

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/saying-hello-on-mothers-day>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

On Sunday, families around the country will celebrate Mothers Day. For people like me who are far away from home, we will likely use low-cost, convenient technology to call our mothers, say hello, and wish them a happy Mothers Day. Unfortunately, for more than 65,000 incarcerated mothers, a low-cost phone call is not possible. [As a recent news article](#) describes, a local phone call made from prison or jail has connection fees and high per-minute costs. Those rates can increase significantly if the call is placed out of state. For those in prison or jail whose families cannot visit this Mothers Day, often because of the cost and distance, the phone is an important way to maintain an ongoing connection with a family member. Exorbitant phone call costs only hinder these contacts.

There are a number of benefits to family contact for people who are incarcerated. While the direct link between phone calls and pre- and post-release prisoner outcomes has not been well-studied, studies of in-person visits suggest that family contact can promote safety within the facility and in the community.

In December 2012, the Federal Communication Commission (FCC) issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking regarding the interstate inmate calling services rates and opened for public comment. Vera submitted comments describing the benefits of family contact and some of the costs that families incur to stay in touch. The FCC has an opportunity to set reasonable phone rates for incarcerated people while covering phone providers costs. This is also an opportunity for prisons and jails to keep pace with technology: facilities around the country are incorporating kiosks to allow incarcerated people to visit with their families by video while keeping costs down.

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