

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/a-new-role-for-technology-the-impact-of-video-visitation-on-corrections-staff-inmates-and-their-families>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Vera's [Center on Sentencing and Corrections](#), [Family Justice Program](#), and [Cost-Benefit Analysis Unit](#), in partnership with the [Washington State Department of Corrections](#) (DOC), are conducting the first comprehensive study of the impact of remote visitation via online video commonly known as video visitation on incarcerated people, corrections culture, corrections budgets, and public safety. Research shows that prison visits by loved ones are integral to managing incarcerated people's behavior, reducing recidivism, facilitating reentry into the community, and promoting positive parent-child relationships. However, prisons are often located long distances from the homes of incarcerated people, making in-person visits time-consuming and expensive. Furthermore, the number of visiting hours facilities can offer is often limited by the operational, financial, and security demands they impose. In several states, corrections agencies are now turning to video visitation as a way to mitigate these burdens while allowing those in prison to maintain relationships with their families and other important people in their lives. Washington DOC is currently piloting video visitation at Mission Creek Corrections Center for women, with plans to roll-out the service to facilities across the state during 2013.

This study will use a multi-methods design combining administrative data, surveys, focus groups, and interviews to assess whether access to video visitation improves the nature and frequency of incarcerated people's contact with their families and others who support them. It will also explore whether these contacts improve incarcerated people's compliance with custodial rules and outcomes after their release from prison. To learn the degree to which other jurisdictions could replicate Washington State's video visitation model, Vera will also evaluate the program's implementation. This study will provide valuable empirical evidence to inform policy debates about family contact with those in prison, investments and policies related to video visitation, and recidivism-reduction strategies.

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