



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

APPLICABILITY  
**PRISON**  
FACILITY/SPANISH MANUALS

REVISION DATE  
1/4/22

PAGE NUMBER  
1 of 7

NUMBER  
**DOC 420.340**

**POLICY**

TITLE  
**SEARCHING AND DETAINING FACILITY VISITORS**

**REVIEW/REVISION HISTORY:**

- Effective: 3/31/91
- Revised: 3/13/01
- Revised: 8/23/02
- Revised: 3/1/05
- Revised: 4/8/08
- Revised: 6/4/09 AB 09-018
- Revised: 3/12/12
- Revised: 3/1/15
- Revised: 1/4/22

**SUMMARY OF REVISION/REVIEW:**


Updated terminology throughout  
Removed I.A.3. as content covered by other Department policy regarding tour groups

**APPROVED:**

Signature on file

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CHERYL STRANGE**, Secretary  
Department of Corrections

12/29/21  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Signed

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**REFERENCES:**


DOC 100.100 is hereby incorporated into this policy; [RCW 72.02](#); [RCW 72.09.650](#); DOC 410.200 Use of Force (RESTRICTED); DOC 410.320 Threats, Bombs, and Suspicious Objects (RESTRICTED); DOC 420.250 Use of Restraints (RESTRICTED); DOC 420.330 Searches of Vehicles (RESTRICTED); DOC 420.360 Searches by Canines; DOC 420.375 Contraband and Evidence Handling

**POLICY:**

- I. The Department requires searches of contract staff, volunteers, vendors and their agents/employees, and other visitors on facility grounds.
- II. Searches will be conducted as needed to enhance security and safety for personnel, incarcerated individuals, and the public by minimizing the introduction of contraband into Department facilities.
- III. The Department may detain any visitor who enters or remains on facility grounds without permission, appears to have committed or is attempting to commit a crime on facility grounds, or is found in possession of contraband.

**DIRECTIVE:**


- I. Searching Visitors
  - A. Notification
    1. Notices will be clearly posted along facility perimeter boundaries and at all entrances to inform all persons that they are subject to search.
    2. Before being searched, visitors must be informed of the type of search that will be conducted and the consequences of refusing a search.
      - a. When a group has been approved for a tour of a facility, the Superintendent/designee may determine in advance whether tour group members will be searched and the type of search(es) that will be conducted. This decision will be communicated to public access employees and employees escorting the tour.
    3. All facility visitors will be provided the opportunity to read this policy.
    4. Each facility visitor must sign DOC 21-575 Acknowledgment of Visitor Search Requirements the first time the visitor enters a facility. The form will be retained by the facility. A copy may be given to the visitor upon request.

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5. If refusing a search, the person will be escorted from the facility and law enforcement may be notified of any suspected criminal activity.
  - a. A person who refuses to be searched may be denied access to the facility for a period of 90 days. A second refusal may result in permanent denial of access.

**B. Searches**

1. **Electronic Search**
  - a. Visitors to Level III, IV, and V facilities will be subjected to a scan by a hand-held or stationary electronic metal detector.
  - b. Visitors to Level II facilities may be subjected to a scan by a hand-held or stationary electronic metal detector.
  - c. Electronic searches that detect the presence of metal (e.g., screws, pins, plates, artificial joints or other medical appliances, underwire bra) will require a pat search.
2. **Container Search**
  - a. Handbags, briefcases, and any other containers or hand-carried items brought in by facility visitors will be searched. These searches may be conducted in a public area.
    - 1) The owner will be present during the search unless ownership cannot be established or there is a compelling security reason for proceeding with the search in the owner's absence. Items of unknown ownership should be handled as suspicious objects per DOC 410.320 Threats, Bombs, and Suspicious Objects (RESTRICTED).
    - 2) A canine may be used to conduct or supplement a container search.
3. **Pat Search**
  - a. Pat searches require the placing of hands on the visitor and may include:
    - 1) Removal of the coat, hat, and shoes,
    - 2) A manual search of clothing and personal effects,

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- 3) Visual inspection of the nasal passages, hands, hair, ears, and mouth, and
  - 4) Removal of any hairpiece, hearing aids, and/or dentures.
- b. Pat searches will be conducted in a private setting by a correctional employee of the same gender as the person being searched.
  - c. For a pat search of a child in diapers, the diaper will be removed by the accompanying adult and replaced with a clean diaper that has been searched by employees. The accompanying adult will also be pat searched.
4. Locker Search
    - a. Searches of state-provided lockers may be conducted using master keys or combinations owned or controlled by the facility.
    - b. A locker search does not require the presence of the person using the locker.
    - c. A canine may be used to conduct or supplement a locker search.
  5. Canine Search
    - a. A canine search of facility visitors may be conducted per DOC 420.360 Searches by Canines.
    - b. When a canine has alerted on a person, a pat search of the person will be conducted. A vehicle search may also be conducted per DOC 420.330 Searches of Vehicles (RESTRICTED).
      - 1) If contraband is not discovered, access to the facility may be permitted.
      - 2) Management strategy for dealing with any remaining suspicion in relation to the immediate visit includes:
        - a) Assigning employees to escort the visitor,
        - b) Seating the visitor and incarcerated individual directly in front of visit room employees, and/or
        - c) No contact visiting.

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c. If the canine has alerted on a person or there is specific intelligence information related to the visitor/incarcerated individual, temporary suspension of the visit is appropriate pending further investigation.

1) Documentation to support the temporary suspension will be submitted to the Superintendent no later than the next business day.

C. Safety Procedure for Searches

1. Employees will wear protective gloves when searching a person, an article, or the surface of any item contaminated with blood or body fluids.

II. Contraband

A. Contraband found during searches will not be permitted inside the facility, and the offending visitor will be denied access pending review by the Superintendent/designee. Any person found to be possessing contraband may be subject to permanent denial of access.

1. Contraband will be documented and disposed of per DOC 420.375 Contraband and Evidence Handling.

B. Local law enforcement will be notified if a facility visitor is found in possession of contraband that is an illegal item.


III. Detaining Visitors

A. The Shift Commander has the authority to detain or remove facility visitors who:


1. Enter or remain within a facility or on the grounds without permission,
2. Appear to have committed or are attempting to commit a crime, when probable cause has been established, or
3. Possess contraband.

B. Employees observing the violation or having probable cause to believe that a violation has occurred or is about to occur, will notify the Shift Commander as soon as possible. Employees will advise the Shift Commander of the following:

1. Name of person(s) involved,
2. Location of incident,
3. Nature of incident,
4. Number of incarcerated individuals involved,

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5. Number of employees involved,
  6. Number of citizens/visitors involved,
  7. Injuries, and
  8. Weapons involved.
- C. The Shift Commander will provide direction to on-scene employees and will send additional employees, if necessary.
1. If the violation occurs during visitation, the visit will be terminated by separating the visitor and incarcerated individual and removing them from the visiting area.
- D. The Shift Commander will immediately notify local law enforcement. Any contraband that is confiscated will be seized, handled, and documented per DOC 420.375 Contraband and Evidence Handling.
1. If law enforcement is responding:
    - a. The Shift Commander will direct that the offending visitor be detained for law enforcement in a location previously designated by the Superintendent. The offending visitor will be:
      - 1) Under constant observation until law enforcement arrives and assumes custody,
      - 2) Afforded reasonable accommodations (e.g., restroom, water), and
      - 3) Subject to any search method(s) mentioned in this policy.
    - b. If the offending visitor becomes combative, a threat to themselves or others, or damages property, use of force is authorized including restraints per DOC 410.200 Use of Force (RESTRICTED) and DOC 420.250 Use of Restraints (RESTRICTED) to protect the safety of visitors and personnel or the security of the facility or state property. The Shift Commander will be notified as soon as practical.
  2. If law enforcement is not responding, the offending visitor will be:
    - a. Subject to any search method(s) authorized in this policy,
    - b. Advised that the incident has been reported to law enforcement and the visitor will be contacted by that agency at a later time,

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- c. Instructed to contact the facility to request the status of visitation privileges, and
- d. Escorted to the facility exit and directed to leave facility grounds.

#### IV. Monitoring and Training

- A. All new correctional employees will receive training in effective/proper search techniques and methods of documentation. Training will include:
  - 1. Methodology,
  - 2. Liabilities, and
  - 3. Policy review.
- B. This training will be documented in the employee's training record.
- C. Supervisors will monitor employee search techniques and provide training to correct any deficiencies.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

The following words/terms are important to this policy and are defined in the glossary section of the Policy Manual: Illegal Item, Reasonable Suspicion. Other words/terms appearing in this policy may also be defined in the glossary.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

None

#### **DOC FORMS:**

DOC 21-575 Acknowledgment of Visitor Search Requirements