

Conjugal visits essay



**ASSIGN
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Most of us assume that prison life precludes any private contact between inmates and their significant others. After all, that's one of the penalties of going to prison. But then what about conjugal visits? The term has an old-fashioned ring to it, evoking images of prisoners' wives sneaking into the big house while the guards turn a blind eye. But conjugal visits actually do take place in a handful of states as a means to preserve family relationships during the period of incarceration. In our society there are many who agree that conjugal visits are good for prisoners and his or her significant other(s).

It is believed that conjugal visits leads to strong family bonds and keeps families functional rather than having the family deal with the dysfunctional side of the relationship due to the lack of sexual contact. Providing prisoners with normal family relations including conjugal rights will (1) somewhat counteract the pain of imprisonment, (2) ease frustration among prisoners, (3) strengthen family ties and (4) encourage normal sexual patterns for married inmates. On the other side of this topic there are a few that would agree that conjugal visits can only lead to bad things.

Physical safety is one of the main problems with this type of visit. Conjugal visits are often unsupervised which could be a problem for a couple that is dysfunctional. Additional opposition to conjugal would include: (1) only a minority of prisoners are married, (2) the state prisons don't have facilities to use for such a program, (3) this privilege would create jealousy among those prisoners unable or not allowed to participate and (4) spouses might be embarrassed by the openly sexual nature of the program. It's also clear to me that conjugal visits increase the risk of spreading sexually transmitted diseases. Rodgers) Logistically, conjugal visits are already high in risk factors

and if implemented throughout the country would be a very expensive program. The cost of each individual visit leads some to believe that the cost of the program outweighs the benefits. The state has to provide adequate space for these private visits. So does this mean the state is paying for mini motels inside the prison wall? Conjugal visitation also presents an ethical dilemma by increasing the chance of pregnancy when the incarcerated partner often lacks the ability to provide financial and emotional support to the partner and resulting child.

Children born as a result of conjugal visitation are denied important emotional bonding with the incarcerated parent. With female offenders, the prison is also forced to finance the cost for medical care of the mother during her pregnancy. One of the most persuasive arguments against the implementation of conjugal visitation is the disinclination of the public to accept programs that provide extra privileges to convicted felons at a cost to the taxpayer. (Wilkinson) In the states where conjugal visits are still observed, they are often limited to inmates who exhibit extremely good behavior.

In other words, the privilege is earned, and not given. When an inmate goes to jail, if he or she is not considered a high risk for security, his or her spouse may be allowed to visit for several hours or even days at a time, during which they can be alone. Some legislators believe that this makes inmates better behaved. The state with the longest history of allowing conjugal visits for prisoners exists in the State of Mississippi. This state's history of allowing conjugal visits for selected prisoners found that its roots are based upon tradition rather than science.

Mississippi has allowed conjugal rights for selected Mississippi prisoners for more than a century. Perhaps because of this history, Mississippi went to the expense of actually building apartments for prisoner use during family visits. While an expensive approach, the apartments provide a way for inmates to have normalized interactions with all family members including any children rather than with the spouse alone. There are three requirements inmates must meet prior to participation in conjugal visits in Mississippi. First, they must be housed in either minimum or medium security units.

Inmates housed in maximum security units are the only division of inmates automatically denied visits. Inmates also must provide proof of marriage, thereby rendering unmarried inmates ineligible for such visits. Finally, conjugal visits must be earned through good behavior. However, inmates must be classified and apply for conjugal visits before they can be granted. California has allowed conjugal visits since the 1970s; it is one of the few states to do so. The program allows an inmate to stay for up to 72 hours in a small apartment or trailer on prison grounds with a spouse, partner or immediate family members.

The visits are not permitted for those under sentence of death or life without parole, or those convicted of violent offences or sex crimes. In 2007 the State of California implemented a new policy regarding conjugal visits. Previously, conjugal visits were only available to heterosexual inmates and partners. The same rights are now law for homosexual inmates. The privilege is being expanded to registered domestic partners under a law signed by former governor Gray Davis that took effect in 2005.

It requires state agencies to give the same rights to domestic partners that heterosexual couples receive. The new regulations permit visits only by registered domestic partners who are not themselves' in custody, and the domestic partnership must have been established before one of the partners went to prison. After much research and prior knowledge on the topic of conjugal visits, I believe that visits of this type should not be allowed.

Inmates are in prison for a reason, to separate them from the outside world to serve their time.

I believe inmates are already granted too many rights, which in my opinion is not helping them rehabilitate to become a better person. Conjugal visits will only lead to more problems, especially if these visits are unsupervised, which therefore shouldn't be allowed. If inmates weren't granted all these loyalties and rights, many would work as hard as they can to change themselves, and not just do their time in order to be released from prison, just to commit another crime to get themselves incarcerated yet again taking up more space in an already overcrowded prison system.