

Self-harm protocol and volunteer credentials

Dear President _____:

During a recent conversation with Chaplain Kenneth Herman, Administrator of Pastoral and Volunteer Activities for the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation & Reentry (ADCRR), two issues of concern were discussed. As a result, he has asked that the following information be distributed to all branches operating in ADCRR facilities. We recognize that not all branches work with the ADCRR, but felt that this information has application for all correctional branches.

The first topic of concern that was discussed was what protocol should be followed when an inmate declares his/her intent to commit an act of self-harm? The physical safety of the inmate is of primary importance for the institution. The institution has in place a protocol to handle self-harm declarations no matter the source of the report. All such claims are taken seriously and the protocol calls for security to protect the incarcerated and have mental health perform evaluations. Any volunteer or branch worker who may be aware of any inmate threatening to inflict self-harm, should immediately alert the institution of this situation.

How should these situations be handled? The quickest and most effective way would be to report the concern to Complex Control...this would apply during normal operational hours, as well as after hours. Complex Control is normally staffed 24/7 and they will then take the appropriate action. The other recommended method for reporting this information would be to alert the Senior Chaplain, if he/she is on duty. Given the fact that a quick response to protect the life or health of the inmate should be the primary objective, it is not appropriate to expect that an email or voicemail message will result a quick response time. It is also not appropriate to notify the complex/unit chaplain...either in person or by other means. This information should only be communicated to Complex Control or to the Senior Chaplain.

The second issue that was discussed involved the credential renewal process and the status of volunteers with expired credentials. Due to the current pandemic, all ADCRR credential renewal processing for volunteers has been temporally suspended. It is important to understand that ADCRR considers all such volunteers with current expired credential to still be on "Active Status." As such, all volunteers are expected, and required, to continue to observe all existing regulations, guidelines, and protocol. Once the lock-down has ended, ADCRR has a system in place that will expedite the processing of all expired credentials. It is important, now that many inmates have access to tablets, to exercise care and follow ADCRR policy regarding volunteer-inmate communications.

We are grateful that, during these unprecedented and challenging times, many of you have taken steps to increase the level of correspondence with your members...these efforts continue to be a blessing for our incarcerated brothers and sisters. We thank you for your tireless efforts and we are confident that the Spirit will continue to bless and guide this important work.

Sincerely,
Del Alvarez

Arizona Correctional Committee Chairman
602-616-2491
Email: mfiero53@gmail.com

Email sent by Derek Dietze, Clerk, Arizona Correctional Committee