

# Jail Ministry of Otsego and Schoharie County

## Aftercare Policy

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After many decades of Christian ministry among the inmates of the Otsego and Schoharie County Jails, the jail ministry has laid the foundations for a system of ministry to ex-offenders as they are released from the jail or state facility. Without a life plan, spiritual counsel, proper resources and interpersonal support, individuals released from the jail or prison all too often become repeat offenders. The public sector has systems in place to address some of these needs, but with limited resources and large caseloads, there is only so much that can be done, and there is always room for more individualized attention. Moreover, the spiritual and pastoral care that has always been the primary focus of the jail ministry continues to be a unique contribution that our organization has to offer as we extend our attention to aftercare. The jail ministry hopes to complement existing aftercare systems in ministering to ex-offenders so that they maintain themselves as productive members of society and, we pray, blessed members of God's eternal kingdom. The appointment of an Aftercare Coordinator is but the first step in the jail ministry's plan for ministering to recently released ex-offenders. It is our hope and prayer to ultimately maintain a residential facility with meeting and office space to further serve those to whom we minister.

### **1. Jail Ministry of Otsego and Schoharie County Aftercare Coordinator**

Therefore, with respect to Aftercare, the Jail Ministry hopes to accomplish the following:

1. The Board of Directors of the jail ministry will appoint and supervise an Aftercare Coordinator to manage this aspect of the ministry.
2. The Aftercare Coordinator, as a member of the jail ministry board will work cooperatively with the Sheriff's office, the County Forensic Transitional Case Manager, Probation and Parole in addressing the inmates' reentry needs in facilitating a discharge plan. The Coordinator will maintain good communications in order to complement and expand existing aftercare systems and to avoid duplication of services.
3. Since the particular time of an inmate's release is often unexpected, the volunteer ministry team members, upon learning of an impending release date and any related aftercare needs of a client is asked to inform the Aftercare Coordinator of the same. He/she will, in turn, work with the appropriate authorities in meeting the aftercare needs of the individual.

4. Upon learning of the impending release date of an inmate, the Aftercare Coordinator will contact the County Forensic Transitional Case Manager, to determine what, if anything is being done for the individual, and to work out in a complementary manner a plan for supporting him/her.
5. The plan for support will address the specific needs of the individual, which is realistic in light of the jail ministry's abilities and resources. The jail ministry sees its role as complementing existing resources and services, taking appropriate actions in concert with the public agencies. In addition to offering friendship and Christian counsel to an ex-offender, the Aftercare Coordinator will be knowledgeable of available resources and will assist the individual with referrals and by helping him/her navigate through the process of rebuilding his/her life when such assistance and services are not provided by the County Forensic Transitional Case Manager. All aftercare plans will be made prayerfully.
6. The jail ministry will participate in developing an Aftercare Ministry Plan in cooperation with appropriate public agencies for a particular ex-offender which should include:
  - a. Assessment of specific immediate and long-term needs for both the individual and their family members. (Legal, psychological, spiritual, material, developmental, employment *etc.*)
  - b. Referrals to meet any of the above needs
  - c. Possible enlistment by the Aftercare Coordinator of the jail ministry team members as primary caregivers.
  - d. Provision to the individual of regular opportunities for spiritual growth and counsel.
  - e. Connection with a mentor, church or Christian ministry.
  - f. Projection of a date or conditions under which the plan will be completed or terminated.
7. The jail ministry will primarily offer referral and interpersonal support as a group of caring Christians. Depending on the amount of financial support from its donors, the ministry may also be able to offer limited direct material and professional support as needed and appropriate.
8. The Aftercare Coordinator will maintain a list of volunteers and resources available from local churches to assist with this work.

## **2. The Jail Ministry Team Members Involved in Aftercare**

The involvement of the volunteer ministry team in the aftercare system is essential. Heretofore, the Ministry Team has relied upon controls in place at the jail which assure their security. Since this will not be the case when the staff begins to minister to ex-offenders after their release, the following assumptions must be made by anyone ministering to such individuals.

1. The ministry team members must work in concert with the Aftercare Coordinator in addressing the aftercare needs of any inmate, so that there is a coordinated effort in serving

individual's needs.

2. Ex-offenders will often be very needy people on a variety of levels. Ministry team members must be aware of their limitations in meeting all the needs of their clients and should never offer more help than they can realistically deliver.
3. Ex-offenders may be unregenerate, even though they have confessed faith in Jesus, and may use their confession of faith to take advantage of well-meaning Christian caregivers. Ministry Team members must temper compassion with objectivity.
4. The primary ministry of the jail ministry is to address spiritual, moral, and referral needs of the ex-offender. The ministry's limitations with respect to providing material support must also apply to each of its Ministry Team members. Ministry Team members are discouraged from giving money, paying for services, or offering housing. While this may seem counterproductive to the message that "Jesus cares, and so do we," such activity is an invitation to codependence and does not generally provide a long-term benefit.
5. For the protection of ministry team members and the integrity of jail ministry, the Board of Directors highly recommends that team members are not alone or out of the public eye with any of their ministry clients. For their own safety and that of their family, Ministry Team members should not bring ministry clients into their own homes, either for visits or to provide housing. The Aftercare Coordinator will assist team members in finding safe neutral spaces in which to meet with their ministry clients.
6. The ministry team members should not agree to hold or store personal property of ministry clients. If this property has been stolen or contains contraband substances, the team member could be implicated in a crime.
7. The ministry team members, aware of the above warnings about maintaining healthy boundaries, and having been specifically advised by the Jail Ministry Board of Directors against crossing or blurring those boundaries, may still believe that they should give material support and unwarranted trust to a ministry client. In such a case, the team member must remember that they are acting as an individual and not in this particular case as a volunteer of the jail ministry. This protects the ministry from liability in the event that unadvisable activities do not turn out well.
8. The Ministry Team members will act in concert with the Aftercare Coordinator to devise and carry out a ministry plan for ex-offenders in their care. The Coordinator will be of ongoing support to team members in their ministry to ex-offenders.
9. In some cases, a Ministry Team member may feel that it is necessary and appropriate to supply an individual with material assistance. Such a need should be brought to the attention of the Aftercare Coordinator, who in turn will bring the need before the Board of Directors for

authorization. If approved, the Board will direct its Treasurer to disburse funds according to the designation of the Aftercare Coordinator.

This Aftercare Policy was adopted by the Jail Ministry of Otsego County Board of Directors on July 26, 2012