

## Ground Rules: Common Prison Security Procedures and Policies

The following procedures and policies are common in most prisons. There may also be additional procedures you need to follow in a specific prison you enter, so check beforehand with the prison chaplain.

### Working in the prison context

- All visitors are subject to a bag search and/or a search of outer clothing at any time (please be prepared). Staff sensitivity is assured should this be undertaken.
- Visitors and Volunteers are required to have photographic ID; a driving license or passport is recommended.
- While in prison, an appropriate Visitor's Badge will be worn at all times.
- **TAKE NOTHING IN AND BRING NOTHING OUT** (unless you have spoken to authorities in advance). This includes letters from prisoners, including letters to you. Any letter addressed to you from a prisoner must be given to the authorities to be read. (Official letter-writing schemes do not expect individuals to carry the letters out of the prison for prisoners.) This also includes verbal information. Do not carry verbal messages between prisoners or between prisoners in different prisons.
- DON'T make phone calls on behalf of prisoners, or allow them to use an office phone, no matter how sorry their story. Direct them to the relevant authority instead.
- DON'T take phones, cameras, any electronic device, or anything on the local prison's banned list into the prison. If you realize that you have inadvertently carried an item through, explain to the authorities. Do not try to conceal your mistake.
- DON'T give your address, phone number, email address, or anything that could identify your locality to a prisoner. Don't tell prisoners what church you go to, unless the chaplain thinks this is appropriate. (If you tell someone what church you go to, they know how to find you.)
- DON'T ask prisoners personal questions. In particular, don't ask them what their offense was.
- DO think before you share information. Be honest, but don't make yourself vulnerable emotionally or regarding personal security.
- DON'T carry lists of prisoners outside the prison.
- DON'T discuss prisoners with people outside the prison, except in very general terms and anonymously. Do not inform others that a person is in prison, neither should they confirm or deny this if asked.
- If you hear any information in the prison that may be a security risk, DO tell the relevant authority immediately.
- Confidentiality is key. All parties will keep information they hear during this course confidential.
- Security is key. If prisoners reveal details of past crimes for which they have not been convicted (ie: that police do not know about), or planned future crimes, the Volunteer may have a legal obligation to inform security. (This may vary from country by country.)
- Setting ground rules gives clear boundaries and expectations to the group and gives leaders and group members authority to bring the group back to order if the need arises. Boundaries are very important in the prison context.
- DON'T make inquiries or discuss a prisoner with another prisoner.
- DON'T engage in passing verbal messages from one prisoner to another.
- Books, magazines or other items can only be forwarded to the prisoner through his Personal Property. If a volunteer wishes to provide items for a prisoner then the appropriate forms must be completed. This must be done in advance of bringing the items into the prison; when they are brought, they must be left at the Gate.
- DON'T receive goods or items from a prisoner.

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- DON'T post mail for a prisoner or give mail.
  - No money may be handed to a prisoner during a visit.
  - It is inappropriate for Volunteers to use the internet or other media to seek information about persons they are visiting in prison.
  - No excessive personal medication may be brought in to the prison.
  - If a prisoner demonstrates behavior that causes any concern (e.g. mood change) volunteers have an obligation to draw this to the attention of a chaplain or staff. Volunteers observe confidentiality about their work in prison. Conversations between a prisoner and a chaplaincy volunteer are to be regarded as private. An exception can be made in relation to any harm that a prisoner states they may cause themselves or others. Such information should be forwarded to Staff. Prisoners are advised of this (unless there is a valid reason suggesting otherwise).
  - No coercion or pressure to practice (or not to practice) a religion is permitted.
  - Volunteers will recognize that people in prison can be deeply troubled and will be aware of their own emotional response to them.
  - Empathy is good but care requires to be moderated.

### Situations to consider

*Note: Please discuss the preferred response to these scenarios with your prison leadership.*

- You hear a prisoner offer to let another prisoner use the mobile phone which he has in his cell.
- One of your group tells you that if you don't hide your coffee jar, he won't be able to stop himself taking it.
- At the end of the session, the prisoners have gone back to the common prison area and you are tidying up. You discover that the electric cable that connects the video player to the TV is missing.
- A course participant asks you to speak in private.
- A course participant asks you what your wife's name is. You avoid answering. Later he asks you what kind of car you have. You say it's red. During the following session he asks you where you live.
- One of the prisoners asks you to get a book for him.
- A prisoner asks you to write to him. He doesn't want to join a letter-writing program, which is available in your prison. He wants to write or hear from you.
- You hear two prisoners talking at breaktime about a serious incident in the common prison area, which you realize they were involved in somehow. They don't know that you have overheard them.
- You hear two prisoners talking at breaktime about a serious incident in the common prison area, which you realize that they were involved in somehow. They notice that you are standing behind them and change the subject.

It is important that volunteers have a clear understanding of how matters would progress if a volunteer was found to be in possession of unauthorized articles, including possible detention for interview by police. All volunteers will be issued with a security briefing protocol, which they will be required to formally sign, acknowledging that they have read, understood and are willing to abide by its terms. Terms include a requirement to report immediately to the governor or his/her representative any information or actions of which they may become aware during the course of their voluntary work, which may threaten the good order and/or security of the establishment.