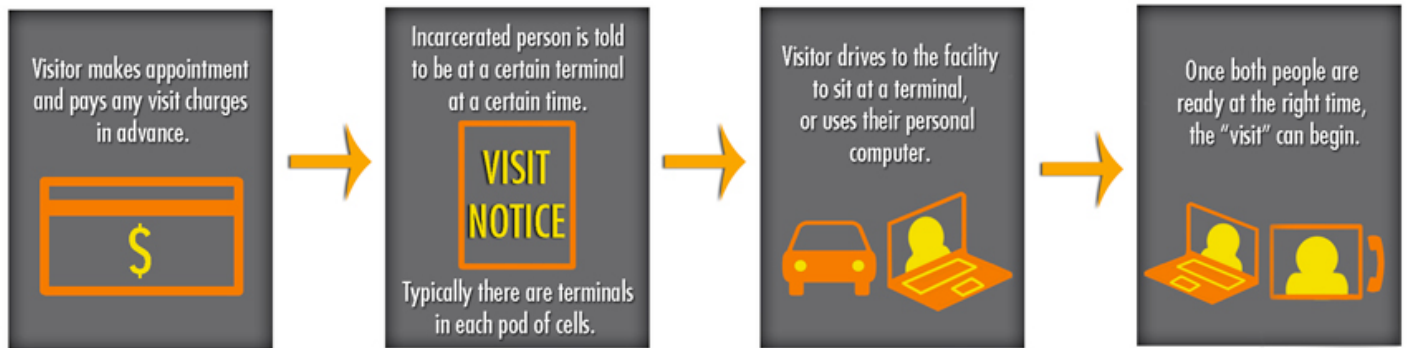


VIDEO VISITATION:

The for-profit video visitation industry
in prisons and jails

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For-profit video visitation is quietly sweeping the nation's prisons and jails. While the technology has existed since the 1990s, the video visitation industry has grown tremendously in the past few years. Currently, over 500 correctional facilities in 43 states and D.C. have implemented video visitation systems. While video visitation systems vary, the process typically requires that visitors pay and schedule visits in advance:



Ironically, video visitation is the least prevalent in state prisons, where, given the remote locations, it would be the most useful, and the most common in county jails where the potential benefits are fewer. In state prisons, video visits *supplement* traditional visits, but in county jails, video visits typically *replace* traditional in-person visits.

Families with loved ones in county jails are left with two options: take the time and expense to travel to a jail for a visit with a computer screen or pay \$1/minute for a visit from home. This practice of banning in-person visits violates best practices put forth by the American Correctional Association and the American Bar Association. Research has long found that in-person visits have positive outcomes for public safety.

County jails should follow the lead of Dallas County, Texas, which — in response to pressure from the community — was the first to reject a video visitation contract that would have banned in-person visits and Multnomah County, Oregon (home to Portland) where the sheriff reversed the ban on in-person visits.

Punishing families who are seeking to stay together in order to gain profits is bad public policy. **Sheriffs and the video visitation companies are simply wrong that expensive computer chats and grainy images are equivalent to visiting someone in the flesh.**

This fact sheet is based on our report, *Screening Out Family Time: The for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails*, available at:

<http://www.prisonpolicy.org/visitation/>

