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 Calaveras 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.
- There will be screening for medical and mental health concerns during booking into the jail. It is very important that they be direct and honest to benefit as much as possible from this screening process. 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, the Jail Medical staff and with Behavioral Health. It is important your family member feels safe to speak openly with the mental health screeners.

STEP TWO: CONTACT INFORMATION FOR CALAVERAS COUNTY JAIL

- The Calaveras County Jail is located at the Government Center, 891 Mountain Ranch Rd, San Andreas, CA. (209) 754-6499
- You may ask for the charges that have been filed; it may be helpful to know whether the charge is a felony or a misdemeanor.

STEP THREE: SEND A FAX

- The Inmate Medication Information Form is available on this web page. Print, complete, and fax as instructed below and on the form.

  or

- Prepare a fax requesting that your relative be screened for mental health problems. Begin this fax with your relative’s:
  - Full legal name
  - Date of birth
  - His/her diagnosis
  - His/her psychiatrist’s name, phone number, and address
  - 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 effects
  - 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 Mental Health staff 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 in this fax. Medical information only!
- Keep a copy of this fax for future reference.
- On the cover page, indicate whether your relative has provided you with a written confidentiality waiver. If your relative has not previously done so, ask that he/she be asked to sign one while in jail. The Jail Mental Health staff is prohibited by law from giving anyone information about a client’s status unless they have the client’s consent, but the staff can receive information from relatives or friends without the client’s consent.
- Once your relative has been booked, fax this document or the Inmate Medication Information Form to the fax number below. Faxes can be sent 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
  - Jail Medical Services    FAX:  209/754-6755.

STEP FOUR: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH - MENTAL HEALTH

- A Mental Health worker may be available to assist inmates with a mental illness. Call Calaveras County Behavioral Health at 209-754-6525 during regular business hours.
- If your relative has a private attorney, contact him/her with information regarding the involvement of Behavioral Health.
- If your relative does not have an attorney, a public defender will be assigned at the arraignment, and you can provide this information at that time.
- Give a brief statement detailing the current circumstances, diagnosis, and relevant history of your family member. Be concise and to the point.

STEP FIVE: DECIDING ON LEGAL REPRESENTATION

- Your family member 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?

Working with an attorney: Call the Public Defender’s office at the court where the case is being heard and ask for the name and phone number of the attorney who will be handling the case. It is more likely the attorney will be at his or 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’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, 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 a concise 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 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 National Alliance on Mental Illness, at 213-632-0782 or on the internet at http://www.namicalifornia.org

To contact the local NAMI chapter, call NAMI-Gold Country at 209-736-4264.