

STATE OF IOWA

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

# An Introduction to Incarceration in Iowa: A Guidebook for Family and Friends of Offenders



February  
2009

This Guidebook is dedicated in memory of Warden Lowell D. Brandt of the Iowa Medical & Classification Center for his inspiration and vision in meeting the needs of offenders of the Iowa Department of Corrections. He believed in the mission of the IDOC to protect the public, employees and offenders from victimization. He believed in providing offenders with the opportunities to participate in rehabilitative programming, basic education, life skills, work experiences, and mental health and medical treatment in order for them become productive and participating members of the public upon release. He supported the use of Evidence-Based Practices to accomplish offender and staff accountability.

Lowell D. Brandt  
May 1950 – December 2008

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## **Why Did We Develop This Book?**

The Department of Corrections staff realize that you may have many questions and concerns as your loved one enters the system. We adhere to best practices in corrections. We realize family and social supports are also very important factors in leading to success. We want to help the offender maintain healthy connections. Therefore, we created this guidebook to provide an overview of the incarceration process and answer some frequently asked questions.

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## Introduction

Incarceration is often a difficult time not only for the offenders, but also for their family and friends. Separation from a loved one due to incarceration can be emotionally, spiritually, and economically overwhelming.

This guidebook has been developed for you as a resource in understanding the rules and regulations that govern the Iowa institutions. Although this guidebook may not answer all of your questions, it is intended to provide general information about the Iowa system.

Please take the time to read this information carefully. It is important to know that this guidebook is for **informational purposes only**, and the regulations outlined herein are **subject to change**. It is important to remember that if changes occur in the Department of Correction's policies and procedures, institutional rules, and in state laws, those changes override this guidebook.

## Mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections

The mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections is to: ***Advance successful offender reentry to protect the public, staff and offenders from victimization.***

## Organization of the Department of Corrections

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is a state government agency which is part of the Executive branch and is headed by the Director of Corrections, a cabinet officer appointed by the Governor. The Department of Corrections consists of nine institutions located throughout the state and the DOC Central Office Headquarters located in Des Moines, Iowa. Community-based correctional services such as probation, parole, and work release are provided through contracts between the DOC and the Judicial Districts; however, the focus of this booklet is to provide information about the Iowa institutional system, not community-based corrections.

The DOC is organized into two geographic regions: Western and Eastern. A regional deputy director oversees each region. A warden or superintendent provides leadership at each institution and reports to the regional deputy director.

The Board of Parole is not a division of the DOC. It is an independent body whose members are appointed by the Governor. The Parole Board is the releasing authority for offenders in the DOC.

## **The Reception Process**

### **What happens when an offender first enters the Department of Corrections?**

All offenders arrive at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center in Coralville, Iowa. This institution is the **reception center** for the Iowa DOC. The reception process will last about four to six weeks. Counseling staff are available to assist the offender in making an adequate adjustment to the institution.

During the reception process, staff will gather information about family history, educational background, work history, medical history, and criminal history. Medical, dental, and mental health screening is completed during this time and the offender is tested and interviewed to determine individual needs and appropriate institutional placement.

The offender is involved in an orientation process. The offender receives information which explains rules, penalties, disciplinary procedures, how to obtain health services, and other important information.

The offender's case will be reviewed and a decision will be made based on the information gathered as to which institution he or she will be transferred to upon leaving the Iowa Medical and Classification Center.

### **Is visitation allowed while the offender is in reception?**

Although visitation is not allowed while the offender is in the reception process, there are steps you can take during this time to become approved to visit the offender at the institution where he or she will eventually be housed. This guidebook provides contact information for questions regarding the visitation process, sending letters and money and making phone calls to the offender during his or her incarceration.

## **Classification**

The purpose of the classification process is to assign the offender to an institution that can best meet the educational, vocational, physical health, mental health, and other treatment needs. Additionally, classification is necessary to ensure the safety of the general public and the needs of the Department.

### **How is it determined where an offender will be housed?**

Offenders are classified based on conduct, types of criminal offenses, sentence length, and other factors. Classifications are reviewed periodically. Some of the many factors considered during classification reviews include an offender's current and past criminal behavior, their adjustment to the institutional setting including institutional behavior, escapes, and other rule violations, current age, and amount of time served versus time remaining to be served.

### **What is custody classification and what are the custody levels?**

Custody classification refers to offenders being placed into a custody level. Each institution is operated on one or more custody levels. Those custody levels are **minimum, medium, and maximum**.

**Minimum Custody** – This custody is the least restrictive and has the most privileges of the custody grades. Offenders in this level may work on the grounds away from the unit or away from the institution with appropriate supervision.

**Medium Custody** – This custody is more restrictive than minimum custody. Offenders are generally restricted to working within the boundaries of the institution and are usually assigned to dormitory or cell setting in medium custody.

**Maximum Custody** – This custody is more restrictive than medium custody. It is for those who may be an escape risk or have been convicted of violent crimes, or their actions in institutional setting have shown they may be a behavior problem. Maximum custody housing is generally made up of single cells and divided into cellblocks, within a building or unit. Offenders in this custody are also under constant supervision.

All offenders undergo routine custody reviews. Their current custody is reviewed to determine if the offender is appropriately assigned to the institution. Progression to a less restrictive custody grade is a privilege granted to offenders. It is awarded by obeying rules and meeting other mandatory requirements. Other factors are also taken into consideration including pending charges, physical and mental health needs, risk to the community, risk to other offenders and staff, number and nature of infractions, and time since last infraction.

### **Are there other types of classification or housing assignments?**

Most offenders are assigned to general population. This means they may move about the institution as needed due to their job or program assignment, for recreation, and mealtime. In addition to the various custody levels, offenders may also be assigned to a **segregation status**, where offenders are separated from the regular population. All segregation is used to manage behavior.

These assignments include:

**Administrative Segregation** – The classification status that temporarily removes an offender from the population and places them in a single cell on a short-term basis to protect staff and other offenders, preserve order, provide control or protection of the offender pending final classification or disciplinary action.

**Disciplinary Detention** – Disciplinary Detention is a determined number of days an offender is in segregation as the result of being found guilty in a hearing of a Major disciplinary report.

**Protective Custody** – A classification status in which an offender is separated from the regular population because the offender’s safety or well-being is perceived to be at risk or for which there may be concern for a variety of reasons. An offender may request protective custody, but a committee decides if protective custody is necessary.

## Offender Programs

### What programs are available to offenders?

Programs provide the opportunity for offenders to play an important role in promoting personal growth and learning more responsible behavior which may eventually help them to become contributing members of the community. Activities are also an important part of the mission and philosophy of the Department of Corrections. Programs vary at each institution. The following is a brief description of the programs.

**Case Management** – Case management is a program of services provided to each offender in the Department of Corrections. Every offender is assigned a **Counselor**. The Counselor works with the offender to help determine his or her needs, risks, and interests. Case management provides the services and resources deemed necessary to improve each offender’s likelihood of success by promoting law-abiding behavior.

**Work Assignments** –Each institution has a variety of jobs for which offenders may apply for and work. Each institution depends on the offenders to assist in the kitchen, provide housekeeping, and other services to maintain the institution and support other governmental agencies. Requiring offenders to work is an important effort to teach good work habits and encourage offenders to work when they return to society.

**Education** –Programs are offered for offenders to work on their literacy skills, their GED, and/or to learn a vocational skill in a wide variety of areas. Special programs are available to offenders with learning disabilities or special needs. Some programs are required and some are provided as an incentive to learn. The DOC partners with the Community Colleges in Iowa to provide these educational programs. Literacy classes, high school diploma and sometimes college coursework can be accommodated. Information about educational opportunities is provided to offenders during the orientation process.

**Religious Services** – The DOC authorizes religious practices for all major religions. Organized worship services are provided for many faith groups. The Department of Corrections employs chaplains at many institutions. The Chaplain’s role is to assist and encourage offenders in spiritual matters and provide spiritual counseling. Chaplains, along with religious volunteers from the community, provide Bible study, worship services, religious training, and ministry to the offenders. The DOC has an established policy on what religious items offenders can have in their possession. There is a review and approval process to follow if an offender is practicing a non-scheduled or new religious accommodation requested.

**Parenting Programs** – A number of classes are offered that assist offenders in being better parents by helping them to recognize the needs of their children and their responsibilities to them. These programs help offenders work to maintain and improve relationships with their children and family during this difficult time and upon their release.

**Reentry Case Planning** – Refers to planning for an offender’s release back to the community. It is very important to his or her success that the offender learn new skills and develop good habits to be law-abiding. Planning for release needs to begin when the offender enters the system through proper assessment and programming to meet the needs. Such programs may assist offenders in planning how to find employment, housing or transportation, continuing in their addiction recovery, furthering their education, and seeking available resources in the community. Family and friends can assist and provide support and encouragement for them to succeed. If the offender will be under continued supervision such as parole, friends and family can assist by communicating with the supervising parole officer. If the offender will be living at your residence, you can ensure the home maintains compliance with release criteria guidelines for community-based home placement.

**Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA)** – These are voluntary programs that occur in many of the institutions. It is up to the offender whether or not to participate in AA or NA but he or she is encouraged to attend to help provide support in their recovery.

**Recreation, Arts and Crafts** – Offenders are provided the opportunity to participate in constructive recreational and leisure time activities. Some of the activities in which offenders may participate include those aimed at improving mental outlook, physical conditioning, cultural experiences, competitions and special events. These activities are usually offered after work duties are completed.

**Substance Abuse Treatment Programs** – An assessment for substance abuse may be completed as part of the reception process. If treatment is needed, various levels of treatment are provided at different institutions throughout the state ranging from licensed inpatient treatment to aftercare.

## Communications

### Can offenders use the telephone?

Yes. Offenders are allowed to make telephone calls. These calls are automatically limited to 20 minutes by the Offender Pre-Paid Telephone Service. The DOC Offender Telephone Accounts Pre-paid form must be completed and sent in with each deposit to be placed on an offenders telephone account. This form is available at all institutions and on the Departments web site at [www.doc.state.ia.us](http://www.doc.state.ia.us). Only cashiers checks or money orders will be accepted. The minimum deposit is \$20.00. All deposits must be designated to a specific offender identified by name and matching I.D. number. Deposits may also be designated to a specific telephone



number as well. Toll free numbers and 900 numbers are prohibited.

**All deposits must be mailed directly to:**

**IDOC**

**Offender Telephone Accounts**

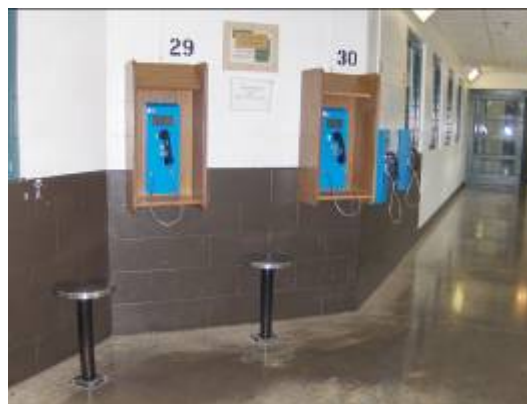
**PO Box 1417**

**Fort Madison IA 52627**

If there is an emergency, critical injury, illness, or death of a family member, contact should be made with the institution where the offender is housed. It is important that correct information is provided so that staff can accurately inform the offender and provide emotional support. There is a list of phone numbers for each institution included in this guidebook.

**How can I get general information about an offender?**

It is best to call the institution where the offender is housed and ask to speak with the assigned Counselor. Institution phone numbers are listed in the back of this book and on the DOC website at [www.doc.state.ia.us/Institutions.asp](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/Institutions.asp). An offender's current location can be found by using the online offender search at [www.doc.state.ia.us/OffenderInfo.asp](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/OffenderInfo.asp).



**Can an offender send and receive mail?**

Yes. One of the most important ways to communicate with the offender is through letters. The DOC encourages family and friends to write. For security reasons, all incoming and outgoing mail will be checked to see if it contains any illegal or unauthorized items. Legal mail is opened by the offender in the presence of staff. Offenders who have no money may be eligible to receive two free stamped envelopes per week.

**Can the public receive information on an offender?**

Yes. Anyone with access to the DOC web site can search for anyone that is currently in an institution or on parole. [www.doc.state.ia.us/OffenderInfo.asp](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/OffenderInfo.asp)

## Visitation

Visitation by family and friends is encouraged and can make a positive difference during an offender's incarceration. The Department of Corrections understands the importance of offenders maintaining contact with their family and friends. However, offenders are not assigned to specific locations for the convenience of visitation.

Visitation rules have been established to ensure the safety of visitors, offenders, and staff. These rules are listed on the visitor application and posted in areas accessible to visitors. Visitation rules are also available on the Iowa DOC website at [www.doc.state.ia.us/documents/OffenderVisiting.pdf](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/documents/OffenderVisiting.pdf). It is important to remember that visitation is a privilege which can be restricted for offenders and visitors who violate the rules.

### **How do I become approved to visit?**

The offender would have to request you be added to his or her visiting list by sending you a visiting application that must be completed and approved. (Note: There are no visits allowed while the offender is involved in the reception process.) The offender will notify you if/when you are approved to visit. No visiting information regarding visiting approvals/denials will be given out over the phone.

### **What type of identification is required to visit?**

The following types of identification will be accepted for visitors:

- Valid state issued driver's license
- State ID issued by Department of Transportation
- Military ID or Passport

When you arrive for a visit, you will be required to show a form of picture ID.

### **What is the dress code during visitation?**

The Department of Corrections asks that all visitors wear appropriate clothing that is not disruptive, offensive, or poses a security risk. The following requirements are for all visitors and apply at all institutions:

- Shirts and shoes are mandatory.
- Halter tops, bare midriffs, strapless tops, tube tops, body suits, underwear-type tee-shirts, tank tops, sleeveless shirts or dresses that are inappropriately revealing (a sleeveless shirt or dress is considered inappropriately revealing when the female breast or lingerie can be seen), fish net shirts, or any type of shirt or pants made with see-through fabric are NOT allowed to be worn by any visitor (male or female).
- Shorts of any kind are NOT allowed.
- Females may wear dresses or skirts. Dresses or skirts may not be more than three (3") inches above the kneecap. Slits in skirts and dresses may not be more than three (3") inches above the kneecap. Dresses and skirts for pre-teens may be shorter than three (3") inches above the kneecap.
- Any shirt or other articles of clothing with a picture or language that may be considered profane or offensive by current public standards or DOC standards, or considered STG (gang) related will not be allowed.

- Wave caps, doo rags, bandanas are not allowed.
- Slacks and pants are to be worn at or above the waist.

### **Can visitors be searched?**

Yes. Any visitor or other persons who enter an institution for any purpose may be subject to a routine search of their person or personal items. The search may occur upon entering or leaving the facility or at any time while at the institution. Trained dogs may be used to search vehicles, property and persons. A person may refuse to be searched; however, entry into the institution will be denied and visiting privileges may be permanently suspended. Offenders are searched before and after each visit.

### **What items can be brought in at visitation?**

For security reasons, items that can be brought into the institution during visitation are limited. Personal items, such as handbags, briefcases, and diaper bags, cameras, recording devices, boxes, cell phones and pagers must remain outside the facility during visitation. You should contact the facility if you have any questions about what is allowed to be brought into the facility. Visitors are not allowed to bring money to offenders. See information in this booklet regarding offender accounts.

Weapons, alcohol, and drugs are illegal on institution property. Items prohibited by policy are considered **contraband**. It is a **felony** for anyone to deliver illegal drugs to an offender or to bring any amount of illegal drugs onto institution property. Any visitor who attempts to deliver or transport drugs onto institutional property will have their visiting privileges revoked and may be formally charged with a crime.

### **Can children visit the offender?**

The offender's minor children (under the age of 18) may be allowed to visit with an approved adult. Any children other than the offender's must visit with their approved parent/guardian. Sex offenders who have minor victims are not permitted to have minors on their visiting list until they have completed treatment.

### **Are visits allowed for offenders who are hospitalized?**

Immediate family members who are approved visitors may visit if an offender is hospitalized in the institution or at a community hospital. This would be considered a special visit and must be arranged in advance. When and if an offender is determined to be critically ill or terminally ill, family members are usually notified and special visits may be approved. For procedures and approval for a special visit, contact the institution where the offender is assigned.

If an offender is hospitalized in a community or state hospital, all information about the medical status of an offender must be provided through the Department of Corrections medical staff. Hospitals, outside providers, and staff assigned to remain with the offender are advised that they are not to allow visitation or provide information about the status of an offender.

For specific visiting hours for each institution please refer to the DOC website at [www.doc.state.ia.us/visitinghours.asp](http://www.doc.state.ia.us/visitinghours.asp)

## **Family Relationships and Incarceration**

### **How does incarceration affect the children of offenders?**

When a parent goes into a correctional institution, children are often confused and feel left out. Some feelings the children might have are loneliness, fear, anger, sadness, and guilt. Their friends may also make fun of them.

Children need to have an adult to talk to about their feelings. They may act out these feelings in ways such as getting a poor grade in school, fighting, a lot of crying, having bad dreams, or stop participating in social activities. Children may develop physical changes such as complaining of headaches, illnesses, or injuries.

These changes in behavior may be cries for help. They need encouragement and support. It is also important to note that even the child/children who were not living with the parent before the parent went incarcerated feel a lot of emotions.

Every child is unique. Each family is different. Each child within a family is different. It is important to tell the child/children the truth. It can be more difficult for them not to know. It is also important for the children to have contact with their incarcerated parent as much as possible through letters, telephone calls, and visitation.

Listed below are other things you can do to help the child/children deal with their parent being incarcerated:

- Allow the child to express his/her feelings. Respond to the feeling the child expresses. It is important not to tell the child what they should be feeling and not force them to talk about it.
- Listen to a child's words and actions. If a child says they miss mom or dad, that's a good time to begin talking about their feelings. Also, if you see a change in behavior during special occasions such as Father's Day or Mother's Day, that is an opening for conversation.
- Talk to the child about their parent's absence. For example, some children may feel better knowing that their parent is no longer in danger because they are not on the streets. Answer their questions honestly.
- Help the child express his or her feelings in appropriate ways. Words and/or tears are a better way of expressing their feelings than actions such as fighting, getting into trouble with the law, or using alcohol or drugs.
- Support the child who can and wants to write the parent, send pictures, send greeting cards, etc.
- Outside support can often help the child and family. A favorite aunt or uncle, a teacher, a social worker, the church, a prison ministry group in your area, or community programs such as the Big Brother/Big Sister Program can help support you and the child /children during this difficult time.
- Prepare the child for an institutional visit. If at all possible, make one or

two visits alone before the child/children visit so you can tell the child what the institution looks like, where the visits take place, how long the visit will last, what the visitation rules are, etc.

- Help the child prepare for his or her parent's release. This can also be especially important if the child/children will not be reunited with their parent.

Here are some books and booklets for parents and caregivers to read with children of offenders:

**When Andy's Father Went to Prison**

by Martha Whitmore

Hickman Albert Whitman and Co.  
5747 Howard Street Niles IL 60648-4012  
ISBN #0-8075-8874-1

**Joey's Visit**

by Donna Jones Cornell Cooperative Extension of  
Onondaga County  
1050 West Genessee Street  
Syracuse NY 13204

**I Know How You Feel Because this Happened to Me**

Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents  
Pacific Oaks College and Children's Programs  
714 West California Blvd.

**Two in Every Hundred: A special workbook for  
children with a parent in prison**

Reconciliation  
702 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue North  
Nashville TN 37209  
(615) 292-6371

**My Mother and I Are Growing Stronger**

by Inez Maury  
New Seed Press  
PO Box 9488  
Berkeley CA 947099  
ISBN #0-938678-06-X

**Just for You: Children with Incarceration**

Center for Children with Incarcerated Parents  
Pacific Oaks College and Children's Programs  
714 West California Blvd.  
Pasadena CA 91105

The website of the Family and Corrections Network is also an excellent online resource: [www.fcnetwork.org](http://www.fcnetwork.org)

## **Offender Conduct Rules and Disciplinary Procedures**

Rules are established and must be followed. Good behavior of offenders is expected and necessary to ensure safety and security for both the offenders and staff. The rules, disciplinary procedures, and sanctions can be found in institution offender handbooks and rulebooks.

There are two types of disciplinary reports that may be issued:

- 1.) A Class II (minor) report – for minor infractions
- 2.) A Class I (major) report – for more serious infractions

The appeal process for each type of disciplinary notice can also be found in the offender guidebook.

### **Searches**

Searches are essential to the safe and secure operation of all institutions. It is the main method of detecting contraband items which could pose a threat to the safety and security of the facility, staff, offenders, and visitors.

### **How are offenders searched?**

Offenders are subject to a search at any time. Searches may be done at random or planned. Routine searches, also called “pat down” searches, maybe done by male and female staff, and are normally done with the offender being fully dressed. Complete searches are called “strip searches,” where the offender is required to remove his or her clothing so as to include a visual search of the body. Strip searches are performed by staff of the same sex as the offender. “Area searches” are searches of an offender’s living quarters, work areas, recreational areas, visiting areas, etc. and may be done at any time. Offenders who, in any way, interfere with or fail to cooperate fully with staff are subject to disciplinary action.

## **Offender Access to the Courts**

Offenders confined to the Iowa Department of Corrections are provided access to the Courts and its attendant administrators, clerks, judges, attorneys, and Ombudspersons for the purpose of safeguarding their statutory and constitutionally mandated rights pursuant to IDOC policy (IO-OR-05).

In an effort to accomplish this goal, the following resources may be made available to an offender:

### **If an offender chooses to pursue certain legal activities:**

An offender may choose to hire their own private attorney for legal matters. Contracted attorney services are provided through the IDOC by the State of Iowa Public Defender’s Office within the scope of the following legal matters:

- Notices of appeal to state criminal convictions
- Petitions for Post Conviction relief
- Petitions for writ of habeas corpus
- 42 USC §1983 complaints
- Iowa Code §910.7 restitution claims
- Various other pleadings and Motions relevant to an offender's criminal case or conditions of confinement

**If an offender's presence is required for court within the State of Iowa:**

A Certified Transportation Order is provided to the institution by a presiding judge of the State of Iowa. The institution will make the offender available for transportation. In general, Law Enforcement Authorities from the requesting county will provide transportation for the offender to and from the institution and will retain custody of the offender until such time the order expires.

**If an offender's presence is required for court outside the State of Iowa by Order of Detainer:**

The Interstate Agreement on Detainers controls the notice and transfer of offenders who are subject to detainers filed against them in Courts outside the State of Iowa. The offender is responsible for responding to the provided notice and may request the assistance of the Central Records staff to respond to the notice.

## **Health Care Services**

The Iowa DOC provides health care services for medical, mental health, and dental needs. Initial assessments for each offender are completed at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center (IMCC). Initial medical, mental, and dental treatment are offered at no cost to the offender. If an offender initiates, questions, or requests the need for treatment through a Health Service Request, a \$3.00 co-pay fee may be assessed. No offender is denied access to health care, timeliness of care, or quality of care due to the inability to pay.

IMCC follows the Center for Disease Control guidelines to protect against the transmission of infectious disease. IMCC, like any medical care provider, must abide by the guidelines governing the offender's right to confidentiality of medical records. Offenders are encouraged to complete a release of information form to be sent to their previous provider(s) for ongoing medical conditions. This can be initiated by the offender through his or her case manager/counselor. The signed release gives the provider the offender's permission to have medical records forwarded to the institution's medical unit for review and to have as a part of the medical file.

**How does an offender's medical needs affect his/her housing assignment?**

Each offender is evaluated and placed in a facility that is capable of meeting the offender's health needs.



**Can medications be sent to the offender?**

No. Prescription and/or over-the-counter medications cannot be sent by family or outside sources. Offenders can purchase approved over-the-counter medications from commissary. Prescription medications are provided as ordered by the physician.

**What if an offender needs to be hospitalized?**

Several institutions have medical facilities on site that provide observation and care. The University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) provide medical care and treatment when specialized services or hospitalization is required. Local community hospitals provide medical care when needed.

**Are services available to pregnant offenders?**

Yes. All pregnant offenders are transferred to IMCC in Coralville as they near their delivery date. Medical care and delivery is provided at UIHC. The staff dietitian works to ensure that they receive the proper foods to meet their dietary needs. Correctional staff is assigned to be with the offender during her entire stay at the hospital. Services are provided to assist the pregnant offender in making the best possible placement plan for her child. Other programming such as parenting classes and maternal health education may be offered. Post-delivery monitoring may occur at IMCC. In most cases, the offender will return to her designated institution.

**What efforts are made to control contagious disease?**

The Centers for Disease Control and the Iowa Department of Public Health guidelines are followed. New offenders are tested for tuberculosis and syphilis, which is required by state law. Routine testing, including annual TB screening, continues to occur for both staff and offenders. An offender will be placed in separate housing if he or she poses a health risk to others.

## **Mental Health Services**

Each new offender is given a mental health screening. General mental health services are available at all institutions. Typically, psychologists and social workers provide services to address most issues related to mental health. In addition, psychiatric services are available for those offenders who require treatment with medications.

**How does an offender receive mental health services?**

Offenders can receive mental health services in a number of ways. An offender can request to see mental health staff by sending a request for services form. Also, other staff members (correctional officers, counselors, case managers, etc.) may suspect that an offender is having a problem and make a referral to the mental health staff. Each institution has procedures for how referrals to mental health are handled. In an emergency situation (e.g., suicide attempt) procedures are in place to make sure that immediate attention is given.

When an offender is identified as having a developmental disability, specialized services are provided and ongoing until his or her release. A treatment plan is



developed to meet the offender's needs for successful transition back into the community. There are institutions that are considered as "special housing" to meet physical limitations offenders may have. Currently those areas provide a continuum of care that in many ways resemble services that are in the community.

## Food Services

### **What types of meals are served?**

Offender meals are composed of healthy foods which contain approximately 3,000 calories per day. We serve one cold and two hot meals daily with a variety of fruits, vegetables, starches and meats. Many of the foods are grown in gardens and processed by offenders. The menus are evaluated by registered dietitians to ensure compliance with the recommend dietary allowances suggested by federal guidelines.

### **Are therapeutic diets available?**

All therapeutic diets are prescribed by the DOC physician at the facility where the offender is housed. Registered dietitians are available for individual consultation.

### **Who cooks the meals served in the institution?**

Meals are prepared by offenders under the supervision of correctional food service staff.

### **Are there other special meals for holidays or religious practice?**

Specials holiday meals are provided for certain holidays including July 4<sup>th</sup>, Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. We offer non-pork entrees at lunch and supper.

## Administrative Services

### **Can offenders have money in the institution?**

Yes, but offenders are not allowed to have cash at any time. If you wish to send money to an offender's account, it must be in the form of a cashiers check or money order made payable to: **IDOC Offender Fiduciary Account**. Money orders or cashiers checks must include the following: **offender name, offender number, sender's name and sender's complete address. *It must be legible.*** If the deposit does not follow these guidelines, it will be returned to the sender my mail. All Money orders and cashiers check are to be sent to:

**IDOC Offender Fiduciary Account  
1550 L Street, Suite B  
Fort Dodge, IA 50501**

The Iowa Department of Corrections does accept wire transfers from Western Union for offender accounts. This does NOT include telephone accounts. Money may be sent in any of the following three ways:

- Via the internet at [westernunion.com/corrections](http://westernunion.com/corrections)
- By phone at 1-800-634-3422.
- By walk-in cash payments at any Western Union site.

The process used is "Quick Collect". Senders' must use the "Pay to" as the Iowa Dept of Corrections. The "Code City" is IOWADOC and the "State" is IA. The "Sender's account #" is the offender ID number and offenders last name. For example, 1234567Jones. If the offender number and last name do not match the IDOC records the payment will be rejected. Fees for this service vary by amount sent and are available by using any of the three options listed above. Funds are posted to the offender accounts three times a day with the last transactions for the day occurring around 3:00 PM central time.

Questions regarding offender deposits can be addressed by calling FDCF(Fort Dodge Correctional Facility) at (515) 574-4700 Press 7 then 4 for offender's accounts. Questions can be E-mailed to [docoffenderaccounts@iowa.gov](mailto:docoffenderaccounts@iowa.gov).

### **Are offenders paid for work while they are in the institution?**

Offenders receive an allowance as deemed appropriate by the DOC Director and as allowed under the Code of Iowa. The allowance is a gratuitous payment and is not a wage arising out of an employment relationship.

(Reception offenders at IMCC will not receive a gratuity.) The gratuity pay is deposited into their account every two weeks. Deductions from the offender's account (applies to both gratuity and monies received from the outside) may include some or all of the following:

1. Restitution 20% - These funds pay attorney fees, court costs and/or damages assessed by the court.
2. Savings Plan 10% - The savings are applied to offender's account until \$100.00 is reached.
3. Child support - As directed by the court on a percentage or dollar basis.
4. Court Fees - For cases filed by the offender in state or federal court.
5. DOC sanctions - For personal damages to DOC property or persons, which are assessed against the offender. Transportation costs may be assessed to the offender as well.

### **Do offenders receive their money when released?**

The balance remaining in the offender's accounts will be given to the offender at the time of his or her release. For those offenders assigned to the Work Release program, any remaining funds will be forwarded to the work release facility and for others, to the offender's forwarding address.

### **Can offenders buy personal items?**

Yes. Iowa Prison Industries operate a commissary for offenders to purchase items such as hygiene items, snack foods, watches, radios, stamps, etc.

## Other Information Related to the Offender's Stay

### **Can offenders have personal items?**

Yes. Offenders are allowed certain personal items purchased through commissary. Types of items and amount of each item that is allowed may vary from one institution to another. Personal items are limited due to fire safety codes, storage space availability, sanitation regulations, and for security and safety reasons. A list of items allowed may be available at the institution where the offender is housed. Unauthorized items or excessive amounts of personal items are considered contraband and may be taken from the offender. These items may be mailed home or be discarded.

### **Are offenders tested for drugs and alcohol?**

Yes. The use of drugs, including alcohol, in an institutional setting presents a threat to the safety and security of staff, offenders, and visitors and is a violation of law. All offenders are subject to drug testing due to cause or suspicion, prior to release, or they can be randomly selected for testing at any time. Alcohol and drug testing is an effort to keep offenders from using or possessing drugs, reduce violence, and ensure offenders released are drug free. Offenders who fail to cooperate with drug testing, or offenders who test positive for alcohol or drug use are subject to disciplinary action.

### **Do the institutions have a smoking policy?**

Yes. All Iowa institutions are tobacco-free.

### **Can an offender attend a funeral or visit a critically ill family member?**

The Department of Corrections has a policy regarding in-state and out-of-state emergency leaves. Funeral and Death bed visits may be granted when there is a confirmed critical terminal illness or death of an **immediate family member**. An immediate family member is considered to be an offender's spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, child, grandparent, grandchild, established legal guardian or other who acted in the place of parents or step or half-relation if the step or half-relation and the offender cohabitated. Emergency leaves for outside the state of Iowa must be approved by the regional deputy director or his/her designee. When the Department of Corrections provides correctional staff to supervise the offender, the offender or the family is responsible for paying the costs of the supervision, mileage and meals prior to approval of the emergency leave.

### **Why is an offender transferred to different institutions?**

Offenders in the Department of Corrections may transfer from one facility to another facility for a number of reasons. These reasons include but are not limited to special job assignment, participation in court-ordered or recommended/special programs, educational needs, medical/mental health needs, segregation, behavioral issues, a custody-level change, or population management.

The Department of Corrections is aware that offenders have reasons for requesting a transfer to another location. However, due to bed space, custody level, programs

needs, and other factors, transfer requests may not be approved. Available bed space and treatment needs are primary factors when considering offender transfer.

## Terms and Definitions

Department of Corrections has a terminology which can be confusing. Many of these terms and phrases are used by correctional staff as well as offenders. The definitions below should help give a better understanding of the meaning of some of these terms.

**Administrative Law Judge** – an attorney employed by the Iowa Department of Corrections, not assigned to any specific prison facility, who independently hears and decides offender major disciplinary cases.

**Administrative Segregation** – an assignment that temporarily removes an offender from the regular offender population and places him or her in a single cell on a short-term basis to provide control or protection of the offender pending classification or disciplinary action. It is commonly known as “Ad-Seg.”

**Board of Parole** – The releasing authority for offenders in the DOC. The Board of Parole is not a division of the DOC. It is an independent body whose members are appointed by the Governor.

**Classification** – a method for determining offender custody level and program needs.

**Concurrent Sentences** – if an offender has more than one sentence the court may decide that the sentences can be served concurrently, which means the sentences are served at the same time. For example, a person with a two-year sentence and a two-year concurrent sentence has a total sentence length of two years.

**Consecutive Sentences** – if an offender has more than one sentence the court may decide that each sentence must be served separately before the next sentence begins. For example, a person with a two-year sentence and a two-year consecutive sentence has a total sentence length of four years. Offenders sometimes refer to consecutive sentences as “boxcar sentences.”

**Contraband** – Items / articles not approved by the institution and approved items that have been altered or are over the allowed limit.

**Convicted** – Term used when a person has been found guilty of a crime by a court.

**Custody** – Level in which an offender is housed based on the crime(s) committed, length of sentence, criminal history, treatment needs, and behavior to maintain public safety and institutional safety.

**Defendant** – Person who is accused of committing a crime.

**Designee** - Staff person who has been appointed to act with authority in the absence of the director, region director, and/or institution warden/superintendent.

**Detainer** - Legal document in an offender's record stating that he or she is wanted in another county, state, or federal system and should be transported to another correctional system rather than being released.

**Developmental Disabilities** – Mental and/or physical limitations that require special programs.

**Director of Corrections** –Person appointed by the Governor to be in charge of the Department of Corrections.

**Disciplinary Action** – action taken against an offender who has been charged with a rule violation and has had a disciplinary hearing. The action taken at the disciplinary hearing can include demotion in custody, loss of privileges, loss of good/earned time, and segregation.

**Disciplinary Detention** – the segregation status of offenders who are sanctioned to a specific number of days after being found guilty of a major rule violation. Disciplinary Detention is also known as “lock-up.”

**DOC** – Department of Corrections

**Escape** – Person who escapes or attempts to escape has violated DOC rules and the laws of Iowa and can receive an additional sentence. Anyone assisting an offender to escape has also violated the laws of the State of Iowa.

**Felony** - A felony is a criminal offense classification (Class A, B, C or D), where the offender is sentenced to serve five years or greater.

**General Population** – Housing assignment where offenders may move about the institution as needed due to their job or program assignment, recreation, or mealtime. It is also known as “gen pop.”

**Gratuity** – Offenders receive an allowance as deemed appropriate by the DOC Director and as allowed under the Code of Iowa. The allowance is a gratuitous payment and is not a wage arising out of an employment relationship.

**Grievance** – An appeal using specific forms and procedures regarding a decision or action.

**Immediate Family** – The DOC policy defines immediate family members as an offender's spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, child, grandparent, grandchild, established legal guardian or other who have acted in the place of parents or step or

half-relation if the step or half-relation and the other cohabitated.

**Incarcerate** – To put an individual in an institution/prison.

**Indigent** – An offender may be considered indigent if they have no money to purchase basic hygiene items such as soap, deodorant, etc.

**Infraction** – A violation of a law or rule. In the DOC institutional system, it is most often called a “write-up” or a “report”.

**Institution** – A prison facility

**Investigating Officer** – A person who gathers the facts when a rule may have been broken or an incident has happened involving an offender.

**Misdemeanor** – Criminal offense classification (Simple, Serious or Aggravated), resulting in a sentence of up to 2 years.

**Offender** – Person convicted of a crime or offense under the laws of Iowa.

**Parole** – a conditional earned release granted by the Board of Parole, that allows an offender to serve the sentence in the community after serving a portion of the sentence.

**Parole Board** - See “Board of Parole”

**Pre-Sentence Investigation** – Also referred to as “PSI” - is a document compiled and generated by the Community Correctional Services and provided to the judge prior to the time of sentencing.

**Probation** – a sentence ordered by the Court allowing an offender to remain in the community with supervision and guidance of a Probation Officer, under such conditions as the Court may impose. If an offender does not follow the conditions of the probation, he or she can be put in an institution.

**Processing** – When an offender first enters the DOC, the first few weeks are spent at a reception center to best determine the needs and assignment of the offender. This time spent in the reception center is called processing.

**Projected Release Date (PRD)** The estimated date of release that is based on any time credits that the offender has earned or is projected to earn until the time of his/her release. The projected release date is always subject to change depending on whether or not the offender earns or loses time credits.

**Protective Custody (“PC”)** – A classification status in which an offender is separated from the regular population because the offender’s safety or well-being is perceived to be at risk or for which there may be concern for a variety of reasons.

An offender may request protective custody, but a committee decides if protective custody is necessary.

**PSI** - Stands for Pre-Sentence Investigation (See definition of “Pre-Sentence Investigation”)

**Reception Center** – A center located in a certain institution where new offenders are admitted, processed, and assessed while waiting for initial classification and housing assignment. In Iowa, all offenders go through reception at the Iowa Medical and Classification Center in Coralville, Iowa.

**Reception Status** – The status or custody classification of offenders while being processed at the reception center.

**Regional Deputy Director** – A person who is in charge of several institutions in a region. The Department of Corrections in Iowa has two regions: Eastern, Western.

**Residential Correctional Facility** – Also referred to as RCF, is a facility located within the community operated by community-based corrections staff. These facilities may house offenders serving probation, parole, or work-release sentences and therefore may be a release option for an offender leaving a DOC institution. These facilities are also referred to as “half-way houses”.

**Restitution** – Required payments that are authorized by the courts to be paid to the victim of his or her crime. Offenders must also pay their fines, fees, court costs and court-appointed attorney’s fees.

**Safekeeper** – A county jail offender admitted to the Department of Corrections while awaiting trial or sentencing. Safekeeping provides extra security for those offenders who pose a danger to themselves, to other offenders and to the general public. A person may also be admitted as a Safekeeper if they require medical or mental health care that cannot be provided by the county jail.

**Security Risk** – Any possible danger to the general public, staff or offenders.

**Suspended** – A sentence ordered may remain inactive subject to conditions established by the court; it may be imposed by the court at any time during the sentence.

**Tentative Discharge Date (TDD)** – The date that a sentence will expire. Tentative because there are factors that can affect the date during a person's stay in prison (such as jail credit, discipline, dead time, etc.).

**Warden or Superintendent** - the person who is in charge of the overall operation of an institutional facility.

## **Institutional Abbreviations**

IMCC – Iowa Medical and Classification Center (Coralville)

ASP – Anamosa State Penitentiary (Anamosa)

ICIW – Iowa Correctional Institution for Women (Mitchellville)

ISP – Iowa State Penitentiary (Fort Madison)

CCF – Clarinda Correctional Facility (Clarinda)

FDCF – Fort Dodge Correctional Facility (Fort Dodge)

NCCF – North Central Correctional Facility (Rockwell City)

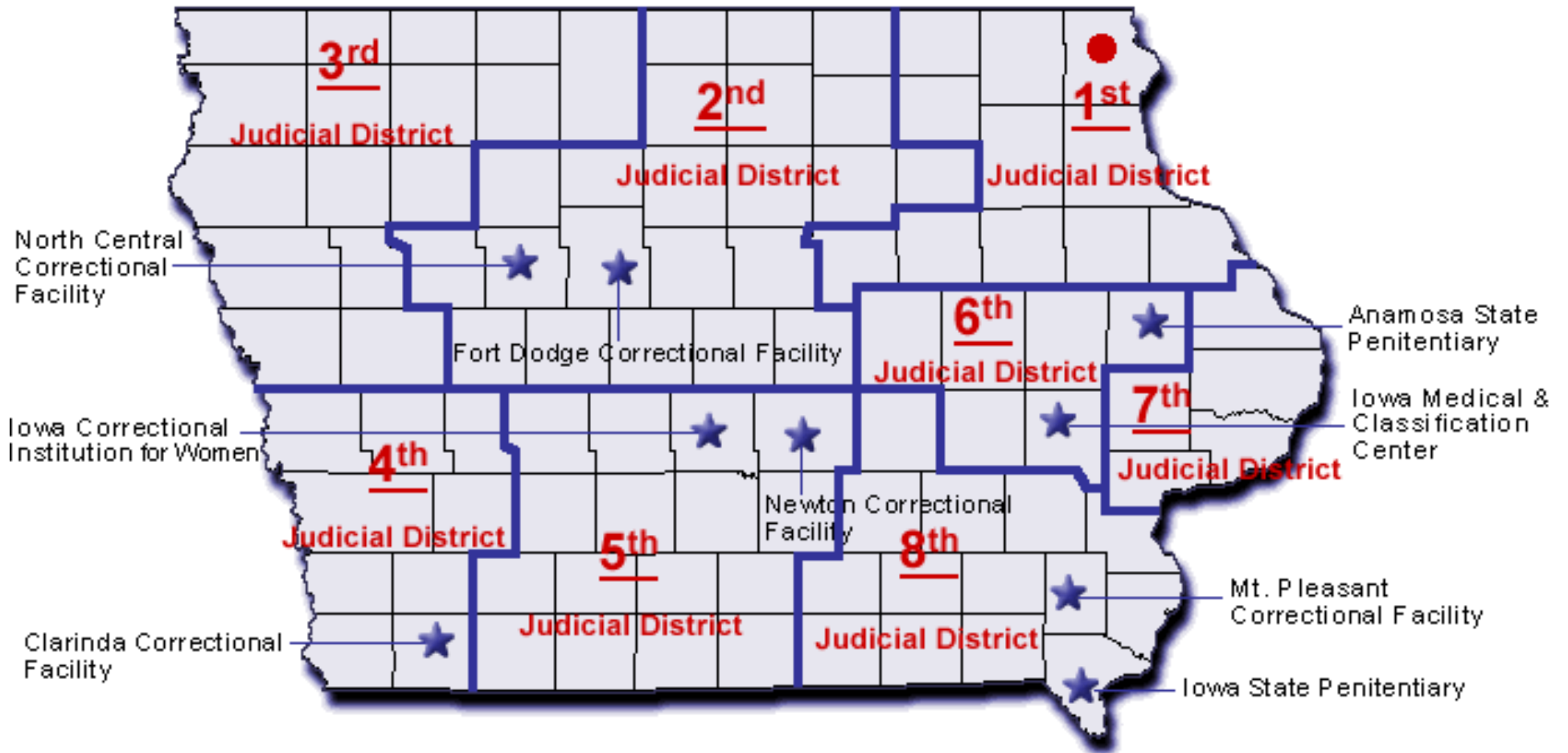
NCF – Newton Correctional Facility (Newton)

MPCF – Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility (Mount Pleasant)

UIHC – University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics



## Map of Institutions and Districts



## Acknowledgements

The IMCC Evidenced Based Practices (EBP) Core Team researched and developed this book for family and friends of offenders. This team maintains a focus on research and evidence that supports decision-making in corrections and improves successful outcomes. Research indicates family support and positive social connections are very important for offenders. These support systems help offenders adjust and manage themselves during incarceration and reenter the community following incarceration. We hope the information included in this book serves as a helpful introduction to the Iowa corrections system.

The IMCC Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) Core Team was created by Warden Lowell Brandt in 2006. He provided the leadership towards several innovative ideas. This guidebook is just one of many projects intended to improve what we do in corrections. The EBP Core Team would like to thank the IMCC Executive Team for providing the support necessary to ensure Warden Brandt's vision could be realized. He supported the involvement of family and friends and wanted to see this guidebook created in an effort to help them navigate the system. It is with great honor that we remember Warden Lowell Brandt as we make this sharing of information a reality and hope those who receive it will find it to be as helpful as intended.

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The Iowa Medical and Classification Center  
Evidence-Based Practices Core Team – February 2009