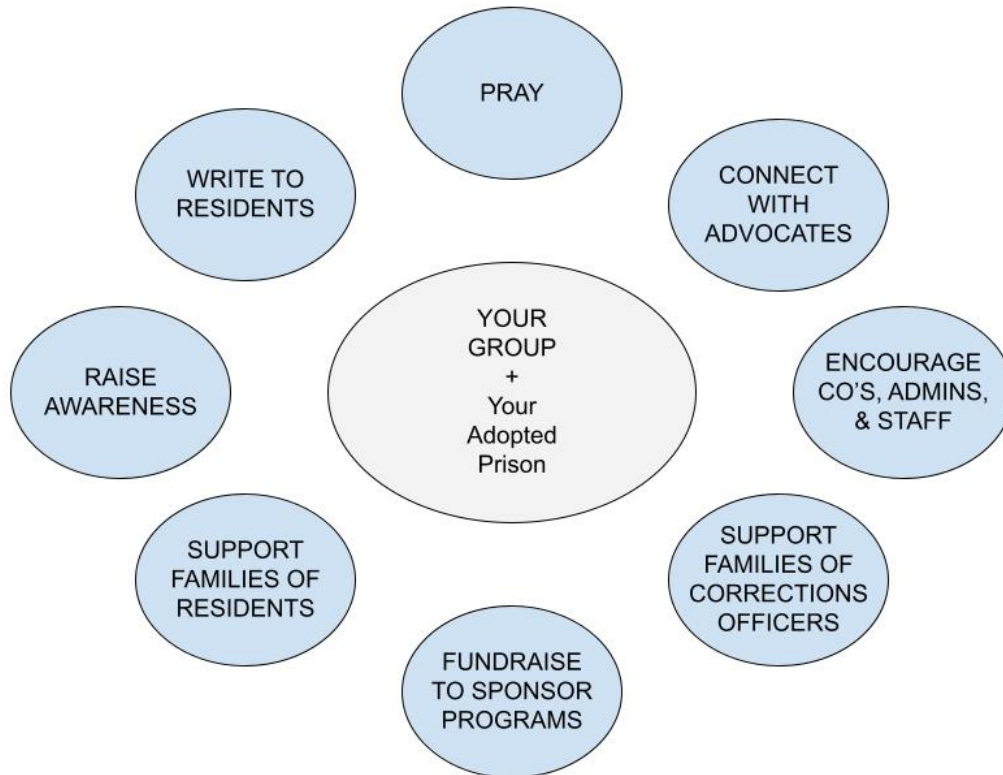


# What Your Group Can Do

All suggested PDF resources in the ideas below are available as FREE downloads from [PrisonCare.org](http://PrisonCare.org)



## PRAY

- If your group is faith-based, pray. Pray for specific needs you learn of, but also simply “remember them before God” on a daily basis, because you often will not be sure about how to pray specifically.
- Make a picture of your adopted prison available to everyone in your group. Visual reminders help us to pray consistently.
- Use tools like the *Monthly Prayer Focus* PDF to lead your congregation in lifting up your adopted prison from the pulpit every month.
- Print and distribute pictures of the residents to whom you are connecting as prayer aids. Each state has a website with an “inmate finder” tool, making it possible to see the mug shot of the person for whom you are praying. Google-search your state’s website to find pictures.
- Offer tools like the *30 Days of Prayer Prompts* PDF to individuals in your group.
- Hold an annual Prayer Service for your chosen facility, all of its people, and all of its needs.

## WRITE TO RESIDENTS

- To get started, ask the chaplain of your adopted prison for the names and DOC numbers of a few residents who would appreciate a pen-pal encourager writing to them occasionally. (Be sure to see *Best Practices for Writing to Incarcerated People* on the [PrisonCare.org](https://www.prisoncare.org) website.)
- Offer tools like the *First Letter Template* PDF to individuals in your group to help them get started.
- Refer to the *Creating a Tracking Notebook* PDF to help you organize your letters.
- For those who are reluctant writers, offer the *Greeting Card Ideas for a Year* PDF to make connection easier.
- Purchase inexpensive packets of blank cards and distribute them to your group. Consider providing postage stamps, too.
- Hold a *Letter Writing Night* periodically, using our helpful PDF as a guide.
- Consider using the [flikshop.com](https://www.flikshop.com) app to share photographs “Instagram-style” on postcards that will be printed and delivered to residents at your facility for less than \$1 each.

## RAISE AWARENESS

- Create a “Welcome to the Neighborhood!” packet that tells people a bit about the prison you have chosen to adopt, the warden, the chaplain, the size of its resident population, and include a picture of the facility. You can often find a picture of the prison on the internet. (Be sure to see *How to Create a “Welcome to the Neighborhood!” Packet* on the [PrisonCare.org](https://www.prisoncare.org) website.)
- Share the [PrisonCare.org](https://www.prisoncare.org) website with others. Encourage them to pay attention to these often-overlooked people-groups at the prisons in their state.
- Educate yourself about mental health challenges for prison residents and corrections officers. Google terms like “corrections officers mental health issues,” and “what incarceration does to mental health,” to get started. Make use of the articles and links to other excellent resources on the [PrisonCare.org](https://www.prisoncare.org) website.
- Host an educational event for your group or local community at large where you share some basic information or invite a professional in to speak on a specific topic. (Visit [sabrinajustison.com](https://www.sabrinajustison.com) if you would like Sabrina Justison, Founder of [PrisonCare.org](https://www.prisoncare.org) to speak to your group in person or via Zoom.) Remember that most people give NO THOUGHT to the prisons in their community and the challenges faced by the people who make up those prison neighborhoods. The goal of an event like this is to simply break this “out-of-sight, out-of-mind” cycle for these invisible people.
- Check out podcasts like “This is With(in)” from Denver University Prison Arts Initiative, or “EarHustle” from Radiotopia.
- Connect with prison reform advocacy groups in your area if you decide to become a voice for legislation change.

## SUPPORT THE FAMILIES OF RESIDENTS

- If your group is a church, make it safe for people who have a loved one in prison to talk about that. Many congregations have members who keep hidden the fact that a loved one is incarcerated. Diminish shame in every way you can, and make personal connection with the families of residents right in your own group, whether or not their loved one is incarcerated at your adopted prison. Ask them how you can be a support.

- Tell the residents with whom you correspond that you care about their families on the outside, and ask if there are specific challenges they face that you might be able to help with. (Be sure to reference *Best Practices for Helping the Families of Incarcerated People* at [PrisonCare.org](http://PrisonCare.org).)
- Ask folks in your group to drop loose change into a jar, and use that accumulated money in a unique and profound way at the prison you have adopted. Refer to the *How Loose Change Can Change a Prison Visit for the Better* PDF on the [PrisonCare.org](http://PrisonCare.org) website.
- Connect with national organizations like Prison Fellowship and their Angel Tree program to become a support to the families of incarcerated people in tangible ways.

## FUNDRAISE TO SPONSOR PROGRAMS

- Learn what programs are offered at your chosen facility, and if those programs are provided by organizations outside the Dept. of Corrections in your state (many of them are), connect with those program providers and ask for ways to support their efforts. The arts, in particular, have a profound impact on creating a positive prison culture. Restorative Justice programs are also life-changing, but only available on a very limited basis.

## SUPPORT FAMILIES OF CORRECTIONS OFFICERS

- Offer supplemental childcare to a CO who has to work unexpected overtime or has a change in shift. Include a CO's kids in activities they would enjoy.
- Send a card that tells a CO's spouse that you recognize the challenges the job creates and are grateful for the service officers provide to society.

## ENCOURAGE CO'S, ADMINISTRATORS, AND STAFF

- All it takes is a personal connection to ONE staffer to find ways to be a support. While police officers are often thanked for the difficult job they do, corrections officers do not experience the same kind of encouragement. It may take awhile, but look for ways to connect to someone on staff at your adopted prison.
- Since 1984, the first week of May has been recognized as National Corrections Officers Appreciation Week in the U.S. Send a heartfelt card to the warden of your adopted prison and ask them to pass along your gratitude to their staff for "the dedication they show in providing custody, care, and control to the resident population" in their facility.
- Host a corrections appreciation event, and give away gift cards to the corrections staff who attend.
- Raise funds to help provide mental health resources (like counseling) to corrections staff undergoing a particularly challenging season.

## CONNECT WITH ADVOCATES

- If you desire to go deeper with efforts to reform the prisons in our country, connect with advocacy groups and seek to change legislation in ways that will improve conditions for EVERYONE behind the walls.