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Inmate Marriages

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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<th>Inmate Marriages</th>
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Inmate Marriages

Reference Number: CTAS-2198


•  [W]hen a prison regulation impinges on inmates' constitutional rights, the regulation is valid if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests. In our view, such a standard is necessary if “prison administrators ... and not the courts, [are] to make the difficult judgments concerning institutional operations.”

•  Id. 107 S.Ct. at 2261, quoting *713 Jones v. North Carolina Prisoners' Union, 433 U.S. 119, 128, 97 S.Ct. 2532, 2539, 53 L.Ed.2d 629 (1977); see also id. 107 S.Ct. at 2267. The Court upheld in Turner a Missouri regulation restricting inmate-to-inmate correspondence, 107 S.Ct. at 2263–64, and stated that an inmate's marriage is indeed “subject to substantial restrictions as a result of incarceration,” id. at 2265, although the restrictions imposed must be “reasonably related to legitimate penological objectives,” id. at 2267, including "legitimate security concerns.” Id. at 2266.

•  The D.C. Circuit noted that while Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 107 S.Ct. 2254, 96 L.Ed.2d 64 (1987), held impermissible a prison regulation effecting an “almost complete ban” on marriage by inmates, FN4 the Supreme Court nonetheless reiterated:

  ◦  [W]hen a prison regulation impinges on inmates' constitutional rights, the regulation is valid if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests. In our view, such a standard is necessary if "prison administrators ... and not the courts, [are] to make the difficult judgments concerning institutional operations.”

Allman v. Motley Not Reported in S.W.3d, 2007 WL 1723373 Ky.App.,2007.  As stated in Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 89, 107 S.Ct. 2254, 2261, 96 L.Ed.2d 64 (1987), "when a prison regulation impinges on inmates' constitutional rights, the regulation is valid if it is reasonably related to legitimate penological interests.” Thus, “legitimate security concerns may require placing reasonable restrictions upon an inmate's right to marry, and may justify requiring approval of the superintendent.” Id., 482 U.S. at 97, 107 S.Ct. at 2266.  The court indicated that a reasonable restriction might be one such as that provided by 28 CFR § 551.10 (1986), which the court described as generally permitting inmate marriage unless the “warden finds that it presents a threat to security or order of institution, or to public safety.” Id. 482 U.S. at 98, 107 S.Ct. at 2266.

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