

How to Find Inmates in Jails and Prisons Through Government Resources

By Kelly Wilson

In the United States, more than 1.7 million people were behind bars* at the end of 2021. That figure includes more than 1.2 million people in prisons and 636,300 in local jails*. But in that same year, almost 7 million people—or 2 percent of the U.S. population—were in jail at some point**. So if you're trying to locate a loved one who was recently arrested or sent to prison, odds are you're not alone.

Though you may not know where to turn during this sad and stressful time, many government resources exist to help you track down a person in prison or jail.

How to find an inmate in prison

People who have been found guilty of a criminal offense are typically sent to prisons when the length of their sentence is more than 1 year***. Prisons can be run by the state, the federal government, or private companies.

State prison

To find someone who's currently incarcerated in a state prison facility, you will need to visit that state's Department of Corrections website and search for that inmate. Below is a list of all 50 state's offender-locator databases; just navigate to the appropriate state below and click the link to begin your search.

Alabama: <https://doc.alabama.gov/InmateSearch>

Alaska: <https://vinelink.vineapps.com/search/AK/Person>

Arizona: <https://corrections.az.gov/inmate-data-search>

Arkansas: https://apps.ark.org/inmate_info/index.php

California: <https://inmatelocator.cdcr.ca.gov/>

Colorado: <https://www.doc.state.co.us/oss/>

Connecticut: <http://www.ctinmateinfo.state.ct.us/>

Delaware: https://doc.delaware.gov/views/inmate_locator.blade.shtml

District of Columbia: <https://doc.dc.gov/page/locate-inmate>

Florida: <https://fdc.myflorida.com/OffenderSearch/Search.aspx>

Georgia: <https://gdc.ga.gov/GDC/Offender/Query>

Hawaii: <https://dps.hawaii.gov/about/divisions/corrections/>, <https://www.statecourts.org/inmate-search/hawaii/>

Idaho: <https://www.idoc.idaho.gov/content/prisons/resident-client-search>

Illinois: <https://idoc.illinois.gov/offender/inmatesearch.html>

Indiana: <https://www.in.gov/apps/indcorrection/ofs/ofs>

Iowa: <https://doc-search.iowa.gov/Offender/Search>

Kansas: <https://www.doc.ks.gov/facilities/faq/locating>

Kentucky: <http://koool.corrections.ky.gov/>

Louisiana: <https://doc.louisiana.gov/imprisoned-person-programs-resources/offender-information/>

Maine: <https://www1.maine.gov/online/mdoc/search-and-deposit/index.htm>
Maryland: <https://www.dpscs.state.md.us/inmate/>
Massachusetts: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/find-an-inmate-in-a-massachusetts-prison>
Michigan: <https://www.michigan.gov/corrections/otis>
Minnesota: <https://coms.doc.state.mn.us/publicviewer/>
Mississippi: <https://www.ms.gov/mdoc/inmate>
Missouri: <https://web.mo.gov/doc/offSearchWeb/>
Montana: <https://app.mt.gov/conweb/>
Nevada: <https://ofdsearch.doc.nv.gov/>
New Hampshire: https://business.nh.gov/inmate_locator/
New Jersey: https://www20.state.nj.us/DOC_Inmate/inmatefinder?i=I
New Mexico: <https://www.cd.nm.gov/offender-search/>
New York: <https://nysdoccslookup.doccs.ny.gov/>
North Carolina: <https://webapps.doc.state.nc.us/opi/offendersearch.do?method=view>
North Dakota: <https://www.docr.nd.gov/resident-lookup>
Ohio: <https://appgateway.drc.ohio.gov/OffenderSearch>
Oklahoma: <https://okoffender.doc.ok.gov/>
Oregon: <https://docpub.state.or.us/OOS/intro.jsf>
Pennsylvania: <https://inmatelocator.cor.pa.gov/#/>
Rhode Island: <https://doc.ri.gov/family-visitors/inmate-search>
South Carolina: <https://www.doc.sc.gov/InmateSearchDisclaimer.html>
South Dakota: <https://doc.sd.gov/adult/lookup/>
Tennessee: <https://www.tn.gov/correction/redirect-agency-services/foil.html>
Texas: <https://inmate.tdcj.texas.gov/InmateSearch/start.action>
Utah: <https://corrections.utah.gov/offender-search/>
Vermont: <https://doc.vermont.gov/>, [https://omsweb.public-safety-cloud.com/jtclientweb/\(S\(jx42rddpusk0xezvj5fusrox\)\)/jailtracker/index/Vermont](https://omsweb.public-safety-cloud.com/jtclientweb/(S(jx42rddpusk0xezvj5fusrox))/jailtracker/index/Vermont)
Virginia: <https://vadoc.virginia.gov/general-public/offender-locator/>
Washington: <https://www.doc.wa.gov/information/inmate-search/>
Wisconsin: <https://appsdoc.wi.gov/lop/welcome>
West Virginia: <https://dcr.wv.gov/offendersearch/Pages/default.aspx>
Wyoming: <http://wdoc-loc.wyo.gov/>

Federal prison

Visit <https://www.bop.gov/inmateloc/> to find a person being held in federal prison. You can search by their Bureau of Prisons, or BOP, number, if you know it, or simply search on their name.

How to find an inmate in jail

Things get tricky when you're trying to find a person in jail. Every day many people across the country enter and leave jails, so inmate information can change quickly. In fact, the vast majority of people being held in local jails across the country have not yet been convicted of a crime****, which means they may be able to post bail and get released while they await their court date.

Your loved one is most likely being held in a city or county jail, though there are a handful of regional jails in the U.S. too. City jails are typically operated by police departments and allow for photographing, fingerprinting, and other processing actions to take place. After that, most offenders will be transported to a county jail.

Googling “city jails near me” or “county jails near me” will bring up several options for jails in close proximity to your location. If the arrest did not occur nearby, you can look up “county map [state]” to find the exact county where it did occur, then search on “[county name] county jail inmate lookup” to find the county’s database.

Rely on the data during a difficult time

By using government databases to find exactly where your friend or family member is being held, you’ll soon find have the peace of mind in knowing their location, even if you can’t know exactly what the future holds for them.

Sources

* <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cpus21st.pdf>

** <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2023.html>

*** <https://bjs.ojp.gov/topics/corrections/correctional-institutions#5ypj7q>

**** <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/reports/pie2023.html>