

New York City Department of Correction
Report on Annual Training Regarding
the Treatment of Visitors
January 30, 2021

Pursuant to Local Law 23 of 2019, the Department is required to implement annual training regarding the treatment of visitors for staff who interact regularly with visitors, and issue reports on these trainings. The following report provides an overview of the training and its methodology, descriptions of the training materials used, and the number of staff who received the training.

COVID impact on DOC Trainings

On March 16, 2020, the Mayor issued Executive Order 100 suspending all in-person programming and visitation at correctional facilities to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. As a result, in-person visit staff training was also suspended for a period of time; however, the Department continued to work to develop trainings for all public-facing staff on how to effectively communicate with those who visit DOC facilities. Below please find updates pertaining to calendar year 2020 detailing how the Department has continued to engage visit staff in training and development despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Detail is also provided on the training which prepared staff for the Department's televisits initiative, which launched in April 2020.

New Pat Frisk Training

Following the settlement of the Grottano litigation, the Department created a new Pat Frisk training for visit staff. This training focuses on the Department's new pat frisk policy for visit staff that addresses appropriate search practices and clearly identifies improper conduct. The Department developed the lesson plan in February of 2020 and began training staff in March of 2020. The training is a 2-hour course in which staff reviews the policy and then engages in a hands-on practice with full-body mannequins. After three training sessions, the Department had to pause due to suspension of in-person trainings for COVID-19 mitigation. In October the Department resumed this training for a short time, and it is again paused at this time. At this point, roughly half of all visit staff have received the new pat frisk training. This winter the Department anticipates training the remaining staff in need of training so that all visit staff will be trained when citywide COVID levels drop and in-person visits resume.

Osborne Association Training

The Department has worked with the Osborne Association to develop a follow-up refresher course based on trainings conducted in May & June 2019 that focused on customer service, de-escalation strategies, implicit bias, and stress management. This fall, the Department finalized a half day refresher training that will be rolled out for the same staff members who participated in the initial Osborne Association training.

The in-house refresher module is entitled "Facilitating Successful Visits," and covers the importance of visits to people in custody and the central role visits play in the Department's rehabilitation-centered correctional mission. The refresher includes activities for participants which highlight the perspective of friends and family members who visit people in custody. In October 2020 the Training Division formally rolled out the in-person "Facilitating Successful Visits" training for related personnel. At this time 154 of the approximately 240 staff members identified for this training have been trained and the remaining staff will be trained in the upcoming months.

Televisits and DOITT Training

The Department suspended in-person visits on March 18, 2020. Beginning on April 1, 2020, the Department launched a televisiting program to provide a socially distanced opportunity for individuals in custody and their family and friends to maintain connections during the pandemic. This program allows visitors to sign up for a televisit on the Department's website and connect to their loved one through a computer, phone, or tablet. As part of this initiative, visit staff process web forms submitted by the visitors and then schedule a visit using a program created by the City's Department of Information and Technology (DOITT). DOITT provided training to visit staff on Wednesday, March 25, 2020 which focused on how visit staff would use this system to schedule televisits with family and friends of incarcerated individuals. The training included three sessions led by a DOITT project director and was attended by visit captains and officers. The instructor provided the training on-line through WebEx and

New York City Department of Correction
Report on Annual Training Regarding
the Treatment of Visitors
January 30, 2021

staff participated in it using computers at the Department's GMDC Learning Center. All staff who participated in the training were spaced a safe distance of 6 feet apart and wore gloves, facemasks, and plastic coverings over the earphones. Each session included roughly 30 individuals across two classrooms for an approximate total training roster of 90 staff. This training was also recorded and is posted on the Department's intranet for future reference as well as for staff who were unable to attend the three sessions on March 25th. The objective of the training was to teach staff the steps of how to schedule a visit using the new system. The instructor walked through the process, sharing his screen with this class, and set aside time at the end of the session for questions. Staff submitted their questions through the chat function on the WebEx platform. Additionally, the instructor distributed written materials with screenshots of each step of the scheduling process so that staff could use for reference. The training is available to staff at all times on the intranet and staff have access to on-going support in utilizing the televisit system as well as troubleshooting technical issues.

Through the televisiting program the Department has facilitated over 33,000 televisits between incarcerated individuals and their loved ones from April through December 2020. Staff who participated in this training schedule televisits during their tour Wednesdays - Sundays. The Department looks forward to reinstating in-person visits when it becomes safe to do so. In the meantime, the Department continues to operate televisits to ensure people in custody remain connected with their communities during this time.