

To Family Members and Relatives

**INFORMATION, SUPPORT, AND GUIDANCE WHEN
A FAMILY MEMBER IS DEPRIVED OF LIBERTY**



Buff

To the Reader

Having a family member deprived of their liberty can turn life upside down. It can trigger strong emotions, cause anxiety, and raise many questions – for both children and adults. In such situations it is easy to feel like you are alone, but you do not have to be.

Buff is a children's rights organisation that supports children and young people, together with their families, when someone in the family is deprived of liberty. We offer support, guidance, and a safe place to turn to regardless of what has happened. This material provides an introduction to what may happen when a close family member is deprived of their liberty, the rights children have, and how to talk to children about difficult situations.

You are not alone. Buff is here to listen, provide support and help you – all on your terms.

When a Family Member is Deprived of Liberty

When a close family member is deprived of their liberty, life can change in an instant. It may happen unexpectedly and without warning, turning everyday life upside down – both emotionally and in practical terms.

Many people describe having feelings of shock, grief, anxiety, or anger. At the same time, many questions and thoughts arise. What do I do now? How do I tell the children? Who can I talk to?

This brochure is intended for you if a member of your family has been deprived of their liberty, whether it is a partner, parent, sibling, or another person who is important in your life. It provides information about what happens when someone is deprived of their liberty, how it can affect children and adults, and how you can access support.

Close Relatives – Emotions, Responsibilities, and Support

As a close relative, you often find yourself in the middle of situations you did not choose yet still have to deal with. You may suddenly need to deal with your children's reactions, manage communication with the authorities, or explain to others what has happened. At the same time, many people try to stay strong for others and end up neglecting their own needs.

It is important to know that you are not alone. Being a close relative of someone who is deprived of their liberty can be a significant strain, and it is entirely natural to experience various strong – and sometimes conflicting – emotions all at the same time. You have the right to feel sad, anxious, angry, and confused. And you have the right to receive support.

When Children Are Involved

When a parent, sibling, or other important adult suddenly disappears from a child's everyday life, the child is of course affected, and sometimes in ways that are not immediately noticeable. Some children ask a lot of questions, while others become quieter than usual. Some try to be strong to avoid burdening the adults. Others are open with their emotions. Every child reacts differently, but all children are affected.

Children have the right to be told what is happening in a way they can understand. Clear, honest information tailored to the child's age and level of maturity helps them feel secure. If children are left uninformed, they may draw their own conclusions, such as believing that what has happened is their fault or something to be ashamed of. Being informed and being allowed to ask questions and express emotions – it all makes a difference.

Talking to Children About Difficult Things

Talking to children about a close family member being deprived of their liberty can be difficult. Perhaps you feel that you do not know what to say, or you may be afraid of upsetting the child even more. But children often cope better when they are informed rather than left out. They notice when something is wrong, and if adults avoid telling the truth, it can create even greater anxiety.

The most important thing is not to have all the answers, but to be honest, willing to listen, and to take the child's questions seriously. You can share what you know, explain that you do not have all the answers, and approach the conversation in stages. What matters is that the child feels included, heard and understood – even when the topic is as difficult as a deprivation of liberty. Bufff can provide support if you need help with these conversations.



The Legal Process – Step by Step

When someone is suspected of committing a crime, a legal process is put in motion. It can seem complicated, especially if you have never had dealings with the legal system before. Here is a simplified overview:

Arrest and questioning

The police can arrest a person suspected of committing a crime. The person is questioned, and the prosecutor decides whether the person should be detained.

Detention

If a person is detained, he or she can be held for up to 72 hours while the investigation is ongoing.

Remand in custody

The court decides whether the person should be remanded in custody, meaning they continue to be deprived of their liberty while awaiting trial. Sometimes, a court will also decide that a person shall have no contact with the outside world and will therefore prohibit visits and phone calls. Such constraints are called restrictions and are used to protect the interests of an investigation.

Trial:

Once the preliminary investigation is complete, the prosecutor decides whether to press charges. During the trial, the court will examine the evidence and determine guilt along with any sentence.

Judgement:

The judgement will be delivered either immediately or within a few days. It may result in a prison sentence, probation, or another type of penalty. Judgements can be appealed within three weeks.

How is the Family Affected?

When a family member is deprived of liberty, life gets disrupted. Family roles may shift, and it is common to feel stress, anxiety or loneliness – especially when you do not know what is happening.

Remand centre:

Time in a remand centre can be particularly difficult. The person in custody is often not allowed to have contact with their family due to restrictions. The uncertainty is draining, and it can feel overwhelming and lonely.

Prison:

When someone is in prison, everyone's day-to-day life is affected. The sense of loss is often particularly strong, especially for children. Permission is required to communicate with or visit the person, and visits may be monitored. The prison where a person is being detained can also be a long way away from where the child lives, which can make maintaining contact even more difficult.

Probation:

Even if a person is not imprisoned, probation can have a significant impact. Supervision, electronic tagging, or requirements to attend meetings and take tests can create uncertainty, particularly with regard to responsibilities, trust, and family roles.

Parole:

When a person is released from prison early on parole, certain rules must be followed. This can bring hope – but also anxiety, especially if the family is unsure how to return to normal life.

Deportation:

If the person is not a Swedish citizen, they may be ordered to leave the country. This can be a temporary measure or made permanent. For the family, this can cause grief, anxiety, and uncertainty about the future.

Contact With a Close Relative Who Has Been Deprived of Liberty

Maintaining contact can be a challenge – both emotionally and practically. Here are some important things to keep in mind:

Phone Calls (INTIK):

A person in prison can make calls via the Swedish Prison and Probation Service's phone system; INTIK or INTIK Play. You must give your consent to being contacted. Relatives cannot call the person themselves.

Letters

Letters can be sent via the Prison and Probation Service's internal postal system, Journalverket, even if you do not know the whereabouts of the recipient. Letters may be inspected, especially at a remand centre.

Kriminalvården
Journalverket
601 80 Norrköping

Write the recipient's name and Swedish personal identity number on the inner envelope and include your own name and Swedish personal identity number as the sender. If the person is incarcerated, the Prison and Probation Service will forward the letter; otherwise, it will be returned to you.

Visits

Visits must be approved by the Prison and Probation Service. To visit someone who is in custody, it is usually necessary to obtain permission from the prison or remand centre where the person is being held. This is done by filling out a special form and submitting it to the Prison and Probation Service. For children, consent from the custodial parent or guardian is required. Visits may be supervised (monitored) or unsupervised, depending on the security assessment.

Leave of absence:

In some cases, a person in custody may be granted a leave of absence – that is, be allowed to leave the prison for important family events or for the purpose of reintegration. If a leave of absence is granted for a person to meet his or her children, it is possible to apply to have these visits arranged at Buff.

Children's Rights When Spending Time with a Parent or Relative in Custody

Children are entitled to stay in contact with a parent – even one who is deprived of liberty – as long as it is in the child's best interests. Contact can be important for the child's sense of security and coherence.

In some cases, a court will decide that contact should take place through, for example, visits or calls. The child's needs will be taken into account, and contact may be supported or supervised.

Contact can take place by means of visits, phone calls, letters or video calls. Visits often require permission from the Prison and Probation Service and consent from the child's legal guardian.

Visiting a remand centre or prison can arouse strong emotions. Children need preparation, support, and an opportunity to talk beforehand and afterward. Remember that, in this context, it is the child who has the right to see their parent, not the parent who is entitled to have contact with the child.

Preparation can involve explaining to the child what conditions will be like, what rules apply, what will happen during the visit, and how long it will last. They can look at pictures or videos in advance, such as the ones provided by the Prison and Probation Service's child-friendly website, Insidan. It is also important that the child is given opportunity to ask questions, express their feelings, and that they understand that it is okay to feel both happiness, anxiety, and hesitation about the visit.

Scan the QR code to access Insidan, or visit www.insidan.kriminalvarden.se





About Bufff

When a close family member is deprived of their liberty, the whole family is affected; but children are often impacted the most. It is common to feel anxiety, grief, anger, confusion, and shame. Many children hold on to questions they do not dare to ask, thoughts they do not want to voice, or feelings that are difficult to put into words. Many adults also feel inadequate in trying to cope with everything alone. That is why Bufff exists – so that no family has to go through this on their own.

Bufff is a children's rights organisation that supports children, young people and their families when a member of the family is deprived of their liberty. We know how difficult it can be when someone important to you is suddenly no longer there, how daily life is turned upside down and emotions run wild. We are here to listen, provide support, and help families through a difficult time.

We offer a broad range of individually tailored support services that meet the needs of the whole family. In addition to providing support, we work to raise awareness and to influence policymakers to ensure that children's rights are upheld. We have extensive experience supporting children and adults in these situations, and we know that it is possible to find strength, hope and a sense of security, even when life feels chaotic. The support we provide is always free of charge, optional, and centred on the child's needs.

Bufff works to ensure that children can simply be children, as is their right.

What Buff Can Do

Buff offers both emotional and practical support to families who are going through a difficult time. Such support can include:

- **Counselling** – for children, young people and adults, both individually and in groups. Buff offers counselling and support grounded on human kindness. We do not provide treatment or therapy. Conversations with us are not documented, and they take place entirely on your terms. You decide what the conversation will be about and how much, if anything, you want to share.
- **Safe meeting spaces** – where children and other young people can meet others who are in a similar situation.
- **Children and youth groups** – where children and young people can meet others who have similar circumstances.
- **Family activities and camps** – to build relationships, create a break from everyday stress, and bring joy.
- **Information and guidance** – to build relationships, create a break from everyday stress, and bring joy.
- **Support for relatives** – to build relationships, create a break from everyday stress, and bring joy.
- **Support in contact with other services** – including schools, social services or the probation service, if you would like help in this area.
- **Support via phone, email, or anonymous online chat** – you decide what you want to share.

We work with the whole family – the child, the legal guardian, and in some cases also the person in custody – but we always put the child's best interests first.

What Buff Cannot Do

All of Buff's work is centred on the situation and needs of the child. We always put the child first. However, our mandate is limited, which means there are things we are not able or not permitted to do. For example:

- We do not take part in legal proceedings
- We do not make decisions regarding custody, contact, or living arrangements
- We do not assess guilt or innocence
- We do not deal with immigration issues
- We do not keep records that could be used in legal contexts
- We do not provide financial support or legal advice
- We do not have access to confidential information from the authorities

We are, however, bound by confidentiality, and what you share with us stays with us – unless you decide otherwise.

Buff is here to listen, provide support, and help. You do not have to be alone, whether you are a child, a teenager or an adult. We are here to create a sense of security when life feels unsteady, and to help you feel that there is a “we”, even when your world feels most fragmented.

Would You Like to Know More?

In our Anhörigbok guide for family members, you can read more about all of this and much more.

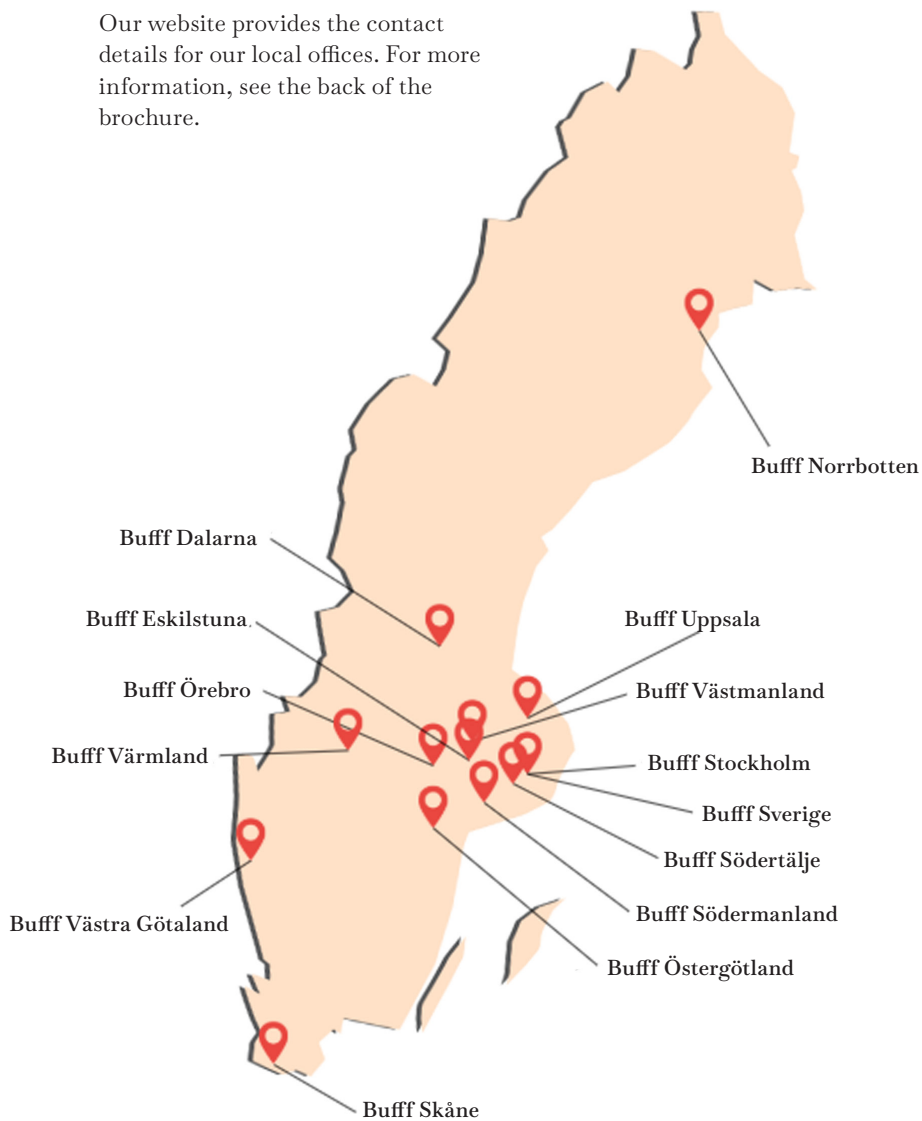
Scan the QR code to access the guide digitally, or contact Bufff to have a copy sent to you. Our contact details can be found on the last page.



The guide for family members is a support resource from Bufff. It contains easy-to-understand information on how the legal process works, children's rights, emotional reactions, how to maintain contact with a relative in custody, and where to turn for support. The guide also highlights children's perspectives, frequently asked questions and common misunderstandings, and provides practical tips for coping during a difficult time.

Where to Find Bufff

Our website provides the contact details for our local offices. For more information, see the back of the brochure.



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Prästgårdsgränd 2
125 44 Älvsjö

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Copy editor:

Selene Cortes

Editor and content:

Alejandra Castaneda

Illustrations and layout

Rajmonda Rexhi

Do you need additional support and advice?

Switchboard: 08-501 293 10

Email: info@bufff.se

Support line: 020-200 330

Chat: www.bufff.se/chatt

Home page: www.bufff.se

Local branches:

www.bufff.se/kontakt

Address: Prästgårdsgränd 2,
124 55 Älvsjö



Bufff.Sverige



BufffSverige



Bufff Sverige



We provide support for and give a voice to children and young people who have a parent or family member in prison, a remand centre, or on probation.