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When a Prisoner Needs Care: Tools For Effective Advocacy and Better Outcomes

1. Get Informed
2. Work Together
3. Make Yourself Heard
4. Keep Good Records
5. Pursue Alternative Routes



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1. Get Informed

- I. Know the Prisoner's Situation. Get Documentation.
 - ✓ Diagnosis, Recent Evaluations
 - ✓ Prescription information
 - ✓ Recent Treatment Records, Current Provider
- II. Know the Detention Facility
 - ✓ System to Notify Prison/Jail
[CDCR: cphcs.ca.gov/contact.aspx](http://CDCR.cphcs.ca.gov/contact.aspx)
 - ✓ Contact person (e.g., an "ADA Coordinator")
 - ✓ Jail Policies
- III. Other Helpful Things to Know
 - ✓ Is there a pending class action lawsuit?
 - ✓ Criminal Defense Attorney/Public Defender

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2. Work Together


- ✓ Get on the Same Page, Inside & Out – BE ONE VOICE.
 - What does the Prisoner Need/Want?
 - What are the Priorities?
- ✓ Have the Prisoner sign an Authorization for Release of Information to allow the prison/jail staff to share info.
- ✓ Encourage the prisoner to use the Administrative Remedy process. ("File a Grievance")
 - Prisoners are expected to try to resolve problems informally with jail/prison staff first.
 - "Exhaustion" of administrative remedy process is required for bringing a lawsuit later.



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3. Make Yourself Heard


- ✓ **WRITE A LETTER.**
 - **Direct letter to Medical Care Supervisor. Copy to the Warden or the Director of the facility.**
 - **Present the facts.** Describe problem, propose solutions.
 - **Be specific.** History of condition, diagnosis, how long, previous requests. Provide documentation.
 - **Convey your deep concern** and your relationship with the prisoner.
 - **Ask for a written response.**
- ✓ **GET THE OUTSIDE TREATMENT PROVIDER INVOLVED.**



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4. Keep Good Records

- ✓ **Keep a Notebook.** Write down everything.
- ✓ **Keep Track** of the dates of events and the names and phone numbers of people you speak with.
- ✓ **Get information from the prisoner.** Ask for a written description of the problem, including dates and the names of those who may have more information (jail/prison staff, other inmates, outside treatment providers).
- ✓ **Keep a Copy of Everything.**
 - All Documentation you give to the jail/prison. Track who you gave the documentation to (or how you sent it) with dates.
 - All Responses from jail/prison.
 - All Letters to/from the outside treatment provider.
 - All Grievances and Institution Responses (from Prisoner).



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5. Pursue Alternative Strategies

- ✓ Work with the Criminal Defense Attorney/Public Defender.
- ✓ Consult with or Hire a Civil Attorney.
- ✓ Send letter to relevant local officials – Sheriff, Warden, elected officials.
- ✓ Contact State Representatives or Congressperson.
- ✓ Media.
- ✓ Use Established Standards:
 - CDCR Receiver's Inmate Medical Services Policies & Procedures cphcs.ca.gov/imspp.aspx
 - ABA Criminal Justice Standards on Treatment of Prisoners (*available online*)

