



HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR INCARCERATED LOVED ONES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(updated 8/3/20)

Help them Advocate for Themselves on the Inside
Amplify their Self-Advocacy on the Outside
Join Community Actions
Access Reentry Services for Those who are Released
Take Care of Yourself

LSPC's [Fighting for Our Rights: A Toolbox for Family Members of California Prisoners](#) offers very helpful general advice for advocating for incarcerated loved ones, including sample letters and record request forms. Use it as a helpful reference as you follow these specific recommendations for dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Help them Advocate for Themselves on the Inside

1) Provide outside information.

- **Urge your loved one to frequently wash hands, sanitize cell, social distance.**

The first page of the [LSPC Coronavirus Self-Advocacy Guide](#) provides tips for protecting oneself from infection while incarcerated. Since the manual was written, it has become a standard recommendation that people wear masks when around others. The most reliable source for additional information is the [CDC](#) website. The Prison Law Office also offers [helpful information](#).

- **Check the prison or jail website for updated information to share with your loved one.**

[CDCR](#) maintains a website describing COVID-19 policies in California prisons. Read through it thoroughly once and then check back for updates that are added at the top of the page. The website includes numbers of [incarcerated people](#) and [staff](#) who have tested positive at each facility. Check the [Prison Law Office](#) site for information about the emergency motion for releases and other measures in the statewide California prison overcrowding court case.

If you are viewing a printed version of this guide, you can find the electronic version with links at <https://bit.ly/COVID19FamAdvocacyManual>.

A federal [Bureau of Prisons](#) website describes modified operations due to the pandemic, and COVID-19 deaths are reported [here](#).

If your loved one is in a jail, look for information on the county sheriff's website – for example, [Alameda](#), [SF](#), [LA](#), [Sacramento](#).

- **Send your loved one guides on how to advocate for themselves.**

The [LSPC Coronavirus Self-Advocacy Guides](#) are written for California state prisons, county jails, federal facilities, and state/local facilities outside California, and each is available in English and Spanish. The **Prisoner Advocacy Network (PAN)** has also produced detailed guides to writing administrative appeals on COVID-19 that are backed with formal exhibits to make the strongest case possible for release and prepare your loved one to file a viable court action if the administrative process is unsuccessful: [How to File 602 and 602HC Appeals that Request CDCR Action or Release Due to COVID-19](#) (and a [shorter](#) version) and [How to Draft Declarations to Support Requests Related to COVID-19](#). Although the PAN manuals are written only for California prisoners, much of their advice is helpful to all incarcerated people. We have also prepared a [Coronavirus Conditions & Complaints Log](#) to help your loved one keep track of what's happening in their facility and prepare evidence for their appeals. If you can't print these manuals and mail them to your loved one yourself, [email](#) LSPC to ask us to mail them (but this will take longer).

- **Educate yourself about CDCR administrative appeal, clemency and parole processes.**

Review pages 19-20 and 29-44 of [Fighting for Our Rights](#) and review the manuals mentioned above so you can coach your loved one through preparing an effective administrative appeal. If appropriate, assist your loved one in applying for medical parole or compassionate release (but note that the requirements are very restrictive) or parole: see pages 22-28 and 45-58 of [Fighting for Our Rights](#).

- **Identify reentry resources for your loved one if possible.** See Reentry Resources below.

2) Gather inside information.

- **When you talk to your loved one, TAKE NOTES** about conditions inside and about your loved one's efforts to avoid infection and to advocate for themselves: write down WHO your loved one spoke or wrote to, WHEN they did it, and WHAT response they got. Print a copy of the [Coronavirus Conditions & Complaints Log](#) to help you organize your notes. If possible, **ask your loved one to send you copies** (handwritten copies ok) of any grievances filed. Send copies to LSPC (ok to take a picture and email it to info@prisonerswithchildren.org). Review pages 3-4 of [Fighting for Our Rights](#) for tips.
- **Your loved one may need help getting copies of a C-file or prison/jail medical records.** Ask your loved one to submit a medical release form ([Form 7385](#)) so you can get copies of their medical records on their behalf and can receive information about their health condition when you contact health services. See pages 10-14 of [Fighting for Our Rights](#).
- **Try to get information about your loved one from the medical department at their facility:**

Medical Department Contact Numbers:

Avenal State Prison – (ASP) – (559) 386-0587 ext. 2336
Calipatria State Prison (CAL) – (760) 348-4610
California City Correctional Facility (CAC) – (760) 246-7600 ext. 7240
California Correctional Center (CCC) – (530) 257-2181 ext. 4718
California Correctional Institution (CCI) – (661) 823-5054
Central California Women’s Facility (CCWF) – (559) 665-8102
California State Prison, Centinela (CEN) – (760) 337-7900 ext. 6955
California Institution for Men (CIM) – (909) 606-7270
California Institution for Women (CIW) – (909) 597-1771 ext. 3791
California Health Care Facility (CHCF) – (209) 467-1800
California Men’s Colony (CMC) – (805) 547-7900 ext. 4099
California Medical Facility (CMF) – (707) 448-6841 ext. 2098
California State Prison, Corcoran (CSP-COR) – (559) 992-8800 ext. 6902
California Rehabilitation Center (CRC) – (951) 739-3598
Correctional Training Facility (CTF) – (831) 678-3951 ext. 4126
Chuckawalla Valley State Prison (CVSP) – (760) 922-5300 ext. 7069
Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI) – (209) 835-4141 ext. 5881
Folsom State Prison (FSP) – (916) 608-3162
High Desert State Prison (HDSP) – (530) 251-5100 – ext. 7777
Ironwood State Prison (ISP) – (760) 921-3000 ext. 5496
Kern Valley State Prison (KVSP) – (661) 721-6300 ext. 5996
California State Prison, Los Angeles County (LAC) – (661) 729-2000 ext. 7841
Mule Creek State Prison (MCSP) – (209) 274-4911 ext. 6104
North Kern State Prison (NKSP) – (661) 721-2345 ext. 6007
Pelican Bay State Prison (PBSP) – (707) 465-1000 ext. 4636
Pleasant Valley State Prison (PVSP) – (559) 935-4900 ext. 5434
Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility (RJD) – (619) 661-6500 ext. 7088
California State Prison, Sacramento (SAC) – (916) 985-8610 ext. 5511
Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF) – (559) 992-7100 ext. 4112
Sierra Conservation Center (SCC) – (209) 984-5291 ext. 5115
California State Prison, Solano (SOL) – (707) 454-3497
San Quentin State Prison (SQ) – (415) 454-1460 ext. 3457
Salinas Valley State Prison (SVSP) – (831) 678-5500 ext. 6259
Valley State Prison (VSP) – (559) 665-6100 ext. 6562
Wasco State Prison-Reception Center (WSP) – (661) 758-8400 ext. 7543

3) Help your loved one file a court action.

- **After your loved one files an internal prison or jail administrative appeal, they may want to file a court action seeking release or improved conditions of confinement.** LSPC has created a [COVID Habeas Packet](#) that incarcerated people can use to seek a court release order: they just need to add their personal information and exhibits. Prisoner Advocacy Network has a [Self-Help Litigation Guide for State Habeas Corpus Petitions Related to COVID-19](#) for those who want to prepare a habeas petition from scratch. The [Prison Law Office](#) also has manuals (not specific to COVID-19) on state and federal habeas petitions and state and federal tort or civil rights actions. Review pages 59-64 of [Fighting for Our Rights](#) to better understand these legal actions.

- **Request help from outside legal resources.**

Send copies of administrative appeals and court actions to LSPC if possible. We cannot represent individual clients, but we can provide advice and updated information as the legal rules and government policies evolve over time.

The [Prisoner Advocacy Network](#) is able to help a limited number of California prisoners advocate for themselves in the administrative process.

If your loved one has a pending commutation petition or referral for resentencing pursuant to Penal Code section 1170(d)(1), contact [Emily Harris](#) at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights for support.

Pretrial detainees in jails should seek help from their public defender or appointed/retained attorney to get released or to redress adverse conditions in custody. If you don't have direct contact information for an attorney, contact the [public defender's office](#) for the county where your loved one has state charges pending.

Convicted persons with pending state court appeals or habeas petitions challenging their convictions should contact their appointed or retained appellate attorney. If you do not have direct contact information for the appellate attorney, contact the [California Appellate Project](#) for the county where your loved one was convicted. You may also want to contact the attorney who represented him or her in criminal court or the [public defender's office](#) for the county of conviction to ask for assistance.

Pretrial detainees in federal custody and convicted persons with pending appeals or habeas petitions challenging federal convictions should seek help from the **federal public defender's office** for the federal court district where their charges are pending (see [map](#)): [Northern](#), [Eastern](#), [Central](#), and [Southern](#) Districts.

People incarcerated in a Riverside County jail should contact the Prison Law Office, which has filed a class action lawsuit ([Gray v. Riverside](#)) to require the jails to institute physical distancing and provide appropriate hygiene supplies.

Amplify their Self-Advocacy on the Outside

1) If you believe your loved one qualifies for the CDCR's expedited release plan, contact CDCR.

CDCR has approved expedited transition to parole for incarcerated people with 60 days or less to serve on their sentences who are not currently serving time for a violent crime as defined by law, a sex offense, or domestic violence. If you believe your loved one qualifies for expedited release, email covid19@cdcr.ca.gov with information about your loved one's reentry plan, including transportation from the prison and housing. Contact [James King](#) of Ella Baker Center for Human Rights for support in obtaining this form of expedited release.

2) Write/call/email/text the warden, the head of the agency, and your elected representatives to amplify your loved one’s petition for release or for safe conditions. Protest any retaliation experienced by your loved one.

Include a copy of your loved one’s petition for release, if any. See sample advocacy letters at pages 21-22 in [Fighting for Our Rights](#). Tips on communicating with elected officials and the media are at pages 75-84.

If your loved one is in a CDCR facility:

- Contact the warden: look up the CDCR facility [here](#) and look for the mailing address for staff and the name of the warden.
- Contact CDCR Secretary Ralph Diaz, 1515 S Street, Sacramento, CA 95811.
- Contact your [state representatives](#) and the [Governor](#).

If your loved one is in a federal facility:

- Contact the warden: look up the federal facility [here](#) and look for the mailing address for staff and the name of the warden.
- Contact [BOP Western Regional Director Gene Beasley](#).
- Contact your [Senators](#) and [Congressperson](#).

If your loved one is in a California county jail:

- Contact the head of the facility: Google the jail and look for the mailing address and name of the facility director (or simply address your comments to “Director”).
- Contact the sheriff for the county where the jail is located.
- Contact the members of the county board of supervisors and sympathetic city officials.
- Contact the [Board of State and Community Corrections \(BSCC\)](#), which oversees the jails.

If your loved one is in a state prison or local jail outside California:

Contact the warden, the head of the state or local correctional agency, and your state or local elected officials as appropriate.

2) Post on social media, call in to radio talk shows, and write letters to the editor to share your loved one’s story.

Join Community Actions

STATEWIDE: [All of Us or None Oakland Chapter/National HQ](#); [California Coalition for Women Prisoners](#); [Legal Services for Prisoners with Children](#); [The Justice Collaborative](#)

Follow these social media hashtags: #ClemencyCoast2Coast, #FreeThemAll

Alameda County: [All of Us or None Oakland Chapter/National HQ](#); [Audit Ahern Coalition \(Ella Baker Center for Human Rights\)](#), [Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County](#); Santa Rita Jail Solidarity

Kern: [All of Us or None Bakersfield Chapter](#);

Los Angeles: [All of Us or None Los Angeles and Long Beach Chapters](#); [Justice LA](#)

Orange: [All of Us or None Orange County Chapter](#);

Riverside: [All of Us or None Riverside Chapter](#);

Sacramento: [All of Us or None Sacramento Chapter](#); [Decarcerate Sacramento](#)

San Bernardino: [All of Us or None San Bernardino Chapter](#);

San Diego: [All of Us or None San Diego Chapter](#); [Pillars of the Community San Diego](#)

San Francisco: [Centro Legal de la Raza](#), [No New SF Jail Coalition](#) (Californians United for a Responsible Budget – CURB)

San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties (Silicon Valley): [Silicon Valley DeBug](#), [Law Foundation of Silicon Valley](#)

Access Reentry Services for those who are Released

STATEWIDE: [Impact Justice](#); [Root & Rebound](#), [Transitions Clinic Network](#) (health care reentry plans; hotline: 1-844-TNC-WELL)

Bay Area: [Bay Area COVID resource list](#), [Alameda County Public Health Dept. Emergency Housing](#), [Bay Area Legal Aid](#), [Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency \(BOSS\)](#), [Root & Rebound](#)

Fresno: [Root & Rebound](#)

Los Angeles: [A New Way of Life](#); [Root & Rebound](#)

Riverside: [Starting Over Inc.](#)

San Bernardino: [Project Rebound](#) (for students at CSU San Bernardino)

San Francisco: [SF Reentry Council](#), [SF Dept. of Homelessness and Supportive Housing](#)

Sex offender registrants: [Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offender Laws](#)

Take Care of Yourself

Join [Family Unity Matters](#), a network of family members of incarcerated people within [All of Us or None](#), which is a civil rights movement of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people and their family members. Let's come together as system-impacted people to **support each other** in dealing with the trauma of incarceration, **maintain family connections** with our incarcerated loved ones, and **take action** to change the unjust carceral system.

Other organizations for women and families impacted by incarceration: [Essie Justice Group](#); [Project Avary](#) (summer camp for kids of incarcerated people), [Time for Change Foundation](#); [Young Women's Freedom Center](#), Get on the Bus (rides to visit incarcerated loved ones; 818-980-7717); Learn about your rights and benefits under the federal stimulus package passed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: read the LSPC [manual on the CARES Act](#) and these Frequently Asked Questions about the [Families First Coronavirus Response Act](#) (paid sick and family leave).

Learn about your rights and access resources: visit these organizations' websites for information on workers' rights, eviction and foreclosure prevention, health care rights, food support, and other resources to help you survive the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of the information on these websites is useful to any California resident.

NATIONAL: [Beyond Prisons](#)

STATEWIDE: [Disaster Legal Services of California](#), [Legal Aid at Work](#); [Root & Rebound](#), : [Western Center on Law and Poverty](#)

- **Alameda County:** [Alameda County Community Food Bank](#), [Alameda County Health Care for the Homeless](#), [Bay Area Legal Aid](#); [Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency \(BOSS\)](#), [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#)
- **San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties:** [Cathedral of Faith Food Distribution](#), [Law Foundation of Silicon Valley \(UAP\)](#), [Second Harvest of Silicon Valley](#)
- **Bay Area:** [Bay Area COVID resource list](#)

- **Elder issues:** [National Center on Law & Elder Rights](#)
- **Nursing home issues:** [California Advocates for Nursing Home Reform](#)
- **Disability issues:** [Disability Rights California](#), [Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund](#), [CommunicationFIRST](#) (especially for nonverbal people)
- **Transgender issues:** [Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund](#)
- **Undocumented workers:** [Relief funds accessible to undocumented workers](#)
- **Consumer issues:** [National Consumer Law Center](#)
- **Mutual aid:** [Beyond Prisons](#), [COVID Mutual Aid & Advocacy](#), [Disability Justice Culture Collaborative](#) (East Bay), [Oakland at Risk](#)