

## Changing the Prison Systems in America

Our broken prison system in America needs to be fixed. Here are four practical areas that can be incrementally done with communities of volunteers. Legal issues will no doubt be involved in each area.

1. **Outside Transparency:** A central online web data base (like Wikipedia), providing information such as prison locations, populations, programs, size, staff, cost, rules, lock down rate, spiritual access, visitation process, and other factors affecting this extended community. This online service must provide various ways to inspect prison conditions and allow ranking and comparisons between prisons. It should also allow interactive query, so that a user can ask a new question, to look at old data in new ways. The point of this is to put public pressure on the worst ranked prisons, and to encourage prison improvement. This prison information connection lets the public know how it's money is spent, how effective the prison is, and how it works for them. (See the included attached paper "A Public Information System for Prison Reform".)
2. **Inside Transparency:** Direct website support for the prison population, their families and friends. Difficulties imposed by prison time affects others, besides the person sentenced to time. These people also need web informational support. One example would be how to safely car pool to and from a prison. It can be difficult for a mother to visit her daughter who is in a prison 300 miles away. Car pooling with others can be an inexpensive solution. That can be accomplished by connecting the right people going to and from the same prison on the same calendar dates.
3. **Empowerment group activities:** Being in a prison should not mean you are completely helpless. Empowerment activities are important and must be recognized. Working groups of prisoners, guard staff positions, and volunteers from the outside public, organized to creatively approach prison reform. Perhaps for example, the food is bad, and this issue can be addressed. Perhaps food that local farms toss out as not being commercial could be used to improve the food provided in a particular prison. There are many topics for ongoing discussions. Perhaps it is just how the food is prepared, being over cooked or cold when it should be hot. Maybe they need new books to read, or a place to exercise in the morning.
4. **Individual Character Building activities:** Once a person becomes a prisoner, they need to know that they can engage in personal character building, such as Silent meditation, reading their Bible, reading their Koran, or other spiritual practice. They also need access to other religions, so they can shop around and find what best works for them.

In some cases, the information or activity is already present, but poorly available, and just needs to become more transparent, more a part of public discussion. The light of exposure is what will bring about all needed changes.