



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

# Counseling & Social Services Unit

An Associate Correctional Counselor or “Social Services” Counselor, is assigned to every housing unit. Depending on what type of housing unit that you are residing in, your assigned counselor will visit your housing unit anywhere from one (1) to five (5) times a week for up to 1-hour. They provide a variety of social services and may be able to answer questions you have regarding the programming available on your unit. Based on your unit, you may also work with your counselor during group-based programming discussing topics like anger management and life skills.

The following pages will include short answers to frequently asked questions. These answers will include examples of how your Social Service Counselor can help you during your time in custody.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## PERSONAL BELONGINGS

### **Need to send money home?**

Your counselor can provide you paperwork to send money from your jail commissary account to a family or friend in the community. There is an option to pick up the check from the Riker's Cashier or mail out the check using a stamped envelope you would provide.

### **Need to send your property home?**

Your counselor can provide you the form to release property you have with you in DOC to a family or friend in the community. There is an option to pick up the property from the Perry Building or mail out the property. If you opt to mail the property, you will need money in your commissary account to cover the cost.

### **Concerned about property held with NYPD?**

If your property is in NYPD custody, you will need a NYPD property affidavit which will need to be notarized by the Law Library. It is your responsibility to get the form to the person you have authorized to pick up your property. We can give you NYPD property clerk phone numbers if you don't know your receipt number.

### **Do you need a Birth Certificate?**

We assist with NYC fee-waived birth certificates. If you were born elsewhere in New York or a different state, we can provide you with the application but cannot submit for a fee-waived certificate. For NYC applicants, your counselor can give you the application which you will need to complete and get notarized in the law library. You will then submit the form back to your counselor.

### **Do you need a Social Security card?**

Currently, we can give you the application to complete and mail in. We recommend waiting to get your Social Security Card until you have been released, as the process is faster, and you can have your card within 5 days upon visiting the Social Security Administration building.

### **Do you need a Verification of Incarceration Letter?**

A counselor can provide you with a verification of incarceration letter while you're in custody. Once you get released you can contact 311 for additional information on receiving a letter from the Department outlining the timeframe you were in custody with us.

## **FAMILY**

### **Has someone in your immediate family recently passed away?**

If you experience a passing of an immediate family member while you're in custody, your counselor can provide you with the paperwork to request to attend the funeral services. Social Services does not approve these requests, we only help submit them.

### **Is someone in your immediate family in critical condition?**

If you have an immediate family member who goes into critical condition while you're in custody, your counselor can provide you with the paperwork to request for a bedside visit with your loved one. Social Services does not approve these requests, we only help submit them.

### **Are you looking to get married?**

Your counselor can provide you with a marriage request form and the next steps to process your request. Your fiancé will need to schedule a virtual visit with the City Clerk on Project Cupid in order to get your license. Once you have your license, you will need to find an officiant who will facilitate your marriage at your assigned jail.

### **Are you looking to get divorced?**

A counselor cannot assist with divorce because this is a civil legal issue. For further questions on the law or how to start divorce proceedings, please speak to a Legal Coordinator in the Law Library.

### **Do you have an active ACS case and need assistance?**

If you know you have an upcoming family court date, please call your ACS caseworker and have them reach out to the court to send an order to produce or telephone order to your jail's General Office. Once we have the order to produce via telephone, we can assist you in our social service office.

### **Do you want to learn about CHIPP visits with your children?**

If you have an active ACS case, a counselor can refer you to the CHIPP program and provide you with a flyer that outlines more information on the program. Visits happen up to 2 times a month on Tuesdays.

### **Other visit-related questions with your children?**

If you do not have an active ACS case but have concerns about not seeing your children while you're in jail, and this cannot be fixed through communication with your family or loved ones, You may be able to submit a motion regarding custody and visitation rights. Please go to the law library to learn more about submitting a motion to the courts.

## HEALTH

### **Are you getting discharged and need to speak to Medical or Mental Health?**

Discharge planning through Correctional Health Services (CHS) normally sees you closer to your discharge date to discuss discharge planning. A counselor or Officer on your unit can complete a mental health referral if needed.

### **Do you need to see a Mental Health Clinician?**

If you need to see a mental health clinician for any reason, a counselor or your floor Officer can assist with completing a mental health referral for you to be seen by Correctional Health Services (CHS).

## PROGRAM AND SERVICES

### **Do you want to enroll in a Program here?**

A counselor can give you a Program Menu to review what programs are at your jail.

### **Do you want to change your religion?**

A counselor cannot change your religion. You will need to speak to a Chaplain located at your jail, or you can submit a grievance form requesting for assistance.

### **Do you want to enroll in School?**

Are you 18-21? If yes, a counselor will take your name and provide it to an educational specialist for enrollment in the DOE school. If you're older than 22, we can still refer you to school, but it is not a guarantee we will have a class available at your jail. You can review your tablet for educational material.

### **Do you want to submit a Grievance?**

There are blank forms available on your housing unit and in Law Library. Grievance Coordinators tour the jail at least twice a week picking up and distributing forms. Once you complete your form, you can hand it directly to the Grievance Coordinator or submit it in a drop box (if that option is available). You can also call 311.

## LEGAL

### **Do you need legal assistance?**

You can contact your attorney for guidance on legal questions you have. You can also go to the Law Library if you are seeking guidance on legal matters.

### **Are you being represented by Legal Aid and need to speak to your attorney?**

At each jail there is a Legal Aid Society paralegal assigned who may assist you in connecting with your attorney. We can give you the Legal Aid Society hotline to directly contact this team: 212-577-3530

### **Are you interested in a print out of your Webcrim page?**

Your counselor or a legal coordinator can assist with providing you a printout of your Webcrim page. "Webcrim" is a public website that provides information on criminal cases with future appearance dates for New York.

### **Are you wondering about the status of your Parole case?**

Depending on your circumstance, a counselor can contact Parole and the Rikers Island Judicial Center (RIJC) on your behalf. Your counselor may be able to find out when your next court date is for Parole, or the status of your warrant being lifted.

### **Are you Pro-se and need help with your case?**

We will need to confirm your status as Pro-se. Once confirmed social services can assist you with making telephone calls at an agreed upon schedule between you and the command. Legal Coordinators in the Law Library can assist you with all other legal matters or documents you may need.

## TELEPHONE

### **Do you have an upcoming mandated court call?**

Your counselor only assists with court-ordered calls upon assignment from the command. The court itself or your attorney will need to provide the Department with your order to produce via telephone. The jail then assigns your counselor to assist.

### **Do you have a co-defendant in custody that you're looking to talk to?**

Your counselor can assist you. The first step is ensuring your indictment numbers match. The next step in this process is getting approval from both attorneys that you and your co-defendant can speak. Once approved your counselor will work with the command to gain facility approval and then set up a video visit.

### **Do you need help with the telephone because you're Deaf or hard of hearing?**

We will work with you on submitting a reasonable accommodation (RA) request for access to TTY phones and/or Video Relay Service (VRS) machines. Once your RA status is confirmed you can access these machines through Social Services or the tour commander.

### **Is there another type of call you're looking to make?**

We will not be able to assist you making any personal calls from our offices. You can make these calls from your housing unit or via your tablet. If there is another type of call, like to an international consulate which cannot be done via your housing area, please speak to your counselor for more guidance.

## RE-ENTRY & DISCHARGE

### **Asking about Bail?**

A Captain can assist you with any self-bail request you may have. They will help with the process of going to intake to use a kiosk that you can submit your cash bail using your commissary account or debit card. We recommend you speak to your attorney or visit law library to learn more about bail bonds.

### **Are you getting discharged soon and want program info?**

We can provide you with a Beyond the Bridge Brochure and Community Justice Network flyer that have information on community programs. A counselor can also take your name and book&case # to refer to a community provider so that they can complete a transition plan with you.

### **Do you need housing when you leave?**

We will provide your name and information to a community provider who may be able to better guide you on the resources available with different agencies regarding housing. Depending on your situation a mental health discharge planner may also assist you with a housing request.

### **Are you concerned about getting your haircut upstate?**

You can go to the Law Library to get paperwork to submit a haircut motion. You will fill out the paperwork, get it notarized by a Legal Coordinator in the Law Library, send it to your attorney, and have your attorney put in the motion to the court. This has to happen before sentencing.

## OTHER SUPPORTS

### **Do you just need someone to talk to?**

Correctional Counselors or "Social Services" visit every housing unit at least once a week, and up to five times a week. Please approach them for counseling when they're on the unit or talk to them about setting up an appointment for the next time they're on the unit -particularly if you need support on a specific topic. They can prepare materials for you on the topic and bring these materials.

### **Are you looking for LGBTQIA+ Support?**

Your counselor may be able to assist with certain referrals or resources based on your needs or request. They can provide you with information on the LGBTQ+ bail fund.

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

**Ask your Counselor for:**

## **PROGRAM MENU**

Description of Programs available in your jail

## **BEYOND THE BRIDGE BROCHURE**

Overview of Re-entry Providers in the Community

## **CONNECTIONS BOOK**

Comprehensive Booklet of all Re-entry Services in NYC

## **VETERAN'S UNIT PAMPHLET**

Are you a Veteran? Your counselor can get you a pamphlet telling you about the Veteran's Unit and available benefits.

They can also refer you to enroll in the Unit.

## **GOING UPSTATE?**

We can provide you with some general information regarding what to expect if you're going upstate and what programs may be available to you.

**Do you have additional questions  
that were not answered here?**

**Speak to your Social  
Services Counselor the  
next time they visit  
your housing unit.**

Call Our Hotline + Leave a Voicemail with your  
information if you haven't seen your counselor and  
have a question #1011