

MY ARRESTED FAMILY MEMBER HAS A MENTAL ILLNESS WHAT DO I DO?

Step 1. Support Your Relative

- If your family member/friend calls you and says that they have been arrested, help them stay calm and let them know you are there to help.
- Remind them that they have a right to have an attorney present if being questioned by police officers or detectives.
- Tell them that they can expect to be interviewed by Jail medical and mental health staff. Let them know that it is OK for them to discuss their physical and mental condition, diagnosis, medications, etc. It is important that they feel safe to speak openly on these topics.

Step 2. Contact the Jail

- Call the County Main Jail at: 805-654-3335 and ask for the court arraignment date and address, the booking number, the location of your family member, and the dates and times when visits are permitted.
- **IMPORTANT NOTE:** if you know or suspect that your family member had recent suicide attempts or thoughts or he/she is currently considering it, call the County Jail where your family member is retained and ask to speak with the Watch Commander. Give the Watch Commander all the information you have.

Step 3. Contact the Jail Medical Department

- Call: 805-654-3346 and ask to speak with the Manager or a Mental Health Nurse in the County Jail Medical Department. After business hours, ask to speak with the booking or Special Housing Nurse. **IMPORTANT:** Due to patient confidentiality laws, the staff will not be able to give you information about your family member's medical or mental condition without a signed consent, but they are able to obtain information from you.

Step 4. Send a Fax

- Prepare a fax requesting that your relative be screened for placement in the mental health unit. Head 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; Their psychiatric's name, phone number, and address.**
- Indicate the medications that are prescribed for your family member by name, dosage, and time of day to be administered.
 - Note if a particular medication has proven to be ineffective, or has dangerous and/or uncomfortable side effects.
 - Note if a suicide attempt is a possibility or if there are any other serious concerns
 - Describe any other serious concerns
 - Describe any other urgent medical conditions, apart from mental illness, that might require immediate attention such as diabetes, high blood pressure, seizures, heart problems, etc. and the necessary medications to be given. Include their medical doctor's name, address, and phone number for verification purposes.
 - **IMPORTANT NOTE: 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. If your family member is transferred to a different facility you will need to fax this information again. Before faxing, please call (805) 654-3346 and ask for the corresponding fax numbers.
 - 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.

Step 5. The Office of Patient's Rights

- The Office Patient's Rights can be contacted at (805) 477-5731. This office provides assistance for the following reasons:
- County jails are required to make mental health treatment services available to all inmates who need their services.
- Educate family members on the requirements of detention facilities regarding mentally ill inmates and if during detention, the inmate is transferred to a psychiatric facility, all patient's rights apply while in the psychiatric facility.