

# San Vittore ICAM - Italy

## Introduction

San Vittore ICAM (Istituto a Custodia Attenuata per Madri detenute) is the first open detention facility for mothers with children established in Italy. Located in the city centre of Milan, in the northern part of the country, the ICAM operates under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice and is managed by the Department of Penitentiary Administration (DAP), in coordination with local social services and regional healthcare authorities. Although institutionally linked to the San Vittore prison, with which it shares staff and management, the ICAM is situated in a separate building and functions according to a distinct set of principles tailored to the presence of children.

The ICAM model was formally recognized by Law No. 62/2011 and is based on a family-like, community-oriented approach to detention. These facilities were created with the dual purpose of supporting incarcerated mothers and safeguarding the well-being and development of their children. They aim to maintain the continuity of the parental relationship while ensuring that minors receive adequate external stimulation and care. At present, there are four functioning ICAMs in Italy: San Vittore (Milan), Venezia Giudecca, Lauro, and Torino.

## Scale

The San Vittore ICAM has an official capacity of nine places.

### RESCALED-principles in practice:

- Small-scale
- Differentiation
- Community-integration

## Differentiation

### *Target group:*

The ICAM is intended for pregnant women or mothers with young children, specifically, those with children under the age of six during the pre-trial phase and under the age of ten during the execution of a sentence. When there are no overriding reasons to hold a woman in a standard prison, judges may order that pre-trial detention or sentence execution take place in an ICAM. This option is generally reserved for women who do not pose a significant risk of reoffending or attempting to escape. The ICAM is therefore designed for individuals assessed as low-risk and in need of specific support due to their caregiving responsibilities. Placement decisions are made by judicial authorities, taking into account the best interests of the child, the woman's behaviour, and the circumstances of the case.

### *Forms of security:*

Security at San Vittore ICAM is based on a combination of static, procedural, and relational elements. While certain physical and procedural safeguards are in place, such as access controls and institutional protocols, the approach is distinctly oriented toward creating an environment of trust and care. Although the concept of relational security is not formally applied, the nature of the facility and the practices of the staff are intentionally designed to encourage a climate that differs significantly from that of a traditional prison. The atmosphere is notably calm, and no critical incidents have been reported. In cases of serious rule violations, the most severe disciplinary response is a formal warning.

The management and staffing of the ICAM are shared with the San Vittore prison complex. Within the ICAM, the team includes a juridical-pedagogical officer, five educators provided by the municipality, and one educator responsible for healthcare coordination. In addition, several volunteers contribute regularly by organizing activities for children. The facility is deliberately arranged to resemble a prison as little as possible.

### *Activities:*

Life inside the ICAM is markedly different from other penitentiary institutions. The incarcerated women can move freely within the facility, and the rules they must follow mainly pertain to the proper management of spaces and domestic life. From Monday to Friday, the children attend kindergarten from 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. The afternoons are dedicated to activities carried out together with the mothers and educators. On weekends, the children go out on Saturdays, thanks to support provided by volunteers. In some cases the surveillance judge authorizes incarcerated women to participate in certain events (e.g., school plays, Mother's Day celebrations). The kindergarten teachers periodically visit the ICAM to hold meetings with the mothers of the children. Every week, there is a meeting between operators and detained women to discuss issues, raise concerns, and gather proposals for new activities. The recreational activities offered include courses in music, theater, dance, and film forums. The children can benefit from pet therapy programs. The educational offer mainly includes literacy courses and middle school education, undertaken after an initial evaluation test. For what concerns employability, one of the most common jobs is for women to work for the prison administration, alternating in two-week shifts between kitchen work, cleaning the premises, and activities in the registry. The monthly salary each earns varies between 300 and 500 euros, depending on the activities performed.

A "typical day" is structured as follows:

- 8:30 AM – 3:30 PM: children at kindergarten, mothers working/studying
- 4:00 PM – 5:00 PM: children's snack time with their mothers

- Evening: activities and dinner
- 9:00 PM: children go to bed
- 11:30 PM – 12:00 AM: TV room closes

Visits are mainly conducted in person on weekends, but exceptions are made when necessary. The six hours of total visiting time provided by the penitentiary regulations are managed flexibly when needed.

## **Community-integration**

### *Location and architecture:*

San Vittore ICAM is located in the city center of Milan, in a residential area surrounded by apartment buildings and easily accessible by public transport. The facility resembles a nursing home rather than a prison, with bright interiors, spacious rooms and several common areas designed to create a welcoming atmosphere.

The ICAM is housed in a large apartment that used to serve as office space for the public administration. The structural condition of the building is generally good, although the administration has identified that various renovation works are required, including the replacement of the plumbing and windows to improve energy efficiency. This modernization work has been delayed due to complications with the lease, which are reportedly close to being resolved.

The layout of the facility follows a long corridor along which there are four bedrooms. Each room is spacious, well-lit and comfortably furnished, with room for two to three beds for mothers and their children. At the time of the visit, three rooms were occupied for single use, each with a mother and child, while the fourth room served as a medical isolation room when needed. The rooms are equipped with new mattresses, high-quality furniture and air conditioning.

### *Interaction with the community:*

San Vittore ICAM maintains an active partnership with the Associazione CIAO, which operates a protected family home for incarcerated mothers and their children. This collaboration offers an important point of referral for women who are eligible to continue their sentence in alternative forms of detention.

The ICAM model was established to provide a less punitive environment than traditional prisons, with particular attention to supporting the mother-child relationship in a setting designed to be more domestic and nurturing. While children are regularly accompanied outside the facility, for

example, to attend nursery school, opportunities for mothers to engage in community-based activities remain limited. In some cases, judicial authorities may grant temporary leave for special events, such as school performances. Additionally, nursery school staff periodically visit the facility to meet with the mothers. Although direct contact between mothers and the wider community is relatively restricted, the ICAM continues to prioritise internal programming and external partnerships aimed at supporting both maternal responsibilities and child development within a stable and supportive setting.

#### San Vittore ICAM

Founded: 2006

Capacity: 9

Autonomy level: Restricted level of autonomy

Nearest city: Milan (Italy)

Nature of interaction:

Visited by Antigone (February 2024)

#### Publicity/ read more

- Antigone's report on the San Vittore ICAM:  
Antigone. (n.d.). *ICAM Milano San Vittore*. Rapporto Antigone. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://www.rapportoantigone.it/primo-rapporto-sulle-donne-detenute-in-italia/icam-milano-san-vittore/>
- Updated presences in Italian ICAMs, data from the Ministry of Justice:  
Ministero della Giustizia. (n.d.). *Presenze negli ICAM*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from [https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg\\_1\\_14\\_1.page?contentId=SST1415281](https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.page?contentId=SST1415281)
- Legal reform processes that lead to ICAM and other measures for mothers deprived of liberty in Italy:  
Antigone. (n.d.). *Gli Istituti a Custodia Attenuata per detenute madri (ICAM)*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from [https://www.antigone.it/upload/Gli\\_Istituti\\_Custodia\\_Attenuata\\_per\\_detenute\\_Madri.pdf](https://www.antigone.it/upload/Gli_Istituti_Custodia_Attenuata_per_detenute_Madri.pdf)
- Legal frameworks in European countries concerning mothers in prison and their children:  
Children of Prisoners Europe. (n.d.). *The treatment of mothers in prison and their children: The situation in Europe and beyond*. Retrieved June 23, 2025, from <https://childrenofprisoners.eu/the-treatment-of-mothers-in-prison-and-their-children-the-situation-in-europe-and-beyond/>