

Prison Guidelines



Overview

As a Kairos volunteer in a state or federal prison system, it is very important that every Team member - new and experienced - understand the guidelines and requirements of both Kairos and the prison system.

This presentation should not be rushed, and should encourage questions in order that everyone understands the issues associated with being a Kairos volunteer in your state's prison system. Plan on 30 minutes.

Preparations

The main preparation is to ensure that the Kairos Leader has prepared the Prison Guidelines handout, and that you have reviewed the "Talking Outline" below and are familiar with any specifics that relate to your particular prison (for example smoking policy).

Remember, you are guiding the Team on behalf of the Team Leader to a common understanding of what the prison expectations of a religious volunteer's behavior and attitude is expected to be. This foundation will form the underpinning for so much of the new Team member's view of what is and isn't acceptable in the Kairos ministry.

Talking Outline

The following "Talking Outline" should be used as you guide the Team through the Prison Guidelines handout. Make sure everyone has a copy (from the Team Leader) of the handout before you start your presentation.

A. Pass out Prison Guidelines

B. Before we talk about specific prison guidelines, it is important to understand why

While we call these "guidelines," it is important to realize that violating them can result in your removal from the ministry. The prison must administer their rules and persons who represent a risk to the security of the institution are not allowed to continue to be a risk.

The greatest risk to Kairos volunteers in this area comes from ignorance on the part of new Team members, or from a too relaxed attitude on the part of experienced Team members. We are going to review the key guidelines of behavior for a Kairos volunteer.

As we go through the handout that you have, if you find yourself discounting or minimizing the relevance of the item, let a flag go off in your head! People get in trouble with the prison officials, or with the Kairos leadership just because we begin to believe that the "rules" don't apply to ME. You should leave this discussion with a very clear understanding that the rules - all of them - DO APPLY TO ME!

1. Do not smuggle anything into or out of the prison.

Smuggling may be the last thing on your mind, but when you carry anything to or from a resident, your ARE smuggling.

What are some common examples that can easily trip you up?

[Seek the wisdom of your veteran Team members.]

2. You may not serve in Kairos AND be on a visitation list in this prison - Period!

3. Do not bring metal and glass objects into the prison

Metal and glass objects can easily be fashioned into weapons. What are some examples that you might easily overlook?

[Seek the wisdom of your veteran Team members.]

4. You may not give or accept anything from a resident.

Security is paramount, and even though YOU don't see taking a note from a resident as a problem - the prison does! Most wardens have a zero-tolerance attitude about this.

You may NOT directly give a Bible or book or magazine to a resident.

5. Never purchase anything from a resident

Even though the prison may have a procedure for purchasing inmate-made crafts, you should never enter into a financial transaction with a resident. It is the wisdom of Kairos that when you get started down a path in your relationship that includes non-spiritual elements, you will eventually regret it.

6. Never pass messages to or from a resident.

Not even "Would you call my momma and tell her I love her." You do not know the real situation, and you may be passing a hidden message. You are not to have any personal/family contact on behalf of the resident.

The residents also know you are not supposed to do this, and if you do, they will use the fact that YOU broke prison rules to try to leverage you to do more.

7. Never mail a letter or package for a resident.

All inmate mail is reviewed by prison officials, and you do not want to be part of a security risk.

8. Religious materials must come thru the Chaplain.

Any materials, whether from you or your church group must be routed through the Chaplain's office. This includes Bibles, studies, or devotional materials.

9. Respect the Warden's authority

This is the Warden's "house" and we are here by his/her invitation. The House rules are his - not ours - and certainly not yours. They change the rules from time to time for security or staffing reasons. When they do, be flexible and don't argue.

10. Additional issues or behavior guidelines at this prison

[Be prepared to discuss any additional guidelines that are specific to your prison]