



My family member has been arrested - What do I do?

A step-by-step guide to help families cope with the criminal justice system in Amador County when a family member who suffers from a brain disorder (mental illness) is arrested.

STEP ONE: SUPPORT YOUR RELATIVE

- If your family member/friend calls you and says that he/she has been arrested, help him/her stay calm and offer your help and support.
- If your family member/friend is being held in the County Jail, remind him/her of the right to have an attorney present if being questioned by law enforcement officers or detectives.
- Your family member/friend will be screened for mental illness, as well as other health concerns, upon arrival. It is very important that they be direct and honest to benefit as much as possible from this screening process. Assure your family member/friend that it is OK to discuss his/her physical and mental condition, diagnosis, medications, etc., with the staff conducting the screening, which includes Sheriff's nursing staff and Jail Correctional staff. It is important your family member feels safe to speak openly with the mental health screeners.

STEP TWO: CONTACT THE JAIL

Amador County Jail
700 Court Street
Jackson, CA. 95642
Phone: (209) 223-6522
Fax: (209) 223-6540

- Call the County Jail and advise the answering officer that you are calling regarding your family member who is in custody and you wish to speak about their mental status. Inform the staff member that your family member suffers from a mental illness and describe the diagnosis and any other concerns you might have. Inquire as to your relative's status and estimated length of stay at this facility. Ask if he/she is expected to be released from the jail. If he/she is going to be released from the jail (this sometimes occurs for minor offenses), ask for the time and place so you can be there to pick them up.
- Important: Make sure that if the family member/friend is released from custody that you ask the Officer for the next court date and court house address.

STEP THREE: SEND A FAX

- Once you have spoken with Jail staff and have the required information, prepare a fax as indicated below, requesting that your family member/friend be seen by mental health.
- Attached you will find the **Inmate Medication Information Form**. Print, complete, and fax as instructed below.
- Please fax the Inmate Medication Information Form as soon as possible.
- List full legal name, date of birth, booking number if know, his/her diagnosis, psychiatrist's name, phone number, and address.

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- The medications that are prescribed for your family member by name, dosage, and time of day to be administered. Whether a particular medication has proven to be ineffective or has dangerous and/or uncomfortable side affects.
- Any history of suicide attempts/threats or other violent intentions in the recent past. Briefly describe the events and when they occurred.
- Any other urgent medical conditions that might require immediate attention, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, seizures, heart problems, etc., and medications currently prescribed for those conditions. Include his/her medical doctor's name, address, and phone number for verification purposes. The medical information you provide is tremendously valuable in making an assessment and will help the mental health staff select the best treatment for your relative. There is a clear preference for maintaining effective current treatment. However, the jail nurse must conduct its own assessment of your relative's condition and may not necessarily prescribe exactly the same medications.
- ***IMPORTANT: DO NOT ADDRESS ANY IMPENDING CHARGES AGAINST YOUR FAMILY MEMBER/FRIEND IN THIS FAX. MEDICAL INFORMATION ONLY!!***
- Keep a copy of this fax for future reference. If your family member/friend is transferred to a different facility, you may need to fax this information again.
- On the cover page, indicate whether your family member/friend has provided you with a written confidentiality waiver. If your family member/friend has not previously done so, ask that he/she sign one while in jail. The jail nurse is prohibited by law from giving anyone information about a client's status unless they have the client's consent, but the jail staff can receive information from relatives or friends without the client's consent.
- Once your family member/friend has been booked, fax the document described in Step Three to the appropriate number below. Faxes can be sent 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**AMADOR COUNTY JAIL
FAX NUMBER 209-223-6540**

STEP FOUR: DECIDING ON LEGAL REPRESENTATION

- Your family member/friend may want to retain a private attorney or use the Public Defenders Office. A public defender will be assigned at arraignment if your relative does not have or cannot afford a private attorney. Do not be afraid to use a public defender. Public defenders often have knowledge of the system as it pertains to those who need mental health services.
- If your family member decides to retain a private attorney, be sure to select one that is well versed in helping people with mental illness and understands how to access the treatment facilities and mental health services that are available.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

BAIL: Think carefully about posting bail for your family member. No one wants a loved one to remain incarcerated for any length of time. It is an unpleasant experience for them as well as the family. However, you must ask yourself the following question. Will your family member be able to comply with the terms of the bail and appear in court when required? Also, as hard as it may seem, jail may be a safer place for a person with severe mental illness who is in crisis rather than having your loved one wander the streets with no help at all. At least in jail they will be fed, will have shelter, and be given access to medication treatments.

WORKING WITH AN ATTORNEY: Call the Public Defender's office and ask for the name of the attorney who will be handling the case. It is more likely the attorney will be at his/her desk in the morning between 8:00-8:30 a.m. before court begins or later in the afternoon after 3:30 p.m. If you do not reach the attorney, be sure to leave a message requesting a return call with your name, phone number, your family member/friend's name and, if possible, the case number and court date. Due to the attorney-client confidentiality requirement, there will be information the attorney may not be able to share with you. Remember, it is your family member/friend, not you, who is the attorney's client.

Inform the attorney of your family member's condition and any information that may be beneficial to the case. Provide the attorney with an extensive medical/psychiatric/social/educational history of your family member in writing. Include hospitalization, diagnosis information, medication treatment, and the contact information of those doctors/clinicians and of facilities that have treated your family member/friend in the past. This information will be very useful in pursuing the best outcome for your loved one. Attorneys are extremely busy and many will appreciate written or faxed correspondence.

Supporting and coping with a loved one who suffers from a brain disorder can be extremely challenging and stressful. Knowledge, as well as your love and fortitude, will be essential in helping you to become a strong and effective support system for your family member. For information about support groups and educational programs provided free of charge in your area, contact NAMI, the Amador Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness, at 209-223-1485, X266. Or, on the internet at www.namicalifornia.org.