

# One Minnesota Budget

## Family Support and Connection

Preserving strong bonds with family while a person is incarcerated leads to more sustained community ties, promotes rehabilitation, and reduces recidivism and future crime. Studies repeatedly find a significant link between family contact and success when returning to community.

The Governor's budget recommendation includes investments to support incarcerated individuals to meaningfully engage with their families through more routine contact with loved ones and increased parenting programming for incarcerated moms and dads.

### In Minnesota:

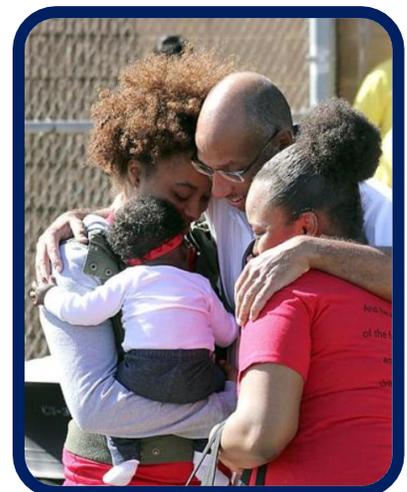
- **73%** of those incarcerated in Minnesota are parents
- **66%** of men and **77%** of women incarcerated are parents to minors
- **56%** of men and **66%** of women were living with their children prior to incarceration
- **40%** of children in foster care have an incarcerated parent(s)
- **80%** of children with an incarcerated parent need state services including mental health, alcohol/drug treatment, and child welfare
- **58%** of incarcerated people have a family member with a criminal record

Children, their caregivers, and families suffer from the incarceration of a loved one. The creation of a Family Support Unit will help to break the cycle of intergenerational criminality, stabilize families, reduce recidivism, and help children lead healthy, prosocial lives. The Governor recommends:

### Establishing a Family Support Unit

The requested investment of \$550,000 per year ongoing will create a family support unit within the Department of Corrections to serve individuals incarcerated in all 11 prisons and their families on the outside of the prison walls.

The unit will focus on supporting meaningful connections between incarcerated individuals and their families, including partnering with community members and organizations on evidence-based programming such as parenting education and connection. The unit will also lead the agency on developing strategies and policies to support incarcerated individuals and their families.



## Eliminate Cost Barriers for Communications

Governor Walz recommends \$2 million per year ongoing to reduce or eliminate the cost of phone and video calls for those who are incarcerated in state facilities. The cost of full elimination of fees is \$3.1 million per year.



While advancing technology has made phone and video calling more affordable and accessible, incarcerated individuals often face significant challenges paying for these services. Family members of those incarcerated often pay the high cost of phone and video calls to support their incarcerated loved ones.

Many incarcerated individuals describe telephones as lifelines, helping them to stay connected, maintain relationships with their children, and secure future housing and other services upon release. Isolation and limited communication with family members can lead to high levels of stress and anxiety.

Ninety-five percent of individuals in prison will return to our communities. If they are connected to their families and support systems, it's better for everyone.

### Current State Policy

Currently, incarcerated individuals can place collect phone calls, which will charge the recipient of the phone call, or they may purchase their own phone time through a service called JPay.

Individuals may only make out-going calls during specifically designated times or days. The minimum time allowed per call is 10 minutes, except when there are reasons to justify limitations. Phone calls may be monitored and recorded by staff.

The state contracts with a specialized vendor. The contracted cost of a same-state phone call in Minnesota prisons is \$0.05 per minute. Intrastate phone calls cost \$0.60 per minute, and international calls cost \$1.67 per minute. The DOC currently receives a 40% commission from these calls, which are used to pay for programs within the facilities.

### Proposal

Under the Governor's budget recommendation, the state would provide free or reduced cost phone calls for incarcerated individuals in both state adult and juvenile facilities. The commissioner of corrections must develop a written policy for administering these calls. The policy must detail limits on the length and number of phone calls and any other limits that may be needed if there are insufficient funds necessary to provide free phone calls.

### Minnesota Prison Calls Facts

- The cost of a 15-minute phone call in state prisons is **\$0.75**.
- Incarcerated individuals with jobs in prison earn between **\$0.25 and \$2 per hour**.
- More than **one-third** of families with an incarcerated family member go into debt because of prison phone costs.

**"Phone calls provide hope, sanity, and a desire to do better."**

- *Incarcerated individual*