

Public Participation Plan 2025



Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Purpose	3
Definitions	4
Public Engagement.....	4
Public Meetings.....	5
Community Development and Outreach.....	6
Website Elements	7
Notifications	8
Plan Maintenance	8

Introduction

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction (NCDAC) is responsible for the rehabilitation, care, custody and supervision of more than 31,000 individuals in institutions and more than 75,000 people on probation, post-release, or parole in our communities.

NCDAC oversees the operation of 55 institutions in three custody levels (minimum, medium, and close), as well as two Confinement in Response to Violation centers and two substance use disorder treatment facilities. NCDAC also manages Community Supervision Judicial District offices in all 100 North Carolina counties. NCDAC's major operational divisions and sections include Institutions, Community Supervision, Comprehensive Health Services, Education Services, Rehabilitation and Reentry, Special Operations and Intelligence Unit, and Correction Enterprises.

The North Carolina Department of Adult Correction recognizes that all citizens of North Carolina have the right to access government services and to meaningfully contribute to government decisions. Building a more collaborative society requires the participation of all North Carolinians. Outreach to and engagement with North Carolinians is critical for NCDAC to be successful in meeting its mission to protect the public by collaboratively focusing on rehabilitation, protection, innovation, accountability, and professionalism.

Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to ensure consistency across the Department in both the understanding and implementation of public access, participation, outreach, and engagement strategies. NCDAC recognizes public engagement is an active and intentional dialogue between members of the public and NCDAC. To be successful in meeting NCDAC's mission, this Plan includes the commitment to:

- Develop staff capacity to represent NCDAC to the public, and to be responsive to individuals who contact the Department seeking information and assistance;
- Continually review how the public accesses NCDAC services, resources, and digital content, to promote transparency, and better enable meaningful participation; and
- Strive for continuous improvement in the areas of public access, building community trust, participation, and engagement.

By applying the guidance and best practices presented in this plan, NCDAC aims to:

- Create better opportunities and mechanisms to receive public input;
- Promote respectful and meaningful dialogue between community members, organizations, and the Department;
- Educate the public about the Department's programs;
- Build trust with the public to strengthen community ties and partnerships;

- Work with community organizations to identify shared goals and opportunities for collaboration;
- Work with the public on strategies to improve future public engagement; and
- Develop tailored communication plans, as needed, that promote outreach to underserved communities to best serve their specific needs in conjunction with NCDAC's Language Access Plan.

Definitions

Public Access: The ability of the public to communicate with individuals in NCDAC custody and interact with NCDAC programs, services, resources, and public meetings.

Public Participation: The involvement of the public in NCDAC programs, services, public meetings, and when possible, in NCDAC's decision-making process.

Public Outreach: Reaching out to the public to communicate information about NCDAC programming, services, resources, public meetings, and opportunities to participate.

Public Engagement: Strategies to facilitate effective public communication and to generate sustained public interest and engagement in NCDAC programming, services, resources, and public meetings.

Public Engagement

In adherence with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#) NCDAC will continue to look for appropriate opportunities to improve community engagement and outreach efforts, especially in underserved communities. NCDAC continues to consider geography, available community information, and other relevant data to reach key constituencies and stakeholders.

NCDAC will consider the scope, potential impact, statutory regulations, and the communities involved for decisions within the Department to determine the appropriate level of public engagement. Based on the public's interest and project specific details, other appropriate public engagement methods may also be implemented. NCDAC's public engagement and outreach efforts may include:

- Distributing media releases when events are posted for public notice and public comment;
- Using social media to raise awareness for public notice and public comment events;
- Communicating with interested parties, such as community members, local, state, federal, and Tribal governments, community organizations and non-profit organizations that have expressed an interest in or may be directly affected by the Department's proposed action;
- Meeting in-person with interested parties to address issues of concern; and
- Directing members of the public to the proper staff contacts within NCDAC or other appropriate agencies.

NCDAC is committed to ensuring the public can appropriately communicate and interact with incarcerated persons. NCDAC allows approved members of the public to come into its institutions through volunteer programs and ensures approved families, friends, attorneys, clergy, instructors, reentry partners, and public speakers can interact with incarcerated persons in several ways including:

- Sending mail, money, and gift packages;
- Telephone calls;
- Text messaging and audio on incarcerated persons tablets;
- In person visiting hours;
- Family days; and
- Video visitation which is currently available in some institutions with plans to expand this ability throughout the state.

NCDAC provides reentry simulations to community organizations, students, and upon request members of the public across the state. The reentry simulations demonstrate the struggles and challenges faced by individuals who are transitioning from incarceration back into society.

Public Meetings

There is no “one size fits all” approach to public involvement. NCDAC continues to use a variety of comprehensive, tailored methods and strategies to facilitate meaningful public involvement. Public meetings are important to the public’s access to NCDAC and to public understanding of NCDAC plans and actions. They are an opportunity for NCDAC to engage communities whose opinions may have been overlooked.

To improve public engagement and access, NCDAC shall:

- Review existing practices governing the conduct of agency public meetings and make adjustments as needed to promote greater access and meaningful public engagement; and
- Implement live-streaming for our public meetings when possible; and
- Adopt the goal of ongoing improvement of public access and public participation.

In their review of existing practices governing the conduct of public meetings, NCDAC Divisions shall consider the following actions which can remediate barriers to participation:

- **Timing:** Schedule public meetings at different hours of the day and days of the week to increase the likelihood of getting more representative participation when applicable.
- **Publicity:** Use a wide range of media and outreach methods to promote meeting attendance.
- **Outreach Intermediaries:** Capitalize on existing social networks by partnering with stakeholders to share information and resources.

- **Venues:** Enhance accessibility to all public meetings and activities by using a range of venues, providing remote participation options, and ensuring compliance with physical accessibility requirements.
- **Language Access:** Ensure individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP) or those who speak languages other than English (LOTE) can fully participate by providing translation of written materials and interpretation services in accordance with [NCDAC's Language Access Plan](#).
- **ADA Compliance (Disability Access):** Ensure individuals with disabilities, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, have access to public meetings and materials through accommodations like American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters, captioning, and accessible venues. NCDAC's General Counsel's Office oversees the ADA Office that manages interpretation and translation services for incarcerated individuals as well as those under community supervision.
- **Non-Technical Information/Plain Language:** Providing relevant information and data to the public in a manner that is easily understandable.
- **Varied Means of Input:** Providing multiple means of public input, augmenting in-person and virtual meetings, to include telephone, email, online comment portals, surveys, polls and other means. And when able, recording meetings for public access.

Community Development and Outreach

NCDAC is committed to connecting with communities, nonprofit organizations, universities, and other types of organizations to provide support to individuals in custody and those reentering their communities. NCDAC is dedicated to using evidence-based practices to identify areas for improvement in our operations and improving our communication with the public.

- **Language Access:**
 - Language Access includes ensuring individuals with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) or who use a language other than English (LOTE) can access vital documents and services in a language they understand through interpretation or translation. This includes providing interpreters and translating documents to facilitate meaningful engagement with all North Carolinians.
 - NCDAC is dedicated to ensuring language accessibility for incarcerated persons, their families, and the public, including at:
 - Institutions;
 - During community supervision;
 - Online through the public facing DAC website that provides resources and information to families of incarcerated persons;
 - Through press releases that offer DAC updates, recruitment events at local schools or organizations; and
 - Local community events and meetings.
 - The Community Development and Outreach Manager will provide guidance and support on language access initiatives throughout NCDAC. For more information

on NCDAC's commitment to language access, see the [NCDAC Language Access Plan](#).

- **Strategic Partnerships:**
 - NCDAC partners with many different organizations that support operations and improve our ability to protect the public. NCDAC will continue to seek out new partnerships and maintain up to date and accessible information about these partnerships on the NCDAC website.
- **Environmental Justice:**
 - In accordance with [Executive Order No. 292: Advancing Environmental Justice for North Carolina](#) and [Executive Order No. 246 North Carolina's Transformation to a Clean, Equitable Economy](#), NCDAC is creating an Environmental Justice Plan to review its institutional footprint and assess potential environmental disparities within institutions and surrounding areas.

Website Elements

Making sure the NCDAC website is designed with a focus on an accessible user experience allows the Department to increase web-traffic and engagement while improving the public's understanding of agency goals and activities.

NCDAC will continue to:

- Offer accessibility options on the NCDAC website including the ability to translate the website in 15 different languages, options for adjusting color contrast, and the ability to increase text size.
- Provide links for the public to access NCDAC information including:
 - [Public records requests](#)
 - [Incarcerated persons lookup](#)
 - [NCDAC data analysis](#)
 - [Resources for locating absconders](#)
 - [NC Statewide Automatic Victim Assistance and Notification \(NCSAVAN\)](#) provides a notification service for victims of crime in North Carolina. Victims and members of the public can register for notifications on an incarcerated persons status at [VINElink](#).
- Regularly check public facing contact information to ensure quick and direct access to departmental contacts.
- Review all website language describing agency policies, programs, and processes, and, where necessary, update content with clear, plain-language statements.
- Consult with other state agencies that have taken steps to improve access to their websites.
- Make available multiple methods for the public to provide input through the NCDAC website and otherwise, including:

- The friends and family hotline 1-800-368-1985; and
- Sending an [email](#) through the NCDAC website.

NCDAC will strive to:

- Convey technical information in a clear and accessible manner.

Notifications

Members of the public may have varied access to technology and the internet. Therefore, it is important for the Department to continue to practice different methods of communication and outreach to help ensure public notices reach an external audience.

- **Social Media:** In many communities, information about events happening in the area are circulated via social media platforms. Given the wide reach and broad use of these platforms, the Department shall publicize events and notices on NCDAC's social media platforms.
- **News Releases:** All [NCDAC news releases](#) are available on the NCDAC website.
- **Flyers:** Flyers can be effective at beginning dialogue with vulnerable populations and underserved communities at locations such as the following:
 - Schools
 - Places of worship
 - Tribal facilities
 - Locally owned businesses
 - Restaurants
 - Nursing homes
 - Public libraries
 - Community colleges and universities
 - Community centers
 - Subsidized housing complexes
 - Local government buildings
 - Laundromats
- **Radio:** Radio can be an effective method to notify certain stakeholder groups in rural areas about public notices or events.
- **Public Meetings Calendar:** Meetings of public bodies required by law to be noticed can be found on the [North Carolina Secretary of State's searchable public meetings calendar search](#), usually within 15-30 days of the meeting.

Plan Maintenance

NCDAC will review this plan annually and update as needed to ensure the Department continues to promote public access and participation. NCDAC will seek input on best practices

from staff, community partners, and other stakeholders to ensure the plan is continuing to meet the needs of its communities and evolving with technology to improve outreach methods.