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Governor

# Corrections and Community Supervision

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## 2024 Transparency Plan Update February 20, 2024

### **DELIVERABLES ACHIEVED SINCE 2021**

**Annual Tour of Correctional Facilities by Private Citizens** – Correction Law Section 146 lists those officials who are authorized to visit correctional facilities at will, such as members of the Legislature and their aides, the State Commission of Correction, judges, district attorneys, and the Correctional Association of New York, etc. No person not otherwise authorized by law may be permitted to enter a correctional facility, except by authority of the Commissioner. Many members of the public mistakenly believe that made-for-television prison dramas, with their graphic scenes of homicide, sexual assault, gang violence, and corrupt staff, are accurate portrayals of what routinely happens behind prison walls. Nothing could be further from the truth.

DOCCS embedded a policy in our current Department [Directive #4755](#), Correctional Facility Tours, that describes the process of the annual tour by private citizens.

To better educate the public about day-to-day prison existence, since 2022, each Department correctional facility has scheduled a general tour to include up to 30 interested private citizens from the surrounding community. Each facility worked with its Community Advisory Board to generate the list of attendees for the tour, as well as the logistics of the tour itself. The facility may also work with the Governor's Regional Representative and state and local elected officials to identify prospective participants for the tour. The Superintendent, together with members of their executive team, first met with the tour group, and provided current, as well as historical information, about the facility. As the tour progressed through the different areas of the facility, the staff will explain their responsibilities. Some interactions with the population may be permitted, if, in the judgment of the Superintendent, it can be accomplished without compromising safety and security. At the conclusion of the tour, the Superintendent, and their executive teams, again briefly met with the tour group to answer any questions.

**Annual Parole Friends and Family Days** – Several years ago, the Department's Community Supervision branch began to pioneer the concept of a Parole Friends & Family Open House at selected area offices, where releasees normally report. The invitees included the releasees, their family members, and their friends. A typical event included presentations on topics of interest, such as, Certificates of Relief, Certificates of Good Conduct, Voter Registration and Voter Rights, and Combating the Opioid Epidemic. Presenters included outside speakers, as well as successful releasees. Refreshments would also be made available. One of the main objectives was to establish buy-in, not just from the releasees, but by their family and friends, that the overall goal was a successful outcome for each releasee, and that relationships and trust can be fundamental in this regard.

DOCCS developed Department [Directive #9820](#), Community Supervision – Friends and Family Events in February 2022, which describes the Department's commitment to releasees.

Since 2022 the Department has annually arranged for this event to be conducted within each of the seven Community Supervision regions.

**Frequently Requested Information** – DOCCS Counsel’s Office conducted a review of FOIL requests in order to publish [frequently requested information](#) online, to better meet stakeholder needs and reduce staff workload. The FOIL and PIO offices produce and periodically update a list of informational items that are frequently requested for publication, in consultation with other units as applicable. DOCCS Counsel continues to conduct ongoing quality reviews and provides additional information based on new requests that are received.

**Board of Parole Business Meetings** – In addition to posting links to video or audio recordings of Board of Parole Business Meetings, the [agendas and minutes](#) have been posted since January 2022, and are also available on the DOCCS website. Public Notice is given on the DOCCS website to inform the public how to attend in person or virtually.

**Board of Parole Decision Notices Online** – By law, Board of Parole Administrative Appeal Findings and Recommendations are posted on the DOCCS website. Since February 2022, the Board has posted the [Administrative Appeal Decision Notices](#) on the DOCCS website.

**Monthly Incarcerated Individual Profile** – DOCCS posts the monthly profile of incarcerated individuals on the DOCCS webpage which answers a number of questions routinely asked of the agency. This data set is a comprehensive representation of the under custody population broken down by facility and includes demographic information, such as age, gender, race, ethnicity, religious affiliation, marital status, and education level of the population, and also contains data on the crime of commitment, minimum and maximum sentence, county of commitment, and length of stay of the population. The publication of the [incarcerated individual profile](#) on the DOCCS website represents a valuable resource for the public, researchers, and interested stakeholders.

**Office of Special Investigations** – DOCCS increased information about our internal investigative unit on the DOCCS website by expanding the [OSI overview](#) to include descriptions of each division and the more prominent display of instructions for reporting misconduct and filing a complaint to obtain greater public input and feedback.

**Publish Program Services Policies Online** – DOCCS conducted a further review of the many [programs](#) that are provided in Program Services policies and procedures and published them on the webpage to better showcase the breadth and quality of programs offered by the Department.

**Research Reports** – DOCCS publishes a number of [annual legislative reports and some discretionary reports](#) on our webpage. DOCCS streamlined the annual report review to ensure publication in a timely manner. In particular, for routine reports that have previously been approved, DOCCS has published them once they have been approved by senior leadership in consultation with the Executive Chamber. This allows for more up-to-date information to be posted on the webpage.

**Open Data NY** – DOCCS added additional data sets on Open Data NY that represents releases from DOCCS’ custody to the community. With the additional data, DOCCS has data publicly available regarding admissions to DOCCS facilities, releases to the community, the under-custody population, Parole Board decisions, the population for releasees under Community Supervision, and recidivism.

The DOCCS webpage was updated to reference and [link to Open Data NY](#). In 2024 DOCCS will continue to pursue acquisition of the appropriate tools and creation of dashboards.

### **INITIATIVES TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2024**

**Expand Use of Social Media** – There are numerous examples of positive stories and actions by the Department on a daily basis (e.g., saving of lives from attempted suicide, DMV call center employees assisting New Yorkers, and success stories from program services and community reentry, etc.). Highlighting these actions can improve the public image and narrative about DOCCS and its staff. DOCCS has expanded the use of social media and will continue to expand what we post, i.e., promotions, graduations, special events, etc.

**Data Dashboards** – In 2024, DOCCS will continue to pursue the acquisition of the appropriate tools to create a variety of data dashboards for both internal and external utilization. The external data dashboards will be used to report data via our web page.