

My name is Katerina Philbrick. I am a licensed professional counselor. I donate my time in support of several inmates currently in the system, as well as a few who have reintegrated.

I currently support an individual in MacDougal Correctional Facility, for the past almost 3 years. I have experienced great difficulty trying to schedule video visits there. The system is entirely inefficient, and is seemingly structured to deter friends and family members from being able to see their loved ones.

Specifically, I have been told by the person who does the scheduling approvals (name was never disclosed), that they are the sole person tasked with receiving all requests, and approving/scheduling the visits. Possibly because of this, more often than not, my requests have gone ignored – neither approved nor denied, and definitely not scheduled. This processes is repeated every week, because apparently, visits cannot be scheduled in advance; so if you don't get a visit in the coming week, you are not “next in line” for the following week, but have to start the process over, with the same low chances... It leaves people wondering... Where is the transparency around this system? Is *anyone* getting visits? Am I being singled out? Is there anyone on the other end at all??

I have supported someone in the Colorado system for nearly 5 years, and in comparison, they have a user-friendly, smoothly operating, DOC-interference-free system, which operates as follows: a monthly visitation calendar is posted, with available slots being *all day long* (unlike just the handful of possible slots at MacDougal). You select the slot that works for you, you schedule it, and pay for it. Easy!

What is Connecticut doing wrong? It is shameful to parse out video visits like they are a luxury, while also making it difficult and frustrating to those trying to schedule them. What part of this helps with rehabilitation or mental health? None – **it is inhumane** and results, depression and suicidality, anxiety, and negative behaviors, to name just a few deleterious consequences. The DOC cannot give lip service to the benefits of visits, while also making it nearly impossible. As someone with a very busy career and life, which makes in-person visits only infrequently possible, I rely on video visits to help support these individuals.

In conclusion, I want to see a modern and updated system replace the human-controlled, and opaque system currently in place. I insist that video and in-person visits be made more available and encouraged by facilitating engagement between inmates and family/friends - *in actuality*, not in theory!

Sincerely,

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