



STATE OF WASHINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

APPLICABILITY
PRISON

REVISION DATE
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DOC 530.155

POLICY

TITLE

FAMILY COUNCILS

REVIEW/REVISION HISTORY:

Effective: 8/1/15
Revised: 8/10/18
Revised: 2/13/20

SUMMARY OF REVISION/REVIEW:

Major changes. Read carefully!


APPROVED:

Signature on file

STEPHEN SINCLAIR, Secretary
Department of Corrections

1/15/20

Date Signed

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REFERENCES:


DOC 100.100 is hereby incorporated into this policy; [Records Retention Schedule](#)

POLICY:


- I. The Department will work collaboratively with local and statewide family councils to problem solve and address relevant issues that lead to improving the lives of incarcerated individuals and their families. This work will:
 - A. Enhance communication, to include following established statewide ground rules and model equity, diversity, inclusion, and respect in all interactions,
 - B. Create opportunities to strengthen family and community connections,
 - C. Develop consistency by working together to incorporate best practices,
 - D. Provide family members the opportunity to provide input on related policies and contracts,
 - E. Address local and statewide ideas, issues, and concerns that affect a broad range of incarcerated individuals and their families,
 - F. Address agreed upon areas of highest concern, and review/update annually,
 - G. Promote successful reentry, and
 - H. Annually review vision, mission, and ground rules for family councils and update as needed.
- II. For the purposes of this policy, family is broadly defined to include immediate, extended, and elected family members (e.g., romantic partner, friend, neighbor, clergy).
- III. All participants will demonstrate commitment, integrity, honesty, good judgment, cooperation, professionalism, respect, courtesy, and work within Department rules, regulations, and policies.
- IV. Exceptions to the content of this policy requires the approval of the Assistant Secretary of Prisons.

DIRECTIVE:

- I. General Responsibilities
 - A. The Department will maintain a Statewide Family Council (SFC).
 - B. Each facility will maintain a Local Family Council (LFC) and:
 1. Post this policy in public access areas, in the visit room, and on the facility's website.


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2. Maintain a suggestion box in the visit room for submitting agenda items and LFC applications.
 3. Refer Department wide issues/concerns to the SFC.
 4. Allow elected representatives to assist in orientation for families that are new to the facility.
 5. The Superintendent will ensure elected LFC members have an opportunity during visit hours to share information about the family council.
- C. The SFC and LFCs will each conduct council meetings at least 6 times annually.
1. Meeting schedules cannot be changed unless there is facility/statewide emergency, or in non-emergent situations, co-chairs are in mutual agreement.
 - a. Family members will be notified as soon as possible.
 - b. If a meeting is cancelled, the co-chairs will determine when/if a makeup meeting will be scheduled.
- II. General Requirements
- A. Participation in the family councils is encouraged, though strictly voluntary for all, except designated employees.
 - B. Each elected SFC/LFC officer will serve for a term of one year, however may be reelected to serve up to 3 consecutive terms on the same council.
 1. If a term cannot be completed, an election will be held to fill the position for the unexpired term.
 2. Family council officers may only serve in one position, either local or statewide. Exceptions may be granted by the Department co-chair at those facilities that are unable to comprise a full council.
 - C. Council participants will not identify/speak on behalf of the family council, in writing or verbally, without an approved motion from the majority of the council members.
 - D. SFC and LFC co-chairs will address performance of behavior that is outside of the values agreed upon by the council members, and may remove an elected officer for nonperformance or unprofessional behavior which directly interferes with legitimate family council business.

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III. Local Family Councils

- A. LFC meeting schedules will be posted on the facility's website and in public access areas and visit rooms.
- B. Issues and concerns of incarcerated individuals must be represented as part of every LFC meeting.
- C. LFCs will consist of family members with an incarcerated individual housed at the facility, Department employees, and may include incarcerated individuals.
 1. The following 5 council officers must attend the meetings:
 - a. The Superintendent/designee as the facility co-chair
 - b. A family co-chair elected by majority vote
 - c. A facility secretary appointed by the facility co-chair
 - d. A family secretary elected by majority vote
 - e. An SFC representative elected by majority vote
 2. In the event an officer cannot attend, a replacement must be identified in advance.
 3. Department representatives should include:
 - a. The Visit Sergeant
 - b. The Community Partnership Program Coordinator (CPPC)
 - c. The Family Services Specialist assigned to the facility
 - d. Other Department employees, contract staff, or volunteers needed to address a specific agenda item(s).
 4. Any approved visitor in good standing may attend.
 5. Whenever possible, incarcerated individuals will be allowed to attend and participate as a representative of the population, however, a family member/visitor cannot be a part of the council or in attendance.
 - a. If attendance is not an option, Superintendents will provide an avenue for incarcerated individuals to provide input.
 6. The Superintendent will attend LFC meetings at least 3 times per year. If unable to attend, the following will be designated to attend, but will not apply to the yearly attendance requirement:
 - a. An Associate Superintendent or Captain for Level 3 or higher facilities.

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- b. The Correctional Program Manager or Lieutenant at a Level 2 stand-alone facility.

- D. Nominations and elections for the LFC must be conducted by October 31st of each year.
 - 1. Elections will be by majority vote of LFC participants present or participating by phone.
 - 2. New officers will assume their position January 1st of the following year.
 - 3. Those nominated will be given the opportunity to make a statement to the LFC before the election is conducted.
 - 4. Elected officers must:
 - a. Remain a visitor in good standing at that facility, and
 - b. Be able to commit to fulfilling meeting responsibilities and attendance requirements.


- E. LFC co-chairs and officers will:
 - 1. Jointly facilitate LFC meetings, and
 - a. Each meeting will follow an agenda developed and mutually agreed upon by the co-chairs and published 2 weeks before the meeting.
 - 2. Work with local families to identify and submit agenda items.
 - a. The agenda will focus on local issues, concerns, and ideas that impact a broad range of incarcerated individuals housed at the facility and their families.

- F. The facility co-chair will ensure conference call capabilities are set up, if possible, so long distance LFC members can participate in meetings.
 - 1. If the family co-chair is not available or is scheduled to be absent, they will contact all elected local representatives to initiate the selection of an acting family co-chair with notification to the Department co-chair. This should be done prior to the meeting whenever possible.

- G. The facility and family secretaries will each take minutes during the meeting, then will work together to finalize a single draft on DOC 03-513 Family Council Meeting Minutes.

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- a. The draft will be submitted to the co-chairs for review and approval within 21 days of the meeting.
- H. The LFC Department secretary will:
1. Ensure approved meeting minutes are distributed to council members and posted within 10 days of finalization on the Family & Friends page of the Department's website, and
 2. Ensure meeting minutes are posted on the facility's website and in public access areas and visit rooms.
 3. Approved meeting minutes will be retained per the Records Retention Schedule.
- I. The LFC family secretary will track action items on DOC 03-514 Family Council Action Items. A review of previous action items and updates will be shared at the meeting.
- J. Meetings and Tours
1. LFC meetings and facility tours will not conflict with SFC meetings or local special events held at the facility.
 2. LFC officers will assist in recruitment efforts to increase participation on the council.
 3. Meetings will be held on a weekend day to provide maximum opportunities for families to participate, preferably every other month.
 - a. LFCs may change a meeting to a weekday if the majority of family members will be more available and a vote has passed supporting it.
 - b. LFC participants will be allowed to visit their loved one on the same day as a meeting, even when it is not a designated visit day/time for the incarcerated individual.
 - 1) In the event a visit is not possible, a makeup visit during a regular visit session at the facility will occur.
 4. Each Superintendent will define and provide facility tours for LFC officers twice per year. Other LFC participants may be approved to attend on a case-by-case basis with the Superintendent's approval. Tours will not substitute for an LFC meeting.

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IV. Statewide Family Councils


A. SFCs will consist of:

1. An elected representative from each LFC,
 - a. Representatives must remain a visitor in good standing at the facility they represent.
2. The following 3 council officers,
 - a. A member from the Prison's Leadership Team designated by The Assistant Secretary for Prisons will attend as the Department co-chair.
 - b. The family co-chair as elected by majority vote of statewide family representatives and must remain a visitor in good standing at the facility they represent.
 - c. The family secretary as elected by majority vote of statewide family representatives, who must remain a visitor in good standing at the facility they represent.
3. Any member of the public who wants to attend, and
4. Department representatives, which should include the following based on the agenda:
 - a. A Community Corrections Division representative
 - b. A Reentry Division representative
 - c. A Family Services Unit employee
 - d. Other Department employees, contract staff, or volunteers needed to address a specific agenda item(s)


B. Each Superintendent and facility Visit Sergeant(s) will attend a SFC meeting at least once every 2 years per a schedule provided by the Department co-chair.

C. Elected SFC officers driving more than 120 miles roundtrip to attend a meeting may request mileage reimbursement on [A19-1A State of Washington Invoice Voucher](#).

1. Requestors must provide supporting documentation and meet requirements to receive reimbursement.

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- D. Nominations and elections for family officer positions will be conducted every November. The elections will be by majority vote of SFC representatives in attendance. Any exception will be reviewed by the SFC co-chairs.
1. Those nominated will be given the opportunity to make a statement to the SFC before the election is conducted.
 2. New officers will assume their position on January 1st of the following year.
- E. SFC co-chairs will facilitate SFC meetings.
1. Each meeting will follow an agenda developed and mutually agreed upon by the co-chairs.
 - a. SFC officers will work with SFC members to identify and submit agenda items. The agenda will focus on statewide ideas, concerns, and issues.
 - b. The Department co-chair will track action items on DOC 03-514 Family Council Action Items. A review of previous action items and updates will be shared at the meeting.
 2. If the Department co-chair is not available, another Prisons Division manager will be designated as co-chair for the meeting.
 3. If the family co-chair is not available or is scheduled to be absent, they will contact all elected statewide representatives to initiate the selection of an acting family co-chair, with notification to the Department co-chair. This should be done prior to the meeting whenever possible.
 4. The family secretary will take minutes during the meeting.
 - a. Draft minutes will be submitted to the co-chairs for review and approval on DOC 03-513 Family Council Meeting Minutes within 21 days after the meeting.
 - b. If the family secretary is not available or is scheduled to be absent, they will contact all elected statewide representatives to initiate the selection of an acting family secretary with notification to the Department co-chair. This should be done prior to the meeting whenever possible.
- F. Focus groups may be created through the SFC to look at a specific issue or item and provide recommendations back to the SFC for action.

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1. A focus group will consist of participants of the council and Department employees.
 2. The focus group will provide written recommendations/results to the SFC upon conclusion of the focus group's work.
- G. Statewide Family Council Department co-chair will:
1. Ensure meeting dates and times are scheduled and posted for the following year by October 31st on the Family & Friends page of the Department's website, and
 2. Ensure approved meeting minutes are distributed and posted within 10 days of finalization on the Family & Friends page of the Department's website.
- H. If an SFC participant misses a visit with their loved one to attend an SFC meeting, a makeup visit during a regular visit session at the facility will occur.

DEFINITIONS:

Words/terms appearing in this policy may be defined in the glossary section of the Policy Manual.

ATTACHMENTS:

None

DOC FORMS:

- [DOC 03-513 Family Council Meeting Minutes](#)
- [DOC 03-514 Family Council Action Items](#)