



My Family Member Has Been Arrested What Do I Do?

This document is a step-by-step guide to help families cope with the criminal justice system in Sacramento County when a family member who suffers from a mental illness is arrested. This informational guide was written by NAMI volunteers based on their own personal experience to help families navigate the system. We are not attorneys, and this is not intended to be a substitute for professional legal advice. Please assist your family member in obtaining proper legal representation.

STEP ONE: SUPPORT YOUR RELATIVE

- If your family member/friend calls you and says that he/she has been arrested, help him/her stay calm and offer your help and support.
- If your family member/friend is being held by the authorities, remind him/her of the right to have an attorney present if being questioned by officers or detectives.
- If he/she is already at the downtown Sacramento County Jail, he/she will be screened for mental illness, as well as other health concerns, upon arrival. It is very important that they be direct and honest to benefit as much as possible from this screening process. The process includes a survey with questions regarding whether he/she has a mental illness and is taking any medications. Assure your family member that it is OK to discuss his/her physical and mental condition, diagnosis, medications, etc., with the staff conducting the screening, which includes Sheriff's registered nursing staff and Jail Psychiatric Service (JPS) staff. It is important your family member feels safe to speak openly with the mental health screeners.

STEP TWO: CONTACT THE SACRAMENTO COUNTY JAIL

- The Sacramento County Jail is downtown at 651 I Street and their website is http://www.sacsheriff.com/organization/court_&_correctional_services/main_jail/index.cfm
- **Call the main jail at 916-874-6752.** Inquire as to your relative's status and estimated length of stay at this facility. Ask if he/she is expected to be released directly from the county jail. If he/she is going to be released directly from the county jail (this sometimes occurs for minor offenses), ask for the time and place so you can be there to pick them up. Also ask for the court arraignment date and address and court department number.
- Inquire as to your family member's location (i.e. floor and unit) and, most importantly, his/her booking number, also sometimes called the "x-reference number."
- Medication will probably not be accessible until your relative is screened/processed, and the jail psychiatrist can verify and order medications. All belongings, including prescribed medications, are held at the jail and cannot be made available to your family

member or forwarded to Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS). Medications received with your relative or delivered by a family member cannot be provided to the arrested party. Jail policy prohibits this since non-prescriptive drugs could be delivered in this manner.

- Use the link on the mail jail web page at:
http://www.sacsheriff.com/organization/court_&_correctional_services/main_jail/index.cfm Use the link on the web page to access mailing instructions, visiting hours and inmate funds. Jail can be a very scary experience for someone with a mental disorder and it helps to have someone familiar and empathetic to talk to. You should visit your loved one at least once a week.
- TIP: Inmates are sometimes booked in with/without middle name. If you are unable to locate him/her, try any names your relative has used. When visiting the jail, always bring a few quarters for a locker to store your personal belongings while you visit your family member. Photo ID is also required.
- **Family Emergencies:** In case of a serious family emergency, contact the Main Jail Social Workers at 916-874-6345 or the Jail Chaplain at 916-874-7724, Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. through 3:30 p.m.

STEP THREE: COUNTY JAIL PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES (JPS)

- If they are not to be released, contact the **Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS) at 916-874-5222** (and fax information on form attached to 916-874-8183) and leave a message to inform them that your family member suffers from a mental illness, describe the diagnosis and any other concerns you might have. It's especially important to report a history of self-harm, or suicidal thoughts and behavior as well as current concerns you might have about possible suicidal thoughts or behavior. Expressions of self-harm may be revealed to family or friends, but not communicated to jail custody or clinical staff by an inmate, so it is important that you let jail staff know. Ask to be contacted by JPS staff as soon as possible – all calls are supposed to be returned by the next business day. JPS has indicated they actively take information from family members about individuals' medications, treatment histories, etc. when provided and then attempt to verify and re-start any psychiatric medications as soon as possible. JPS has an inpatient unit at the main jail as well as an outpatient unit. Patients are not sent to a psychiatric hospital.
- If there is a history or potential for other inmates to take advantage of or victimize the individual in some way you must also make this clear to jail staff so that they can take appropriate steps to place the individual in a segregated unit as appropriate and if space is available.
- It is important to understand JPS's limitation in discussing clinical information over the phone. JPS is not able to disclose information to family members unless the individual has signed a Release of Information allowing JPS to do so. Ask that JPS staff seek to obtain a Release during your first contact with them. They will not necessarily offer to do so.
- If it is an emergency situation, push "0". Calls will still be triaged, but if they do consider the situation as urgent they should respond within 24 hours.

STEP FOUR: SENDING A FAX TO JPS

- Immediately prepare a fax requesting that your relative be screened for placement by Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS). Begin this fax with your relative's:
 - Full legal name
 - Date of birth
 - Booking number
 - Location
- In the body of the fax include:
 - His/her diagnosis
 - His/her psychiatrist's name, phone number, and address
 - The medications that are prescribed for your family member by name, dosage, and time of day to be administered
 - Whether a particular medication has proven to be ineffective or has dangerous and/or uncomfortable side effects
 - Any history of suicide attempts/threats or other violent intentions in the recent past. Briefly describe the events and when they occurred.
 - Any other urgent medical conditions that might require immediate attention, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, seizures, heart problems, etc., and medications currently prescribed for those conditions. Include his/her medical doctor's name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. The medical information you provide is tremendously valuable in making an assessment and will help the mental health staff select the best treatment for your relative. There is a clear preference for maintaining effective current treatment. However, the Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS) staff must conduct its own assessment of your relative's condition and may not necessarily prescribe exactly the same medications.
- Once your relative has been booked, send the fax to 916-874-8183.
- **IMPORTANT:** Do NOT address any impending charges against your family member in this fax. Medical information only!
- Keep a copy of this fax for future reference; it will be useful if your family member must be represented by a public defender in court, or, after release, if at some point they are admitted to an acute psychiatric inpatient facility. If your family member is transferred to a different facility, you will need to fax this information again.
- On the cover page, indicate whether your relative has provided you with a written confidentiality waiver. If your relative has not previously done so, ask that he/she be asked to sign one while in jail. The Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS) staff are prohibited by law from giving **anyone** information about a client's status unless they have the client's consent, but the staff can **receive** information from relatives or friends without the client's consent.

STEP FIVE: MENTAL HEALTH COURT

- Sacramento County is considering funding a mental health court and that item will be heard at the County Supervisors meeting sometime in September 2006. NAMI strongly supports this effort and it will be a keystone of jail diversion efforts. For more information on how to support the court, check the NAMI Newsletter August and September 2006 for information on how to advocate for a mental health court.

STEP SIX: FAMILY ADVOCATE

- If you have any difficulty with this process, call Randall Hagar at (916) 233-5310 (cell). Randall is a jail liaison for NAMI Sacramento. He can provide information about arrest, booking and jail procedures as well as court processes. He can provide information about the laws governing the treatment of people with mental illness both in and out of jail and can also assist in obtaining access to attorneys for individuals who need their services.
- Don't forget to provide your family member's name, location, and booking number.

STEP SEVEN: DECIDING ON LEGAL REPRESENTATION

- Your family member may want to retain a private attorney or use the Public Defenders Office. A public defender will be assigned at arraignment if your relative does not have or cannot afford a private attorney. Do not be afraid to use a public defender. Public defenders are more familiar with the court processes, the judges and district attorney's, often have frequent first hand experience with defendants who have a mental illness than most private attorneys, and will therefore be very likely to know what legal and treatment options are available to them.
- If your family member decides to retain a private attorney, be sure to select one that is well versed in helping people with mental illness and understands how to access the treatment facilities and mental health services that are available.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

- **Bail:** Think carefully about posting bail for your family member. No one wants a loved one to remain incarcerated for any length of time. It is an unpleasant experience for them as well as the family. However, you must ask yourself the following question. Will your family member be able to comply with the terms of the bail and appear in court when required? Also, as hard as it may seem, jail may be a safer place for a person with severe mental illness who is in crisis rather than having your loved one wander the streets with no help at all. At least in jail they will be fed, will have shelter, and be given access to medication treatments.
- **Working with an attorney:** Public Defenders (PDs) are extremely busy and do not have much time to take or return phone calls. Often PDs will not know that they have been assigned to a particular individual's case until very shortly before a first court appearance. Do not assume that the initial court file has any reference to your family member's mental illness in it. If a public defender has not been assigned or you can't obtain that information it is still important to share the written medical history information that you also have provided to JPS. The only reliable way to do this is to plan to attend the first court hearing if you are able and to deliver your written document to the PD. Arrive early. Bailiffs (Sheriff's Deputies assigned to a particular court room) can assist you in passing along written information to PDs, and even having a brief word immediately before hearings. PDs appreciate written or faxed correspondence. Remember, it is the inmate, not you, who is his client. A private attorney will grant you more time, but remember you are paying for that access. Provide the attorney with an extensive

medical/psychiatric/social/educational history of your family member in writing. This information will be very useful in pursuing the best outcome for your loved one.

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

Jail Psychiatric Services (JPS)

Main Phone: 916-874-5222

Director: Paul Hendricks e-mail: hendricksp@saccounty.net

Medical Director: Gregory Sokolov e-mail: sokolovg@saccounty.net

Federal Defender

Phone: 916-498-5700

Chief Assistant Federal Defender: Leigh Opferman

E-mail: Leigh_Opferman@fd.org

Supporting and coping with a loved one who suffers from a mental illness can be extremely challenging and stressful. Knowledge, as well as your love and fortitude, will be essential in helping you to become a strong and effective support system for your family member. For information about support groups and educational programs provided free of charge in your area, contact NAMI-the Nation's Voice on Mental Illness at 916-874-9416 or go to the website at www.namisacramento.org.

This document was last updated in July of 2006. If any of this information is inaccurate or in need of updates, please send your feedback to:

NAMI-Sacramento, P.O. Box 2154, Fair Oaks, CA 95628

Phone: (916) 874-9416, FAX: (916) 875-5807

Email: office@namisacramento.org

INMATE MEDICATION INFORMATION FORM

INMATE INFORMATION

FULL LEGAL NAME OF INMATE: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

DOB: _____

BOOKING _____

JAIL LOCATION: _____ FLOOR: _____

FAMILY CONTACT INFORMATION

FAMILY CONTACT NAME: _____ RELATIONSHIP _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

DAYTIME PHONE: _____ EVENING PHONE: _____

CONTACT SIGNATURE:

X _____

PSYCHIATRIST/TREATMENT FACILITY INFORMATION

PSYCHIATRIST/LAST TREATMENT FACILITY: _____ DATE LAST TREATED: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

PHONE: _____ FAX: _____

MEDICAL INFORMATION

DIAGNOSIS: _____

DAYTIME MEDICATIONS: _____

NIGHTTIME MEDICATIONS: _____

PRIOR ADVERSE MEDICATION EFFECTS (i.e. side effects, allergies, poor efficacy): _____

IS SUICIDE A CONCERN? NO _____ YES _____ IF YES, WHY? _____

OTHER MEDICAL CONCERNS: _____

MEDICAL DOCTOR'S NAME: _____ OFFICE PHONE: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

JAIL PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES (JPS)

EITHER CALL THIS INFORMATION IN TO JPS AT (916) 874-5222 OR FAX THIS FORM TO 916-874-8183