



NEW MEXICO CORRECTIONS DEPARTMENT

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State issue ID's to releasing inmates

Santa Fe NM- the New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD), Adult Prisons Division in collaboration with the Taxation and Revenue Department, Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) are piloting an initiative to assist inmates within one year of release in obtaining state issued identification prior to their release from prison.

The concept of state issue identification to releasing inmates is not new. It has been in various stages of discussion for several years. While researching similar issues, Corrections Department Faith Based and Volunteer Program Coordinator, Leticia Chavez-Paulette, recognized the opportunity and presented it to executive staff with the Adult Prisons Division of the Corrections Department. With their support, Chavez-Paulette reached out to MVD about working together to develop a solution to move forward. "The idea is to help offenders, by reducing the challenges they face upon returning to their communities," said Deputy Director of Adult Prisons, Anthony Romero. "State issue identification, versus a prison issued ID card helps them overcome the stigma often associated with incarceration and move forward with dignity and purpose."

Through use of its MVD Mobile Office, MVD staff is able to travel to prison facilities. Eligible inmates have the opportunity to apply for a state issue identification card. Incarcerated individuals with the assistance of prison staff will obtain the documentation necessary and acceptable to the Motor Vehicle Division. Inmates pay the fees associated with a state issue ID. However, ability to pay is not a deterrent for an eligible inmate. Inmate's who are indigent will be able to receive financial assistance to cover the cost.

During the initial trial in May, the MVD Mobile office went to two separate prison facilities and began issuing ID's to eligible inmates. The MVD mobile unit regularly provides customer service at senior citizen events and high-traffic events like the State Fair, as well as in Native American communities and other rural areas. Including travel time, Motor Vehicle staff put in a 14-hour day to make the project a reality. MVD put the visit together at the request of the Corrections Department, which was highly appreciative of the Mobile Unit's efforts.

MVD Bureau Chief James Lopez reports his team was able to process credentials for 56 inmates nearing their release dates. "There were a few technical difficulties throughout the day, but with the willingness and expertise of the mobile unit staff, we were able to improvise and make this effort a success," Lopez said.

Through the initial trial the collaborative between the Corrections Department and Motor Vehicle Division hopes to expand to continue to offer this service to justice involved persons as they transition back to communities after incarceration. The standard ID can be used for a variety of everyday purposes that might otherwise be a challenge for a newly released inmate - activities like renting an apartment and applying for jobs.

Recently, the MVD Mobile office also went to the Central New Mexico Correctional Facility; where over 70 eligible inmates were given the opportunity to apply for state issue ID's. Many of the inmates voiced their gratitude to the NMCD and MVD in helping them overcome this significant issue. For them, it is one less thing they have to worry about once they are released.

For additional information contact the New Mexico Corrections Department Office of Public Affairs at NMCD-Inquiries@state.nm.us or 505-827-8710.