

PREA Basics for Rape Crisis Center Staff

FACT SHEET

PREA Overview

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) is a federal law that sets standards to prevent and respond to sexual violence in correctional and detention facilities. PREA requires facilities to provide incarcerated individuals with access to victim advocacy services and to make reasonable efforts to partner with local rape crisis centers (RCCs).¹ While PREA creates new responsibilities for detention and correctional facilities, it does not change the role of RCCs. Advocates continue to provide trauma-informed, survivor-centered services while following their organization's confidentiality and mandatory reporting policies.

Services that RCC Advocates Can Provide

- **In-Person Visits**
 - Correctional and Detention Facilities
 - Review the facility's policies before your visit, including the dress code, required identification, and any restrictions on what you may bring into the facility.
 - Identify a point of contact at the facility, such as the PREA coordinator, security staff, or administration, who can answer questions before or during your visit.
 - Sexual Assault Forensic Exams (SAFEs)
 - During SAFE exams, custody staff may be present, privacy may be limited, and survivors may be restrained for security reasons.
 - Provide trauma-informed support while working within the facility's security procedures.
- **Crisis Intervention by Phone**
 - Correctional and Detention Facilities
 - Phone calls may have limited privacy, be monitored or recorded, and only be available during certain hours.
 - Begin each call by asking whether it's safe to talk.
 - If privacy is limited, use brief or yes-or-no questions and offer options the survivor can respond to safely.
 - When possible, calls from incarcerated survivors should be answered by trained staff rather than volunteers.²
 - Virtual SAFE Exams
 - Use plain language and check that the survivor understands the information being provided.
 - Mute the mic or turn off your video if the survivor requests privacy during intimate parts of the physical assessment.
 - Provide trauma-informed support while working within the facility's security procedures.
- **Communication by Mail**
 - RCCs can consider developing template letters that can be customized for each survivor. Using templates can help provide consistent and trauma-informed support while allowing advocates to personalize each response.

For resources to support incarcerated survivors, please visit:

mcasa.org/survivors/resources-for-incarcerated-survivors

¹ "§ 115.53 Inmate, detainee, and resident access to outside confidential support services" (n.d.). National PREA Resource Center. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/standard/115-53>

² "§ 115.53 Inmate, detainee, and resident access to outside confidential support services" (n.d.). National PREA Resource Center. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.prearesourcecenter.org/standard/115-53>; "Building a Service Line to Support Incarcerated Survivors of Sexual Abuse" (n.d.). National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Retrieved June 2026 from <https://www.nsvrc.org/resource/building-service-line-support-incarcerated-survivors-sexual-abuse>