

BEACON OF LIGHT

Lighting the path...

Write Now – A Christian Inmate Pen Pal Program in New York State

This pen pal program is written with the intention of helping inmates forge relationships with people and a church in their home community. The ultimate goal of this program is that the inmate will learn to develop diverse interests and healthy thought patterns as well as have a few people he/she can look to for friendship, guidance and accountability.

There are a few rules to this program that are in place to protect all parties. Not all rules are regulated by the State of New York but many are. Please read the attached New York State Directive #4422 dated 08/24/2012 or visit it online at <http://www.doccs.ny.gov/Directives/4422.pdf>. *You are personally responsible for the contents of your mail and any violations of this directive could cause the inmate to be disciplined.* This could mean loss of privileges, loss of good time, keeplock/SHU (segregation) and monitoring of all of the inmates outgoing mail for an extended time.

1. The Pen Pal must be a Christian regularly attending church service and over the age of 18.
2. The Pen Pal cannot be currently on probation or parole, a person presently or formerly employed by the Department of Corrections or in a Department Facility or a victim of the crime committed by the inmate.
3. All Pen Pals will write the same sex inmate. Men will write men and women will write women.
4. Each inmate must have a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 6 pen pals.
5. Each Pen Pal must agree to write the inmate on a scheduled basis (in turn, every 4-6 weeks).
6. You MUST use a return address on your envelope. Put your name in care of C/O the church address as your return address.
IE: John Smith
C/O Our Christian Church
123 Main Street
Anytown, NY 12345
7. You MUST address the envelope with the inmates name and Department Identification Number (DIN), Facility Name, Address, City, State and Zip.
IE: Bill Jones, DIN 12A3456
New York State Correctional Facility
456 Main Street
Anothertown, NY 67890
8. All incoming mail IS opened and inspected for cash, checks, money order, printed or photocopied materials or contraband. What you write may be read. The inmate is not present when this is done. Contraband (disallowed materials) are destroyed and dealt with according to facility rules and regulations.
9. Your correspondence can be a letter, a postcard or a greeting/note card.
10. You can send blank paper, coloring sheets, word searches, jokes, etc. (Up to 5 pages per envelope).
11. Share God's word as it feels appropriate trying to reference at least one or two Bible verses in each written exchange.
12. Don't ask about the inmates crime or share information about other inmates or crimes that have occurred "outside".
13. Your correspondence cannot be a "blingy" card (with dangles or embellishments) or an envelope of blank cards for the inmate to use (considered a package).
14. You cannot send money, stamps, stickers, packages or photographs.

These are some articles and references you can peruse for ideas when you have the time:

<http://talkingpointsmemo.com/theslice/power-prison-pen-pals-12-12-14>

http://www.prisonfellowship.org/documents/prisonfellowship/2012/revised_visit_prison_envelope.pdf