

My loved one is in jail and has a mental illness. I'm extremely concerned. What do I do to get him or her out, or to get the mental health assistance and services that he or she needs?

1. Contact the jail and ask to speak to the medical/ and/or mental health department health services manager and/or nursing supervisor regarding medical issues. Also ask if they have mental health personnel at the jail and the name of the contact person.
2. Contact the local Community Services Board (CSB) in the area where the jail is located to see if the CSB clinical staff goes into the jail to provide treatment. If you're not sure how to do this, call local Community Services Board and ask who the correct CSB assigned to the jail might be, and try to get a contact name/number.
3. The jail's medical staff will need a release to provide the concerned family/loved one with medical/mental health information about the inmate. Ask medical staff if one has been signed by the person. If not ask them to obtain one. If there is no release yet, you can still inform medical staff of your concerns—but under privacy laws the medical staff can't inform you unless there is a release that specifically permits the release of information to you.
4. Ask about what type of care they are providing the person, if he/she has been offered medication, monitored by mental health/medical staff, etc. If you are concerned that your loved one is being held in solitary, ask what behavior led to that placement and ask how long he/she will be there.
5. Ask if the inmate has been evaluated for a pre-screen to the state hospital. Note- the inmate will have to meet Virginia's temporary detention order (TDO) criteria in order to be transferred to the hospital or will have to be opined incompetent to stand trial, and an inpatient order for restoration will need to occur, which can take some time. Check with her inmate's defense attorney to see if he/she has asked about either of these scenarios for hospitalization.
6. Ask the jail's medical staff to put you in touch with the persons who schedule jail visits to see if she can get a visit. If not, talk to your loved one's defense attorney and ask if he/she can get access to the inmate. In other words, see if you can work with the defense attorney to get further information about your loved one, as the attorney might be able to get more information from the jail than you are able to, in some circumstances.
7. Be persistent.