
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Sabrina Cervantes, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 2434 (Bonta) - Inmates: visitation

Version: May 18, 2026

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 3, 2026

Policy Vote: PUB. S. 5 - 0

Mandate: No

Consultant: Bob Franzoia

Bill Summary: AB 2434 would prohibit a person sentenced to imprisonment in a state prison from being prevented from receiving personal visits.

Fiscal Impact: Costs, possibly in the millions of dollars annually, for staffing for expanded visiting hours, processing visitation re-applications, and managing the revised search process, as required by this bill. The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) also anticipates possible one-time costs for infrastructure improvements for some family visiting facilities. Additional significant, ongoing costs to CDCR to handle legal challenges arising from denial of visitation (General Fund).

Background: Existing law requires CDCR regulations to recognize and consider the value of visiting as a means to improve the safety of prisons for both staff and incarcerated persons, and the important role of incarcerated person visitation in establishing and maintaining a meaningful connection with family and community.

CDCR facilities must provide at least 12 hours of visiting per week and requires regular visiting days to be consecutive and include Saturday and Sunday.

There generally are three types of visitation: in-person visits, in-person non-contact visits, and family visits. According to CDCR most incarcerated people in the general population may participate in an in-person visit. These visits allow the incarcerated person to sit together with their visitor(s) in a designated shared space, usually furnished with tables and chairs. In-person visits are limited to five visitors at a time and are not limited in duration except for normal visiting hours or terminations caused by overcrowding.

In-person non-contact visits are for incarcerated people in reception or in segregation. Non-contact visits occur with a glass partition between the incarcerated person and the visitor. The incarcerated person is escorted in handcuffs by staff. The handcuffs are removed only after the incarcerated person is secured to their side of the visiting booth. Non-contact visits are restricted to three visitors and are limited in time.

Family visits (overnight visitation) are visits where the incarcerated person and immediate family members are permitted to spend time in private facilities on prison grounds, for a duration of approximately 30 to 40 hours. Incarcerated persons sentenced to death, convicted for sex offenses, still in reception, or under disciplinary restrictions are not permitted to have family visits

Proposed Law: This bill proposes number changes to CDCR visitation policies and procedures, including:

- Prohibits a person sentenced to imprisonment in a state prison from being prevented from receiving personal visits, including, but not limited to, noncontact and family visits, unless necessary and narrowly tailored to further legitimate security and safety interests.
- Specifies conduct that could be deemed necessary and for legitimate security and safety interests if the conduct occurs within visiting areas during visiting hours or the conduct poses a clear and imminent risk of physical violence within visiting areas and during visiting hours.
- Prohibits CDCR from denying or restricting in-person contact and noncontact visits.
- Requires CDCR to provide at least 3 days of in-person visiting per week.
- Requires all infrastructure and areas initially erected for the purposes of providing family visits for incarcerated persons to be used only for the purpose of family visits.
- Prohibits CDCR from using strip searches, visual body cavity searches, and physical body searches of visitors under 18 years of age.
- Requires CDCR to maintain multiple methods by which to search visitors, including, but not limited to, metal detectors, body scanners, and other contactless screening methods.
- Authorizes CDCR to conduct a strip search of minors if the department has probable cause and obtains a warrant to search.
- Permits CDCR to offer a noncontact visit, if feasible, or deny the visit if the minor and their parent or guardian do not consent to the minor being searched.
- Requires CDCR to issue a written notice detailing the reason for denial or restriction, as specified, if a visitor is denied visitation or has visitation restricted. Prohibits a person sentenced to imprisonment in a state prison from being prevented from receiving personal visits, including, but not limited to, noncontact and family visits, unless necessary and narrowly tailored to further legitimate security and safety interests.
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Related Legislation: AB 2709 (Bonta) 2024 was substantially similar to this bill. AB 2709 was held on the committee's suspense file.