

My Family Member Has Been Arrested in Solano County.

What Do I Do?

This document is a guide to help families cope with the criminal justice system in Solano County when a family member who suffers from a mental illness is arrested. It is intended to help families navigate the forensic system. It is not intended to be a substitute for professional legal advice. Please assist your family member in obtaining proper legal representation.

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 by the authorities in custody and being interrogated by investigators, remind him/her of the right to have an attorney.
- When being questioned by intake officers at the jail, it is not necessary to have an attorney present as the questions being asked will pertain solely to the arrestee's current and past medical and mental condition and to determine proper housing classification.
- If he/she is already at the Fairfield Jail, he/she will be screened for mental illness, as well as other health concerns, upon arrival. It is very important that he/she be direct and honest to benefit as much as possible from this screening process. The process includes a survey with questions regarding whether he/she has a mental illness or a history of mental illness and is taking any medications.
- Assure your family member that it is OK to discuss his/her physical and mental condition, diagnosis, medications, etc., with the staff conducting the screening, which includes California Forensics Medical Group (CFMG) health services staff and/or psychiatric services staff. It is important your family member feels safe to speak openly with the health/mental health screeners.
- Your family member's belongings are held at the jail until his/her release. However, they can be released to a family member. Obtain a form from the Visiting Officer in the lobby of the jail. It must be signed by the inmate as well as the person who will receive the inmate's belongings.

INFORMATION FOR SOLANO COUNTY JAIL – FAIRFIELD

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Fairfield Jail is located at:

500 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533 (Map Link Below)
<http://www.mapquest.com/maps?address=500+Union+Ave&city=Fairfield&state=CA&zipcode=94533>

The jail phone number is **707-784-7162**.

Call for information about:

- Your relative's status (on administrative separation or disciplinary isolation)
- Where your family member is housed
(**Note:** *inmates are often moved around, so check before each visit*)
- Court arraignment date, court department number and address
- Expected release date and time
- His/her booking number

If you are unable to locate your relative, try any other names he/she may have used at some time (aliases, maiden name, etc.).

In case of a serious family emergency, call the jail and ask to speak with the **Shift Sergeant** or the **Chaplain**. The Chaplain's number is 707-421-7185.

VISITING

Try to visit your loved one at least once a week. Two 30-minute visits are allowed per week. Jail can be a very scary experience for someone with a mental disorder, and it helps to have someone familiar and empathetic to talk with.

It is advisable to call the jail before each visit to determine that visiting is being allowed and that your family member is available (not at a court appearance). The phone number is 707-421-7102.

Note: there are strict rules for visiting. They are detailed online at:

http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/sheriff/custody_division/jail_visiting_information/justice_center_detention_facility.asp

- You must be able to clear a metal detector.
- There is a specific dress code for visitors.
- Photo ID is required.
- No cell phones are allowed.

SENDING MAIL

Use the link to the jail's web page to access mailing instructions:

http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/sheriff/custody_division/jail_mail_information.asp

COMMISSARY

You can set up an inmate trust account to allow your relative to purchase items from the commissary. Funds can be added at any time: online at <http://www.touchpaydirect.com>, by phone (866-232-1899), or at the kiosk located in the jail lobby.

Care packages are also available. Use this link to order treats to be delivered to your loved one in the jail:

http://www.co.solano.ca.us/depts/sheriff/custody_division/jail_commisary_icare_package.asp

CALIFORNIA FORENSICS MEDICAL GROUP (CFMG) PSYCHIATRIC SERVICES

CFMG is the organization that runs the mental health section of the jail's medical facility. The staff appreciate receiving information from family members about individuals' medications, treatment histories, etc., and attempt to verify and re-start any psychiatric medications as soon as possible.

Note: *medication may not be administered until your relative is screened/processed, and the psychiatric staff can verify the medication order.*

The best way to insure that current medications are started as soon as possible is to visit the jail with your relative's bottles of current medications in hand so they can be verified immediately. Ask to see a member of the CFMG staff.

You can provide information by phone or in writing. Written information can be dropped off at the jail, or mailed to:

Solano County Jail
Attention: CFMG
503 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

To provide information by phone: 707-421-7150

To provide information by fax: 707-421-6674

On Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m., a clerk is available to answer the phone in the medical unit. At times, there may not be a staff person in the office as they are out with patients. Request to speak with a member of the CFMG psychiatric services staff or leave a detailed voice message if staff are not available.

See the [Medical Information Sheet](#) (hot link) to help organize medical and psychiatric information. Include:

- Your relative's full legal name and date of birth
- Mental illness diagnosis
- Psychiatrist's name, phone number, and address
- Current medications - name, dosage, and time of day to be administered
- Name and location of the pharmacy that dispensed these medications
- History of negative experiences with medications
- History of alcohol or other substance abuse
- History of suicide attempts/threats or other violent intentions in the recent past, briefly describing the events and when they occurred
- History of (or potential for) victimization by other inmates
- Other medical conditions that might require immediate attention, (e.g. diabetes, high blood pressure, seizures, etc.) and medications currently prescribed for those conditions
- Medical doctor's name, address, and phone

Do **NOT** address any impending charges against your family member in this communication. Medical information only! Keep a copy of this information for future use.

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 CFMG psychiatric services staff will conduct an assessment of your relative's current condition and may not necessarily prescribe exactly the same medications.

DECIDING ON LEGAL REPRESENTATION

Your family member may want to retain a private attorney or use the Public Defender's Office. A public defender will be assigned at arraignment if your relative does not have, or cannot afford, a private attorney. Do not hesitate to use a public defender. Public defenders are more familiar with the court processes, the judges and district attorneys. They often have more frequent firsthand experience with defendants who have a mental illness than most private attorneys, and will therefore be more likely to know what legal and treatment options are available to them. 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 LEGAL 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?**

WORKING WITH AN ATTORNEY: Public Defenders (PDs) are extremely busy and do not have much time to take or return phone calls. Often PDs will not know that they have been assigned to a particular individual's case until very shortly before a first court appearance. Do not assume that the initial court contains any reference to your family member's mental illness. If a public defender (PD) has not been assigned, or you can't obtain that information, it is still important to share the written medical history information that you also have provided to CFMG. The only reliable way to do this is to plan to attend the first court hearing if you are able, and deliver your written document to the PD. Arrive early. Bailiffs (Sheriff's Deputies assigned to a particular court room) can assist you in passing along written information to PDs, and can even get you a brief word with them immediately before hearings. PDs appreciate written or faxed correspondence. Remember, it is the inmate, not you, who is his/her client.

A private attorney will grant you more time, but remember you are paying for that access. Provide the attorney with an extensive medical/psychiatric/social/educational history of your family member in writing. This information will be very useful in pursuing the best outcome for your loved one.

There are 2 offices for the Public Defender in Solano County:

Fairfield:

Phone: (707) 784-6700

Fax: (707) 784-6747

Vallejo:

Phone: (707) 553-5241

Fax: (707) 553-5013

Both can be contacted by email at publicdefender@solanocounty.com

ADDITIONAL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

Supporting and coping with a loved one who suffers from a mental illness 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 – Solano County:

Phone: 707-422-7792

Email: NamiSolanoCounty@sbcglobal.net

Website: <http://www.namisolanoounty.org>