



Texas Prisons Community Advocates

General Tips for Advocating for your Loved Ones inside TDCJ

1. DOCUMENT EVERYTHING!!!

- You need to Keep a TDCJ journal
- Your LO should daily log, and or journal
 - We recommend a hardback cover that's bound together, so there are no loose pages.
 - Document **ALL** of your communication with TDCJ and/or medical staff.
 - Be sure to include
 - **WHO** you spoke to
 - **TIME** and **DATE** you spoke with them
 - **WHAT** the conversation consisted of
 - and of course your **PURPOSE/WHY** for calling them.
- Encourage and express the importance of you Loved One to start a journal as well.
 - *But just beware that sometimes journals are taken during shakedowns, etc.*

2. Copies - Maintain copies of everything

- We suggest **3** copies of everything;
 - 1 is the original one for court if you plan to get that far
 - 1 copy for your records
 - 1 copy for your own record.
- Your Loved One can purchase CARBON PAPER at the commissary, \$2 for ten sheets.
- Your Loved One can also make copies at the "law library" for 10 cents a copy.
- When needed you may want to have you Loved One mail the copies to you certified or place in their "property" for you to pick up at your next visit.

3. I-60'S -Forms that your Loved One turns in at the unit whenever he/she has a request. (See Copy available in our TPCA Facebook group FILE section and website)

- Your Loved One should request these forms from the Duty Officer at their unit.
- When turning in the I-60...
 - If possible, have your Loved One place the I-60 in a receiving box that has a camera pointing towards it.
 - Tell them to wave at the camera.
 - Have them let you know **exactly which box** it was placed in and the **time** and **date** that they did it.

4. **Grievance** (*For more detailed information on Grievances and Grievance Forms please see our Facebook FILE section and our trainings*)

- The purpose of the grievance is to officially complain about some form of injustice, such as a violation of policy or law, or to let the administration know that certain conditions of confinement, or actions by another are unacceptable
 - **Unless your Loved One advocates for themselves, TDCJ is NOT going to let you advocate for them effectively. So, filing a grievance is an important step.**
 - Your love ones need to file a Step 1 Grievance. If they do not receive a response from their Step 1 grievance or an adequate response, they need to file a Step 2 Grievance. See Offender Handbook for specifics on the Grievance process
https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Offender_Orientation_Handbook_English.pdf?token=AWzkSdHAFwd1lczPTYSOiGFCHNAUMNO9tnNtvjegl0r5hQEopNjMpu2nvPWIkOP_ZIRv6m89DPKjW_Q9i1B1LlotCMsuuEPJgOWOCqhbBZ567alnrtWcJ_q19j8RebiPF7n-QM1C6Sw4iCFlzVm-emY
- **Grievance forms and instructions on how to use them are available from staff in each housing area or at the law library.**
 - Step 1 Grievance – You always need a paper trail to show as proof that you filed a grievance and the response you were given.
 - Step 2 Grievance – If your Loved One doesn't receive a response from their step 1 grievance or they receive an inadequate response, they need to file a step 2 grievance.
- **The first thing TDCJ administration and/or an attorney will ask is “did your loved one file a grievance.” In the long run, getting it done is better than not getting it done.**
- If your Loved One has an “urgent” medical concern, and needs medical attention immediately, be sure to tell them to file a grievance if possible while you are simultaneously pursuing other options. *Please see our Document on Medical Advocacy see our Facebook FILE section and website)*
- When turning in the Grievance...
 - If possible, have your Loved One place the Grievance in a receiving box that has a camera pointing towards it.
 - Tell them to wave at the camera.
 - Have them let you know **exactly which box** it was placed in and the **time** and **date** that they did it.
- Good reference - grievance book by Terri Leclerc is on amazon please refer to the links below for more specifics on the grievance process.

https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/arm/res_grievance.htm

https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/.../Offender_Grievance_pamphlet_English.tx

https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/divisions/cmhc/complaint_process.html

5. **Familiarize yourself with**

- **The “Disciplinary Rules and Procedures”**
https://lookaside.fbsbx.com/file/Disciplinary_Rules_and_Procedures_for_Offenders_English.pdf?token=AWwfEYhyWUQ5o4GUecwTQVasyxLcEOAigvWF7vva6P9hFn541TB_XG7g0FN4lLoTcMm2euUo4Kz1LLvPuEp5wXIZ1ktCH3H-OWv66EFLxIO6_FsjxF9LzNc2qjQ_V3G7f0f2wglcBEND4n_FqITeYP8AS

- TDCJ Website <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/>
- TDCJ Chain of Command (you can find this on their website or in our Facebook files)

6. Writing/Emails/Phone calls/In person meeting

- Always try to solve issues on unit level first.
 - Send an email to the warden and/or call, or ask to meet in person.
- Call the Regional Director
- If the problem can't be solved on unit level send an email to the ombudsman "CC" up the chain of command within TDCJ administration and board members. (*You use our list from our Facebook FILES section-We are trying to keep that list current however TDCJ changes are made frequently check back for updates*)
- Standard email format is (See our Facebook FILES section-for sample letters)
 - TDCJ – First Name.Last Name@tdcj.texas.gov
 - TDCJ Board - First Name.Last Name@tbcj.texas.gov
- Now remember to be nice and don't play the blaming game because that never works just explain to the warden your concerns tell them that you are aware of the _____policy and right now that is being broken.
 - Explain your concerns and ask how the problem can be fixed.
 - If you chose a phone call, always follow it up in writing.
 - Type a recap of your conversation in an email or letter and send to the person you spoke to verifying your conversation.
- Record your phone calls
 - Get **names, dates** and the **subject matter in writing !!**
 - Good terms to use are "deliberately indifferent", "reckless disregard for a serious medical condition," "negligence," "malfeasance", deficient", and if you refer to the penal code, looking at statutory violations look at "deadly conduct", "abuse of official capacity," official oppression (if they give him a case over medical) and go read sec. 39.04 deprivation of rights under color of law by a person at a correctional facility. Very liberal in who can be held criminally liable even for taking privileges. However, before using these terms, make sure you understand their meanings and definitions. Depending on how each one is used, they can be very serious accusations.
- You may also want to "cc" OR add to the main correspondence line the media, legislators, TDCJ Board members, and other organizations.
- Send certified mail, return receipt requested. Once the recipient signs for it, they have officially been served.
- Contacting outside agencies –
 - MEDIA
 - Make sure you have factual information NOT just rumors
 - Clearly state your **EVIDENCE/PROOF**
 - Clearly state what you and your loved one have done to help the situation
 - You can ask the media **NOT** to report on the alleged offenses of your loved one
- Complaints to the Special Litigation Division of the United States Department of Justice

- Special litigation division of the United States department of justice has investigated state prisons in the past and may be able to investigate the pervasive systemic 8th amendment violations/ civil rights violations in TDCJ. The law allows for the attorney general to intervene on behalf of institutionalized people whose rights may have been repressed or violated.
- To file a complaint, write the special litigation section (SPL) explaining the situation about which you are complaining, with as many details and verified facts as possible. Please include information on how to contact you if they need further information (such as an address, telephone number and e-mail address). Also, do not include original documents as they cannot guarantee their safe return.
<https://www.Justice.Gov/crt/how-file-complaint>

Special litigation section U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue,
NW special litigation section Washington, D.C. 20530
phone: (202) 514-6255 or toll-free at (877) 218-5228

7. POLITICAL OFFICIALS *(see Topics section for TPCA Political Advocacy trainings and virtual meeting on our Facebook group page)*

- **YOUR REPRESENTATIVE, SENATOR OR OTHER POLITICAL OFFICIALS**
 - Call, email or set a Face to Face meeting
 - Clearly state the problem and policy violation
 - Bring your documented evidence
 - Journal, medical records, all correspondence