

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Karen Anderson and my grandson is incarcerated at OSP. He has been in prison for about three years. I live about three hours away, in Yelm, Washington. My daughter and I have been able to drive down to visit him about once per month. I am handicapped so I depend on her to drive me. My grandson and I communicate more frequently over the phone. We speak on the phone about three times per month.

Our contact is important. It is important for my grandson to know that his family is in his corner, no matter what, and that we are proud of the positive changes he is making. After his father passed away when he was a teenager, my grandson started to struggle in many ways. He lived with me for a period, but we often disagreed about what was best for him. He had a very short fuse. Nonetheless, his mother and I have tried to support him through it all. I often remind him that he is not stuck going in a certain direction, but that he is a young man with his whole life still ahead of him. Thankfully, my grandson has really found himself over the last couple years while incarcerated. He is now getting his GED, has a job, and is maturing in many ways. It has been beautiful to witness, and I know that our support through phone calls and in-person visits has contributed. I, too, have appreciated our phone calls, as even at my age, it is nice to know there is someone I can pour my heart out to.

I am generally able to send my grandson \$100 per month, half for phone calls and half for commissary items. If I did not put money on his account, he would not be able to afford to call myself or his other family members. In fact, there were times when neither of us had enough money to call and we had to write letters instead. We both missed speaking to each other during those times. I became a widow a couple years ago, so money is tighter now than it was when my husband was still alive.

Phone calls with family are crucial for moral support. Of course, I understand that people go to prison because they made serious mistakes. But their family members and friends on the outside haven't done anything wrong, and yet it feels like we are being punished too. We all need to be able to speak with our family members and know that someone cares about us. For an incarcerated person, that can contribute greatly towards their rehabilitation. For me, every penny I can save helps, and I know that a lot of families need even more help financially. I therefore believe that phone calls should be free.

Sincerely,

Karen Anderson  
Yelm, WA  
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