

A Publication of The Pennsylvania Prison Society

# GRATERFRIENDS: SPECIAL EDITION

*Promoting a humane, just and constructive correctional system and a rational approach to criminal justice since 1787*

## Pennsylvania State Government Responds to COVID19

### King's Bench and Reprieve Sentences

*Pennsylvania Prison Society Staff*

On March 30, 2020, the ACLU of Pennsylvania brought a King's Bench petition on behalf of the Pennsylvania Prison Society. The petition argued that the imminent threat of COVID-19 calls for the Supreme Court to invoke its jurisdiction to reduce prison populations, thereby granting relief against the potentially deadly consequence of the virus's spreading within the walls of Pennsylvania prisons. "Across Pennsylvania," the petition stated, "it is not possible for county jails to implement the most critical preventive measures set forth in the CDC Guidance: social distancing, preventive hygiene, and the medical isolation of confirmed or suspected COVID-19 cases." The petition argued that prison populations in PA must be reduced in order to implement the social distancing ordered by Governor Tom Wolf in light of the imminent threat posed by COVID-19.

On April 3, the Supreme Court declined to invoke its jurisdiction, but demanded that "action must be taken to mitigate the potential of a public health crisis." The Supreme Court, in rejecting the petition, delegated the responsibility to local officials to implement procedures reducing prison

populations.

Governor Tom Wolf took up the Supreme Court's call to action on April 10th, issuing an executive order to temporarily reprieve sentences across Pennsylvania State prison facilities for nonviolent offenders whose sentences end either within nine months or, for those who are in a high-risk group, within a year.<sup>1</sup> As stated on the Governor's website, Wolf "ordered Department of Corrections officials to establish a Temporary Program to Reprieve Sentences of Incarceration to help aid the department in the transfer of qualifying individuals to community corrections facilities or home confinement amid the COVID-19 pandemic."<sup>2</sup> The Governor's order applies only to

1 Jeremy Roebuck et al, "Thousands of state prison inmates in Pa. and N.J. are now eligible for temporary release as governors act to avert coronavirus spread," Philadelphia Inquirer, April 10, 2020, <https://www.inquirer.com/health/coronavirus/coronavirus-prisoners-pennsylvania-new-jersey-governor-wolf-murphy-20200410.html>.

2 "Gov. Wolf: Department of Corrections to Establish Temporary Program to Reprieve Sentences of Incarceration," Governor Tom Wolf, April 10, 2020, <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/gov-wolf-department-of-corrections-to-establish-temporary-program-to-reprieve-sentences-of-incarceration/>.

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people in state prisons, SCI's, who are eligible for release within the next 12 months, or who are within nine months of their minimum date. They must also fulfill a second requirement: be either 50 years of age, pregnant, or have chronic medical conditions including heart disease, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, cancer, or asthma. The order will not apply to most (but not all) people convicted of a sex offenses, a crime in which a person was injured or a crime in which a gun was used.

This order applies to approximately 1,500 to 1,800 individuals in state prison. It is likely that, because of the challenges arising from reentry, the number of inmates released will be fewer than the eligible number. As of April 15th, at least seven inmates have been released under the Governor's reprieve.<sup>3</sup>

3 Sarah Cassi, "First Pa. state prison inmates released under coronavirus reprieve program," lehighvalleylive.com, April 15, 2020, <https://www.lehighvalleylive.com/coronavi->

*(See State response continued on page 3)*

# FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

As we have since 1787, the Pennsylvania Prison Society stands ready to do our part.

During these uncertain times, the Pennsylvania Prison Society is working hard to bring light to what is happening behind bars across the Commonwealth and to advocate for the health and safety of all those impacted by the criminal legal system. We are working around the clock to ensure that incarcerated people receive proper physical and mental health care during this crisis.

**Suspended Social Services:** As you may know, the coronavirus health crisis has required us to temporarily suspend aspects of three of our Social Service programs: Family Transportation, Mentoring at SCI Phoenix and SCI Chester, and Parenting classes in Philadelphia and Centre County. As of April 13th, we have started virtual communication with all of our mentees. We are identifying additional ways to use technology to safely support those who count on our programming on the inside and fielding questions in an effort to keep everyone connected and up to date as the landscape continues to rapidly change.

**Virtual Visitation Technology:** As of now, the Department of Corrections has suspended all busses bringing loved ones

to visit incarcerated family members, including the Prison Society subsidized busses. Approximately 300 loved ones rely on our busses to visit SCIs on a monthly basis, and we know first hand how important this physical contact is for families. In light of the Commonwealth-wide suspension of in-person visits, the Department of Corrections began piloting virtual visits on March 19th. We applaud the Department's effort to provide an alternative means of connection during the crisis but we also recognize that it is an imperfect solution. Traditionally, on any given day, 30-40 visits can happen simultaneously in the visiting room of an SCI, and the DOC simply does not have the capacity to mirror the same level of virtual access. In this issue of Graterfriends, we have included a step-by-step guide to virtual visitation, to learn more see page 6, or go to the DOC web page titled "Video Visitation."

**Reentry Services:** The Prison Society will continue to work with those who rely on us for ongoing support when they come home. Finding stable housing, employment, and healthcare can be difficult for those returning home under normal circumstances, but unfortunately these challenges are intensified by this crisis. Our Mentoring Associate, Joe, is available around the clock to help returning citizens navigate where and how to access help.

## GRATERFRIENDS

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Claire Shubik-Richards

EDITOR AND DESIGNER Alyssa Feitzinger

EDITORIAL ORGANIZER Jennifer Stevens

EDITORIAL ASSISTANTS Noelle Gambale, Kevin Bendesky,  
Taelor Jones, April Rountree,  
Kailyn Schneider, Emma Holyst, Taylor  
Lawriston, Kirstin Cornnell

FOUNDER Joan Gauker



230 South Broad Street • Suite 605 Philadelphia, PA 19102

Telephone: 215.564.4775 • Fax: 215.564.1830

Email: [EditorGF@PrisonSociety.org](mailto:EditorGF@PrisonSociety.org)

[www.prisonsociety.org](http://www.prisonsociety.org) • [www.facebook.com/PrisonSociety](https://www.facebook.com/PrisonSociety)

Graterfriends is a publication from the Pennsylvania Prison Society. The organization was founded in 1787 to promote humane prisons and a rational approach to criminal justice.

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. We will not print anonymous letters. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space.

To protect Graterfriends from copyright infringement, please attach a note, on your submission, stating that you are the original author of the work and that you give us permission to edit and print; date and sign the declaration.

If you have a question about Graterfriends, please contact our staff by mail, email, or phone.

Given how quickly the state and local situation is evolving, we are following new developments and will continue to reevaluate our steps and actions daily. Know that we are committed to giving you, the families we serve, our supporters, and those on the inside, credible, timely information. We are in this together as one community. We are here for you — for those on the inside, for those who have returned home, and for those who care.



## NOMINATIONS REQUESTED

Do you know a Society volunteer, incarcerated person, or correctional employee who shows **#LoveAboveBars**?

Every year we honor people who have shown **#LoveAboveBars** and who have shown an unwavering commitment to humane prison conditions and exemplarily leadership as a volunteer, correctional employee, or while being incarcerated. We are delighted to give out these three awards:

- Incarcerated Person of the Year
- Correctional Employee of the Year
- Prison Society Volunteer of the Year

If someone you know comes to mind in any of these categories, please send in a nomination by May 30, 2020. Let us know their name, contact information, and why you think they would be the perfect recipient for one of these awards. We can't wait to hear more about all of the people who are making a difference in the lives of incarcerated Pennsylvanians and their families.

*(State response continued from page 1)*

The Department of Corrections, with input from the Court, the Attorney General, and the various District Attorney's offices, will recommend to Governor Wolf which inmates qualify for temporary reprieve. The Governor will have to approve each recommended conditional reprieve. In turn, each reprieve will be "contingent upon compliance with all terms and conditions of community supervision imposed by the Department." Each issuance will extend as long as necessary for the Governor to terminate the Disaster Emergency proclaimed on March 6, 2020. The inmate will then return to his or her respective prison for the remaining duration of his or her sentence. ***See page 5 for more information on how to advocate for early release.***

Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Prison Society Claire Shubik-Richards told Donald Hunt of The Philadelphia Tribune, "Gov. Wolf really took leadership. This issue of reaching people to protect public health and public safety that was put at the feet of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and they declined to do anything," she continued. "Then, it was batted over to the legislature and they declined to do anything. Then, the buck really got passed to Gov. Wolf. He's the person with secretary [John] Wetzel at the Department of Corrections who stepped up. The executive branch showed the leadership what the judiciary and the legislature declined to do. Even though we would have liked to have seen an order like this three weeks ago before anyone in the Pennsylvania prisons was sick with COVID-19, it's not too late."<sup>4</sup> The Prison Society applauds Governor Wolf for taking needed action, action that the state Supreme Court and the Legislature declined to take.

The Prison Society will be in close communication with the Department of Corrections over the next few weeks to bring you up-to-date and accurate information on our website, to answer your questions, and to ensure that this order is implemented effectively.

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[rus/2020/04/first-pa-state-prison-inmates-released-under-coronavirus-reprieve-program.html](https://www.phillytrib.com/news/health/coronavirus/da-chief-defender-praise-state-prison-release-program-urge-governor-to-go-further/article_c5424441-07ad-5f46-831e-b492e377ae91.html)

<sup>4</sup> Donald Hunt, "DA, Chief Defender praise state prison release program, urge governor to go further," Philadelphia Tribune, April 13, 2020, [https://www.phillytrib.com/news/health/coronavirus/da-chief-defender-praise-state-prison-release-program-urge-governor-to-go-further/article\\_c5424441-07ad-5f46-831e-b492e377ae91.html](https://www.phillytrib.com/news/health/coronavirus/da-chief-defender-praise-state-prison-release-program-urge-governor-to-go-further/article_c5424441-07ad-5f46-831e-b492e377ae91.html).

# DOC RESPONSE

## COVID-19

We have included a summary of some of the steps the DOC has taken to mitigate the spread of COVID19 behind bars.

### **Quarantines:**

At 10 p.m. on March 29, the DOC began a statewide inmate quarantine in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

DOC Sec. John Wetzel said that inmates will be fed in their cells, and they will be afforded out-of-cell time for video visits, phone calls, access to the law library, as well as being provided with in-cell programming. All inmate movements will be controlled to conform to social distancing recommendations.

When quarantines happen, individuals housed in those housing units cannot participate in video visitation for the duration of the lockdown.

Also, lockdowns that are unrelated to quarantine may happen due to prison-related incidents. The same is the case for medical care – there are some inmates who require hospitalization that are not related to COVID-19.

The DOC screens all employees upon arrival for work. Anyone who does not clear the screening is turned away.

All figures the DOC reports of employee cases are self-reported by employees. The DOC does not have the right to obtain medical information on staff, so the DOC relies on employees to provide that information. Employees who tested positive are directed to remain off work until they are cleared by a medical professional to return to work. Employees awaiting results are directed to self-quarantine at their homes. Employees who tested negative may return to work once cleared by a medical professional.

### **Measures for Inmates:**

All inmates will receive 5 free 15-minute phone calls and 5 free emails per week.

Effective April 1, all inmates will receive free cable TV in their cells. Inmates without a TV can still buy one from the commissary.

Each inmate will be permitted (without cost) to mail 12, one-ounce first class letters per month.

Activities departments have increased activity opportunities.

Commissary caps have increased from \$70 per week to \$100 per week.

Town Hall meetings are being held to educate inmates on COVID-19

Secretary Wetzel recorded an informational video to be posted on the inmate channel for all inmates.

All inmates are being screened coming in and going out.

All new inmates are being screened before being admitted into prison. The DOC is not releasing any inmates without screening for symptoms.

Inmates who have flu-like symptoms from counties will not be accepted. All inmates leaving our facilities (parolees, max outs, movements, etc.) will be screened.

Medical co-pays have been waived for any inmate with influenza like illness (ILI).

Inmates have been provided with disposable masks and are strongly encouraged to utilize them.

Inmates are being provided materials to clean their cell daily. Materials will be provided to them on a daily basis.

### **Staff:**

Each facility is conducting enhanced screening for all individuals entering a facility. No one will be permitted to enter a facility who has a fever over 100.4 or exhibits signs of cold or flu.

Masks are required for all staff and institutions have provided each staff member with a cloth mask for use. Employees are permitted to provide their own mask similar to the ones the facility is handing out.

Daily updates are emailed to ALL staff to mitigate rumors and provide up-to-date information.

Personal Protection Equipment is provided to all staff.

Masks are being manufactured by Correctional Industries. All CDC and DOH protocols are being followed in reference to masking.

### **Sanitation:**

Institutions are holding town hall meetings with their inmate population to review sanitation guidelines and COVID-19 information for awareness. These meetings are conducted with institutions safety manager and infectious control nurse. Inmates are being educated on prevention/mitigation efforts.

Sanitation has increased all throughout the SCI, including housing units and cells.

Provided all staff with a vehicle sanitation plan explaining how to clean all vehicles.

Correctional Industries increased production of anti-bacterial soap to ensure all inmates and staff have sufficient supply throughout the institution. Soap is provided free of charge to inmates.



The DOC hired all equipment (radios, OC, etc.) to be cleaned after each shift and throughout the day. Pennsylvania Correctional Industries is increasing manufacturing capabilities, specifically of manufacturing anti-bacterial soap and masks.

All gyms and barber shops/cosmetology are closed until further notice.

The general libraries will be closed for inmates, but they can request books and have books delivered to them. The legal libraries will remain open as normal. Legal libraries will be prioritized based on most critical need.

#### **Parole/Field/Reentry:**

All parole hearings will continue as scheduled and follow the existing process.

Bureau of Community Corrections is furloughing eligible reentrants.

Community Corrections has implemented additional sanitation efforts.

Community Corrections staff and reentrants are undergoing enhanced screening.

Field agents have increased contacts via technology.

Agents are equipped with PPE to use if necessary.

## EARLY RELEASE INFORMATION: PA

There is not a specific list of people who will be released under the Governor's order. Instead, the Governor's order provides certain requirements for those seeking release in the state prisons (SCIs):

- Over 50 years old
- Suffering from chronic medical conditions including heart disease, diabetes, kidney or liver disease, cancer, or asthma
- Pregnant
- Eligibility for release within the next 12 months, or within 9 months of their minimum date.

The order does not apply to most:

- persons who have committed a personal injury crime
- persons convicted of sex offenses.
- crimes in which a gun had been used.

Those who will be released will likely find out on a rolling basis.

If you want to know if a person may be released under this order or if you want to advocate for someone to be released under this order, you can email the DOC at [ra-crdocemergencyrel@pa.gov](mailto:ra-crdocemergencyrel@pa.gov).

*See page 7 for re-entry resources.*

#### *Wondering about the status of your submission?*



We think it is important for you to know that, because we receive many submissions, we are unable to print every article.

You may receive a postcard like the one above in the mail as a thank you for your submission with either confirmation that it has been considered for publication or a reason for denial.

If we believe that the issue presented in a submission is of serious concern, your letter may be forwarded to an official visitor or relevant personnel for further inquiry.

**Please remember that any submissions we receive will NOT be published without permission to print and a note stating that you are the original author.**

**Submissions without either of these two requirements will not be printed. We also cannot print copyrighted material. Original submissions will not be returned.**

# VIRTUAL VISITATION VISITOR INSTRUCTIONS

The Department of Corrections is offering video visiting for ALL incarcerated individuals and their authorized visitors. While only recently implemented, video visits will be held seven days a week. The DOC conducted 5,174 video visits between March 19-April 2. There are more than 2,100 video visits scheduled to take place through April 25. This number will continue to increase due to daily scheduling happening at state prisons.

## How to Set up a Video Visit:

1. The visitor on the outside needs to download the Zoom Cloud Meeting application on a smartphone, tablet, or computer. Unless the visitor uses Zoom for other meetings, they will not need to use it until the day of their virtual visit.
2. Each facility has a different Zoom resource email that the visitor must contact to schedule the visit. The corresponding emails are below:

Albion - RA-CRALBZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Benner Township - RA-CRBENZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Camp Hill - RA-CRCAMZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Cambridge Springs - RA-CRCBSZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Chester - RA-CRCHSZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Coal Township - RA-CRCAZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Dallas - RA-CRDALZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Frackville - RA-CRFRAZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Forest - RA-CRFRSZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Fayette - RA-CRFYTZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Greene - RA-CRGRNZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Houtzdale - RA-CRHOUZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Huntingdon - RA-CRHUNZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Laurel Highlands - RA-CRLAUZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Mahanoy - RA-CRMAHZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Mercer - RA-CRMERZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Muncy - RA-CRMUNZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Phoenix - RA-CRPHXZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Pine Grove - RA-CRPNGZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Quehanna Boot Camp - RA-CRQUEZOOMSCHED@pa.gov

Retreat - RA-CRRETZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Rockview - RA-CRROCZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Smithfield - RA-CRSMIZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Somerset - RA-CRSMRZOOMSCHED@pa.gov  
Waymart - RA-CRWAMZOOMSCHED@pa.gov

3. The visitor sends an email to the corresponding Zoom resource email with the following information:

Visitor Name(s)  
Address(es)  
Date(s) of Birth  
Phone Number(s)  
Schedulers E-mail address  
Inmate Name  
Inmate ID  
Requested Visit Date  
Requested time slot (provide a 4-hour time slot within the facilities visiting hours)

4. The facility will send the visitor an email with an assigned date and time of the visit OR the facility will ask the visitor for additional times because the times they gave were filled. Unless the facility emails you back with a date and time, a visit has NOT been scheduled.

\*We recommend giving them a date a month in advance to avoid back and forth emails trying to schedule a visit- the facilities are receiving hundreds of requests\*

5. The email with the scheduled date and time will contain a link and a meeting ID number. On the day of the visit, the visitor will click on the link to open the meeting in Zoom. They will then be prompted to type in the meeting ID number to begin the call.

## Guidelines for Visits:

Up to 3 authorized visitors may participate in a video visit. Each inmate is permitted 1 hour long visit a week and only 1 weekend day is permitted per month. The visiting rules for Video Visitation are generally the same as those for visiting in the facility.

# RESOURCES

## REENTRY:

**Action Wellness** - 1216 Arch Street, 6th Floor Philadelphia PA 19107 - 215-981-0088 - Philadelphia

Action Wellness's program, RE-LINK, offers reentry services, such as getting your GED or high school diploma and entering college, job searching and training, finding health insurance, finding a doctor or dentist, drug and alcohol treatment, mental health treatment, getting legal documents (state ID, birth certificates, Social Security cards), and transportation. Action Wellness also offers primary care medical services and STD/HIV testing.

**Affordable Housing Centers of PA** - 846 N Broad Street, 1st Floor Philadelphia PA 19130 - (215) 765-1221 - Philadelphia

The centers provide free housing counseling to low and moderate income homebuyers in PA (primarily in Philadelphia). They have HUD-certified, Fannie Mae-approved housing counseling to help families to achieve homeownership. They provide foreclosure counseling, one-on-one mortgage loan counseling and first-time homebuyer classes.

**Allegheny County Treatment Alternative (ACTA)** – 2410 5th Avenue Pittsburgh PA 15213 - (412) 535-4338 - Philadelphia

Supportive services for female incarcerated offenders and their children under 5 years old. The program offers residential alternatives to incarceration as well as help with reentry into the community once the sentence has been served.

**Broad Street Ministry** - 315 S. Broad St. Philadelphia PA 19107 - (215) 735-4847 – Philadelphia

In addition to enjoying nutritious and professionally-prepared meals, our guests can access a variety of life-stabilizing services delivered by our team and our partner organizations, including the Prison Society. Services provided include reentry navigation, mailing addresses, clothing, on-site medical and dental care, activation of benefits and more

**Client Assistance Program (CAP)** - 1515 Market Street, suite

1300 Philadelphia PA 19102 - Toll Free: (888) 745-2357 - Philadelphia

With the help of CAP, individuals can obtain pre-employment transition services, access the services they need to pursue a meaningful career and live independently. Offices in Philadelphia & Camp Hill.

**Congreso de Latino Unidos, Inc.** – 216 W Somerset Street Philadelphia PA 19133 - (215) 763-8870 - Philadelphia

Latino and multicultural service center. Services include: Domestic violence program, Counseling, Education, Health, Crisis management and intervention, Translation and Court Accompaniment. There are several satellite sites in the Philadelphia Area.

**Critical Path Project** - 1233 Locust Street, 2nd Floor Philadelphia PA 19107 - (215) 985-4448 -(EXT. 143) - Philadelphia

The Critical Path Learning Center at Philadelphia FIGHT is an educational commons and stigma-free space devoted to the intersection of health and literacy for the digital age. Core programs include a health resources library, technology access and training, adult education, employment resources, and hospitality services.

**Dignity Housing** - 5227 Germantown Avenue Philadelphia PA 19144 - (215) 713-0968 – Philadelphia

Dignity Housing provides quality, affordable housing in 3 housing programs, each specially designed to meet the varying needs of the resident population. Dignity Housing currently has 58 housing units.

**Erie County Re-entry Services and Support Alliance** - 18 West 9th St Erie, PA 16501 - (814) 459-4581

The ECRSSA helps support and service those who are returning to the community. They assist in finding job training, employment, education, medical and mental health care, housing support, etc.

*(Continued onto pages 8 and 9)*

# RESOURCES

**Mayor's Office of Reintegration Services (RISE)** - Philadelphia

Re-entry Help: Provides Philadelphia ex-offenders and their families with information regarding agencies, programs, services, employment opportunities and social events that will ultimately assist in the reintegration process. Provides training and education programs to assist in reentry.

**Project HOME** – 1515 Fairmount Avenue Philadelphia PA 19130 - (215) 232-7272 – Philadelphia

Non-profit organization that empowers adults, children, and families to break the cycle of homelessness and poverty.

**St. John's Hospice** - 1221 Race Street Philadelphia PA 19107 - (215) 563-7763 - Philadelphia

Saint John's Hospice is a Catholic Social Services shelter for men located in Center City Philadelphia.

**Women's Opportunities Resource Center (WORC)** - 2010 Chestnut Street Philadelphia PA 19103 - (215) 564-5500 - Philadelphia

The mission of WORC is to promote social and economic self-sufficiency primarily for economically disadvantaged women and their families. WORC provides training, individual business assistance, incentive savings program, job placement, and access to business and financial resources. Services are provided in Philadelphia, Bucks, Montgomery, and Delaware Counties.

**Philadelphia Reentry Coalition** - 1-215-686-2123 - Philadelphia

The Coalition brings reentry partners together to increase collaboration, reduce duplication, align existing efforts and strengthen stakeholders' capacity to improve their own reentry programs.

**Face to Face** - 123 East Price Street Philadelphia PA 19144 - (215) 849-0179 - Philadelphia

Face to Face is a human services organization which provides free meals, nurse-managed health care, legal and social services, computer training, creative arts studios, and children's after school and summer programming to low income residents of the Germantown neighborhood. Web site has contacts (phone numbers and email addresses) for various services. Face to Face's Legal Clinic is available on Tuesdays from 10am - noon and on Saturdays from noon - 2pm.

**Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project** – 1528 Walnut Street, suite 515 Philadelphia PA 19102 -(267) 703-8046 – All of Pennsylvania

The Youth Sentencing & Reentry Project (YSRP) uses direct service and policy advocacy to transform the experiences of children prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system, and to ensure fair and thoughtful resentencing and reentry for individuals who were sentenced to life without parole as children ("juvenile lifers").

**Pinebrook Family Answers' Forensic Services Department** – 402 North Fulton Street Allentown PA 18102 - (610) 432-3919 - Lehigh, Northampton, Carbon

Offers a comprehensive regional reentry program for women. All aspects of the program are designed to address the unique needs of incarcerated woman and support their successful reentry back into the community. Serves Lehigh, Northampton, and Carbon counties.

**The Program for Offenders, Inc.** – 564 Forbes Avenue, suite 930 Pittsburgh PA 15219 - (412) 281-7380 - Allegheny

THE PROGRAM for Offenders, Inc. provides supportive services for offenders to give them a second chance and to give their children a first chance. Services include employment services, case management, inpatient and outpatient drug and alcohol treatment, and residential alternatives to incarceration.



# RESOURCES

**The Program, “It’s About Change”, INC** - 1515 Derry Street Harrisburg PA 17104 - (717) 238-9950 – Dauphin

The Program, “It’s About Change”, Inc., is an independent, 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization committed to providing resources and encouragement to ex-offenders reentering our community.

**West Homestead Center (WHC)** - 225 West Seventh Avenue West Homestead PA 15120 - (412) 535-4345 - Dauphin

Allegheny County: Supportive services for female incarcerated offenders and their children under 5 years old. The program offers residential alternatives to incarceration as well as help with reentry into the community once the sentence has been served.

**Franklin County Reentry Coalition** - 533 S. Main Street, Chambersburg, PA 17201 - 717-263-5060 ext. 314 - Franklin

The mission of the Franklin County Reentry Coalition is to develop strong collaborative community and professional partnerships that will empower and support formerly incarcerated individuals and their families

**Lancaster County Reentry Coalition** - 601 South Queen Street Lancaster, PA 17603 -717.299.7301 - Lancaster

The Lancaster Re-Entry Coalition provides resources, mentoring and opportunities for individuals who are returning to the community after incarceration.

## NEWSLETTERS:

**Hearts on a Wire** - 1315 Spruce Street Philadelphia PA 19107

Hearts on a Wire is a grassroots organization working to address the needs of incarcerated transgender people in Pennsylvania prisons. Offers a free newsletter to incarcerated and detained people. Write to be added to their mailing list.

**Prison Legal News** - PO Box 1151 Lake Worth FL 33460 - (561) 360-2523

Prison Legal News is an independent 64-page monthly magazine that provides a cutting edge review and analysis of prisoner rights, court rulings and news about prison issues. PLN has a national (U.S.) focus on both state and federal prison issues, with international coverage as well. PLN provides information that enables prisoners and other concerned individuals and organizations to seek the protection and enforcement of prisoner’s rights at the grass roots level. Subscription is required. (online or hard copy)

**Prison Health News** - 1233 Locust Street, 3rd Floor Philadelphia PA 19107 - (215) 985-4448 (EXT.) 417

Prison Health News is a quarterly newsletter and health resource. Their newsletter is published four times a year for people in prison and strives to lift up the voices, experience and expertise of currently and formerly incarcerated people. They respond to all types of health questions from people in prisons and jails everywhere in the United States. Write to them for a free subscription or with health questions. Past issues are downloadable from the website.

**Prisoner Diabetes Handbook** - A guide to managing diabetes for prisoners, by prisoners. Published by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

**Adopt an Inmate** - PO Box 1543 Veneta OR 97487 - (971) 236-7897

Nonprofit volunteer organization that connects outside volunteers with prisoners seeking mentors, support and friendship. (They are not a dating service). Their website is a comprehensive source of tools and resources to advocate for inmates. They welcome stories, poems, artwork, and book reviews by inmates and their advocates for publication on their website

# AN OPEN LETTER FROM SANKOFA

## A TRAUMA HEALING STUDIO

Trauma is an experience that feels overwhelming. It feels like a threat to a person's life that they cannot escape. After the trauma is over, the sense of relief that is felt is a powerful healing tool in itself. It's a signal to our body and mind that the danger has passed, and we can exhale. But what happens when we aren't able to see an ending? What happens while we are holding our breath in fear?

When this experience extends over an extended period of time or is repeated, we call it complex trauma. This type of trauma can affect the way we see the world and interact with others. When we are in a state of constant fear, we may not be able to concentrate or even think clearly. We can become tense. We don't feel like ourselves. And we can become angry, withdrawn, or simply like we don't know what to do. Trauma has a profound impact on us but each of us may respond differently to it.

The current state of the world has impacted our mental health in ways that we aren't able to measure quite yet, but it has impacted people who are incarcerated especially hard.

Remember that it is ok to not feel ok all of the time. Your feelings are your own and all feelings are normal. There isn't a play-book for what we are experiencing. What I can offer are a few tips that may be able to reduce the level of anxiety you may be feeling.

One way to ease anxiety is to connect with what you are feeling. Not to judge it but to simply name and validate it in the moment. Think of pies as a treat that you give yourself. Now think of it as P.I.E.S. a way that you can treat yourself with kindness by checking in Physically, Intellectually, Emotionally, and Safely.

- Notice what is going on for you **physically**. Our body will send us both negative and positive signals. It could be sweating, fast beating heart, shakes, shortness of breath. What is your body telling you in that moment?
- Check-in with how you are feeling **intellectually**. Sometimes we have difficulty focusing or have racing thoughts. Once we can identify what thoughts are the most pressing for us, we can begin to connect with how we feel about them.
- Name your **emotion** or mood. Keep in mind you can feel calm and scared at the same time. Just notice how you are feeling in that moment.
- Lastly, but most importantly, do you have any sense of **safety**? That can look different for each us. It could be felt as a sense of spirituality or maybe within a network of support systems you have access to.

Examining your PIES will allow you to become grounded in the moment and can serve as an act of self-care to decompress. Try it as a personal check-in and use it to check-in with each other. Try to take a deep breath through your nostrils and make your exhale longer and through your mouth. Think of blowing the biggest bubble possible without it popping. This is another way that we can calm ourselves in tense moments. Inhale the feelings that ground you and exhale the stuff that you no longer need.

Finally, make sure you remember to laugh, to grieve, to be angry, to feel however you want. Most importantly, I want you to know that - you are valued and you are loved by many! You are not alone.

In Peace, Love, and Solidarity,  
Jacqui J.  
Founder



*Reclaiming the Past, to Heal the Future*

# AN OPEN LETTER FROM THE PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

Dear Friends,

First and foremost, everyone at the Prison Society hopes that this letter finds you healthy and safe. Know that we are thinking about you and that you are not alone.

Life on the outside looks vastly different than it did two months ago, just as I am sure it does on the inside. Routines have been disrupted, people are more isolated, and there is a general sense of uncertainty looming over everyone.

But one thing remains very apparent—we are all part of a larger community that is committed to caring for one another. The simple act of stopping to wash your hands, to put on a face mask, and to sacrifice some of your daily freedoms is an act of love both for yourself and for your neighbor.



The Prison Society receives hundreds of calls, emails, and letters a week with people inquiring about the health and safety of those behind bars, and we are doing our best to respond to each and every one. There are a tremendous number of people who care about you and who are thinking about you. We are listening to what you and your loved ones are telling us. And we are pushing for change where we can.

Connie, a Prison Society volunteer and Official Visitor in Centre County, reminded me of advice that she shares with participants in her parenting class: We cannot change the past or let guilt or fear drive our behavior. Rather, it is our job as parents, as neighbors, to be attentive to the needs of others. We must acknowledge that our behaviors impact others, and we must also seek the support we need to effectively support others.

We are in this together, and we are here for you. Stay safe, stay healthy, and prioritize your well-being as best you can. Know this is temporary and that we cannot wait to see you again.

Sincerely,  
Kirstin C.  
Social Services Director, PPS

# COVID-19 SURVEY

*As part of our continued efforts to monitor prison conditions, we are asking you for your help understanding what is happening on the inside.*

*Please fill out this survey and mail it back to us at:  
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605, Philadelphia, PA 19102.*

1. Do you feel safe? **Yes** **No**
2. Can you describe the atmosphere in the prison since the coronavirus outbreak?
3. What is the attitude of the staff like?
4. Have you seen any changes in activities and programming? **Yes** **No** **Other**  
If so, what has changed?



- |   |            |           |              |
|---|------------|-----------|--------------|
| 5. Has there been a reduction in recreation time?                                     | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| 6. Are you able to wash your hands regularly?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| 7. Are you able to disinfect your cell regularly?                                     | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| 8. Is the prison disinfecting communal areas?   | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| 9. Are you and the people you know able to access medical care?                       | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> | <b>Other</b> |
| 10. What are your concerns about how the prison is managing the coronavirus outbreak? |            |           |              |

11. What facility are you in?

12. What is your housing unit?

13. What date did you fill out this survey?

14. **OPTIONAL** (your name will not be used in reporting out results)

Name and

Inmate Number

Thank you for your feedback. We are here during these uncertain times.

PLEASE NOTE if you have other concerns, not related to the questions above, please write to us on a separate piece of paper. If you provide additional information on this survey, it may get lost.

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Philadelphia, PA 19102

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