



Prison Families Alliance

Best Practices: Tips on how to approach and talk to prison staff respectfully and effectively

- 1. Know Who to Contact:** Ensure you have the correct department and person aligned with addressing your concern.
- 2. Be Polite and Respectful:** Always address prison staff with courtesy and respect. Use "please" and "thank you," and address them by their titles (e.g., Officer, Sergeant) to show respect for their roles.
- 3. Be Clear and Concise:** Clearly state your purpose and the information you need. Avoid rambling or going off-topic.
- 4. Stay Calm:** Keep your emotions in check, even if you're feeling frustrated or upset. A calm demeanor can help facilitate a more productive conversation.
- 5. Listen Actively:** Pay attention to what the staff member is saying. Acknowledge their responses and show that you are listening.
- 6. Be Prepared:** Have all necessary documents and information ready before you approach prison staff. This demonstrates that you respect their time and are serious about your concerns.

Best Practices: continued



Communication Strategies: Ensuring Your Concerns Are Heard and Addressed

- 1. Use "I" Statements:** Frame your concerns using "I" statements to avoid sounding accusatory. For example, "I am concerned about my loved one's health" rather than "You are not taking care of my loved one's health."
- 2. Stay Solution-Focused:** Offer potential solutions or ask for suggestions rather than just highlighting problems. This approach shows that you are willing to work together to resolve issues.
- 3. Ask Open-Ended Questions:** Encourage dialogue by asking questions that require more than a yes or no answer. For example, "What can we do to improve my loved one's situation?"
- 4. Acknowledge Their Efforts:** Recognize and appreciate the efforts of prison staff. This can help build a cooperative relationship.
- 5. Follow-Up:** If your concern is not immediately resolved, ask about the next steps and follow up as needed.

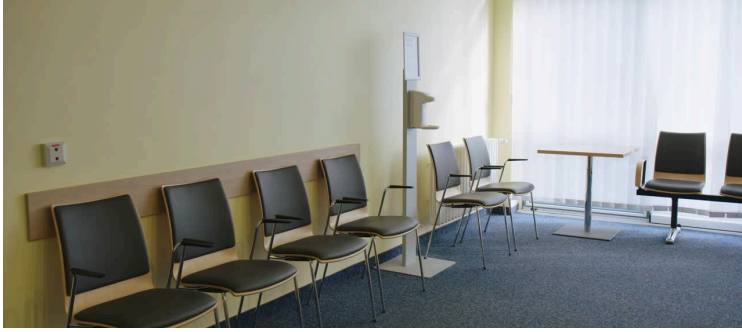
Do's and Don'ts: Key Points to Avoid Negative Impact:

Do's:

- Do BREATHE - take a few deep breaths before talking to prison staff.
- Do remain respectful and courteous at all times.
- Do express your concerns calmly and rationally.
- Do be clear and specific about what you are asking or need.
- Do show appreciation for any assistance or information provided.
- Do follow proper channels and procedures when addressing issues.

Don'ts:

- Don't raise your voice or become confrontational.
- Don't make accusations or blame the staff.
- Don't use threatening language or behavior.
- Don't bring up unrelated issues or grievances.
- Don't bypass official procedures to get immediate results.



Documentation

Documentation: Maintaining Clear Records of Interactions

- 1. Take Notes:** Write down the date, time, and names of the prison staff you spoke with, along with the key points discussed.
- 2. Keep Copies:** Maintain copies of all written communications, including emails, letters, and any responses received.
- 3. Record Follow-Up Actions:** Document any follow-up actions or commitments made by the staff, including deadlines and expected outcomes.
- 4. Organize Your Records:** Keep all documents and notes organized in a dedicated folder or digital file for easy reference.
- 5. Summarize Conversations:** After each interaction, write a brief summary of the conversation, including any agreed-upon next steps or resolutions.

By following these guidelines, you can make your interactions with prison staff respectful, effective, and productive, ultimately supporting the well-being of your loved one.

For more information, contact:

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