

Corrections Correspondence

—a special kind of A.A. Service

I know how important our Twelfth Step work is and I enjoy writing to men who are locked up. It is one of the tools that I use to keep me sober. I myself found A.A. in prison almost 20 years ago. And it hasn't been necessary for me to return to prison since I was released.
—Outside Correspondent

We are in need of A.A. members on the “outside” to correspond with A.A. members in correctional facilities across the U.S. and Canada.

Having prison experience is not a prerequisite — sobriety in A.A. is. Inmates are more interested in learning how we got and stayed sober through A.A.’s Twelve Steps, rather than hearing about time we may have spent in prison.

It is suggested that men correspond with men and women with women. Currently, we receive more requests from male inmates than female inmates, and we appreciate your response, which will help us to reduce the waiting list.

If you would like to share your experience, strength and hope with A.A.s who are confined, please mail the tear-off form to G.S.O.’s Corrections Desk, or email the information to corrections@aa.org. (You can also access the form on the Corrections Committee page on our website at aa.org.) The name of an inmate, selected at random from a geographic region different from your own, will be sent to you from the General Service Office and you will make the initial contact through the mail.

Those who have participated in this service have found sharing with inmates a very gratifying form of Twelfth Step work. We are happy to know there are A.A. members like you willing to help make it possible for the A.A. message to be carried to those on the “inside.”

Guidelines for Corrections Correspondence Service (CCS)

Welcome to one of the most rewarding and rarely mentioned forms of Twelfth Step work.

In the spirit of cooperating with correctional facility requirements for correspondence and mail, here are some suggested guidelines drawn from shared experience to help you when writing to A.A. members on the “inside”:

To begin, remember that when writing to an inmate, *you must use your last name on the envelope* or it will not be accepted by most institutions. The G.S.O. does not forward CCS mail.

1. We introduce ourselves by qualifying briefly in our opening letter.
2. We try to let the inmate know that writing, like all forms of sharing, helps us as much as it helps him or her.
3. We let the inmate know that he or she is not alone.
4. Most correspondents use their home address, since we match up correspondents from different regions. Some correspondents ask permission of their A.A. group or intergroup/central office to use the office P.O. Box for receiving mail.
5. We share sobriety and sobriety only.
6. We have found it best for all concerned if no emotional or romantic involvements develop.
7. If there is a desire to send a gift for a special occasion, we make it an A.A. book, A.A. literature, or Grapevine material. (Before sending literature, see if the facility will allow it. Many Correctional Facilities will permit inmates to receive only literature sent directly from the publishers.) Also, some facilities do not allow inmates to receive stamps or preaddressed, stamped envelopes.
8. In the spirit of the Twelfth Tradition, we respect the anonymity of our correspondents.
9. We encourage “inside” A.A. group activity and stress making that first meeting *the day* the inmate leaves confinement.
10. We encourage “inside” correspondents to notify G.S.O. prior to their release so that G.S.O. can set up a prerelease contact from their home community.

Thank you for your willingness to share in this most important work.