

TEXAS INMATE MAIL SUPPORT ADVOCATES

PO BOX 580247 - KISSIMMEE, FL 34758

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THE LATEST ANNOUNCEMENTS, NEWS AND YEAR IN REVIEW!

INTRODUCTION

We are sure you are wondering who Texas Inmate Mail Support Advocates (TIMSA) are and what we do. So please allow me to explain. TIMSA began as a subsidiary of Creative Cactus. Tricia Ruiz was advocating for clients and seeing a need for accurate information to be distributed. Many advocacy groups, while they serve a positive purpose, they tend to allow inaccurate advice and claims to be made in their groups. We saw how this was hurting families and we came together to create a group that would investigate situations to ensure accurate advice and information was brought provided. We understand many like to test the waters, do workarounds and cheat the system, that is a part of human behavior, but sometimes, when dealing with corrections, those behaviors can have an undesired consequence to them.

We focus on assisting families navigate telephone, visitation and correspondence issues and appeals. We teach your loved ones what is expected and should they find themselves in a bad situation, we assist in navigating that. We are a unique group and we do not charge a membership fee, or ask for donations all year long. We do accept donations for our newsletter as it is a very expensive process. But we will not constantly ask families for money.

TIMSA actively offers correspondence courses that help couples, families, and friends. These come complete with a certificate of completion. At present we have the Friendship and Couples Correspondence Courses, and will soon be adding in the Visitation, Telephone and Correspondence courses for those who have been placed on a negative mailing, telephone or visitation list. We are also developing additional courses to help our members.

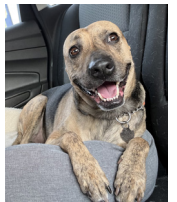
TIMSA is comprised of our President Tricia Moreno-Ruiz, and 5 admins. All members of our team have been advocating for their loved ones for many years and we have a full understanding of what it takes to make change. We remain devoted to our members and assisting each person who needs guidance.

A WORD FROM OUR PRESIDENT



TRICIA MORENO RUIZ - PRESIDENT

LUPITA ESPERANZA - CEO



Many of you know me as Tricia from Creative Cactus. Creative Cactus has been my baby for 3 years now. As stated above we saw a need and had to branch off and extend what we were offering to and for families.

For those who are wondering why there is a Florida address, I divide my time between Florida and Texas. I am in Texas 4-6 times a year for a month or so at a time. I have friends and family members alike that are incarcerated within TDCJ and that is where ALL of this began.

When we began TIMSA we did not know what to expect. Shortly after, our CEO (Lupita) was attacked by a vicious dog, and she began the fight for her life. This community came together to pray for her, send her love and to show that we have a foundation of love in this group. We learned very quickly this was not just another group for families, it was a group willing to pull together and do what we are able to do to help all our members in their time(s) of need, regardless of that need. All acts are done with love and from our hearts. Regardless of a person's situation, there is a family at TIMSA waiting to embrace and assist them.

TIMSA is a resource center for you, your family, and friends. We are here to help you navigate through all the changes that come your way. We only ask that you also help us help you. You must be willing to do your part. It is a shared responsibility. So long as you and your family can do your part, we are able to assist and guide you through all of it. Together we can move mountains!

DOING YOUR PART

At TIMSA we do not operate like any other advocacy group. We devote our time to teaching your family members how to navigate a system that is challenging at best. We cannot fight your fight for you. We can support and guide you and that is exactly what we will do. It should be a partnership. You have got to do your part.

Time and time again when we check on issues we are told there are no grievances filed and therefore no problems. When you file a grievance, you may not get an immediate response. You may feel it does no good. But it does. It supports what your family, advocates and politicians are saying in support of you. It is a shared responsibility. It is a give and take if you will. You cannot continue to take, or the well will run dry. You must do your part so we may continue to support and fight for you. You must help us, help you. It is the only way we can be effective with change.

SCAMS TARGETED AT THOSE INCARCERATED

Those who are incarcerated, and their families are very vulnerable to scams. A few years back there was Inmate Magazine Services. They would take the money for subscriptions and families would have to fight and report this to the Better Business Bureau and still would be out of their money and no product. Tricia Ruiz worked very hard with the FTC and US Department of Justice to push for them to peruse the investigation. Subsequently they were shut down and received harsh punishments for what they were doing. This company took advantage of families that felt powerless to fight back.

They are not the only company that prey on families of those incarcerated. This is why we encourage you to do your homework. Ask questions, have your family join us on Facebook and ask question. The old saying "Measure twice, cut once" should be your approach when soliciting services.

In the last year we have seen a "Ministry" scam families out of money for parole packet services, wedding officiants scam families out of services and provide fraudulent marriage licenses to their clients. This caused a nightmare for the families as they were removed from all points of contact from their loved ones.

We continue to see "Care Package" companies prey on your family members. These companies know they are not approved to send packages into TDCJ, yet they make it believable on their website. The main predator in this is "Inmate Care Packages" or www.inmate-packages.com. They sell you the dream and deliver a nightmare with return policy that is impossible and they will not refund the money once the package is denied. They even state they can add money to your books, which they cannot do. The ONLY care package you can receive is your quarterly ecommerce package ordered through the state's website.

The common theme in businesses running scams is they take payment through Cash APP, Venmo, and Zelle. Money transfers are near impossible to dispute. Once it is sent, it is gone. That is why they use this form of payment, to take advantage of you and your wallet. A legitimate business will invoice you and provide a proper receipt. If your loved one is ordering anything for you, they should always look at the fine print and the return policy. If they are unsure or think it might not be a good idea to move forward, they can always ask a member of our team.

At TIMSA we recognize a need to create a list of businesses that offer services without the headaches, hassles, and scams. We are in the process of building a Business Resource Center and hope to have this completed by April 2023. This resource center will have a list of verified businesses serving this community. Your family members will have access to this in our group and if you need a printed copy of this,

VISITATION FUND INCREASE

TIMSA has worked hard over the last year, as did many others, to ask for an increase in visitation money. This is the money your loved ones bring in to order the snacks during visitation. We are happy to say the increase was made from \$25. Per adult visitor to \$35 per adult visitor. The world as we all know it will continue to see inflation and it is expected to get worse before it gets better. We will celebrate all wins, large and small. We are happy to see this change and happy to be one of the many people who advocated for this. This will benefit many families.

TABLETS & EMESSAGING

The tablet rollout continues. What we have seen is once the phone system starts having issues, you are close to the install date. There will be intermittent issues with the phone lines as they bring the system on-line. It is important for your families to report any issues. This is closely monitored during the install process.

E-messaging is new and exciting for all of us. It is, for the most part, a quicker way to communicate. The messages are not in real time and do not always instantly send and receive. E-messaging is no different than regular mail. If you are on a monitored mail list, in certain programs or the message contains a picture, it will have to be screened before the message is released. Be patient as this is new to all of us.

The tablets will not have a camera on them, so you won't be able to send pictures, but you will be able to receive them. We know there are many who like the naughty pictures. Keep in mind that the more your loved ones send that is denied it eventually can cause the sender to be restricted from communication. So, you may not want to test those waters. We are just being honest and real with you.

For those with international loved ones, there is an issue with the purchase of stamps. Many people are offering crazy work arounds that can get all parties involved in hot water. The only official way to get assistance is to contact Securus at 800-844-6591. They can complete the purchase for your family members.

TIMSA'S CURRENT PROJECTS FOR 2023

TIMSA is still very new, and we are growing. As we grow and see the needs of our members both inside and outside of those walls, our focus will redirect itself. For the upcoming year we will continue to launch correspondence courses and host our webinars. Our Business Resource Center will launch by April! We do have a Parole Packet Guide that will be released in March 2023. The guide teaches you the core parts of creating an awesome parole packet. This is just to get you going on your parole journey. You should begin preparing your parole packet a year before you come up for parole! This guide will assist you and your family with preparations.

There are a few more courses we are designing that would help you adapt once you are released and adapting to your new life. We have a job interview course in the works that will teach you how to be your best in a job interview. It will also provide you with resources that may help you once you are released.

TIMSA will continue to teach and educate your families as best as we can. If we see the need, we will continue to develop tools to help you and your loved ones on this journey.

IN CLOSING

We have so much to look forward to in 2023. There will forever be changes that will impact those incarcerated and their families and we are here to guide you through it. We just encourage you to find your voice and for the issues that require a grievance to file it. Let's use recreation as an example, if you are being denied recreation and you don't file a grievance, no one knows, and it is not documented. You are stuck in your cell or building all day and that is punishment alone. So, you need to decide which level of difficulty you wish to endure. To be stuck like chuck in your housing all day or fight for recreation. If there is a problem and you don't fight with grievances because of retaliation, you have no way to prove anything because you have not done your part. If you have grievances, you can prove retaliation has occurred and you will be part of the solution for the change. So, you need to decide if you wish to be part of the problem or part of the solution. We hope you will be part of the solution. It always take a village.

We cannot wait to launch our Business Resource Center for you and your families and our additional courses that are on the way will be a great benefit to you and your personal growth.

Here's hoping that 2023 is a great year for all us! Keep working hard and keep the focus on you!

TEXAS INMATE MAIL SUPPORT ADVOCATES ART CONTEST

TIMSA IS CURRENTLY HOSTING AN ART CONTEST FOR THOSE INCARCERATED WITHIN TDCJ. THE CONTEST WAS DELAYED SLIGHTLY DUE TO UNFORSEEN CIRCUMSTANCES. ALL ENTRIES MUST BE MAILED DIRECTLY FROM THE UNIT TO OUR PO BOX.

- THERE WILL BE 1 WINNER PER REGION!
- SUBMISSIONS CAN INCLUDE POETRY, SHORT STORIES, DRAWINGS
- IF YOU CAN CREATE IT ON PAPER AND MAIL IT, IT CAN BE ENTERED!
- NO SEXUALLY EXPLICIT ART PLEASE
- DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS IS 02/14/2023

ENTRIES:

You must mail your submission to us at: TIMSA - PO BOX 580247 - KISSIMMEE, FL 34758

If you would like your original art mailed to your loved one, please include the name and address with your submission, otherwise all original artwork will be returned to you.

PRIZES:

1ST PLACE - 12 MONTH PHOTO DELUXE CALENDAR (YOU PROVIDE UP TO 24 PICTURES OR A VISIT BAG (FOR YOUR LOVED ONE)

2ND PLACE - 1 SET OF BOOKMARKS OR YEAR ON A PAGE CALENDAR

**THERE WILL BE A DIGITAL ART GALLERY ONLINE
FOR THE WORLD TO VIEW YOUR SUBMISSIONS!**



KEEPING FAMILIES CONNECTED