



# WASHINGTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## Helping a Friend or Family Member

### **STEP ONE: When Deputies Arrive**

*If you are present when a deputy arrives, stay calm and give them time to ensure public safety and to assess the situation. Remember, they are trained to identify and respond to people in mental health crisis. Let the deputy know you are available to share information when they are able to talk with you.*

Patrol deputies receive training to help them identify people who are in mental health crisis and to have a variety of communication or tactical techniques to use depending on what happens during a call. On the busiest shifts, Mental Health Response Team deputies have a mental health clinician riding with them on patrol. We cannot guarantee a deputy will never use physical force to bring a situation under control, but the combined response of a deputy and a clinician gives the deputy more options at the scene. Even if a crime is not been committed, we strive to leave the person who in crisis and their families headed in the right direction.

### **STEP TWO: Confirming a Person is in Our Jail**

Search the online jail custody database by last name: [search our database](#). The system informs you the date of arrest, charges, and other helpful information. You may also call the jail at (503) 846-6826.

If a deputy took the person to the hospital for treatment instead of jail and they are an adult, we are able to tell you the name of the hospital, but nothing more. Due to HIPAA restrictions, you will need to contact the hospital directly and meet their requirements to receive additional information.

### **STEP THREE: Support Your Loved One**

If your family member or friend calls to tell you they have been arrested, help them to remain calm and offer your help and support. Assure the person that it is okay for them to talk freely about their physical or mental condition, diagnosis, and medications with jail medical staff.

Rest assured, they will automatically be given a chance to contact an attorney and they will be screened for mental illness and other health issues upon arrival.

### **STEP FOUR: Share Helpful Information with Jail Staff**

You can provide information to jail medical staff on the inmate's mental health diagnosis and prescription medications. Medications can be available within 24 hours if the inmate signs a release. If an inmate discloses they are on prescription medication(s) and they sign a release for their pharmacy or clinic to communicate with jail medical staff, the medications can be started within 24 hours.

Staff is aware that the most acute patients, those who are bipolar for example, tend not to report and share information on medications. The most helpful information you can provide is about prescribed medications. If you bring a current prescription pill bottle to the jail lobby, medical staff is able to order the medication right away and offer it to the inmate within 24 hours.

You can share information about the inmate's diagnosis with jail medical staff. HIPAA is a federal act that prevents jail medical staff from disclosing to anyone medical information on an inmate, unless the

inmate signs a release giving us permission to do so. However, you can legally share any medical information openly with jail medical staff. Call Jail Medical at (503) 846-6358.

Please understand that if you are a victim or related to the criminal charges that brought the inmate to jail, we will not ask the inmate to sign a release and we will not talk to you about any medical or mental health information.

**STEP FIVE: Contacting or Helping an Inmate**

Use the links on our [jail website](#) to access information about [phone calls](#), [visiting in person](#), [video visiting](#), and [mail](#) rules. We encourage you to go to the website first when you have a question.

**STEP SIX: Support for You**

Caring for or supporting a family member or friend in mental health crisis or who suffers from a mental illness can take a toll on the caregiver. When you need to talk through a challenge or find someone who can give good advice, considering reaching out to one of these organizations:

- [NAMI](#)
- [Crisis Line](#)