

PRISONERS' LEGAL SERVICES
10 WINTHROP SQUARE, BOSTON, MA 02110
617-482-2773; WATS 800-882-1413
FAX 617-451-6383
State Prisoner Direct Dial *9004#
County Collect Calls 617-482-4124
www.plsma.org

Assisting Family & Friends of Prisoners with
Health Care Issues

Who are the Health Care Contacts?

Director of the Health Services Division for the Department of Correction (DOC):

- Responsible for the delivery of health care to the entire DOC prisoner population including medical, dental, and mental health.
- Contracts with outside health care providers to deliver health services.

Superintendent and/or Deputy Superintendent in charge of health services, for each DOC facility; or Sheriff for a county facility:

- Develops and/or approves written procedures describing how prisoners can access health care.
- Addresses health care issues.
- Sheriffs may have delegated health care issues to a facility Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Health Services Administrator, or legal counsel.

Clinical Administrator from UMass Correctional Health (UMCH) for each DOC facility:

- Oversees the operation of the Health Services Unit.
- Processes medical complaints and medical grievances.
- Informs prisoners about treatment to be provided.
- Ensures continuity of care.
- UMCH personnel provide health care, including emergency, sick care, and periodic physical exams. A contractual physician is on-call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Sick care is available by on-site providers 5 days a week during normal weekday business hours.

Mental Health Director from MHM (formerly Mental Health Management) for each DOC facility:

- Oversees the mental health treatment at the facility.
- Processes mental health complaints and grievances.
- Informs prisoners about treatment to be provided.
- Ensures continuity of care.
- MHM personnel provide psychiatric and pharmacy services, therapy, and clinical management programs.

State Representatives:

- Legislative voice for addressing consumer human rights and health care issues.

How do I get information about, or communicate with, the Health Care Contacts?

Health Services Division for the DOC:

- Lawrence Weiner, Asst. Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Services
12 Administration Road
P.O. Box 426
Bridgewater, MA 02324
(508) 279-8612
Fax: (508) 279-8654
- <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/law-enforce-and-cj/prisons/offices-and-divs/clinical-services-division.html>
- MA DOC Health Care Policies include:
103 DOC 630, Medical Service and 103 DOC 650, Mental Health Services
(available at DOC website's Policy List page:
<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/law-enforce-and-cj/prisons/doc-policies/>)

DOC facility Superintendents and Deputy Superintendents, Clinical Administrators (medical), Mental Health Directors:

- <http://www.mass.gov/eopss/agencies/doc/>
Click on "State Correctional Facilities" to find the facility you need. If you call, the menu for most facilities has an option for the Superintendent's Office (sometimes by selecting "Administration," then "Superintendent"), and one for Health Services (which could then be directed to the Clinical Administrator or the Mental Health Director).

UMASS Correctional Health Program (UMCH), a program of the University of Massachusetts Medical School, provides the contractual medical services for the DOC except for Bridgewater State Hospital:

- www.umasscorrectionalhealth.org

MHM provides the contractual mental health services at all sites and medical services at Bridgewater State Hospital:

- <http://www.mhm-services.com/index.html>

Sheriff for county facility (or Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Health Services Administrator, legal counsel):

- Locate address and phone number for county Sheriff's Department through www.mass.gov:
<http://www.mass.gov/portal/global-agency-list.html#S>

State Representatives:

- www.mass.gov

Click on Mass Gov "Home," then Government Links "Legislature," then Legislators "House Districts."

Where can I get advice or learn more about the health care services available to prisoners?

Prisoners Legal Services:

10 WINTHROP SQUARE

BOSTON, MA 02110

(617) 482-2773

- www.plsma.org
- Accepts prisoner telephone requests for assistance on Monday afternoons from 1 to 4pm; when Monday is a holiday, calling hours are on Tuesday.
- Family and friends of prisoners can call toll-free from anywhere in Massachusetts on (800) 882-1413.
- DOC prisoners can use the pre-authorized speed dial number *9004#; prisoners in county facilities should call collect on (617) 482-4124.

Miscellaneous Resources:

- Massachusetts DOC Family and Friends Handbook
<http://www.mass.gov/eopss/docs/doc/f-and-f-hbook-aug2012.pdf>
- Families of Incarcerated Individuals, Inc.
www.familiesofincarcerated.org

How Do Prisoners Access Health Care?

New Prisoners:

- ✓ The process and procedures for accessing health care should be explained to the prisoner during orientation.

Routine Process for Prisoners:

- ✓ Get a sick slip on the unit; complete the slip; put the completed slip in a box on the unit.
- ✓ A nurse from that facility will pick up the slips placed in the box daily.
The slips are triaged according to urgency.
The medical staff determines which requests warrant follow-up.
The prisoner will be sent to the health office as appropriate.
- ✓ The process regarding mental health issues/concerns is the same, although a separate staff of mental health providers addresses those needs.
- ✓ If prisoners have not been contacted regarding their sick slip after a few days, they should resubmit their request.

Dissatisfaction with Response (in the DOC):

- ✓ If prisoners are not satisfied with the response from the Health Services Unit (HSU), they should attend the "Management Access Time" before filing a formal grievance.
- ✓ The criteria for grieving are noted on the back of the medical grievance form.
The complaint needs to be stated on the front of the form.
The form can be placed in the unit sick box, or given directly to a staff member.
The Clinical Administrator (or Mental Health Director) at the facility will review the grievance, and either forward it to a higher administrator for a response, or return it to the prisoner.
A response from the UMCH or MHM administrator may take several weeks.
- ✓ If prisoners are not satisfied with the response to their grievances, they may appeal to the Assistant Deputy Commissioner for Clinical Services (contact information above).
- ✓ If the entire process has been followed and prisoners are still not satisfied with the response, they can contact Prisoners' Legal Services.

How Can Families and Friends Advocate for Prisoners' Health Care Needs?

Facility Health Care Procedures:

- ✓ Encourage prisoner to follow the facility's procedures for getting access to health care, and for submitting a grievance if there are continuing problems.

Consent for Involvement in Care:

- ✓ Get the prisoner's permission to discuss his/her situation with the appropriate people.
- ✓ The prisoner must complete an "Authorization to Release Information" form.
- ✓ In the event of an emergency, initiate contact with or without consent.

Health Care Contacts:

- ✓ In DOC, contact the facility's Clinical Administrator or Mental Health Director, the Superintendent's Office, and/or the DOC Health Services Division to voice your questions and concerns about the prisoner's health issue.
- ✓ In a county facility, contact the facility's health services administrator, the Superintendent's Office, and/or the Sheriff's Office to voice your questions and concerns about the prisoner's health issue.
- ✓ Make written notes about what you want to say prior to your call.
Speak slowly and focus your remarks on the major health symptoms, complaints, and issues.
Describe what the prisoner has done to obtain health care.
Keep a record of when you called, who you spoke with, and what you were told.
- ✓ If you continue to be dissatisfied with the prisoner's health care, contact Prisoners Legal Services and/or your State Representative.

Updated October 5, 2012