

PRISON OUTREACH GUIDELINES



1. Please arrive on time for your assignment. We are on the prison's timetable and need to be respectful of their wishes.
2. Prison officials are to be obeyed at all times. Do not make jokes with them about security issues. We need to demonstrate that we are serious about our responsibility and respect their responsibility to maintain order and security.
3. Be willing to "go with the flow." Often, we have to make last minute schedule changes to comply with count times, meal times or other prison programs. Stay flexible.
4. Feel free to share your personal testimony and the Gospel with those who ask, but do not "badger" anyone who does not seem receptive. You can ask to pray with them. Do not engage in an argument with any inmate. We are there to share the love of Jesus and to let inmates know that He has a plan for their lives.
5. Never criticize any specific denomination or religion. Stay positive and focus on scripture references. For example, do not tell people of other faith that they are going to hell. Some inmates of other religions may try to start arguments or comparison conversations. Always use the Bible as your source, and if you can, ask to pray with them.
6. Do not bring cameras, tape recorders, large amounts of money, pocketknives, cigarettes, lighters, beepers, and cell phones into prison. If you need to make special provisions to have one of these, please notify the volunteer coordinator *before* the day trip.
7. Do not give anything to any inmate other than approved Christian literature. Do not give them your home address, phone number, money, food, etc. Do not under any circumstance mail letters or send messages for the inmates. If in doubt on how to answer an inmate, contact the prison ministry director.
8. When authorized, please mingle and talk with the inmates. Being friendly can open doors to share the Gospel. Be a good listener.
9. Do not question inmates about the specifics of their crime, sentence or record. They may choose to share this information, but counselors should not try to find out. Also, do not engage in conversation about the corruption of the correctional system or the downfalls of their facility.
10. Do not assume that you are welcome into an inmate's cell. Always knock and be courteous, just as you would at anyone's home. Ask permission before you enter or sit.
11. Don't attempt to "super spiritualize" your lifestyle. Praying "pretty" prayers and using "churchy" language doesn't go very far with inmates. Be real with them and let God be seen in you. Don't assume that they know basic Christian principles or lingo.