



## MISSION STATEMENT

### VISION:

*PrisonCare equips compassionate people to support positive prison culture from the outside, because everyone on the inside matters.*

### DISTINCTIVE:

PrisonCare differs from other prison ministries, reform agents, and advocacy organizations in its *holistic approach to prison communities*.

- We recognize a prison as, essentially, a neighborhood.
- The people groups in a prison neighborhood often interact within an “Us. vs. Them” mentality, but actually need many of the same things to improve the quality of the culture in the facility.
- In addition, the people groups in a prison are often invisible to or forgotten by the community outside the fence, lacking appreciation and resourcing that should ideally be offered to all law enforcement agencies.

PrisonCare seeks to support people who are impacted by a prison’s culture in any way — the residents, corrections officers, staff, and administrators.

Most people agree that U.S. prisons and prison systems need to change, but there is little consensus on what those changes should be. PrisonCare seeks to support those who make up the uneasy neighborhood of any singular prison facility *as it is right now*, regardless of what reform may be realized in the future. The residents, corrections officers, staff and administrators, spending their days and nights in close proximity to one another, need support from outside the walls in reducing the toxicity of the culture inside.

- ◆ PrisonCare’s model for support is *multi-partisan*, adaptable to secular and faith-based groups alike, and accessible to individuals with extensive connection to and knowledge about prisons, or absolutely none at all. Unlike reform organizations, *there is no singular vision* among participants in PrisonCare as to what the U.S. prison system “should” look like. We help people support the well-being of those who make up prison communities as they are now, regardless of any reforms to come. Prison reform is important and must be carried out by people with a shared vision for the final result. PrisonCare’s goal of improving prison culture can be shared by people with widely varied political and social philosophies.

The support offered by traditional prison ministries is typically faith-based, a help to the residents who are interested in religious study, prayer, and worship services, but an

awkward fit for those who are not. Additionally, the focus of traditional prison ministries is on the people who are incarcerated, with little scope for support of the officers charged with their custody, care and control, the staff meeting a host of needs in the facility's programming and operations, or the administration taxed with the complexities of overseeing a facility with a deeply-rooted "Us vs. Them" mentality. PrisonCare endeavors to support and resource a prison as a singular community, reducing toxic culture for *everyone* inside the walls.

- ◆ The heart of PrisonCare's approach is ***personal connection and flexibility***. Unlike traditional prison ministry models, there is no commitment to go inside the prison, no background checks, no formalized training, and no exclusion of people who have been incarcerated in the past. The PrisonCare model helps people offer support with no minimum requirement regarding the time and energy they must commit; individuals can bring as much or as little as they like to the endeavor.

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

PrisonCare, Inc. equips individuals or groups (faith-based or secular) to:

- ◆ raise awareness about the needs of the often-invisible people groups behind the walls of a prison — the residents, officers, staff, and administrators
- ◆ choose a specific prison to support, and strategically offer support to the people in that facility.

PrisonCare offers ***curriculum and connection opportunities to raise awareness*** of the many needs in prison facilities and the ways people on the outside can support the creation and maintenance of positive prison culture.

PrisonCare helps people begin to see the prisons in their communities in a new light. Similar to the way in which we need hospitals, our society at this time in history is structured in such a way that we must have prisons, and we must have people whose job it is to run them. But unlike our relationship to hospitals, our society in general does not hold the people in prisons in high regard. We lack compassion for residents, even as we expect them to be rehabilitated before they are released back into our neighborhoods. We lack respect and appreciation for the corrections officers, staff and administrators, thinking of their jobs as dirty work we'd prefer to ignore.

The [PrisonCare.org](http://PrisonCare.org) website ***has a library of free, downloadable PDF curriculum resources and will regularly add links to instructional video and audio content via YouTube and The PrisonCare Podcast. Each helps people understand*** the types of challenges faced by people inside a prison.

While most people have a general sense of prisons as difficult places to live or work, many have no substantive understanding of the daily challenges or the simple ways in which outside support can help.

PrisonCare equips by ***sharing the stories of people behind the walls, suggesting evidenced-based practices for offering support, and connecting compassionate people with one another***, both virtually and in real life at workshops and conferences, to share ideas as they seek to offer prison care to their chosen facilities.

The PrisonCare online library offers individual and bundled PDF resources with instruction on topics related to:

- choosing a prison to support
- establishing encourager and peer-mentor-style pen-pal relationships with residents who are personally invested in making positive change in their lives
- developing a plan for appreciating and encouraging corrections staff and administrators
- using positive culture creation and virtues-based vocabulary
- connecting with families of the individuals incarcerated in that specific facility in healthy and productive ways
- praying for prisons (for people of faith)
- encouraging healthy rapport behind the walls
- understanding and promoting mental wellness practices in prison
- equipping resident leaders to be positive culture creators

The PrisonCare Podcast provides 25-minute episodes on topics like these, as well as stories that help to humanize the people in prisons, whether they are sentenced to live there, or choose to work in the facility.

YouTube instruction via 10 - 15 minute videos will eventually accompany all of the PrisonCare PDF curriculum resources.

Online community via Facebook Groups will connect PrisonCare compassion teams and individuals to share encouragement, ideas, and resources.

In person workshops and online webinars, as well as conferences (eventually) will provide facilitated learning opportunities.

### **FUNDING:**

PrisonCare is in the process of applying for tax-exempt status as a 501(c)(3) charitable and educational organization, making tax-deductible contributions of money or goods possible for benevolence and programming, including but not limited to:

- general operating expenses
- assistance for family members for whom prison visitation is too expensive to manage (transportation to/from the prison, childcare needed, vending machine food cost, etc.)
- donations of basic hygiene supplies that the staff may distribute at the administration's discretion to residents with an acute need and lack of funds (in particular, menstrual products)
- mental health support and counseling made available via tele-health appointments for residents in a facility that has approved this practice, supporting basic mental health such as coping strategies for anxiety, goal-setting, managing depression, developing communication skills, etc.
- in-person or tele- health counseling for corrections officers and staff suffering the effects of hyper-vigilance and exposure to threat and violence common in their workplace
- appreciation events for corrections workers in their local community, including gift cards to local grocery stores

***Membership:***

Annual memberships will be made available at three levels, and membership will provide members with personal connection points to people impacted by incarceration.

***Monthly Supporters:***

Pledged monthly support will make up a large portion of PrisonCare's operating budget.

***Ticket Events:***

Workshops and webinars will be for-sale ticket events.

***Special Fundraising Events:***

Two special fundraising events each year, on average, will be held.

***One-Time Donations:***

People may choose to donate unrestricted funds to support all operations and programming, or donate restricted funds in any amount to be used only for specific programming. In addition, goods may be donated (with PrisonCare staff approval) to be given away in benevolence or programming endeavors, or to be sold and the cash from the sale received by PrisonCare as a donation.

***HISTORY:***

PrisonCare, Inc. was co-founded by Sabrina Justison and her son, J, in response to his incarceration in a Level 3 Medium Security prison. As Sabrina began to learn about the challenges J faced as a resident, she also noticed and discussed with him the challenges facing the officers and staff, and the unhelpful and unnecessary "Us vs. Them," mentality that exists in prison. Together, they began exploring ways to promote a more positive culture that benefits everyone on the inside.

Sabrina's local church established the first PrisonCare compassion team in 2021 with very little planning. They started writing letters to J and a few of his friends, and found that there was surprising power in building relationships through simple pen-pal encouragement. With feedback from the guys on the inside, and many hours of research, they began exploring ways to show appreciation to the corrections officers in J's facility as well, and found that it meets a real need in this often ignored or misunderstood people group.

The ideas we get about prison life from television and movies do not paint an accurate picture. It is only by forming relationships with people on the inside — whether residents or employees — that we will really understand what this uneasy neighborhood is like.

Our society, at this point in history, requires the existence of prisons, but most people never give prisons a thought. The facilities themselves are often built far from our homes and places of business, so we rarely even drive past them. An "out of sight, out of mind" situation exists that does nothing to facilitate the rehabilitation of people who have committed a crime, or appreciate and encourage the people whose job it is to help them make life changes before they are released.

What should be a restorative process has become, in many cases, the warehousing of humans, and while sweeping reform may take a long time, compassionate people can make a difference today by becoming aware of the needs and seeking creative ways to be supportive. Since we want “bad guys” to be “good guys” when they are released, we need to support all of the people who are trying to bring about that transformation.

While wonderful, effective prison ministry organizations exist, as do inspiring advocacy and reform groups, there didn't seem to be anything out there equipping average people, like Sabrina and the compassionate people at her church, to become a source of encouragement and support to a chosen prison as a neighborhood. The paradigm shift is important; understanding a prison as a neighborhood changes the ways you interact with the people who live there. It's simple to do, but very few people are aware of the need to do it.

PrisonCare was founded in an attempt to raise awareness and equip people to begin to be a force for positive culture creation in a prison facility in simple, manageable ways.

J continues to model and encourage positive attitudes, a commitment to mental wellness practices, virtues-based language, and healthy rapport in his prison, sharing with his mom what he is learning along the way. Sabrina continues to educate herself on the struggles of incarcerated people and the challenges faced by those who work in corrections. She is constantly looking for ways to provide respectful and practical support in J's facility and sharing those ideas with others.

The dream is that, one day, EVERY prison in the US will benefit from the simple and practical support of a PrisonCare team!

### **AUDIENCE AND PROMOTION:**

PrisonCare, Inc. is **primarily internet-based**, and its website content is search-engine optimized to help people who are interested in prisons find information and connection. Over time, we will establish a social media strategy that uses multiple platforms for community development, awareness, fundraising, and education.

Networking with **churches** that have an interest in prison ministry (or would like to do something for those in prison but don't have the means to launch a traditional prison ministry) will provide word-of-mouth opportunities for growth.

PrisonCare will seek to connect with **university student groups** focused on criminal justice, sociology and psychology, and with student service organizations.

Connecting with veterans organizations is also a goal, equipping those groups to offer support to the many veterans who are incarcerated.

Ongoing outreach to prison chaplains and wardens around the country will educate and spark creativity in our support endeavors and connect us to **the communities that geographically surround prisons** all over the U.S.