

# How To Advocate For Your Loved One Inside the Alachua County Jail

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*a Project of Community Spring  
Gainesville, FL*

## **Introduction**

When your loved one is in jail, many things will happen outside of your control. This is extremely hard to accept in an often devastating situation. While the outcome of your loved one's case is entirely up to the court system, you can support them from the outside in several ways. This booklet is designed to inform you on what you can do to advocate for your family member on the inside of the Alachua County Jail.

It is important to note that many people sit inside the cells of the Alachua County Jail without anyone on the outside to advocate for them. If your loved one has you, they are already in a better position than many. Phone calls to the jail, to the medical department, and to the public defender's office can really make a difference for your loved one on the inside. Certain things will always be out of your control, but there are benefits to being persistent in advocating for your loved one.

## **Alachua County Jail**

**Main Line (352) 491-4444**

*\*Note that many numbers on the jail website are incorrect.*

*Use this guide for the most updated contact information.*

## **Mental Healthcare**

- Family Medical Help Line extension - 4655

To see a mental health counselor, your loved one will need to fill out a medical request form called a "sick call". To obtain the form, your loved one must ask a corrections officer for it. This can be the officer that is overseeing their current pod. Additionally, and usually in the mornings, another officer may yell to the pod that they are collecting sick call forms. When you speak to your loved one, remind them that they should fill out this form.

Calling the jail to advocate for your loved one's mental health can be beneficial because it puts their name on the radar of jail staff. Sick call forms can sit in piles, sit on the wrong desk, or even be lost. Sometimes, staff do not prioritize the care of prisoners and choose to be unhelpful. This is why a phone call to push for your loved ones mental health treatment can quicken the process and increase accountability of jail staff. Do

remember that medical professionals may not be able to answer all questions because of legal privacy protections. You can always speak to the sergeant on duty in the pod your loved one is housed in. Additionally, calling the communications officer can be helpful to address any issues.

### *Medical Attention*

- Medical Services - (352) 491-4448
- Family Medical Help Line extension - 4655

For medical services, your loved one also needs to fill out a “sick call” form. At the jail, a private company called Wellpath facilitates medical services. This includes care for illnesses that need medication, any physical rashes or wounds, or any reason you would choose to see a doctor. If your loved one takes daily medication, medical staff provide this to individuals in their pod.

Calling the medical department can have the same benefits as calling the mental health service providers. Getting the attention of the staff from an outside person, in addition to a sick call form from the inside, can speed the process of getting your loved one’s needs met. Your loved one still has a right to medical privacy while inside, so the staff may be unable to answer some specific medical questions.

### *Legal Support*

- Alachua County Office of the [Public Defender](#) - Primary Number (352) 338-7370
- [Three Rivers Legal Services](#) (Gainesville) - (352) 372-0519
- [CoDe Collective](#) - (352) 534-9806 [gainesvilleraiseup@gmail.com](mailto:gainesvilleraiseup@gmail.com)

A lawyer helps your loved one navigate their charges and make decisions regarding their case. If a person cannot afford a private attorney, they can opt to have a public defender assigned to them by the circuit. Public defenders are assigned based on defendants’ last names, by letter.

Keep in mind that lawyers represent their clients, and not you. While you may want to push for certain outcomes, like treatment or probation, if your loved one’s request does not match yours, the lawyer will always try their best to meet the desires of your loved one. With permission from your loved one, their lawyer can keep you up to date with their case.

Public defenders are extremely busy, and so you must be persistent in your attempts at communication with them. Advocating for your loved one to their lawyer can keep your

loved one's case in the forefront of their mind, because one public defender may have as many as 85 open cases at once.

It is important to never speak about your loved one's case over the jail phone, in writing to your loved one, or at the courthouse, because these are all recorded modes of communication that can impact someone's case.

### ***Public Court Records***

You can follow your loved one's case through the [Alachua County Court Records web page](#). Sometimes, you can obtain information about upcoming court dates and what motions are being filed, before your loved one is even aware of it. This is beneficial to keep them in the loop on their case which can be so important because most people sit in jail and have no idea at all what's happening with their case.

#### **To follow your loved one's court case:**

1. Type in google "Alachua County court records" and click on the link that says "Court Records- Alachua County Florida." Or, if viewing this online, click [here](#).
2. Enter the captcha. Once you successfully enter the captcha you will be taken to a page that says "Court Records Main Menu" and will have links underneath it.
3. Click the link underneath "Court Records Main Menu" that says "General Index Search."
4. After clicking that, you will come to a page where you can type in your loved one's information.
5. Type in their last name and first name, and then click "search." You will come to a list of records that you can confirm is your loved one by checking their name and year of birth. This is a list of cases and if it helps, you can look at the "case status" column for a case that says "open" to find the case your loved one is currently facing.
6. Click the blue link under the "case number" column to open the records. Once you are on the page you will see tabs on your screen. The most important tab to look at is the "dockets" tab. When you click this tab, you can see a list of everything that is public records for your loved one's case, starting at the very bottom with the police report. You can see upcoming court dates, you can see what motions are filed and you can see what charges are filed. If you look at the column that says "images" and you see a small magnifying glass, you can actually click the magnifying glass and see the paperwork for that specific record.

### ***Communication With Your Loved One***

Prisoners are not allowed to receive phone calls, but they are able to make outgoing calls between 8AM and 10PM. Calls are free and unlimited, but may be shortened as a

courtesy to others in line to use the phone. You may receive a call from an “Unknown” number, and will be prompted to set up a Securus account, which is how all outside folks can receive calls. This account is to monitor your calls, which is required, but you will NOT need to make any payments for calls from the Alachua County Jail.

You must write pre-stamped postcards to the Alachua County jail, which you must buy at the US Post Office. They cost about the price of a stamp. Letters and other paper mail are NOT accepted into the jail and will be returned to the sender. Writing must be in English or Spanish only, and it may not include any profanity, or drawings or pictures. There are many reasons mail gets rejected, so it is best to check the jail’s website for any updates. Writing mail is different for every jail and is also different for the FL Department of Corrections. Make sure you include your return address so it comes back to you if rejected.

The same rules do not apply to outgoing mail from the jail; while incarcerated there you are able to write postcards as well as letters to the outside.

How you address your postcard:

**Inmate Name**  
**3333 NE 39th Ave**  
**Gainesville, FL 32609**

All inmate visits must be scheduled 24 hours in advance via the scheduling website [www.videovisitanywhere.com](http://www.videovisitanywhere.com). In-person visits are free and occur on the jail’s property, sometimes face-to-face and sometimes through a terminal with a screen. Internet visits are \$7.95 for a 30-minute session and can happen from anywhere. For questions about the internet visitation option call Securus at (800) 844-6591 or call the jail directly at (352) 491-4444.

Two adults may visit a prisoner at once, and children under 24 months can be additional. There is a dress code and code of conduct required for visitation that you can find on the jail’s website. No property can be exchanged between you and your loved one. Make sure to bring a legal form of identification like a legal driver’s license, passport, or military ID.

### ***Sending Food***

You can send either money or care packs to your loved one in the jail.

Money “on their books” goes to the commissary, which is where people can buy food to supplement their meals, hygiene products, clothing, and letter writing supplies. You can

add money to your loved one's "inmate debit account" using a kiosk in the jail lobby with cash or a credit/debit card. A fee is added if using this method. Also for a fee, you can do this online, via [accesscorrections.com](http://accesscorrections.com). For questions, contact the jail front desk at extension 2800 or Trinity Commissary 352-491-4524. To avoid paying a fee, you can deposit a money order in the jail's lobby dropbox. On the money order, make sure to include your loved one's name, your name, and your address clearly.

Any money on a person's commissary gets given to them when they are released. For questions about this, contact the inmate trust fund coordinator at (352) 491-4461.

With [mycarepack.com](http://mycarepack.com), you can send packages of food and snack products to your loved one. Monday night is the deadline to get the pack for that week, and each pack costs around \$40. If a person is released before they get their care pack, call extension 4524 to arrange a pickup.

For commissary and care packs, you will need your loved one's booking number to ensure resources go to the correct person.

### *Getting Out*

When your loved one is getting released, it can happen at any time of day or night. Most releases happen after midnight and before 3AM. Your loved one will have a chance to make a call immediately before their exit from the jail, but it is good to be in touch before then to discuss their needs. From the outside, you can call the jail to ask about release times.

Some items to bring with you when picking up a loved one from the jail:

- A change of clothes
- Their favorite food or snack
- Cigarettes or anything they might miss from being inside
- A phone charger as their cell phone might be dead

### *Solitary Confinement*

If your loved one goes to solitary confinement, we want you to know that you are not alone in your pain and worry for your loved one. It can be challenging to miss communicating with them, and to wonder how they are doing. It is really important to make sure you are taking care of your emotional health while you advocate for your loved one.

People's rights are severely restricted while in solitary confinement, and they will not have access to the same amenities as others. They will not have access to the phone or

visitation during this time, and might not have access to mail. They will receive basic hygiene items but cannot receive care packs or commissary.

*Local Non-Profits and Advocates*

- [Community Spring](#)
- [Released Reentry](#)
- [Florida Prisoner Solidarity](#)
- [Gainesville Books to Prisoners](#)
- State Probation - Alachua County Office - (352) 955-2023
- Alachua County Probation - (352) 338-7390