

***LYCOMING COUNTY  
PRE-RELEASE CENTER***

*546 COUNTY FARM RD.  
MONTOURSVILLE, PA 17754*

***VOLUNTEER  
HANDBOOK***

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*Dear Volunteer*

*Thank you for your interest and participation in our volunteer program. The commitment of your time and energy is an asset to both this facility and the inmates.*

*Adults of all ages, all educational levels and from all life experiences become good volunteers. Correctional systems need level-headed people who are willing to share their experience or training with inmates.*

*The facility receives the benefit of your specific talents, skills and the investment of your personal time, all of which provides added dimension to the various established program services. The inmate population welcomes the opportunity your presence affords to interact with individuals from the community who are interested in understanding and helping.*

*This information packet is intended to provide a general overview of the Lycoming County Pre-Release Center and its programs. If you have additional questions, please contact the Deputy Warden of Inmate Services.*

*We are looking forward to the ways in which you will enhance the total program, but we know your effectiveness can only begin after you understand the operation of the Pre-Release Center, its security needs and what is expected of you while you are a volunteer. If we are successful, we will all enjoy the satisfaction of seeing inmates find better ways to grow and learn while incarcerated and leave this facility in a better position to be a better citizen than when they arrived here.*

*It is very important that you, as a volunteer, participate in an orientation process and be provided a handbook. It is important that you fully understand and follow the rules, regulations and guidelines as they are outlined for you in this handbook.*

*As you go about your volunteering, the staff is always available to help you in any way in which we can. We not only hope, but expect that you will ask for our assistance in making your volunteer efforts the best they can be.*

*Thank you for your interest and commitment to this need.*

## **TREATMENT PROGRAM**

The Pre-Release Center is a structured community in the corrections treatment program for offenders, operated by Lycoming County. The Lycoming County Pre-Release Center provides a structured minimum-security inmate program with the necessary degree of security to protect the community, the program participants and the staff. This program provides integrative services for its participants who can progress through various privilege levels while assigned to Work Crew and Work Release. The major goal is to prepare the program resident to return to the community by reducing the risk of return.

## **SECURITY**

**\*\*CELL PHONES OR OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED. PLEASE LEAVE THEM IN YOUR VEHICLE.\*\***

If you are scheduled to lead a group or have scheduled contact with a PRC inmate, enter the building through the front door and proceed to the control desk. Identification is required by all visitors in order to enter the building. After visitors sign the registry, they will be directed to the appropriate area for their visit. **A valid Driver's License is the acceptable means of identification.** Please have your driver's license and identification from the agency you represent so we can check it with our approved outside agency list. If you want to bring someone new with you to assist, you must have prior approval before they enter. If approved, please make sure they have proper picture I.D. and agency approval.

Visitors, carrying bags, and briefcases are subject to being searched for contraband. Cigarettes, matches and any other tobacco products are considered contraband in the Pre-Release Center and shall be left in your vehicle. No personal purses, food or drink are allowed.

Instructional materials for meeting or tutoring are permitted. We ask, however, that all materials be given to a staff member to be checked for contraband, prior to being given to the inmate. If any questions should arise as to what shall be permitted, contact a staff member. You are not to enter the facility with recording, video or camera type devices.

You may not take anything out of the facility for residents, no matter how trivial it seems.  
Letters to be mailed are not permitted to be brought in or taken out by volunteers. All inmates' mail must be channeled through the Pre-Release mail procedure.

Everyone entering or leaving the institution is subject to search. The finding of contraband in a volunteer's possession could be embarrassing and will probably cause the termination of that volunteer's privilege to enter the institution. Charges could be filed for introduction of contraband.

The Warden has the discretion to curtail, postpone or discontinue the services of volunteer or volunteer organization.

## **LAWS GOVERNING ESCAPE AND CONTRABAND**

- **18 PA C.S.A. Subchapter B Crimes Code of PA**

Laws governing escape and contraband are important because they are applicable to volunteers and their contact with inmates.

5121 ESCAPE

- (b) **PERMITTING OR FACILITATING ESCAPE**– A public servant concerned in detention commits an offense if he knowingly or recklessly permits an escape. Any person who knowingly causes or facilitates an escape commits an offense. 1972, Dec. 6, P.L. – No 334, 1. Effective June 6, 1973.

#### 5122 IMPLEMENTS OF ESCAPE

- (a) **OFFENSE DEFINED**– 1) a person commits a misdemeanor of the first degree if he unlawfully introduces within a detention facility or mental hospital, or unlawfully provides an inmate thereof with any weapons, tool or other thing which may be used for escape. 2) An inmate commits a misdemeanor of the second degree if he unlawfully procures makes or otherwise provides himself, with, or has in his possession any such implement of escape.
- (b) **DEFINITION**– As used in this section the word “unlawfully” means surreptitiously or contrary to law, regulation or other order of the detaining authority.

#### 5123 CONTRABAND

- (a) **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE CONTRABAND TO CONFINED PERSONS IS PROHIBITED.** A person commits a felony of the second degree if he sells, gives, transmits or furnishes to any convict in a prison, or inmate in a mental hospital, or gives away in or brings into any prison, mental hospital, or any building appurtenant thereto, or on the land granted to or owned or leased by the Commonwealth or county for the use and benefit of the prisoners or inmates, or puts in any place where it may be secured by a convict of a prison, inmate of a mental hospital, or employee thereof, any controlled substance included in Schedules I through V of the act of April 14, 1972 (P.L. 233, No. 64), known as the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, (except the ordinary hospital supply of the prison or mental hospital) without a written permit signed by the physician of such institution, specifying the quantity and quality of the substance which may be furnished to any convict, inmate or employee in the prison or mental hospital, the name of the prisoner, inmate, or employer for whom and the time when the same may be furnished, which permit shall be delivered to and kept by the warden or superintendent of the prison or mental hospital.
- (a.2) **POSSESSION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE CONTRABAND BY RESIDENT IS PROHIBITED.** A prisoner or inmate commits a felony of the second degree if he unlawfully has in his possession or under his control of any controlled substance in violation of section 13(a) (16) of The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act.
- (b) **MONEY TO RESIDENTS PROHIBITED.** A person commits a misdemeanor of the third degree if he gives or furnishes money to any inmate confined in a State or county correctional institution, provided notice of this prohibition is adequately posted at the institution. A person may, however, deposit money with the superintendent, warden or other authorized individual in charge of a State or county correctional institution for the benefit and use of an inmate confined therein, which shall be credited to the inmate’s account and expended in accordance with the rules

and regulations of the institution. The person making the deposit shall be provided with a written receipt for the amount deposited.

- (c) **CONTRABAND OTHER THAN CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE.** A person commits a misdemeanor of the first degree if he sells, gives or furnishes to any convict in a prison, or inmate in a mental hospital, or gives away in or brings into any prison, mental hospital, or any building appurtenant thereto, or on the land granted to or owned or leased by the Commonwealth or country for the use and benefit of the prisoners or inmates, or puts in any place where it may be secured by a convict of a prison, inmate of a mental hospital, or employee thereof, any kind of spirituous or fermented liquor, medicine or poison (except the ordinary hospital supply of the prison or mental hospital) without a written permit signed by the physician of such institution, specifying the quantity and quality of the substance which may be furnished to any convict, inmate or employee in the prison or mental hospital, the name of the prisoner, inmate or employee for whom, and the time when the same may be furnished, which permit shall be delivered to and kept by the warden or superintendent of the prison or mental hospital.
- (c.1) **TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES TO INMATES PROHIBITED.** A person commits a misdemeanor of the first degree without the written permission of superintendent, warden or otherwise authorized Individual in charge of a correctional institution, prison, jail, detention facility or mental hospital, he sells, gives or furnishes to any inmate in a correctional institution, prison, jail, detention facility or mental hospital, or any building appurtenant thereto, or puts in any place where it may be obtained by an inmate of a correctional institution, prison, jail, detention facility or mental hospital, any telecommunication device.
- (c.2) **POSSESSION OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEVICES BY RESIDENTS IS PROHIBITED.** An inmate in a correctional institution, prison, jail, detention facility or mental hospital, or any building appurtenant thereto, commits a misdemeanor of the first degree if he has in his possession any telecommunications device without the written permission of the superintendent, warden or otherwise authorized individual in charge of a correctional institution, prison, jail, detention facility or mental hospital.

**“INMATE”** – A male or female offender who is committed to or confined in a penal or correctional institution.

**“TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICE”** – Any type of instrument, device, or machine or equipment which is capable of transmitting telephonic, electronic, digital, cellular or radio communications or any part of such instrument, device, machine or equipment which is capable of facilitating the transmission of telephonic, electronic, digital, cellular or radio communications. The term shall include, but not be limited to, cellular phones, digital phones and modem equipment devices.

### **DRESS**

Please maintain a neat appearance at all times. Your physical appearance will help you establish the good working relationship you want with the inmates and the staff. Women's attire like – see-through apparel, halter-type tops or extremely short skirts should not be worn or you could be refused entering PRC.

### **RESPECT**

We ask that you respect and treat inmates as fellow human beings. They are people not unlike yourself for which they are now incarcerated. They will eventually return to society. Inmates are to be accorded the rights of human dignity which apply to all of us.

Be yourself that is a concerned, caring person from the community simply trying to help a person enhance his /her life through education, emotional support or social interaction. Don't make promises you can not keep. Such let-downs can cause problems. Know the difference between sympathy and empathy. Please avoid making phone calls for inmates. If you have a question about phone calls contact the Pre-Release Center Manager.

### **PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT**

We suggest you avoid personal involvement with the inmate's personal – legal problems and treatment needs. You are here strictly as a volunteer. If any questions/problems should arise, or if you have any doubts, contact the assigned correctional counselor for the inmate. Likewise, we suggest you carefully evaluate how much you want to tell the inmate about your personal life. We suggest you not release your telephone number or mailing address. If you have a question, let's discuss it. Do not divulge personal information about yourself or staff.

### **PERSONAL WELFARE**

You are not permitted to strike or lay hands on an inmate unless it is in self defense. For everyone's safety, any unusual situation which occurs or information received, which could threaten person, property or security, must be reported immediately to a staff person. You may be requested to be interviewed about an incident. Inmates are not permitted to wander around during the meeting.

### **EMERGENCIES AND SITUATIONS**

A Resident Supervisor is assigned to make periodic checks on all interview and multipurpose rooms. If you are faced with an emergency such as a fire, assault, escape or physical illness, remain calm, in control, and locate the nearest staff member in person to report the emergency and get help. In absence of the Warden, the Deputy Warden is in command of all staff and buildings. Matters involving the Pre-Release Center, the Pre-Release Manager will be in command. In case of emergencies, escapes, new offenses committed by residents, personnel problems and matters of unusual manner the Pre-Release Manager will report to the Deputy Warden.

### **LEGAL**

Inmates often file lawsuits against persons with whom they come in contact while incarcerated. This rarely happens to volunteers. If you are sued, the County can provide no liability insurance to you nor may it provide counsel to represent you. While you are present in the institution, you

are subject to the laws of the Commonwealth of PA. Any crimes committed on the facilities or grounds will be prosecuted.

**VOLUNTEER RESPONSIBILITIES:**

1. You have the responsibility to abide by all the facility rules and regulations.
2. Keep in contact with your liaison on staff.
3. Report periodically on the progress of your work with the inmates; inform the staff of any radical changes in the inmate's attitude/behavior. Suicidal inmates should be reported immediately.
4. Know the resources available to you and how to use them.
5. Arrive early enough to allow the needed time to process you through security.
6. Be patient and friendly to staff facilitating your entrance to or exit from the facility. What they do is in the interest of your safety.
7. Report any suspicious situations and be aware of policy changes at the institution which may affect your volunteer effort.
8. **Fire evacuation procedures or fire drills (all volunteers).** Please go to the lobby and stand by for instructions.
9. Staff may cancel or terminate a volunteer program due to an uncontrollable situation within the facility.

**SUMMARY:**

Things **NOT TO DO:**

- Give or receive anything from inmates.
- Promise to make phone calls or contact family members without first discussing this with the staff coordinator.
- Carry out mail or any other article from an inmate.
- Become overly friendly to the point you could be placed in a compromising position.
- Bringing in any tobacco products, alcoholic beverages, narcotics, or arrive at the institution yourself under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- Being in possession of significant amounts of money or expensive jewelry.
- Display keys or leave them lying around. Please use the lockers in the lobby.
- Resort to being "one of the crowd" to get along with the inmates.
- Be naïve or gullible.
- Show favoritism to any inmate or small select group of inmates.
- Leave personal or institution possessions in an unsecured location.
- Use vulgarity or profanity in the facility.
- Attempt to psychoanalyze the inmates you deal with or recommend any medical procedure.
- Engage in controversial or critical discussions about the staff or prison programs. Do not release personal information about other volunteers or correctional staff.
- Engage in physical contact.
- **NO CELL PHONES OR TELECOMMUNICATION DEVICES.**

Things **TO Do**:

- Inspire inmates to greater achievements. Help instill pride.
- Display a positive attitude in working with inmates, and treat them with the dignity afforded fellow human beings.
- Be firm, fair and honest in dealing with inmates.
- Be polite and courteous at all times.
- Be a good listener, committed and persistent while volunteering.
- Keep your vehicle locked.
- Be familiar with PRC policies, rules and regulations.
- If you are not sure of something, ask before you act.
- Be aware that all persons are subject to be searched while on PRC grounds and do not carry anything which is considered contraband.
- Maintain a neat, clean appearance.
- Report all irregularities to a staff member.
- Know how to say “no” to an inmate.
- Avoid feeling sorry for inmates. Empathy – yes; sympathy – no.
- Speak in simple language as you work with inmates.

The **DO's and DON'Ts** will help you understand your role in sharing your talents and skills while contributing to safety for everyone, inmates, volunteers and staff.

A GENERAL RULE OF THUMB IS TO BE AS PLEASANT AS POSSIBLE IN ALL SITUATIONS. As a volunteer, you represent volunteers in general and your actions or behavior can influence the acceptance of all volunteers.

**SUGGESTIONS AND RULES**

1. Do not volunteer if you are a relative to an inmate or staff member or a visitor of a Lycoming County Pre-Release Center resident in that institution.
2. Do not bring contraband into the Pre-Release Center. If you are not sure what contraband is, ask the staff. People who bring in contraband are subject to permanent expulsion and/or arrest.
3. Do not bring anything into or out of a facility for an inmate at any time, no matter how innocent or trivial it may seem unless with the written permission of the Deputy Warden or Pre-Release Center Manager.
4. Keep everything in the open. Do not say or do anything with an inmate you would be embarrassed to share with your peers or supervisors.
5. Do not give up if you failed at your first try. Try again.
6. Don't over identify. Be a friend, but let inmates carry their own problems. Be supportive without becoming like the inmates in viewpoint or attitude.
7. Do not take anything, including letters, in or out of a correctional facility without permission. Respect the confidentiality of records and other privileged information. Volunteers shall not offer housing to inmates.

8. Do not bring unauthorized visitors or guests with you to the Lycoming County Pre-Release. They will be refused admission. **PRIOR APPROVAL IS A MUST!!!**
9. Do not give out your address or telephone number. If asked, you might say, "I'm sorry, but I was told that it was against the rules to do that."
10. Do not correspond with inmates in the facility in which you volunteer or accept collect phone calls from them at your place of residence.
11. Be aware that the use of, or being under the influence of, alcohol or drugs while in the facility is prohibited.
12. Don't impose your values and beliefs on inmates. Do not let others impose a lower set of values on you.
13. Don't discuss the criminal justice system, the courts, inconsistency in sentencing, or related topics. Although everyone is entitled to his or her opinion, what volunteers say can have serious repercussions in the facility or with staff.
14. Ask for help. If you are uncertain about what to do or say, be honest. It is always best to tell the inmate that you will have to seek assistance from your supervisor. Inmates don't expect you to have all the answers.

### **VISITATION**

All volunteers are screened prior to being admitted to the institution. After contact has been made by your field coordinator to the staff you may receive a brief orientation of the facility, including areas where you will be permitted. At this time, staff will answer any questions you may have. It shall be your responsibility to contact the institution to set up a schedule for your contacts. Failure to do so will result in loss of visiting privileges into the facility.

Please have your driver's license and identification from the agency you represent so we can check it with our approved outside agency list. If you want bring someone new with you to assist, you must have prior approval before they enter. If approved, please make sure they have proper picture I.D. and agency approval.

**PROFESSIONAL VISITS:** Monday thru Sunday: 9:00am – 10:00 pm (or as scheduled)