

DECEMBER 2025

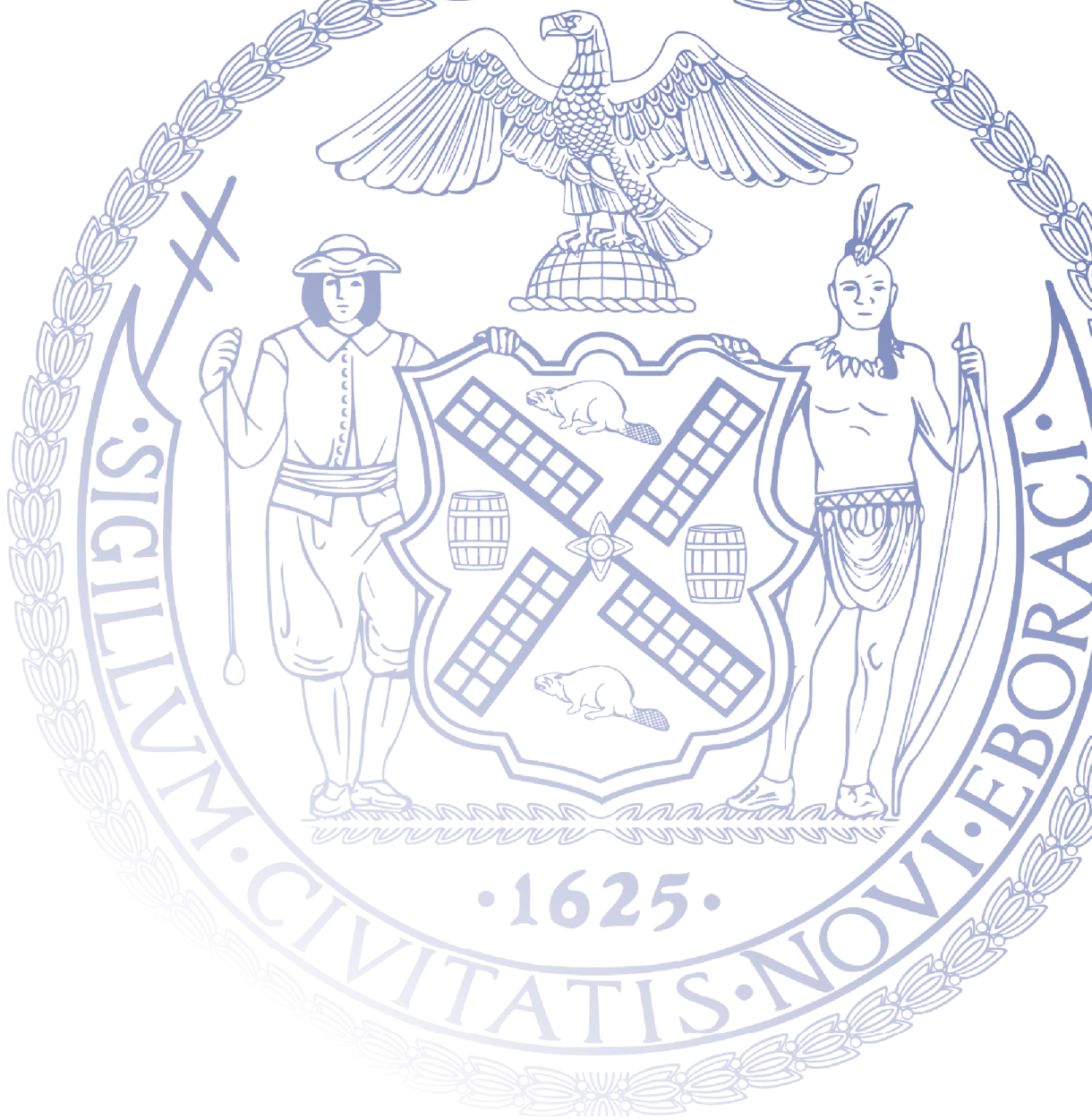
# Still Waiting

An Investigation into  
the Visiting Process at  
Rikers Island



OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS  
DIVISION





## **ABOUT THE NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL OVERSIGHT AND INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION**

The Oversight and Investigation Division (OID) is an interdisciplinary team of investigators, policy and data analysts, and attorneys dedicated to strengthening the City Council's oversight and legislative work. Through comprehensive, fact-based investigations, OID brings clarity to matters of public significance by identifying issues, presenting findings, and improving transparency in City government.

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# Executive Summary

This year, an average of 7,200 visitors traveled to Rikers Island each month.<sup>1</sup> For those detained, the New York State Court of Appeals has held that a “contact visitation of reasonable duration is required by the due process clause of the State Constitution.”<sup>2</sup> Visits are linked to reduced recidivism and improved mental health,<sup>3</sup> and City regulations state they should be “encouraged and facilitated.”<sup>4</sup>

Despite this, visitors to Rikers Island face a number of challenges when they attempt to see their loved ones. While there have been some improvements to the visiting process in recent years, including child-friendly visit rooms and free transportation buses to take visitors to the jail complex,<sup>5</sup> the Department of Correction (DOC) has also acknowledged that processing for visitors is “taking too long”<sup>6</sup> even as it has reported that, in total, far fewer people are visiting Rikers now than before the pandemic.<sup>7</sup>

An investigation into the experience of visitors by the New York City Council’s Oversight and Investigations Division (OID) found several issues with the current state of family visiting at the jails. Through interviews with people who had visited loved ones at Rikers, the direct observations of an OID investigator who visited someone incarcerated on the island, and a tour directed by DOC, OID found the following:

1. **Visiting Rikers Island typically takes “all day” for a one-hour visit, with an estimated five to six hours spent on the island.** The Council’s investigator spent more than six hours on the island when visiting a person incarcerated there, arriving at 12:30 p.m. and leaving at 7 p.m. Others who had visited someone at Rikers similarly revealed in interviews that it is “a whole day event” to visit their loved ones, and that they typically spent over five hours on the island.

<sup>1</sup> Email from Chelsea Chard, Senior Advisor for Pol’y and Legis., DOC, to Meagan Powers, Acting Dir., N.Y.C. Council Oversight and Investigations Div. (Dec. 3, 2025, at 13:34 ET) [hereinafter DOC December 2025 Email] (on file with Council).

<sup>2</sup> See generally *Cooper v. Morin*, 49 N.Y.2d 69, at 73, 82 (1979).

<sup>3</sup> See generally LEAH WANG, PRISON POL’Y INITIATIVE, RESEARCH ROUNDUP: THE POSITIVE IMPACTS OF FAMILY CONTACT FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES, (2021), [https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family\\_contact/](https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/) (last visited Jun 27, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit.40, §1-09(a); see also *Hearing Before the N.Y.C. Council Comm. on Crim. Just.*, 58-59 (N.Y.C. Sept 27, 2024) [hereinafter, *September 2024 Hearing*] (“DOC recognizes the importance of maintaining and strengthening family bonds during incarceration.”).

<sup>5</sup> *Preliminary Budget Hearing Before the N.Y.C. Council Comm. on Crim. Just.*, 118-119 (N.Y.C. Mar. 7, 2025) [hereinafter, *Preliminary Budget Hearing*]; see also *Rikers Island Opens New Kid-friendly Visitation Room at the George R. Verno Center*, NEWS12 THE BRONX (Jun 17, 2024, 7:41 AM), <https://bronx.news12.com/rikers-island-to-open-new-kid-friendly-visitation-room-at-the-george-r-verno-center>; Press Release, N.Y.C. Dep’t of Corr., DOC Launches Free, Express Visitor Bus Service to Rikers Island (April 25, 2018), [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/press-release/DOC\\_Visitor\\_Bus\\_Press\\_Release\\_4.25.18.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/press-release/DOC_Visitor_Bus_Press_Release_4.25.18.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Preliminary Budget Hearing*, *supra* note 5, at 174-75.

<sup>7</sup> Compare N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CORR., VISITATION Q. REP., Q1 OF FISCAL YEAR 2025 (showing 19,612 total visitors to Rikers over the three months), [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/Visitation\\_Report\\_FY25\\_Q1.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/Visitation_Report_FY25_Q1.pdf), with VISITATION Q. REP., Q2 OF FISCAL YEAR 2020 (showing a drop from 27,489 quarterly visitors to 19,612) <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/security-indicators/LL90%20FY20%20Q1.pdf>.

2. **Visitors endure long waits outside without seating, although the Board of Correction (BOC)'s Minimum Standards require seating in waiting areas.** The Council's investigation found that, when visitors first arrive at Rikers Island, they are generally required to wait in a line outside without seating or clear information about access to restrooms or drinking water. The BOC's Minimum Standards, which govern many aspects of operations at Rikers Island, including visiting, require sufficient seating for all visitors in waiting areas.<sup>8</sup>
3. **DOC's website and posted notices do not adequately prepare or inform visitors.** The Council's investigation found that DOC's website lacks key information that could help visitors prepare for their visits, and that posted signs within facilities were often inadequate or not placed in locations where they could be most useful. Those interviewed as part of this investigation shared that they felt confused or disoriented while visiting Rikers, and an investigator found a lack of clarity on rules and procedures throughout the security process.
4. **Some visitors are denied visits due to dress code violations, in apparent violation of DOC's Visit Procedures Directive.** The Council's investigation uncovered multiple instances where visitors traveled all the way to Rikers Island and were then denied their visits due to seemingly minor dress code violations. These visitors were not offered cover-up garments, in apparent violation of DOC's own internal rules governing visiting.<sup>9</sup>
5. **Some visitors experience staff as disrespectful or unhelpful.** Everyone interviewed as part of this investigation described experiences where DOC staff were disrespectful or unhelpful, using words like "rude," "nasty," and "demoralizing." Additionally, they reported that officers were inconsistent in their application of rules.

To address these issues, OID recommends the following:

1. *Accelerate improvements to visiting:* DOC should accelerate its assessment of visiting, publish its findings, and immediately take steps to improve the process. Additionally, it should implement an online scheduling system as soon as possible.
2. *Comply with the BOC Minimum Standards:* In the area where visitors wait outside the Central Visits Building, DOC should add both seating and clear signage directing visitors to the nearest restroom.
3. *Improve visitor communication:* DOC should update its website and relocate signs to ensure that visitors understand rules and are properly prepared for visits.
4. *Stop turning visitors away:* In its Visit Procedures Directive, in trainings, and in a memo to all staff, DOC should clarify that dress code compliance should be assessed only once, at each jail, and that nobody willing to wear a cover-up garment should be denied a visit.
5. *Evaluate training for Correction Officers:* DOC should evaluate its training for correction officers who work with visitors and assess the roles that non-uniformed employees or volunteers can play in family visits.

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<sup>8</sup> See N.Y.C. RULES, tit.40, § 1-09 (outlining requirements for "visiting and waiting areas" including that "visitors shall not be required to wait outside a facility unless adequate shelter is provided" and additional requirements are met, which include that "[a]ll waiting and visiting areas shall provide for at least minimal comforts for visitors, including but not limited to...sufficient seats for all visitors"). The OID investigator observed visitors waiting outside of the Benjamin Ward Visit Center (Central Visits building) and therefore considered this a "waiting area." *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> See N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., VISIT PROCEDURES FOR INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS, 18 (Mar. 1, 2021), [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/directives/Directive\\_2007R\\_E-Visit\\_Procedures.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/directives/Directive_2007R_E-Visit_Procedures.pdf), [hereinafter VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE].

# Introduction

For individuals detained at Rikers awaiting trial, visiting is a right under the New York State Constitution, as upheld by the New York State Court of Appeals.<sup>10</sup> The positive impacts of visits for these individuals, their families,<sup>11</sup> and their communities are well established. Research shows that family visits can improve incarcerated people's mental health and reduce prison misconduct and recidivism.<sup>12</sup> Consistent with that evidence, New York City's regulations state that "[m]aintaining personal connections with social and family networks and support systems is critical to improving outcomes both during confinement and upon reentry. Visitation ... should therefore be encouraged and facilitated by the [New York City] Department [of Correction]."<sup>13</sup> Department of Correction (DOC) leaders themselves have repeatedly acknowledged this under oath, recognizing "the importance of maintaining and strengthening family bonds during incarceration"<sup>14</sup> and "how critically important the visit process is for our detainees [as] an emotional and behavioral support."<sup>15</sup>

Despite these acknowledgements, visiting Rikers remains a challenge for the island's over 7,000 monthly visitors.<sup>16</sup> Rikers Island is in an inaccessible location for many New Yorkers – the island's only bridge is in Astoria, Queens, more than a mile and a half from the nearest subway station,<sup>17</sup> and the only way onto the island is via a Metropolitan Transportation Authority<sup>18</sup> or DOC bus.<sup>19</sup> Once at Rikers, it is widely reported that visitors wait for hours and go through a series of security protocols including metal detector scans and canine searches before getting a one-hour visit with their loved one.<sup>20</sup> These challenges underscore the need to accelerate the transition to borough-based jails, smaller facilities with newly designed visiting rooms where people will likely be incarcerated closer to their loved ones in the community.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See generally *Cooper v. Morin*, 49 N.Y.2d 69, at 76 (1979) (finding a detainee's right to "contact visitation of reasonable duration" in the due process clause of the New York State Constitution).

<sup>11</sup> See N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, §1-09(a) (defining "family" as not "limited to those related to the individual by blood or by legally-recognized bonds" but rather "construed broadly to reflect the diversity of familial structures and the wide variety of relationships that may closely connect a person to others.").

<sup>12</sup> WANG, *supra* note 3.

<sup>13</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, §1-09(a).

<sup>14</sup> *September 2024 Hearing*, *supra* note 4, 58-59.

<sup>15</sup> *Preliminary Budget Hearing*, *supra* note 5, at 174.

<sup>16</sup> DOC December 2025 Email, *supra* note 1.

<sup>17</sup> GoogleMaps, <https://maps.app.goo.gl/EgBw5uA8AZjYC38x9> (showing 1.5 miles from Astoria-Ditmars Boulevard stop on the N or W train line to the parking lot adjoining the bridge to Rikers Island).

<sup>18</sup> See VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9 ("Prospective visitors to all Rikers Island facilities shall first report to the Rikers Island Visit Control Building. Visitors arriving in private vehicles are required to park at the Queens Abutment and then use public transportation to the Visit Control Building."); see also Directions to Rikers Island, N.Y.C. Dep't of Corr., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/about/facilities-locations.page> ("Take either the MTA Q101 or Q100 to Rikers Island. [...] You will have to transfer [...] to the Q100 bus to travel over the Rikers Island Bridge to the Rikers Island Visit Center.").

<sup>19</sup> *Visitor Transportation*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visitor-transportation.page>.

<sup>20</sup> See, e.g., Emma Seiwel, *Rikers Visitors Wait in Line for Hours without Seeing Jailed Loved Ones; NYC Correction Officials 'Make It As Difficult As Possible'*, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (Dec. 18, 2022 2:05 PM), <https://www.nydailynews.com/2022/12/18/rikers-visitors-wait-in-line-for-hours-without-seeing-jailed-loved-ones-nyc-correction-officials-make-it-as-difficult-as-possible/> ("An in-person visit takes up to six hours."); Kim Kelly, *What to Know When Visiting a Loved One at the Rikers Island Jail*, Teen Vogue (Mar. 2, 2020), <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/what-its-like-visit-rikers-island>.

<sup>21</sup> See generally *About Borough-Based Jails*, City of N.Y., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/borojails/about/about-borough-based-jails-program.page> (last visited November 15, 2025) ("Being closer to home and transit will enhance the network of support systems for people who are detained and help prevent reincarceration. [...] The design and construction of the new Facilities and related projects of the BBJ Program must provide a safe, humane, secure, and efficient environment for all those who work, visit, or are in custody within these Facilities.").

Given changes in visiting patterns in recent years<sup>22</sup> and delays in the transition to borough-based jails,<sup>23</sup> the New York City Council's Oversight and Investigations Division (OID) conducted an investigation of the visiting experience at the DOC correctional facilities located on Rikers Island. OID investigators conducted in-depth interviews of visitors, participated in a visit to an individual incarcerated at Rikers, and were led on a DOC tour of the visiting process. The investigation found that DOC still subjects visitors to long wait times, appears to routinely violate written regulations, and fails to adequately prepare visitors or staff in a way that would create a more positive visiting process.

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<sup>22</sup> Comparison of VISITATION Q. Rep.s, *supra* note 7 (showing a drop from 27,489 quarterly visitors to 19,612).

<sup>23</sup> N.Y.C. Bd. of Corr., BOROUGH-BASED JAIL REPORT, 4 (July 1, 2025)(listing the respective "substantial completion date" for each of the projects as 2029 (Brooklyn), 2031 (Queens and the Bronx), and 2032 (Manhattan)), <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/boc/downloads/pdf/Reports/BOC-Reports/BBJ-July-2025-FINAL.pdf>.

# Background

## Regulations Governing Rikers Island Visits

The correctional facilities on Rikers Island are operated by DOC<sup>24</sup> and regulated, in part, by the New York City Board of Correction (BOC).<sup>25</sup> BOC establishes the Minimum Standards, which are rules and regulations that govern many aspects of DOC jail operations, including visits.<sup>26</sup> The Minimum Standards outline certain requirements for visiting, including the schedule of visits, certain rights during security procedures, and requirements for waiting rooms, like sufficient seating and access to restrooms and vending machines.<sup>27</sup> DOC also publishes written directives outlining the Department's own internal policies for jail operations.<sup>28</sup> The Department's directive on visiting, "Visit Procedures for Incarcerated Individuals"<sup>29</sup> ("the Visit Procedures Directive"), details how DOC staff should manage the visiting process, including instructions on search procedures and the enforcement of rules for visitors.

## The Visiting Experience

During their incarceration, people in DOC custody are entitled to receive visits from loved ones.<sup>30</sup> There are eight total jails on Rikers Island,<sup>31</sup> and visits generally take place in the jail in which the person in custody is housed.<sup>32</sup> As outlined in more detail below, all visitors first go through initial security procedures at the Benjamin Ward Visit Center ("Central Visits building"),<sup>33</sup> then take a bus to the specific jail where the visit will occur,<sup>34</sup> and then go through additional security procedures at that jail.<sup>35</sup> Then, visitors have a one-hour visit with their loved one.<sup>36</sup> Unless they are required to have a non-contact visit,<sup>37</sup> visits take place in one large room with correction officers supervising.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>24</sup> See generally CITY CHARTER § 623.

<sup>25</sup> See generally *id.* § 626.

<sup>26</sup> See *id.* § 626(e) ("The board shall establish minimum standards for the care, custody, correction, treatment, supervision, and discipline for all persons held or confined under the jurisdiction of the department and it shall promulgate such minimum standards in rules and regulations [.]"); also see generally N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40.

<sup>27</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, § 1-09.

<sup>28</sup> Directives, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/directives/directives.page>.

<sup>29</sup> See generally VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9.

<sup>30</sup> See generally *Cooper v. Morin*, 49 N.Y.2d 69 (1979); see also N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, § 1-09.

<sup>31</sup> Facilities Overview, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/about/facilities.page>.

<sup>32</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 30-33 (describing the locating and notifying of the incarcerated individual that they have a visitor and the transportation of the visitor to that facility).

<sup>33</sup> *Id.* at 19-29.

<sup>34</sup> *Id.* at 33.

<sup>35</sup> *Id.* at 34-35, 39.

<sup>36</sup> *Id.* at 5; accord *Visit Schedule*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., [https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised\\_Visit\\_Schedule.page](https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised_Visit_Schedule.page).

<sup>37</sup> See generally *Visit Procedures Directive*, *supra* note 9, at 6 ("An incarcerated individual's right to contact visits may be denied, revoked or limited only when it is determined that such visits constitute a serious threat to the safety or security of a facility. Should a determination be made to deny, revoke or limit an incarcerated individual's right to contact visits in the usual manner, the incarcerated individual shall be afforded non-contact visits.").

<sup>38</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, § 1-09(g)(6) ("Visits shall not be listened to or monitored unless a lawful warrant is obtained, although visual supervision should be maintained.").



People trying to prepare to visit a loved one at Rikers will find that DOC's website is the main source of City-provided information about their visit. The website includes information on visiting schedules (which vary based on the person in custody's last name),<sup>39</sup> transportation,<sup>40</sup> acceptable forms of identification,<sup>41</sup> and visitor dress code.<sup>42</sup>

## Changes to Visiting in Recent Years

In 2017, the City committed to improving the visiting process on Rikers Island as part of its long-term plan to transition to borough-based jails by “renovating visit areas, training staff on department policy and community engagement, revamping protocols that encourage families with children under six to visit, and piloting expedited transportation options.”<sup>43</sup> In a March 2025 Council hearing, a DOC Deputy Commissioner testified that the Department was working on a “wholesale assessment of the visit process,” recognizing that visits currently take too long.<sup>44</sup> In recent years, DOC has made a few improvements to the visiting process, including interactive playrooms for children in some facilities,<sup>45</sup> free transportation buses to the island from Harlem and Downtown Brooklyn,<sup>46</sup> and an option for video visits.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, the Department has also shortened in-person visiting hours, reducing the registration window by two hours each day.<sup>48</sup>

## Recent Legislation Related to Visiting

This year, the Council has enacted two laws related to visiting DOC facilities. Local Law 40 of 2025 (effective August 12, 2025) requires DOC to create a program specific to children under the age of 16 that reduces the time that a child visitor waits before commencing a visit, trains relevant Department staff on interactions with children, and provides toys, games, books, and activities in spaces where the actual visit occurs.<sup>49</sup> The second, Local Law 43 of 2025, which takes effect in April 2027, requires DOC to establish an online system for scheduling visits.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> *Visit Schedule*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., [https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised\\_Visit\\_Schedule.page](https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised_Visit_Schedule.page) (last visited November 24, 2025).

<sup>40</sup> *Visitor Transportation*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visitor-transportation.page> (last visited November 24, 2025).

<sup>41</sup> *Visit a Person in Custody*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/In-PersonVisits.page> (last visited November 24, 2025).

<sup>42</sup> *Visitors' Dress Code*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR. [hereinafter, *Visitors' Dress Code*], <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visitors-dress-code.page>. (last visited November 24, 2025).

<sup>43</sup> CITY OF N.Y., *A Roadmap to Closing Rikers*, <https://rikers.cityofnewyork.us/strategies/improve-visitation-to-rikers-island/> (last visited November 15, 2025).

<sup>44</sup> *Preliminary Budget Hearing*, *supra* note 5, at 174-75.

<sup>45</sup> *Id.* at 118-119; see also *News12 THE BRONX*, *supra* note 5.

<sup>46</sup> N.Y.C. Dep't of Corr., *supra* note 5.

<sup>47</sup> Press Release, N.Y.C. Dep't of Corr., *Department of Correction to Resume In-Person Visits and Other Services Suspended Due to Covid-19* (Jun. 9, 2021), <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/media/in-person-visit.page> (announcing the resumption of in-person visits after the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and stating that “[o]nce in-person visits resume, our televisits program[...] will continue to be available”); see also *Televisit*, N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/televisits.page> (LAST VISITED NOV. 12, 2025).

<sup>48</sup> Compare N.Y.C. DEP'T OF CORR., *Visit Schedule* (Aug. 9, 2019) (on file with Internet Archive, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190808014521/https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visit-schedule.page>) with *Visit Schedule*, N.Y.C. Dep't of Corr., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/In-PersonVisits.page> (last visited Nov. 6, 2025).

<sup>49</sup> N.Y.C. LOCAL L. No. 40 (2025).

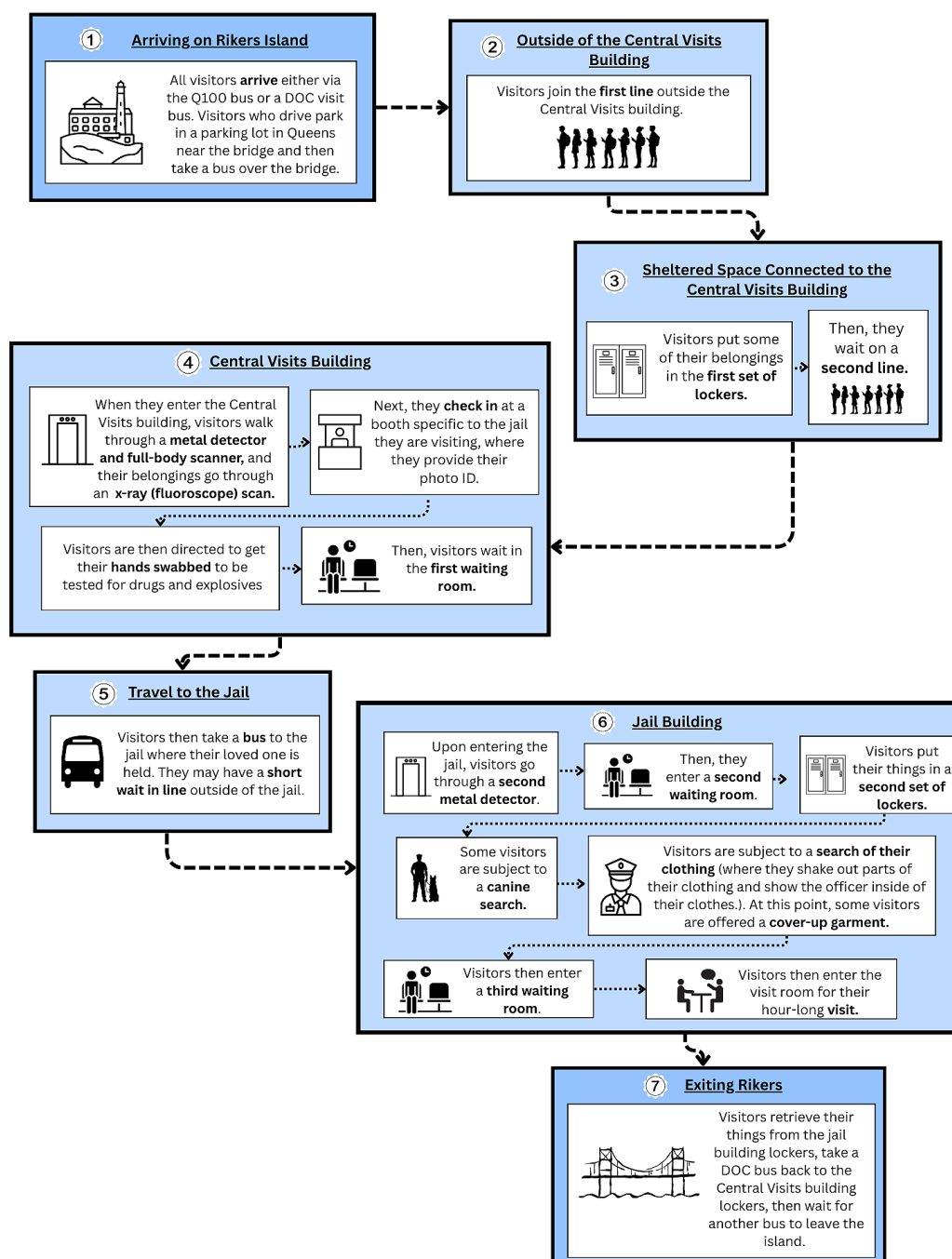
<sup>50</sup> N.Y.C. LOCAL L. No. 43 (2025).

## The Visiting Process

To aid in understanding the findings and recommendations in this report, below is a general outline of what is involved in the process of visiting a loved one at Rikers. The process varies, and additional security measures, such as a pat frisk, may occur:

FIGURE 1

### Rikers visiting process, as observed by OID investigator



# Methodology

After conducting a literature review, OID held meetings with several organizations that have familiarity with the family visiting process at Rikers Island. During these meetings, investigators asked open-ended questions about visiting generally, issues they or their clients have encountered, and more specifically about wait times, security procedures, and the experience of children during the process.

OID also requested to be connected to clients or members of the organizations who had visited a loved one at Rikers, for the purpose of conducting in-depth interviews. OID then conducted interviews with five people who had visited a loved one at Rikers, and with one person who had been detained at Rikers and received a visit from a loved one during that time (hereinafter, the “interviewees”). Interviews were conducted with two OID staff members present. Of those interviewees who had visited Rikers, four out of five had visited most recently between 2023 and 2025, and one had visited most recently in 2016. The person who had received visits was detained at Rikers in 2023. Interviews lasted 60 to 90 minutes and followed a script, asking the same questions in each interview.<sup>51</sup>

OID also requested that organizations provide connections with people who were planning to visit a loved one at Rikers soon and received one such contact. An OID investigator then accompanied the visitor on a family visit without informing DOC that they work for the Council, aiming to experience a visit in the same way as a member of the public. Later that day, the OID investigator was interviewed by another OID team member, recounting the experience in detail and answering many of the same questions as other visitors did in the recorded interviews.

Finally, on November 19, 2025, Council staff, escorted by DOC staff, were taken on a tour of Rikers visiting facilities (the “November Tour”). Council staff were taken through the Central Visits building and were permitted to watch correction officers screen a handful of visitors. Council staff were also taken to the Rose M. Singer jail, where they were shown empty waiting rooms, search areas, and visiting rooms (both contact and non-contact) before the day’s first visits began.

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<sup>51</sup> OID acknowledges that these five interviewees are not a representative sample of all visitors to Rikers Island but believes that these detailed primary accounts are a key supplement to OID’s direct observations and review of public sources.

# Findings

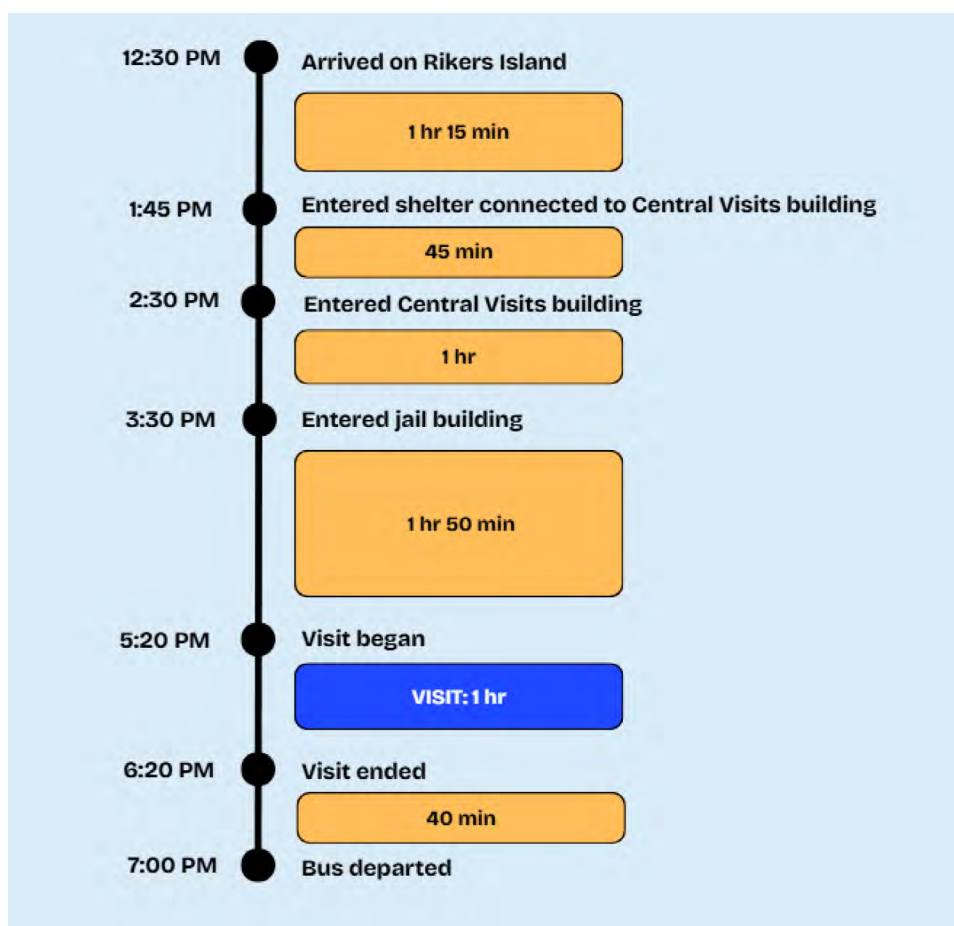
Through an investigator's visit to Rikers and interviews with those that visited loved ones at Rikers, OID uncovered the following key findings related to visiting.

**1. Visiting Rikers Island typically takes “all day” for a one-hour visit, with an estimated five to six hours spent on the island.**

An OID investigator's recent trip to Rikers took more than six hours. They arrived on the island at 12:30 p.m. and left around 7 p.m. They waited for an hour and fifteen minutes outside of the visit building, and then for 45 minutes after putting their things in a locker. Then, they waited for about 20 minutes in the first waiting room, about an hour in the second waiting room, and for approximately 20 minutes in the third waiting room. All in all, they waited for approximately an hour and 40 minutes in waiting rooms and for an additional two hours standing in line, all to have a one-hour visit.

**FIGURE 2**

**Approximate Timeline of OID Investigator's Visit to Rikers**





Most interviewees shared that, similarly, they typically spent over five hours on the island to have a one-hour visit. In a Council hearing last year before the Committee on Criminal Justice, DOC shared that the average time visitors spent on the island, according to their own study, was four and a half hours.<sup>52</sup> This timeframe does not include travel time to Rikers Island.<sup>53</sup> One interviewee described visiting Rikers as a “whole day event.” Publications from advocacy organizations<sup>54</sup> and from the press<sup>55</sup> also note that visits to Rikers often take up to six hours. When asked what would make them visit more often, three out of five interviewees responded that they would have visited more often if the process were shorter or if the jail was not as far from their homes. One interviewee described her trip to Rikers as “very long” and others detailed long commutes from all over the city, usually involving a car or train trip before getting on the Q100 bus. As one interviewee put it, “I genuinely didn’t have time for all of that... if it was quicker, I would have visited more.”

Interviewees also noted that their visits to Rikers involved much longer wait times than their visits to New York State-run prisons, where they were also able to visit their loved ones for longer periods. One interviewee stated that her visit to an upstate prison was “nicer and faster,” estimating that the security process for the visit took less than an hour. Another interviewee said the travel time to visit his loved one at a state-run facility was comparable to how long it took to get to the actual visit on Rikers Island and that, once there, he was able to have a much longer visit.

## **2. Visitors endure long waits outside without seating, although the Board of Correction (BOC)’s Minimum Standards require seating in waiting areas.**

OID found that visitors are generally required to wait outside of the Central Visits building without seating or clear information on access to restrooms or drinking water. According to the Minimum Standards, “visitors shall not be required to wait outside a facility unless adequate shelter is provided” and there are “sufficient seats for all visitors” and “access to bathroom facilities and drinking water.”<sup>56</sup> According to the Visit Procedures Directive, visitors should not be required to wait outside a jail facility or the Central Visits building at all.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> September 2024 Hearing, *supra* note 4, at 123.

<sup>53</sup> *Id.*, (showing that “[f]our and a half hours” answered the question “can you just restate for the record the average or typical wait time for a visit from arriving at the central visit house [on Rikers Island] to actually starting their visit with the person in custody they’re visiting?”).

<sup>54</sup> N.Y.C. JAILS ACTION COAL., VISITING RIKERS ISLAND, A GUIDE: WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN VISITING YOUR LOVED ONE ON RIKERS ISLAND (2016), <https://www.libertyfund.nyc/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/2016-Rikers-Island-Visitor-Guide.pdf> (“How Long Will it Take? In addition to the 1 hour spent visiting your loved one, the visiting process can take 2-5 hours due to searches and long waits. You should also plan for travel time to and from Rikers Island.”).

<sup>55</sup> Seiwel, *supra* note 20.

<sup>56</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit. 40, §§ 1-09(b)(3) and (b)(4)(i)-(ii).

<sup>57</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 41 (“Visitors shall not be required to wait outside a facility or the Visit Control Building.”).

- (4) All waiting and visiting areas shall provide for at least minimal comforts for visitors, including but not limited to:
- (i) sufficient seats for all visitors;
  - (ii) access to bathroom facilities and drinking water throughout the waiting and visiting periods;
  - (iii) access to vending machines for beverages and foodstuffs at some point during the waiting or visiting period; and
  - (iv) access to a Spanish-speaking employee or volunteer at some point during the waiting or visiting period. All visiting rules, regulations, and hours shall be clearly posted in English and Spanish in the waiting and visiting areas at each facility.

Source: N.Y.C. Rules, tit. 40, §1-09(b), N.Y. City Record (June 9, 2021).

When an OID investigator arrived at Rikers Island thirty minutes before the start of visiting hours, a long line with dozens of visitors had already formed before the entrance to the Central Visits building. The investigator waited for an hour and fifteen minutes outside (including for 45 minutes after the start of visiting hours). There was an awning providing shade and shelter from rain outside of the building, but the awning provided no protection from hot or cold temperatures or other weather conditions. Additionally, there were no seats available and no posted information regarding access to restrooms or water fountains for visitors waiting on the line. During the November Tour, DOC staff explained that visitors who request to use the restroom are directed to the nearby Samuel L. Perry building. Multiple interviewees also recounted waiting outside of the Central Visits building for up to two hours in all weather conditions.<sup>58</sup>

### 3. DOC's website and posted notices do not adequately prepare or inform visitors.

DOC communicates visiting policies and procedures to visitors through both its website and through signs and notices posted on Rikers Island. Specifically, DOC's website contains a Family Visit section, which includes information about visiting, schedules, transportation, and rules, including dress code.<sup>59</sup> In addition, the Visit Procedures Directive requires certain signs and notices to be posted throughout the visiting facilities, including information on the penal law relative to promoting prison contraband, registration procedures, locker instructions, rules of conduct, and ID requirements.<sup>60</sup> Despite this, both the visiting OID investigator and several interviewees found the process confusing, noting that their experience did not always match what was on the website's guidance and that signs posted in the facilities were not helpful.

<sup>58</sup> These instances likely took place without even an awning protecting them from sun or rain. On the November Tour, Council staff learned that the awning was erected in late August or early September 2025, likely just before the investigator's visit to Rikers. A press report from December 2022 shows visitors waiting outside in the rain with no awning (<https://www.nydailynews.com/2022/12/18/rikers-visitors-wait-in-line-for-hours-without-seeing-jailed-loved-ones-nyc-correction-officials-make-it-as-difficult-as-possible/>).

<sup>59</sup> See *Family Visit*, N.Y.C. DEP'T CORR. [https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised\\_Family\\_Visit.page](https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/Revised_Family_Visit.page) (last visited Nov. 18, 2025).

<sup>60</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 42.

For example, the DOC website contains information on the Dress Code and indicates that see-through or hooded garments, clothing identifying a gang, and tops that “expose the chest, stomach, or back” are all prohibited.<sup>61</sup> However, the website does not mention that tank tops are prohibited,<sup>62</sup> despite correction officers turning people away for wearing tank tops, as detailed below. Additionally, while the posted dress code does state that visitors may only wear a single layer of clothing during the visit itself, the website does not make clear that much of the dress code applies to the visitor’s bottom-most layer of clothing (i.e., the shirt a visitor wears *underneath* their sweater or sweatshirt),<sup>63</sup> likely causing further confusion. At the jail, an investigator observed a seemingly more helpful poster detailing the dress code using examples and an image, but that poster is not displayed on the website for the benefit of visitors getting dressed at home.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the visiting process generally, when the OID investigator visited Rikers, they found a lack of clarity on instructions at each step of the process. At the first lockers, outside the Central Visits building, it was unclear what must be stored there versus what could be brought further. For example, while DOC’s Visit Procedures Directive suggests that books, wallets, and pocketbooks can be carried through the Central Visits building and into a jail facility,<sup>65</sup> no sign clearly specified what could be brought through.<sup>66</sup> The investigator originally did not lock up their bag in those lockers, but another visitor on the line then advised them that only an identification card and cash could be brought through. There are several signs required to be posted at various points throughout the process.<sup>67</sup> Many of those signs are just outside the Central Visits Building, near the lockers, a location where stopping to read the posted signs might make visitors lose their place in line.

One interviewee also expressed frustration with the location of the signs. The interviewee was waiting outside for hours in line close to a woman with a baby. When they both reached the front of the line and were about to enter the Central Visits building, they saw a sign saying that visits can be expedited if visitors are with a baby. Due to the location of the sign, the woman with the baby had not seen it until she had already waited for hours.

Similarly, when the OID investigator visited Rikers, they noticed a sign specifying a window of visiting hours where visitors with children under six would be prioritized. That information is not on the DOC website. On DOC’s website, the page “Visiting with Children” only informs the public of what items they can bring in for a visit when they bring children.<sup>68</sup> The investigator visited outside of these priority visiting hours and nonetheless observed several families with young children, indicating that they may not be aware of this information.

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<sup>61</sup> *Visitors’ Dress Code*, *supra* note 42.

<sup>62</sup> *Id.*

<sup>63</sup> *Id.*; accord *VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE*, *supra* note 9, at 16 (“When meeting with the incarcerated individual, visitors may only wear a single layer of clothing (except those visitors required to wear a cover-up garment) and no accessories.”) (emphasis added) (internal citation omitted). That single layer does not include undergarments, which are required by the Directive’s subsequent provision.

<sup>64</sup> *Visitors’ Dress Code*, *supra* note 42.

<sup>65</sup> *VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE*, *supra* note 9, at 17 (listing “Additional Items Not Permitted on Facility Visit Floor”).

<sup>66</sup> When asked during the November Tour whether books could be brought into the Central Visits building and held until the second set of lockers, DOC staff responded that books were not permitted past the first set of lockers.

<sup>67</sup> *VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE*, *supra* note 9, at 42.

<sup>68</sup> *Visiting with Children*, N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visiting-children.page> (last visited Nov. 16, 2025).

Interviewees reported feeling confused or disoriented during the security process before their visit. They described procedures that varied each time they visited, and feeling unprepared for the search process based on what they learned from others or could read online. One interviewee said, “You don’t know till you get there. Like you might get a little information, but when you get there, it doesn’t always match what you get when you’re there.” Another described, “They purposely change the manner in how you get to Rikers Island because they don’t want you to get accustomed to one way; it would be surprising each time... the experience is so traumatic because each time it’s different.”

#### **4. Some visitors are denied visits due to dress code violations, in apparent violation of DOC’s Visit Procedures Directive.**

Both DOC’s Visit Procedures Directive and the DOC webpage on Visitors’ Dress Code state that “visitors whose attire violates the dress code will be permitted a contact visit if they agree to wear a cover-up garment provided by the Department.”<sup>69</sup> However, this investigation revealed that some visitors are being turned away without being offered that garment.

**Visitors whose attire violates the dress code will be permitted a contact visit if they agree to wear a cover-up garment provided by the Department. Visitors who refuse to wear a cover-up garment provided by the Department will be denied a visit.**

Source: *Visitors’ Dress Code*, N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CORR., <https://www.nyc.gov/site/doc/inmate-info/visitors-dress-code.page>

As detailed above, visitors to Rikers Island go through security procedures first at the Central Visits building and then through more security procedures at the jail where they visit their loved ones. But the OID investigator’s observations and interviews revealed that some people are turned away at the Central Visits building due to dress code violations, when they should have been allowed through to the jail buildings and given a cover-up garment, according to the Visit Procedures Directive.<sup>70</sup>

During security procedures at the Central Visits building, some people observed by the OID staff member as well as two interviewees were told they could not visit due to their clothing and were not offered a cover-up garment. The OID investigator witnessed one person leave the line at the Central Visits Building in visible distress; she was seemingly told she could not visit because she was wearing a tank top.<sup>71</sup> The investigator did not observe the visitor receiving any written notice regarding the denial of their visit, though that is required according to the Visit Procedures Directive.<sup>72</sup> The OID investigator also witnessed someone returning to the line after changing into a T-Shirt, presumably in order to comply with the dress code. Interviews also revealed multiple instances where people were denied their visit due to a dress code violation. One interviewee reported being told she could not visit because she was wearing a sleeveless shirt. Another reported having to leave the line, get back on the bus, get a sweatshirt from her car, and then wait in line again, because a

<sup>69</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 16; accord *Visitors’ Dress Code*, *supra* note 42.

<sup>70</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9.

<sup>71</sup> An observing correction officer informed the visitor that she could get a cover-up garment, but by that point in time, she had already left the line and lost track of the family member she was accompanying.

<sup>72</sup> See VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 7.



correction officer told her that her shirt was too cropped. On the November Tour, DOC staff confirmed that visitors have been turned away at the Central Visits building due to the dress code.

At the jail building, which visitors enter after going through security at the Central Visits building, the OID investigator observed a correction officer assessing visitors' clothing for dress code compliance during the clothing search. The investigator further observed that those visitors whose clothing was determined to be inappropriate for visiting were provided a cover-up garment (a very large T-shirt) and allowed to have their visit, in line with the Visit Procedures Directive.<sup>73</sup> Receiving a cover-up garment was not uncommon—three women out of the approximately 15 total visitors in the investigator's visiting group were given a cover-up garment. Given the availability of cover-up garments at the jail buildings, it is not clear why any visitor would be turned away at the Central Visits building due to the dress code rather than continuing on to the jail facilities.<sup>74</sup>

DOC's application—and misapplication—of the dress code provisions in the Visit Procedures Directive likely have a larger impact on women and girls who visit Rikers Island. The people whom OID observed either being denied their visit or being required to wear a cover-up garment were all women, and interviewees also only recounted times that women or girls were denied their visits due to dress code issues.

## **5. Some visitors experience staff as disrespectful or unhelpful.**

Every interviewee described experiences while visiting where correction officers were disrespectful or unhelpful. Interviewees described officers as “rude” and “nasty,” and one interviewee noted that the way officers talk to visitors is “very intense and demoralizing.” Another interviewee stated that, due to the way correction officers watch her during her visits, “There’s never a time I’ve gone in there and not felt uncomfortable.”

When the OID investigator visited Rikers, they encountered correction officers who were not particularly rude, but who were not proactively helpful. At a certain point while waiting in line to enter the Central Visits building, the investigator was told that they had neglected to fill out a form and would need to go back to the end of the line. Neither the investigator nor the visitor they accompanied had heard any such announcement. The correction officer insisted that he had announced the need for the form multiple times, but another correction officer working in the same area recounted that three other visitors had already experienced the exact same delay, suggesting the announcement was not sufficiently made. Generally, the investigator observed officers answering questions when asked but not proactively guiding visitors, leaving them to rely on one another to navigate confusing aspects of the process.<sup>75</sup>

Interviewees similarly reported that officers were inconsistent in their application of rules, and that they observed some other visitors receiving special treatment—with both one interviewee and the OID investigator observing that some people got a few extra minutes of visiting time with their loved ones. Additionally, one interviewee reported seeing some people bypass certain searches, a potential security risk. The investigation revealed another similar inconsistency: the hand stamp, a security measure required under the Directive and demonstrated by DOC management to Council staff on the November Tour, was not imposed on the OID investigator when they visited Rikers.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Id.* at 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Id.*

<sup>75</sup> On City Council's November Tour of visiting facilities led by DOC management, staff heard a correction officer giving instructions to visitors entering the locker area.

<sup>76</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 39–41 (“Upon entering the Visit Area [of a jail], prior to registration, all visitors shall be stamped with a non-reversible character on the back of the left hand using fluorescent ink. [...] Prior to visitors exiting from the visit house, the officer assigned to the visit house entrance gate shall inspect the hand stamp code of each visitor with the use of the ultraviolet light [...] The visit bus driver shall check the hand stamp with the black light [equipped on each bus] as each visitor boards the bus and again when exiting the bus at the Visit Control Building.”).

# Recommendations

- 1. Accelerate improvements to visiting: DOC should accelerate its analysis of visiting, publish its findings, and immediately take steps to improve the process. Additionally, it should implement an online scheduling system as soon as possible.**

This investigation confirmed that visitors to Rikers Island continue to endure long wait times on top of lengthy commutes to and from the island, making it difficult for many New Yorkers to visit their incarcerated loved ones. This year, at a Council hearing before the Committee on Criminal Justice, representatives for DOC acknowledged that wait times are currently “too long” and claimed that they were conducting a wholesale assessment of the visiting process.<sup>77</sup> Six months later, DOC echoed that claim in testimony to the BOC, highlighting the installation of new lockers and the creation of a new, as-yet-unfilled position of Executive Director of Visit Operations.<sup>78</sup> The Department should accelerate that analysis, publish its findings, and empower that new Executive Director to use the knowledge gained during its assessment to significantly improve the visiting process. When it transitions to borough-based jails, the analysis should inform the new visiting process, and DOC should make every effort to further decrease wait times.

Local Law 43 of 2025 requires DOC to establish an online system for scheduling visits by April 2027.<sup>79</sup> In a hearing on the bill last year, a DOC representative agreed that the new system would “hopefully reduce wait times.”<sup>80</sup> The Department should make every effort to expedite the process and implement the new system as early as possible.

- 2. Comply with the BOC Minimum Standards: In the area where visitors wait outside the Central Visits Building, DOC should add both seating and clear signage directing visitors to the nearest restroom.**

This investigation revealed that DOC currently appears to violate BOC Minimum Standards by requiring visitors to wait outside the Central Visits building without access to seating or clear information on access to restrooms.<sup>81</sup> To rectify this, DOC should add benches or other seating to its outdoor waiting area, and should add signs along the line informing visitors that restrooms are available in the Samuel L. Perry building. Further, the borough-based jails should be designed in such a way that visitors are never required to wait outside, and DOC should work closely with BOC to ensure continued compliance with the Minimum Standards related to visiting.

<sup>77</sup> Preliminary Budget Hearing, *supra* note 5, at 174.

<sup>78</sup> Bd. Meeting, Bd. OF CORR., at 01:05 (Sept. 9, 025), <https://youtu.be/5EYLMdi6QU8?t=3913> (“There is a broader initiative underway to improve, modernize and streamline the visit process for everyone who is visiting Rikers Island.”).

<sup>79</sup> N.Y.C. LOCAL L. No. 43 (2025).

<sup>80</sup> September 2024 Hearing, *supra* note 4, at 111.

<sup>81</sup> N.Y.C. RULES, tit.40, §§ 1-09(b)(3) and (b)(4) (stating that “[v]isitors shall not be required to wait outside a facility unless adequate shelter is provided and” there are “sufficient seats for all visitors [and] access to bathroom facilities and drinking water throughout the waiting and visiting periods”).

**3. Improve visitor communication: DOC should update its website and relocate signs to ensure that visitors understand rules and are properly prepared for visits.**

This investigation found that DOC's website and posted signs were not sufficient to prepare people to visit Rikers Island, or to inform them once they arrive. To better communicate with visitors, DOC should update its website to include easily digestible information about the visitor dress code and other key information about visiting. The website's dress code page should make clear which rules only apply to the visitor's bottom layer of clothing,<sup>82</sup> and should include examples of acceptable and unacceptable clothing with pictures. The website should also provide information on what visitors can expect when they visit Rikers, including what they'll be required to put into the first and second set of lockers. DOC's webpage "Visiting With Children" should also highlight information on priority visiting hours for children under six, and on activities and toys available for children at Rikers.

Additionally, DOC should assess the location of signs at the entrance to the Central Visits building, and relocate signs where they would be most helpful given the information presented. For instance, signs about what should be placed in lockers and how to use lockers should be located near the lockers. Signs telling people that they can skip the line outside if they have a baby with them should be located near the line outside. Signs that convey general information should be placed where visitors are waiting for a period of time so that they have time to read them.

**4. Stop turning visitors away: In its Visit Procedures Directive, in trainings, and in a memo to all staff, DOC should clarify that dress code compliance should be assessed only once, at each jail, and that nobody willing to wear a cover-up garment should be denied a visit.**

This investigation revealed that some visitors were turned away at the Central Visits building due to a violation of the dress code, and that they were not offered a cover-up garment or a non-contact visit in those instances. DOC should ensure that all staff involved in the visiting process are properly trained on dress code enforcement, and aware that visitors should never be denied a visit due to a violation of the dress code as long as they are willing to wear a cover-up garment or, in limited cases, have a non-contact visit.<sup>83</sup>

It is unclear whether DOC's current dress code review process permits staff at the Central Visits building to evaluate visitors' dress for compliance or whether staff observed by the OID investigator turning away visitors at the Central Visits building were in violation of DOC's process. Regardless, DOC should amend its directive on visiting to clarify that compliance with the dress code should only be assessed at the jail buildings—where cover-up garments are available—and not at the Central Visits building.<sup>84</sup> Staff at the Central Visits building should have no role in evaluating visitors' compliance with the dress code. In future trainings and a memo to all staff, it should be made abundantly clear that a violation of the dress code should almost never result in the denial of a visit. If any jail runs out of clean cover-up garments, staff should be instructed to contact the central storehouse, where DOC policy states a reserve supply should be available.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Excluding undergarments.

<sup>83</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 16; accord *Visitors' Dress Code*, *supra* note 42 (both stating in identical language that "[v]isitors whose attire violates the dress code will be permitted a contact visit if they agree to wear a cover-up garment provided by the Department."). *But see also* VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 26 (stating that in the event that a visitor is subject to a pat frisk and is wearing a skirt or dress that "cannot be shaped to form a barrier similar to a pant leg," in order to properly perform the pat frisk, the visitor should be given a non-contact visit).

<sup>84</sup> VISIT PROCEDURES DIRECTIVE, *supra* note 9, at 16 (further specifying that "Department staff of the rank of Captain or above shall be responsible for determining whether a visitor is in violation of the dress code").

<sup>85</sup> *Id.* at 17.

Further, DOC should convey to all staff that visitors should never be turned away without going through the full procedure for denying a visit. If a correction officer thinks denying a visit is warranted, they are required to bring the incident to the attention of the tour commander (or their designee), then complete Form 143R, “Notice to Incarcerated Individual/Visitor of Cancellation/Limitation/Denial of Visiting Access.”<sup>86</sup> DOC should also post signs at the entrance to the Central Visits building stating that visitors cannot be denied their visit without receiving the form.

**5. Evaluate training for correction officers: DOC should evaluate its training for correction officers who work with visitors and assess the roles that non-uniformed employees or volunteers can play in family visits.**

This investigation found that many visitors perceived correction officers as disrespectful, unhelpful, or inconsistent in their application of policies. To rectify this, DOC should evaluate its training for staff who work with visitors to ensure it sufficiently prepares them to treat visitors with respect and helpfully guide them through the visiting process.

DOC is required to report on its annual trainings for staff who regularly interact with visitors.<sup>87</sup> In 2019, the Department reported that it had contracted with the Osborne Association to provide a full-day “customer service and community sensitivity training,” which focused on interpersonal skills for interacting with the public, de-escalation and diffusion skills with a trauma-informed approach, and stress management.<sup>88</sup> The department’s description of that module—one of nine—no longer mentions facilitating successful visits,<sup>89</sup> though the Department maintains that it still offers a full-day training.<sup>90</sup> In addition to continually evaluating their course, the Department should more fully report on the contents of their training to ensure proper oversight.

Additionally, DOC should expand its program to add more non-uniformed staff throughout the visiting process. DOC employs “Visit Facilitators,” whose tasks include “greeting and acknowledging all visitors in a friendly, polite, and professional manner” and “informing visitors of relevant services, directions, visiting hours, and DOC visiting procedures.”<sup>91</sup> Although OID’s investigator did not observe any such facilitators during their September visit and so could not personally evaluate the effectiveness of the position, it is likely that such non-uniformed staff members would help foster a more positive environment for visiting. As one interviewee shared, “It would be great to have some civilians in there just to really help the process, because COs still gotta be who they are. They can’t break that silence too much... it would be great to have civilians to kind of soften the mood.”

<sup>86</sup> *Id.* at 5-7.

<sup>87</sup> N.Y.C. LOCAL L. 23 (2019).

<sup>88</sup> N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CORR., ANNUAL VISITOR TRAINING REPORT (2019), [https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/FINAL\\_CY19\\_Annual\\_Visitor\\_Training\\_Report.pdf](https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/FINAL_CY19_Annual_Visitor_Training_Report.pdf).

<sup>89</sup> Compare *id.* with N.Y.C. DEP’T OF CORR., ANNUAL VISITOR TRAINING REPORT (2024) <https://www.nyc.gov/assets/doc/downloads/pdf/CY2024.pdf> (dropping the phrase “facilitating successful visit” altogether from description of that module, now one of nine). But see also *Id.* at Section 9 (describing the new ninth module “Strengthening Interactions with Visiting Children”).

<sup>90</sup> DOC December 2025 Email, *supra* note 1.

<sup>91</sup> N.Y.C. Jobs, No. 718652 Visit Facilitator (2025), <https://cityjobs.nyc.gov/job/visit-facilitator-in-queens-jid-34744> (last visited Nov. 16, 2025) (expired version on file with Council) (showing 2 positions posted from July 15, 2025 to September 12, 2025); DOC December 2025 Email, *supra* note 1.



# Conclusion

Asked to describe the visiting process at Rikers in one word, interviewees responded: “unpredictable,” “lengthy,” “brutal,” “traumatic,” “disgusting,” and “horrible.” OID’s investigation uncovered some of the issues underlying this negative experience for family members visiting their incarcerated loved ones in New York City—wait times are long and uncomfortable, some people are turned away unnecessarily, and DOC’s communication with visitors and training for staff falls short. While adhering to the recommendations stated above will improve visiting at Rikers Island, the transition to borough-based jails is imperative, and represents an opportunity to end the all-day affair of visiting. If DOC can learn from this investigation, family visiting can become a truly positive experience for all those affected by incarceration in New York City.

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