

02 May 2017

C84748

Kate McIntyre
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Dear Ms McIntyre

Thank you for your email of 29 March 2017, requesting information about visiting prisoners in hospital. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

The Department recognises the importance of prisoners maintaining regular contact with their family and friends and the benefits this has in supporting their rehabilitation. Visitors to prison must first be an approved visitor of a prisoner. People who wish to visit a prisoner must first complete an application form that is sent out by the person in prison. Following receipt of this completed application form, security checks will be undertaken. Prison staff will then assess the application and make a recommendation to the Prison Director, who will then approve or decline each request.

You have asked ten questions about visiting a prisoner in hospital that I shall answer below.

- 1. Are already registered visitors of an incarcerated person able to visit that incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?*
- 2. Are close relations of an incarcerated person able to visit that incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?*
- 3. Are spouses of an incarcerated person able to visit that incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?*
- 4. Are those in a domestic partnership with an incarcerated person able to visit that incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?*
- 5. Are friends of an incarcerated person and/or acquaintances of an incarcerated person able to visit that incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?*

6. Are there grounds for compassionate consideration for allowing people to visit an incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital.

7. Is there a formal application process for being allowed the right to visit an incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital?

8. If there is a formal application process for being allowed the right to visit an incarcerated person during a time which that incarcerated person is in hospital, approximately how long would an application take to be approved or denied?

Anyone who is an approved visitor of a prisoner is eligible to apply to visit a prisoner while they are in hospital. Visits must first be approved by the Custodial Systems Manager or delegate and in instances where a person is not already an approved visitor, special visits can be arranged at the Prison Director or delegate's discretion.

Each application is assessed on its own merits, and while every effort is made to ensure these are managed in a timely and efficient manner, there is no set timeframe in which applications must be approved. You can find further information about the visitor application process on the Department's website via the link below:

http://www.corrections.govt.nz/working_with_offenders/prison_sentences/staying_connected_with_friends_and_family/visits.html

9. Are there written guidelines for Department of Corrections and/or hospital staff during visits to incarcerated people during a time which those incarcerated people are in hospital?

10. Please provide written guidelines for Department of Corrections and/or hospital staff during visits to incarcerated people during a time which those incarcerated people are in hospital.

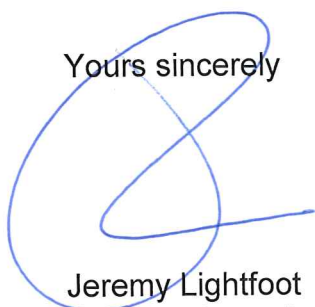
Where a prisoner has been admitted to hospital, prison staff escorting the prisoner are provided with special instructions. These guidelines provide instruction to prison staff on how to manage the prisoner and identify risks unique to the hospital environment. Sections one through six of these special instructions have been withheld in accordance with section 6(c) of the OIA, as the release of this information would be likely to prejudice the maintenance of the law, including the prevention, investigation, and detection of offences, and the right to a fair trial.

However, section seven of the special instructions for prisoners admitted to hospital, outlining the process for visitors has been provided below for your reference.

7. Visits must be approved by the Custodial System Manager(CSM) or delegate:
- a. Only approved visitors are allowed (must be during hospital visiting time appropriate for the ward) or as approved by the CSM or delegate.
 - b. No more than x number (at the discretion of CSM or delegate) of visitors at any one time.
 - c. Visitors must present ID and staff must positively, identify all visitors.
 - d. Prisoner is not allowed to receive from visitors, any property/items or food unless it has been approved, in writing, by the Prison Director or delegate.
 - e. Prisoner is not allowed to use visitors' cell phones (if cell phones are allowed by hospital).
 - f. Visitors are not allowed to photograph/selfies or video record the prisoner or any aspect of the visit.
 - g. Staff must supervise the visit at all times and must terminate the visit if the safety and security is compromised e.g. prisoner and/or visitors do not comply with a lawful "instruction".

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Department. Alternatively you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143.

Yours sincerely



Jeremy Lightfoot
National Commissioner