



PA Institutional
Law Project

Prison Rape Elimination Act "PREA" Info Sheet

Prisons and Jails in PA



Lewisburg
Prison Project

What is the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)?

The **Prison Rape Elimination Act**, also known as "**PREA**," is a law passed in 2003 to address the widespread problem of sexual violence in prisons. It applies to all detention facilities, including jails, private facilities, prison lockups, and immigration detention centers. PREA required the development of national standards on how to prevent prison rape, and it requires all facilities to adopt a zero-tolerance policy towards sexual assault.

PREA does *not* create a right of action. This means that if your facility violates PREA, it does not automatically mean they violated the law or make them legally responsible. You *cannot* bring a lawsuit just because a facility has violated PREA. PREA is a set of guidelines facilities must follow in order to receive federal funding. PREA reports are generally referred to state law enforcement, but filing a PREA report does not automatically mean that criminal charges will be brought.

However, PREA does create certain protections and ways for you to seek help.

PREA, requires institutions to:

- Provide access to PREA reporting options, including anonymous reporting and third-party reporting through a hotline
- Maintain camera coverage throughout the facility
- Screen incarcerated people for risk of abusing others or for risk of being abused
- Hire, train, and use staff in a way that prevents and responds effectively to sexual violence
- Prevent juveniles from being housed with adults
- Prevent retaliation against individuals who report, or attempt to report, sexual violence or fear of sexual abuse
- Provide additional protections to transgender people
- Inform incarcerated people of PREA policies and reporting procedures
- Designate and keep a PREA coordinator
- Provide survivors with medical and mental health care
- Provide access to victim advocates
- Provide free forensic rape exams to people who wish to undergo this process
- Fully investigate claims of sexual abuse following evidence protocols
- Prevent opposite gender pat searches and opposite gender guards entering housing units unannounced

What to do if you think PREA has been violated:

- Call the PREA Hotline:

PREA Hotline:
1(800) 472-8477

For most Pennsylvania prisons and jails

GEO Group PREA Hotline:
(561) 999-5927

For George W. Hill Correctional Facility

What to do if you think PREA has been violated (continued):

- Speak directly to the PREA Coordinator at your facility.
- Report the incident to a staff member. Check the inmate handbook at your institution to see if there are specific procedures for reporting sexual abuse or harassment. You may also be able to file a grievance through your institution's administrative remedy process.
- For individuals incarcerated in a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections state facility, you can send a written report to the DOC PREA Coordinator. You may file a report anonymously if you do not feel safe revealing your identity or are concerned about retaliation.* Send a written report to:

PREA Coordinator
Office of State Inspector General
555 Walnut Street, 8th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17101

- For individuals incarcerated the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) facility, you can send a written report out of the facility.* Include the dates, times, and locations where each incident took place, along with the names of those who were involved. Send a written report to:

If the person involved is incarcerated:

National PREA Coordinator
400 First Street, N.W., Room 4027
Washington, D.C. 20534

If the person involved is staff:

Office of Internal Affairs
320 First Street, N.W., Room 600
Washington, D.C. 20534

*Note that even though you are using a reporting option outside the facility, this information will likely be routed back to the facility for an investigation. Calls to these numbers will also be recorded by your facility under its usual policies.

What should you do if your institution is placing you at risk, not taking your concerns seriously, or not allowing you access to PREA reporting?

If you have been sexually assaulted and staff are not allowing you to report or not taking steps to protect you, or if you are being retaliated against for filing a PREA report, please write or call us using the contact information below:

PA Institutional Law Project
247 Fort Pitt Blvd, 4th Floor
Pittsburgh, Pa 15222
(412) 434-6004
www.pailp.org

Lewisburg Prison Project
P.O. Box 128
Lewisburg, PA 17837
(570) 523-1104
www.lewisburgprisonproject.org

PA Institutional Law Project
718 Arch St., Suite 304 S.
Philadelphia, PA 19106
(215) 925-2966
www.pailp.org

*Please note the Lewisburg Prison Project and the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project assist incarcerated people with issues related to the conditions of their confinement (e.g., medical, mental health, excessive force, etc.). We **do not** assist people with criminal matters, habeas cases, sentencing issues, or parole, and cannot assist with early or compassionate release.*