

For more information, contact your associational Missions Development council, church missions committee or write to:

Chaplaincy Division
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Volunteer Chaplaincy

City and County Jails





City and county jails are where public offenders are first confined and where they feel the impact of their situation. They have been defeated. They feel helpless and hopeless. They need friends who care about their future. Volunteer chaplains can perform a valid and effective ministry to these offenders if the volunteers are carefully selected and if officials cooperate and support their efforts.

These suggestions are guidelines for developing a volunteer chaplaincy ministry in city and county jails.

the volunteer chaplaincy ministry. Each jail is different and one ministry will not fit every situation. Therefore, the ministry must be workable and meet the needs. Here are a few suggestions.

1. Plan a one-day workshop or training session for those who have volunteered to be chaplains. Have the jailer (sheriff, warden) present to explain jail rules, lead you on a tour of the jail and explain how the volunteer chaplaincy ministry can assist him. Also, have someone (prison chaplain, minister or layperson who has worked in a prison ministry before) to speak on the role of the volunteer chaplain.

2. Post the schedule for volunteer chaplains two months ahead. Always have a standby. Remind volunteer chaplains of any change in schedule.

3. Plan special programs, such as visiting speakers, music groups and Christmas programs.

4. Provide materials for volunteer chaplains, such as Bibles, correspondence courses, bulletins, greeting cards, literature and tapes.

5. Set up workshops for training and developing skills of volunteer chaplains.

6. Inform volunteer chaplains of local and state agencies that can assist inmates and their families.

7. Develop an evaluation system that will give guidance for future programming and information needed for reporting to the AMDP or the ministerial association.

8. Plan an annual renewal for volunteer chaplains. This will provide time to exchange ideas, to have a resource person speak, to plan future work and to evaluate the ministry.

Determining the Need

If the city or county jail has one person confined, there is a need for a chaplain. If there is no organized chaplaincy ministry, with a chaplain on 24-hour call, there is a need. If pastoral counseling is not available for every inmate, there is a need. Very few jails have chaplaincy ministries that meet these needs.

The initial step in establishing a volunteer chaplaincy ministry in a city or county jail begins with the associational Missions Development program (AMDP) or with the local ministerial association surveying the situation and opportunities available. Individuals or churches already may be working in this area. The logical place to look and see if ministries of this type are being conducted is Mission Action groups of Baptist Women or Baptist Men or in the Missions Development program in the association or in churches. The chaplaincy ministries project director of the associational Missions Development Program (or the general director if there is no existing chaplaincy ministry) or a representative of the ministerial association should visit the jail and evaluate the ministry being provided. Those already involved in the ministry should be kept informed and, when appropriate, included on the AMDP council as chaplaincy ministries project directors.

Pursuing the Need

If there is need for a volunteer chaplaincy ministry to be established, and the AMDP or ministerial association supports such a ministry, the second step is to make an appointment and talk with the jailer about establishing a ministry. Assure the jailer that:

- The AMDP will be dependable.
- The AMDP council will select trustworthy and sincere volunteers.

- Volunteers will be responsible to the AMDP and to the jailer.

- No favors will be asked for inmates that would embarrass the jailer.

- All rules established by the jailer will be obeyed.

- Cooperation with all religious groups will be practiced.

If the jailer is favorable toward establishing a volunteer chaplaincy ministry, request a starting date. Allow plenty of time to recruit and train volunteer chaplains.

Recruiting Volunteer Chaplains

The third step toward establishing a volunteer chaplaincy ministry is to recruit volunteers. Baptist Men and Baptist women leaders in the association and churches can provide contacts for volunteers.

Pastors and laypersons should work together, keeping each other informed of progress and programming at all times.

These things should be kept in mind when seeking volunteer chaplains to work in city and county jails.

1. Volunteers should have a *deep concern for individuals*. Inmates detect insincerity quickly, thus the motive of volunteers should be genuine.

2. Volunteers should be *dependable*. The ministry will be rejected if volunteers are not trustworthy with inmates and prompt with schedules.

3. Volunteers should be as *skilled* as possible to relate to inmates and their deep-seated problems.

Developing the Ministry

The associational Missions Development program or ministerial association should select a responsible person for developing and directing