

Prison Telephone Policies

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Issue

When and under what circumstances are inmates allowed to make telephone calls? What other policies are in place regarding inmate telephone use?

Summary

Department of Correction (DOC) regulations and directives establish policies for inmate telephone use ([Conn. Agencies Reg. § 18-81-41](#) et seq., and [Administrative Directive \(AD\) 10.7](#)). They specify that telephone use is a privilege, not an entitlement, which may be prohibited under certain circumstances (e.g., as a disciplinary penalty). The DOC commissioner or his designee may restrict or terminate the availability or use of telephones at the commissioner's discretion. But if the inmate's call is to an attorney, it may only be prohibited to maintain the facility's safety, security, or orderly operations.

Inmates are generally given access to collect call only telephones within prescribed hours of the day. Most calls are limited to 15 minutes and subject to monitoring and recording. An inmate may submit up to ten phone numbers for approval on his or her authorized call list.

Certain phone calls are considered privileged (e.g., calls to the inmate's attorney or a government official) and are not subject to recording, though a staff member out of listening range may observe the inmate while he or she is on the phone.

Calls may also be terminated under certain circumstances.

Telephone Access

Under DOC regulations, telephones for outgoing collect-call-only telephone calls must be provided in areas specified for inmate use. An inmate must enter his or her authorized personal identification number (PIN) in order to make a phone call.

Phone calls are limited to 15 minutes in length and may be made between 6:00am and 11:00pm. There is no time limit between allowable calls. The regulations also prohibit credit card calls, third-party billing, call forwarding, transfers, or any other means of circumventing the collect call billing.

An inmate may submit up to ten phone numbers for approval on his or her approved call list. The facility reviews the numbers and deletes any restricted ones from the list. Restricted numbers include known telephone numbers of victims and any other individuals the unit administrator deems prohibited. An inmate may change the list once every 30 days. (According to the [DOC Friends and Family Handbook](#), the calls are billed through Securus, and phone call recipients must set up an account by contacting the company at 1-800-844-6591 or www.securustech.net.)

An inmate may be allowed to make an emergency call upon approval from the shift commander or unit manager. Such calls are at the inmate's expense (unless he or she is indigent) and are monitored and documented in the facility log book.

Inmates on certain types of restricted status are limited, depending on the status, to (1) one 15 minute phone call per week, plus calls to attorneys, or (2) only calls that are made for cause as approved by the unit administrator ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 18-81-41 — 18-81-43; AD 10.7\(5\)](#)).

Monitored Calls

Unless a phone call is privileged, it may be monitored and recorded in accordance with the following conditions:

1. a sign in both English and Spanish must be posted near the phone stating that conversations on the phones are subject to monitoring and recording;
2. upon admission, each inmate must sign a form acknowledging that he or she consents to such monitoring and recording (inmates are prohibited from using the phones if they refuse to sign the consent);
3. when a call is recorded, an automatic tone must sound during the call at approximate 15 second intervals during the recording; and

4. listening may only be authorized when there is cause to believe that doing so is reasonably related to maintaining the facility's security, good order, and discipline, or preventing criminal activity in the facility or community.

Only personnel who have received certain training and are authorized by the unit administrator or a higher authority may listen to inmate phone calls. Information obtained from the phone calls may only be disclosed if reasonably necessary to promote legitimate penological, law enforcement, or public safety purposes. Recordings must be kept for at least 90 days and those that lead to administrative, investigative, or legal action must be kept for at least three years or the duration of the proceedings, whichever is longer ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 18-81-45, -46, & -51](#)).

Privileged Calls

Inmates must be provided with a reasonable accommodation to make non-recorded phone calls to any of the following, provided the person agrees to accept the call:

1. an attorney or organization providing legal services to inmates;
2. any judge or court, including the court clerk;
3. the governor;
4. a state legislator or any other elected government officials;
5. the attorney general;
6. the DOC commissioner or any official he appoints;
7. the Board of Pardons and Paroles or the Sentence Review Board;
8. the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities; or
9. the state claims commissioner.

Such calls are considered privileged and inmates may make two per month, in addition to calls initiated by the inmate's attorney. A staff member must place a privileged call on behalf of the inmate and then generally must move out of listening range while the inmate and the call recipient converse. A staff member may listen to a non-recorded call if (1) the call is placed by a DOC staff member, (2) both the inmate and the call recipient are informed that the staff member will listen to

the call and they both agree, (3) the inmate signs a statement agreeing that the staff member may listen, and (4) the call and listening is reasonably related to a legitimate penological interest. The calls are normally limited to ten minutes, but the limit may be extended at the attorney's request, provided there are no exigent circumstances ([Conn. Agencies Regs. §§ 18-81-28, -46, & -47](#)).

Termination of Phone Calls

Calls may be terminated for (1) violating unit rules, (2) illegal activity, (3) exceeding applicable time limits, (4) vandalism or misuse of equipment, (5) threatening or disruptive behavior, (6) a unit emergency, or (7) a legitimate penological interest ([Conn. Agencies Reg. § 18-81-48](#)).

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