

Massachusetts Sheriffs re-affirm commitment to family contacts: will provide free phone calls to inmates

The fourteen Massachusetts County Sheriffs recently re-affirmed their unanimous support for one of their highest collective priorities – providing strong support for communication and interaction between justice-involved individuals and their families.

Solidifying their mission to ensure that these crucially important links to family and support systems remain not only intact, but fortified, the 14 Sheriffs of Massachusetts have agreed to provide, at a minimum, ten minutes of free phone calling per week to all incarcerated individuals. Additionally, the Sheriffs have committed to reducing the cost of subsequent phone calls by charging no more than \$.14 per minute.

Strengthening these bonds to family members, friends and outside support systems help to provide a sense of grounding to those in our care, which is beneficial to their efforts to better prepare for life after reentry.

“My fellow Sheriffs and I know that contact with friends and loved ones is an essential component for preparing justice-involved individuals for successful reentry into society,” said Sheriff Steven W. Tompkins, President of the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association. “This unanimous decision by the fourteen Sheriffs is reflective of our commitment to those in our care and custody. As the nature of corrections continues to evolve in the Commonwealth, we are proud to re-affirm our commitment to maintaining and strengthening

familial bonds.”

By law, fees collected for phone calls must be, and are, used to benefit the inmates. This includes educational programs, vocational skills training and other services designed to prepare inmates for re-entry. The Sheriffs remain committed to working with our populations to break the cycle of recidivism that has captured so many in Massachusetts.

Given the logistics of implementing this program, it will go into effect no later than August 1, 2021.