



TIPS ON MAKING CONTACT WHEN THERE IS A PROBLEM



Excerpted from Oregon CURE:
"Advocating with the Incarcerated
in Oregon"



SHOULD I WRITE OR CALL OR SEE SOMEONE IN PERSON?

When deciding how to handle the problem, think about your own personal strengths, how urgent the situation is, and what you hope to accomplish.

Consider writing if:

- you write well or can get help in writing
- you get angry quickly
- travel is difficult or expensive
- you don't want to deal only with the person directly involved in the incident
- you want a written record
- the situation is not urgent
- you haven't much money

Consider phoning if:

- ☞ you talk well on the phone
- ☞ you do not write very well
- ☞ you are able to stay calm even when frustrated
- ☞ travel is difficult
- ☞ a written record is not important
- ☞ you can afford the phone call
- ☞ the situation is urgent

Consider discussing it in person if:

- ☞ you do not write very well
- ☞ you are able to stay calm even when frustrated
- ☞ travel is not difficult or you are at the institution where you are

having difficulty

- ☞ a written record is not important
- ☞ the situation is urgent

!! MAKE SURE IT'S FACT-- NOT RUMOR-- BEFORE YOU JUMP IN !!



TIPS ON WRITING

When you write a letter, follow these rules:

- Keep your letter short-- no more than one page.
- Include important facts, such as dates, times, the names of DOC employees if those are important.
- If you can't say everything in one page, think about listing key events on a separate page, as a list. For example, list the date and time, and the sequence of events.
- If you have important documents, attach them to the letter. Be sure any copies are readable.
- Keep a copy of everything you send.
- Ask a friend or family member to read the letter so you know it is clear and has no major errors.
- Be polite. Do not use vulgar language or make threats.
- If you want something to be done, state clearly what you want to have happen.
- Ask the person you write to, to contact you with the results of

his/her actions.

- Be sure you include your own address and telephone number.
- If the matter is something that is ongoing for a period of time, keep a file with copies of everything you have sent and everything you have received that is connected with the issue.
- If you feel it is important to have documentation that what you sent was received, send it certified mail, return receipt requested.

If you believe that the person to whom you are writing may not do anything with your complaint, send a copy to that person's boss or the boss's boss. Don't expect an answer from the people to whom you send copies. You are sending the copies so that if the person you are writing to does not answer within a month, you can contact his/her boss.



TIPS ON CALLING

When you make a phone call, follow these rules:

- ☞ Have all the facts and all the records handy when you call. If you need to look something up, it should be easy to do so.
- ☞ Stay calm. Do not shout or threaten. If you are feeling very angry, do not call until you are calmer.
- ☞ Do not call near the end of a shift

Employees are getting ready to leave, and are usually too busy to talk.

- ☞ Be as brief as possible.
- ☞ Remember to listen carefully. Take notes so you will know who you talked to and what was said.
- ☞ Do not call often, or with petty complaints. You will be ignored if you are a nuisance.
- ☞ If you want something to be done, state very clearly what you want.
- ☞ If the person says they will do something, ask when it will be done, and when you can expect to be notified that it was done.
- ☞ If you agree to talk again, decide who will call, and when the call will be made.
- ☞ If it is something ongoing over a period of time, keep a log of all calls you made and received; with the date, time, who you talked to and what was said. ---

★ DATE EVERY CONTACT ★



TIPS ON PERSONAL CONTACT

When you decide to have personal contact, follow these guidelines: Stay calm. Do not shout, swear, or threaten. If you are feeling very angry or emotional, do not try to have personal contact.

- Be sure you are talking with the

right person. If in doubt, briefly explain the type of problem you are having, and ask who you should talk to.

- If possible, make an appointment. That may not be possible if you are dealing with a problem that occurred on a visit, for example.
- Have all the facts and all the records with you when you meet. If you need to look something up, it should be easy to do. If there are key documents or notations, you can tab them with sticky notes so they are easy to find quickly.
- Be as brief as possible.
- Remember to listen carefully. Take notes so you will know who you talked to and what was said.
- If you want something done, state clearly what you want.
- If the person says they will do something, ask when that will happen, and when you can expect to be notified.
- Decide who will follow up and how soon that will happen.



FOLLOWING UP

- ✓ Contact the person you first contacted at the time/date agreed on.
- ✓ If there has been no action, contact that person's boss. Give a list of the contacts you've made.
- ✓ **KEEP THE SAME KINDS OF RECORDS OF THESE CONTACTS!**