places. Most prisons have adequate parking for all visitors, but the parking may require a fairly long walk to the processing center or the boarding of a prison van or bus to be driven to the processing center. Parking for disabled visitors is provided in specially-marked places.

All visitors should be careful for themselves and their children in walking through the parking lot, as often there is substantial moving traffic. Visitors should walk from their cars to the line, as running on prison grounds is not allowed and may be perceived as an emergency.
D. Waiting

There will be a wait from the time you arrive at a prison to the time you are processed to visit. Typical wait times for processing are not excessive. However, on occasion may be as long as two hours, depending on the number of visitors, the time of day, and conditions of processing (including the size of the processing center, the number of staff, and the speed of processing). The wait times are usually longer first thing in the morning, when many visitors arrive all at the same time.

The conditions under which visitors must wait depend on the particular prison, but visitors should be cautioned that the wait may be without shelter (even in the rain, snow, or strong heat), may be without bathrooms, and may be in an area with traffic hazards or restricted movement (including not allowing children to move around).

As noted previously, there are Visitor Centers at most of the prisons, and those Centers provide bathrooms, shelter, and activities for children. At a few prisons, visitors are given numbered passes either when they drive onto grounds or once they are parked and get in line. If you have a numbered pass, that will secure your place in line while you go to the Visitor Center; however, since most prisons do not hand out numbered passes, going to the Visitor Center will require the visitor to go to the end of the line when he/she returns to the line.

Some prisons require scheduled appointments for visitors during the first two to four hours of visiting. At these prisons, visitors without appointments will be processed on a first-come, first-in-line, first served basis; but not until all visitors with appointments have been processed. Appointments can be made either by e-mail and/or telephone, but only during specified hours. The 800 Visitors’ Information number and the CDCR website will have information regarding whether the prison you are visiting requires appointments and how to make an appointment.
Processing of Visitors

A. Processing Times

The processing of visitors and the movement of the line begins at the time posted for visiting to begin. Processing continues until an hour before the time posted for visiting to end.

Processing of visitors may be suspended at times due to staffing issues or a temporary emergency. Delays in visitor processing cannot be predicted, and last only as long as necessary to manage the issue(s) causing the delay.

B. Passes and Computer Checks

Every adult visitor must fill out a pass each time he/she visits. The pass calls for the prisoner’s name and CDCR number, the relationship of the visitor to the prisoner (spouse, mother, friend, etc.), the visitor’s name and address, and the visitor’s signature. If the adult visitor is bringing in minor children, he/she lists the names of the children on the pass.

The completed pass is submitted to staff. Using a computer, staff checks the prisoner’s file to make sure the visitor is an approved visitor and that the prisoner is eligible to visit on that day. Staff marks the pass with the prisoner’s housing and notes whether the visit is contact or non-contact.

The pass, along with the visitor’s identification, is the visitor’s “key” to get into and out of the prison. Although the pass and identification may be held by staff once the visitor gets to the visiting room, it will be returned to the visitor upon leaving the visiting room.

C. Searches of Visitors

It is a felony for anyone to attempt to bring into the prison any drugs or weapons. It is against prison rules, and sometimes is a criminal offense for which one can be prosecuted, for anyone to attempt to bring in any item not allowed by the prison. Visitors are required to follow all rules, regulations, and laws while on institution grounds. To ensure that prohibited items are not allowed into the prison, all visitors and their possessions are searched before the visitor is allowed to visit.

Visitors must remove all outer clothing (jackets, sweaters, etc.), shoes, and any jewelry that will set off the metal detector. Those items are placed along with other allowable items (money, comb, baby items, etc.) on either a conveyor belt for an x-ray search or on a counter for a manual search by staff. The visitor, including all minors, must clear a metal detector. If a visitor has an implant or a prosthesis that prevents him/her from clearing a metal detector or if he/she cannot go through a metal detector (because, for example, he/she cannot get out of his/her wheelchair), staff will use a hand-held metal-detector on the visitor as long as the visitor has presented a letter from a medical doctor verifying the location of the implant or prosthesis.
Visitors who, for religious reasons, cannot remove all outer clothing (such as scarves, burkas, yamakas, etc.) will be taken to a private room where they can remove the item and staff of the same gender will use a wand to search.

Visitors with devices to assist their mobility (wheelchairs, canes, etc.) may be required to exchange their device for a prison-issued device and exchange back as they leave the prison.

Children are subject to the same searches. A child too young to walk through a metal detector alone may be carried through the metal detector by the adult visitor escorting the child in.

Any search beyond the searching of belongings and the clearing of the metal detector is allowed only if there is cause to believe the visitor is attempting to bring a prohibited item into the prison. If such cause exists, the visitor must be advised, in writing, of the reason for the search and the name of the prison official ordering the search. The visitor has a right to refuse the search, but the refusal will result in the visitor not being allowed to visit for the day; and may result in future visits being conditioned upon a search greater than the usual search of belongings, and clearing a metal detector, for as long as staff has cause to believe the visitor is attempting to bring in a prohibited item.

Visitors may not be searched without their consent unless there is a warrant that requires such a search or unless the visitor is being detained for arrest for unlawful actions that present an immediate and significant threat to prison security. Actions which do not present an immediate and significant threat to prison security but are nonetheless unlawful, may result in the visitor being detained or escorted off prison grounds and prison officials referring the matter to local law enforcement, but may not result in a request of the visitor to submit to search by prison staff.

After clearing the metal detector, staff will stamp the back of one of the visitor’s hands with an ultraviolet ink stamp. At most prisons, visitors are required to put their hands under an ultraviolet light and show the stamp as they exit the visiting room and/or prison.

D. Getting to the Visiting Room

Most prisons have more than one visiting room. Staff will write which visiting room the visitor is to go to on the pass. At most prisons, visitors walk from the processing center to the visiting room; but at some prisons, visitors must wait for a prison bus or van to take them from the processing center to the visiting room.
In the Visiting Room

A. Turning in Pass and Awaiting Prisoner’s Arrival

Upon arrival to the visiting room, the visitor turns in the pass to staff. At some prisons, the visitor also surrenders his/her identification to staff; at other prisons, the visitor must show his/her identification but otherwise holds onto it during the visit. Staff then uses the information on the pass to call the housing unit and advise the prisoner that he/she has a visit and should come to the visiting room.

Usually it should not take more than twenty minutes for a prisoner to get to the visiting room after staff has called. That period can be longer due to factors such as the need for an escort, the readiness of the prisoner for his/her visit, or unforeseen lockdowns, incidents on the yard, or quarantines. If a visitor has been waiting more than 30 minutes, he/she should ask staff about the delay. Staff will typically know whether the delay is a prison-related issue and advise the visitor; if it is not, the visitor should ask staff to call again for the prisoner. (When visiting room staff calls the housing unit for the prisoner, it becomes the responsibility of housing unit staff to advise the prisoner. Sometimes housing unit staff are diverted by other responsibilities and forget to advise the prisoner, so it is important to inquire if you have been waiting for more than 30 minutes.)

Prisons count their prisoner population at certain times during the day. Movement of prisoners is frozen during those periods, and no prisoner will be released to the visiting room. The only count that is likely to interfere with visiting during the weekend hours is the Close Custody Count which prevents prisoners from going to the visiting from about 11:15 a.m. until the count is cleared around 12:45 p.m. The prisoner you are going to see will be able to tell you whether he/she is close custody and what time the “close custody” count is on Saturday and Sunday. If you arrive in the visiting room during a count period, you will be required to wait for the prisoner’s arrival until count has cleared (meaning that the prison has accounted for all the prisoners being counted), a period that can last more than an hour.

B. Seating

All prison visiting rooms have chairs set up for prisoners and their visitors to use while visiting. Most prison visiting rooms also have small tables, usually about 24 inches square and no more than 18 inches high. (A limited number of larger, taller tables are available for disabled prisoners or disabled visitors.) At some prisons, staff assigns the visitors to a specific table and/or chairs; at other prisons, the visitors are allowed to choose where they wish to sit.

Prisoners and visitors are subject to continuous surveillance. Most prison visiting rooms have surveillance cameras. All visiting rooms are staffed by several correctional officers. There is usually a podium or control booth where at least one officer will sit; others will walk throughout the room. Prisoners are usually required to sit facing the podium or control booth. Visitors are usually allowed to sit facing any direction, but some prisons may have restrictions for visitor seating as well.
Many visiting rooms have adjoining patios that prisoners and their visitors may use. The patios may have some grass, some play equipment for small children, and some furniture (benches, chairs, tables). The patios may be available for use during all visiting hours or only at restricted times.

Some visiting rooms have an area set aside for small children. The area is usually relatively small (about the size of a typical bedroom) and has toys, games, and books for the children. Children must be supervised at all times while on prison grounds by the adult who has accompanied them to the prison, including whenever the children are in the play area. Failure to adequately supervise children can result in the termination of the visit, but it can also result in a lack of safety for the children, so visitors should be diligent about supervision and not allow other adults (prisoners or other visitors) to supervise their children. No adults (neither prisoners nor visitors) are allowed in the play area except when supervising their children.

C. Contact Between Prisoners and Visitors

Prisoners and their visitors are allowed to briefly kiss and/or hug at the beginning and the end of visits. The only physical contact allowed between prisoners and their adult visitors at other times is holding hands. Prisoners may also hold minor children whom they are visiting.

Physical contact between a prisoner and visitor beyond that described previously, is considered “excessive” and can be cause for staff to terminate the visit and, in some cases, to either suspend the visiting privileges of the visitor for some period and/or to discipline the prisoner. Although most staff will use common sense and not overreact to transitory non-sexual touching (a prisoner physically guiding his/her wife/husband away from an obstacle as they walk, a mother brushing dirt off a prisoner’s shirt), behaviors such as feeding each other, touching each other’s faces, adjusting each other’s clothing, and the like should be avoided.

D. Food, Photographs, and Games

Visiting rooms have vending machines stocked with food and beverages for purchase by visitors and consumption by visitors and prisoners. A visitor may not bring any food or beverage from the outside into the prison and cannot take out any food or beverage bought at the prison when he/she leaves. Vending machines usually have sodas, water, sandwiches (including burgers), and burritos, popcorn, candy, pastries, and coffee. At some prisons, vending machines may also include fresh fruits and vegetables. The prices will vary for such items but usually are about a dollar for a can of soda or bag of popcorn and three to four dollars for a sandwich. The visiting room has microwave ovens for the heating of frozen items.

Although at most prisons the prisoners are allowed to go to the vending machines with their visitors in order to select the food items they want, no prison allows the prisoners to touch either the money or the vending machines. A prisoner who handles money is subject to having his/her visit terminated and may be disciplined.
Most prisons provide limited board and card games for prisoners and their visitors to play together. These may include Scrabble, Dominoes, Uno, Checkers, Chess, and other like games. Most prisons also have children books that prisoners can read to their minor visitors as well as religious materials from most major religions (the Bible, the Torah, the Koran).

Prison visiting rooms have digital cameras available for photographs of prisoners and/or their visitors to be taken. There is a cost for the photographs, usually two dollars for each photograph. At some prisons, the visitor purchases a “ticket” for the photograph either from staff in the processing center or from a vending machine in the processing center or in the visiting room. At other prisons, the prisoner is required to purchase the photo ticket from the canteen. Either staff or a prisoner who works in the visiting room takes and prints the photograph and it is given to the prisoner during the course of the visit. Either the prisoner may keep the photo (taking it back with him/her after his/her visit) or the visitor may take the photo.

E. Rules and Violations

Per the Department Operations Manual, Section 54020.29.1 - Suspension or Exclusion of Visitors from the Visiting Program, it states, “Visitors violating a policy, regulation, or law are subject to denial, suspension, or revocation of a visit in progress or exclusion from the visiting program in accordance with California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 15, Subsections 3176 - 3176.3.”

All visitors should also be aware that CDCR is prohibited from recognizing hostages for bargaining to affect an escape by inmates or for any other reason(s). In addition, the prison may be surrounded by an electric fence. To protect visitors, especially children, from being injured, visitors are cautioned to stay away from the perimeter fence line.

It is a felony for a former inmate or parolee/probationer to be on the grounds of any prison for any reason without prior written approval from the Warden of that institution. Persons discharged from parole must provide proof of discharge along with the Warden’s written permission to visit.

This handbook has already touched on several rules relating to visiting, including rules regarding supervision of minors, physical contact between prisoners and visitors, and bringing or attempting to bring items into the prison. In general, rules exist to protect the safety and security of the prison, staff, prisoners, and visitors, (for example, not being under the influence of drugs or alcohol, not using gang slogans, or walking somewhere on prison grounds you are not allowed.) You should behave as a reasonable person would behave in a public place (for example, staying fully clothed at all times, not verbally or physically fighting with others, not being defiant to staff.) Prisoners and visitors are subject to having their visits terminated and/or suspended for rule violations and prisoners may also be disciplined for violations. Serious rule violations (for example, bringing drugs or weapons to the prison or engaging in sexual contact in the visiting room) can result in terminations, suspensions, and discipline even without warning. Less serious rule violations will usually, although not always, result in warnings first and termination, suspension, or discipline only upon a repeat violation.
A visitor whose visit is terminated or whose future visits are suspended, must be given written notice of the violation, the reason for the termination or suspension, and the name of the person authorizing the action. The visitor may appeal the action by writing to the Warden; the Warden will respond within 15 days. If the visitor disagrees with the Warden’s response, he/she can appeal to the Director of Adult Institutions in Sacramento (address at the end of this handbook). Appeals to Sacramento are to be answered within 20 days of receipt by the Director’s Office, but may take longer due to the volume of appeals received and delays in the processing of mail. The action taken by the prison remains in effect while the appeal is pending.

A prisoner whose visits are terminated or suspended or who has been disciplined may appeal that process through the normal prisoner appeal process. Prisoners are given information about process when they first enter prison.

F. Overcrowding

Because there are limited visiting hours at prisons and the prisoner population is large, there are times when more visitors arrive to visit than the visiting room can accommodate. The prisons in very remote areas are less likely to experience this problem than those closer to more-populous areas. When the visiting room becomes overcrowded, staff will terminate some visits in order to allow waiting visitors to come in to visit. Usually, terminations will be of those prisoners and visitors who have been visiting the longest, at the time terminations become necessary, in order to make space for waiting visitors. All prisoners and visitors who have their visits terminated should receive a written termination report, indicating that the reason for the termination was overcrowding. If a visitor is not offered a termination report, he/she should ask for one.

In limited circumstances, a prisoner and/or his/her visitor may not have their visit terminated even if the visiting room becomes overcrowded. Generally, the exceptions apply to visitors who have traveled over 250 miles to get to the prison and haven’t visited in 30 or more days, to disabled visitors who must rely on specialized transportation to reach the prison, to visitors visiting due to a family emergency (such as death or serious illness), to visitors who have not visited in six or more months, and to prisoners who have married the day of the visit.

G. Leaving After a Visit

Prisoners subject to non-contact visits have time-limited visits, usually one to two hours; their visitors must leave at the end of the allotted time. Prisoners who receive contact visits are allowed to visit until either their visits are terminated or until the end of visiting. Visitors may leave a visit at any time or stay until the end of visiting. Whenever the prisoner and visitor leave, it is their responsibility to clean up the area in which they were visiting by returning any books or games and putting trash into its proper place. Prisoners and visitors who have had contact visits may again share a brief kiss and/or hug at the end of the visit.

All visitors must show (or collect) their identification and pick up their pass as they leave the visiting room. Visitors should check and make sure they have been handed the correct identification and pass by staff, as sometimes a mistake is made and is not
caught until the visitor gets to the processing center requiring them to return to the visiting room to collect the correct items.

Prisoners who have had contact visits must undergo a search before they are allowed to return to their housing units. Some prisons require that the visitor remain in the visiting room until the prisoner has been searched and cleared. That process usually takes only a few minutes; but if the visitor is leaving at the end of visiting, there will be many prisoners to be searched at the same time and the wait (if the visitor is required to wait) can take much longer, up to 30 minutes. Once allowed to leave the visiting room, the visitor returns to the processing center (either by walking or by prison bus or van) and shows his/her identification and the stamp on his/her hand and surrenders his/her pass. He/she is then free to leave prison grounds.
Questions, Comments, and Complaints

If you have questions, comments or complaints about visiting (or other matters), there are several sources available.

A. The Inmate Family Council

Most prisons have an Inmate Family Council (IFC), a group of visitors who meet regularly with prison administration to try to resolve issues that come up relative to family and friends staying connected to prisoners. There will be a bulletin board at the prison that provides the names of those on the IFC and there will be a suggestion box at the prison for comments for the IFC.

B. Visitor Centers

As noted several times, each prison has a Visitor Center, usually on prison grounds, to assist visitors with matters such as clothing, babysitting, and transportation. Staff at the Visitor Centers are quite familiar with visiting rules and procedures and can be a good source of information for the family and friends of prisoners.

C. Visiting Staff

Correctional officers who work in visiting should be able to answer most questions or take your comments and complaints. Every prison has a Visiting Sergeant and/or Visiting Lieutenant who can also answer questions or take comments and complaints. If your complaint is about a correctional officer who works in visiting, you will want to make your complaint to the Visiting Sergeant and/or Lieutenant.

D. Warden

Visitors may write to the Warden about any issue. Often the Warden’s Office will forward the letter to some prison staff the Warden feels is best able to address the concerns raised.

E. Ombudsmen

The Department has several Ombudsmen to help resolve issues that cannot be resolved at the local institution through local staff. The Ombudsmen can be contacted by telephone at (916) 445-1773 or visit the CDCR Website at www.cdc.ca.gov and click on “About CDCR,” then click on “Offices & Programs” and lastly click on “Office of Ombudsman.”

F. The Director

All prisons are overseen by the Director of the Division of Adult Institutions, whose office is located in Sacramento. Anyone with a concern that cannot be resolved through local staff, the local IFC, the Warden, or the Ombudsman can contact the Director by mail at: P. O. Box 942883, Room 351-N, Sacramento, California, 94283-0001 and seek assistance.
Mail and Telephone Calls

In addition to visiting, there are two other ways for family and friends to remain connected to prisoners during incarceration: mail and telephone calls.

A. Mail

Prisoners are allowed to receive mail from anyone other than an incarcerated person or one released from prison within the last year. To receive mail from another prisoner or those recently released, the prisoner must seek the Warden’s approval. There is no limitation on the number of people who may correspond with the prisoner or the number of mail items a prisoner may receive. The only restriction on content of written communication is that it may not contain anything that is a threat or potential threat to another (including discussion of a future criminal act, discussion of an escape, discussion of disrupting the security of the prison, coded messages, maps depicting the area in which the prison is located, gang-related comments or photographs, or photographs of nudity or sexual conduct).

All mail sent to or from prisoners is inspected to the extent necessary to ensure that there is nothing unacceptable in the envelope and to ensure that the content does not contain anything that presents a danger or threat of danger to any person. As a practical matter, that means that any mail sent to the prisoner is opened by mailroom staff, which checks the envelope for enclosures and quickly examines the written content, although it may be more thoroughly reviewed at any time.

Correspondents may send prisoners letters (not more than 10 pages in one envelope), cards (without embellishments such as stickers or glitter), photographs (limited to 10 per envelope and not larger than 8” x 10”), drawings, children’s schoolwork, articles cut from newspapers or magazines, etc. Correspondents may not send the following directly to a prisoner: books, magazines, newspapers, or packages; such matters must be sent through approved vendors and the prisoner can advise his/her family and friends about that procedure.

All mail should be addressed to the prisoner with his/her full name, his/her CDCR number, his/her housing, and the address of the prison. Most prisons have a post office box number to which prisoner mail is to be sent. The address for prisoner mail at the prison you are going to send mail to can be obtained on the CDCR website or by calling the prison.

You may enclose a money order or check in an envelope sent to a prisoner. Mailroom staff will take the money order or check out when the mail is inspected and send it to trust accounts, where it will be credited to the prisoner’s account. Money may also be sent to a prisoner by credit card through an approved telephone vendor (i.e., Western Union, J-Pay), but there is a charge for that procedure.

The prisons try to deliver mail to a prisoner within seven days of its arrival at the prison, but the amount of mail, turnover of mailroom staff, and mailroom vacancies may cause additional delays. Overnight or express mail will arrive at the institution more quickly, but will not be searched, reviewed, or delivered any differently.
than first class mail. Correspondents can help prevent unnecessary delay in the mail by ensuring the address is clear and complete, and that the mail contains no unauthorized material. Legal mail will be delivered on an expedited schedule.

B. Telephone Calls

Family and friends (called party) cannot call prisoners; prisoners must call to speak to someone outside the prison. The prisoners use designated phones that make collect calls to a land line (residence) or cell phones. The called party is responsible for paying for the calls. Calling cards cannot be used. International calls can be made if the called party sets up a pre-paid account with the telephone vendor. Instructions for these types of calls can be found on the CDCR website at:

http://www.cdc.ca.gov/Visitors/Receiving_Calls_From_Inmates_and_Wards.html

The state contracts with one telephone vendor who provides local, long distance, inter-state, and international telephone services to prisoners. The contract term is usually for several years and the contract rates are fixed and do not change for the contract term. The current contract is with Global Tel*link (GTL). GTL issues notices when contract changes occur. The GTL Notices that include current rates, and current/past notices to inmates, family/friends can be found on the CDCR website.

The collect call rates are different for local, long distance, interstate, and international calls. If a called party would like to know their collect call rate, they would need the prisoner to call them first so that a completed call or call attempt would be in the GTL system. Then, the called party can call GTL at 1-888-415-0377, provide their telephone number, and ask for the cost of the call. A GTL user guide that includes billing options, refunds, and other information, will be issued soon. This guide will be shared with the Statewide Inmate Family Council, local prison family advisory groups, prisoner advisory councils, and will be posted on the CDCR website.

Prisoners can sign-up to use the designated phones in 15-minute time slots. The number of calls made by one prisoner can be limited based upon open time slots on the sign-up sheet. The designated phones’ “on” and “off” times vary at each prison; however, these phones are turned off during late night and early morning hours. If a prisoner attempts to make a call when the phones are turned off, the call will not go through.

GTL uses an automated operator system to process the calls. When a prisoner makes a call, the called party will hear a message stating the call is coming from a state prison and the call will be monitored and recorded. The called party can listen to the entire message or they can press the five button on their telephone to accept the charge of the call. During the call, there will be a message played periodically reminding the called party that the call is from a state prison. The calls have a 15-minute time limit and the system automatically ends the call at the end of the 15 minutes. The called party and prisoner will hear a warning message advising when they have two minutes and one minute left in the call.

All billing and blocking issues should be directed to GTL’s Customer Service number at 1-888-415-0377.
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<th>Institution Mailing Address</th>
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<td>Avenal State Prison ASP</td>
<td>#1 Kings Way Avenal, CA 93204 (559) 386-0587</td>
<td>PO Box 8 Avenal, CA 93204-0008</td>
<td>PO Box 9 Avenal, CA 93204-0009</td>
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<td>Calipatria State Prison CAL</td>
<td>7018 Blair Road Calipatria, CA 92233 (760) 348-7000</td>
<td>PO Box 5001 Calipatria, CA 92233-5001</td>
<td>A Yard PO Box 5004 Calipatria, CA 92233-5004 ASU, Level I, Firehouse PO Box 5008 Calipatria, CA 92233-5008 B Yard PO Box 5005 Calipatria, CA 92233-5005 C Yard PO Box 5006 Calipatria, CA 92233-5006 D Yard PO Box 5007 Calipatria, CA 92233-5007</td>
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<tr>
<td>California Correctional Center CCC</td>
<td>711-045 Center Road Susanville, CA 96130 (530) 257-2181</td>
<td>PO Box 790 Susanville, CA 96127-0790</td>
<td>Lassen Yard PO Box 2210 Susanville, CA 96127-2210 Cascade Unit, Arnold Unit PO Box 2500 Susanville, CA 96127-2500 Sierra Unit, Infirmary PO Box 2400 Susanville, CA 96127-2400</td>
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<tr>
<td>California Correctional Institution CCI</td>
<td>24900 Highway 202 Tehachapi, CA 93581 (661) 822-4402</td>
<td>PO Box 1031 Tehachapi, CA 93581-1031</td>
<td>Housing Unit 1 PO Box 107 Tehachapi, CA 93581-0107 Housing Unit 2 PO Box 608 Tehachapi, CA 93581-0608 Housing Unit 3, Reception Center PO Box 1905 Tehachapi, CA 93581-5905 Housing Unit 4A PO Box 1902 Tehachapi, CA 93581-5902 Housing Unit 4B PO Box 1906 Tehachapi, CA 93581-5906</td>
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<td>2302 Brown Road Imperial, CA 92251 (760) 337-7900</td>
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<td>Central California Women’s Facility CCWF</td>
<td>23370 Road 22 Chowchilla, CA 93610 (559) 665-5531</td>
<td>PO Box 1501 Chowchilla, CA 93610-1501</td>
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<td>California Institution for Men CIM</td>
<td>14901 Central Avenue, Chino, CA 91708-0128</td>
<td>Minimum Support Facility PO Box 600, Chino, CA 91708-0600</td>
<td>Reception Center Central PO Box 441, Chino, CA 91708-0441</td>
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<td>California Institution for Women CIW</td>
<td>16756 Chino-Corona Road, Corona, CA 92880-6000</td>
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<td>California Medical Facility CMF 1600 California Drive, Vacaville, CA 95696-2000</td>
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<td>California Rehabilitation Center CRC</td>
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<td>Chuckawalla Valley State Prison CVSP</td>
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<td>Deuel Vocational Institution DVI</td>
<td>23500 Kasson Road, Tracy, CA 95378</td>
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<td>California Substance Abuse Treatment Facility SATF</td>
<td>900 Quebec Avenue, Corcoran, CA 93212</td>
<td>PO Box 7100, Corcoran, CA</td>
<td>A &amp; B Facilities, PO Box 5248, Corcoran, CA</td>
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<td>Sierra Conservation Center SCC</td>
<td>5100 O’Byrnes Ferry Road, Jamestown, CA 95327</td>
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Visiting A Friend or Loved One In Prison 24
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**Visiting A Friend or Loved One In Prison**

26
WRITTEN CONSENT FOR MINOR VISITATION

I, __________________________________ give permission for:

(Parent/Legal Guardian)

NAME: ______________________________ AGE: ________ DOB: _______________

NAME: ______________________________ AGE: ________ DOB: _______________

NAME: ______________________________ AGE: ________ DOB: _______________

NAME: ______________________________ AGE: ________ DOB: _______________

To visit _________________________________ at a California State Prison or Institution

(Inmate Name and CDCR Number)

With _________________________________ for one year. I understand this Authorization is to be

(Name of Accompanying Adult)

updated annually and that the minor Birth Certificate, or a Certified copy of the Birth Certificate, from the County Recorders Office is required. Satisfactory Evidence of Proof of legal guardianship to said minor(s) is required as an attachment to this authorization form.

I understand that this authorization can only be revoked IN WRITING, and will remain in effect for one (1) year, or until written notice of revocations is issued by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

________________________________________

(Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian) (Date)

A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of
the individual who signed the document, to which this certificate is attached, and
not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

CERTIFICATE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

State of California
County of _________________________________

On ______________________ before me, ______________________________________ personally appeared

(DATE) (Name and Title of the Officer)

________________________________________

(Name Parent/Legal Guardian) who proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to

be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledge to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

I certify under PENALTY OF PERJURY under the laws of the State of California that the foregoing paragraph is true and correct.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature _________________________________ (SEAL)