



John Howard Association of Illinois

2015 recipient of MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions

70 East Lake Street, Suite 410, Chicago, IL 60601

312-291-9183, www.thejha.org

Rules for Visiting Correctional Facilities

When indicating your interest to visit a facility:

1. If you intend to visit a facility where a relative, friend, or someone you know is incarcerated, or where you have visited in a capacity other than as a JHA volunteer within the past year, you must inform John Howard Association (JHA) staff of this fact and receive their approval for your participation in the visit. Failure to do so may constitute grounds for termination of your association with JHA.

Before you leave home:

1. Make sure you have one (1) piece of current, official government identification with a picture (e.g., driver's license, state I.D., passport).
2. There is no specific dress code; however, IDOC can refuse entrance to visitors if their clothing is considered inappropriate – they have wide latitude in making this decision. In general, conservative, nonprovocative clothing should be worn. Jackets and caps bearing team logos and/or colors may present a problem, since these frequently suggest gang affiliation. Comfortable, casual clothing and shoes are recommended. Since some facilities have stairwells made of open grating, high-heel shoes and skirts should not be worn. Buttons or pins for political candidates or organizational endorsements should not be worn. Please err on the side of caution when selecting your outfit for a prison visit to minimize administrative inconvenience.

Dress according to weather conditions, but be aware that most adult correctional facilities are not air-conditioned and can be very warm. During cold weather, we will normally be walking between buildings during our visits and may cover considerable distances on foot. Although umbrellas are generally not permitted, waterproof or water-resistant jackets or coats are highly recommended on days when rain threatens.

3. If you are driving your own vehicle to the facility, be aware that all vehicles on the grounds of a correctional institution are subject to search: remove items such as alcoholic beverages or items that could be used as weapons from your car. Firearms, even if duly registered, should **never** be brought onto the grounds of any correctional institution.

4. Make sure you have your identification in your pocket.
5. Do **not** bring *any* of the items listed below into a facility, per IDOC rules and JHA internal policy.
 - * medication (prescribed or over-the-counter) or cosmetics;
JHA staff leading the visit must be informed of any medical conditions and necessary medication or medical devices that may you need during the visit at the time you express interest in the visit. This is for your safety as well as because taking medication or devices into a prison must be cleared with IDOC and/or the facility prior to the visit.
 - * sharp objects (e.g., nail files, clippers; notebooks with metal spiral bindings);
 - * food (including chewing gum and beverages)
 - * cell phones, smart watches, cameras, radios, or any other type of electronics

All of the above items can be considered contraband and you, JHA, or anyone else found with the item inside a facility may get in trouble or be prosecuted.

6. Do not bring *any* unnecessary personal items with you into a jail or prison. Other than identification, the only items allowed and some are required, include: a pad of paper (not spiral bound), pen, and JHA business cards. Car keys may be permissible; however, some facilities may ask that keys be kept in a locker until the conclusion of the visit. Leave as much as can at home, to the extent that you must bring purses, briefcases, wallets and some kind of work bag, be sure they are locked in the car.
7. All visitors are required to sign in and out at the front desk and, sometimes, at other locations within facilities. You must show identification at this point and may be asked to surrender your I.D. in exchange for a visitor's pass which must be worn on your outer most garment in full view at all times during our visit. Be sure that you exchange your visitor pass for your I.D. when exiting the facility.
8. Visitors are subject to a body search (i.e., pat down) conducted by a correctional officer of the same sex in a closed room. This normally entails removal of outer garments (e.g., coats, jackets) and shoes. Visitors may refuse to be searched, but this will result in being denied entrance to the facility and possible restriction on future visits. Visitors will also normally pass through metal detectors.

During the visit:

1. Be mindful that we are invading the privacy of inmates when we inspect the places where they eat, sleep, and bathe. Particularly in inmate living units, JHA visitors should be sensitive to privacy concerns, age of inmates, and gender issues.
2. Be mindful of safety and health concerns: although unlikely, you may be subject to verbal or physical intimidation or assault, either deliberate or inadvertent. The risk of such occurrences is somewhat higher in maximum-security facilities,

facilities housing inmates with psychiatric conditions, and segregation units. Health care units frequently house inmates with communicable diseases, although signage is usually posted.

3. Follow all orders from facility staff during the visit. *Never* attempt to interfere in any situation that occurs during the course of a visit, no matter how objectionable. We are there *solely* to observe and record information. Report any issue you see to JHA staff as soon as it is practical.
4. If, at any time during a visit, you become aware that a relative or friend is incarcerated at that facility, you should immediately notify the JHA staff person leading the visiting team.
5. We sometimes eat a complementary lunch at the institution, in part as a means of personally verifying the quality of the food served. Visitors are not required to eat during visits; this is optional.
6. ***Interaction with Inmates and Staff***
 - 6A. JHA visitors are permitted extraordinary access to conduct confidential conversations with inmates. In these encounters, we may take notes and/or give inmates JHA business cards.
 - 6B. Visitors are required to take notes during visits, as a means of gathering accurate and comprehensive information about facility conditions, services, and programs. However, visitors should respect the wishes of inmates and staff whenever they indicate they are speaking off-the-record and when they wish to remain anonymous. All JHA staff and volunteers maintain the confidentiality of inmates and staff whenever requested.
 - 6C. When taking notes, be sure to note inmate's names *and* I.D. numbers, unless inmates object. When documenting information provided by staff, note name and title or rank (e.g., officer) of the person.
 - 6D. Visitors shall not make calls, emails, texts, or social media postings of any kind or communicate outside the facility in any way on behalf of inmates. JHA volunteers are not permitted to establish personal lines of communication with an inmate while on a JHA visit. The only contact information that volunteers can provide to inmates during a JHA visit is JHA contact information, which is made available on business cards we bring into the facility.
 - 6E. You should give your first name and affiliation with JHA to inmates and staff; however, additional personal information (e.g., age, marital status, address, phone number) should **not** be given. All communication with inmates should be by mail via the JHA office; in addition, please inform inmates that we cannot accept collect calls.

- 6F. Many inmates will begin to discuss their criminal cases and/or appeals. You should explain that JHA cannot provide or assist in providing representation in *any* court proceeding, criminal or civil; however, knowledgeable JHA visitors can share information regarding civil litigation options (e.g., Section 1983 suits) and risks (e.g., effects of the Prison Litigation Reform Act [PLRA]). While it is generally inappropriate to refer inmates to private attorneys or law firms, you may refer them to legal assistance agencies or to JHA for further referrals.
- 6G. A cardinal rule for dealing with inmates: *Don't make promises to do things, unless you are sure you can and will keep them!* Your credibility and the credibility of our monitoring program depend on this.

Following the Visit

1. *Debriefing*

At the conclusion of a visit, JHA visitors share their observations, concerns, and questions with facility administrators, usually the warden or superintendent and members of his/her staff. This is the primary opportunity to provide feedback on both positive and negative aspects of the facility, its operation, programs, and services. Appropriate subjects for debriefing sessions include both general observations and complaints and problems expressed by one or more inmates; however, these individual issues should *not* become the principal focus of a debriefing session. If individual complaints are numerous and/or complex in nature, they can usually be relayed more effectively by follow-up correspondence from JHA staff. If you are uncertain about whether or not to share information during this debriefing please ask the JHA staff person leading the visit.

Each member of the visiting team will be given an opportunity to share his/her observations and concerns; being respectful to staff and administrators. Please bear in mind that, while you are free to express your personal opinions and views, the only person authorized as a spokesperson for JHA is the staff member leading the visit.

2. *Preparation and Submission of Notes and Reports*

A. **All members** of JHA visiting teams are required to share copies of notes taken during visits and/or reports they prepare following visits within one week. Such documents are critical components in the development of official JHA correspondence and reports to facility administrators, department heads, inmates, stakeholders, and the public.

B. Notes taken during facility visits with JHA are for purposes of sharing information and observations with JHA staff. Volunteers may not share these notes with other individuals or organizations without JHA's express written permission.

3. *Use and Disclosure of Information*

A. All JHA visitors agree not to disclose information gathered during the course of visits to any third parties without prior notice to and permission from JHA staff. Any information from a visit that is to be disclosed by a JHA volunteer visitor in any reports, papers, articles, or other documents or presentations shall be initially approved by JHA staff and submitted to JHA's Executive Director for review and approval prior to use. Inappropriate disclosure of information regarding some inmates (e.g., pretrial detainees) may prejudice their ability to receive a fair trial or result in other negative outcomes.

B. All JHA visitors agree not to use information gathered during the course of visits in preparation for or furtherance of litigation of any kind against any correctional agency or its employees.

C. All JHA visitors agree that the information gathered during the course of a visit is to support the monitoring and advocacy work of JHA and provide individual understanding of the conditions, programs and treatment inside Illinois prisons. The information is not to be used for independent academic, professional or personal work product without prior consent and approval from JHA.

In addition to the rules above, volunteers are expected to review and abide by additional information and guidelines sent by JHA staff, as well as the rules for prison visitation established by IDOC.

I have read these rules and I fully understand the content contained herein. I acknowledge that I am volunteering my time and services as well as signing this document freely and voluntarily.

Printed name

Signature

Date