

Safer Communities Ministry's Do's & Don'ts for Volunteers

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A. "Do's and Don'ts" - INMATE & EX-OFFENDER Ministry

Presented by: Rev. Al Lewis

Safer Communities Ministry - Executive Director

[CD1, Track 2](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (19 minutes)

1. *Be Prepared Spiritually.* Be prayed-up, given-up, confessed-up with no ought in your heart. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Pray for your sphere of influence so you'll have no hindrance to do this work. Come with thanksgiving in your heart and with open hearts for others. Ask the Father for the Holy Spirit to go ahead for everybody, outside and inside.

2. *Be Prepared for Spiritual Battle.* In this kind of ministry, the unnatural resistance that happens in the spiritual battle for souls is sometimes amazing. Believers have Biblical authority for doing spiritual warfare with the evil demonic realm that work in a person's sin nature. In prisons or when just working one on one with an ex-offender, **cover yourself and the volunteer group in prayer.** Usually do so away from those being ministered to, before you go in and after you are out of the facility. Speak to evil spirits in the name of Jesus. For example, "You have no authority here and you must go to a dry place." Do so with calm confidence - with no fear and without getting loud or hyped up.

3. *Don't Get Into Denominational Issues And Doctrines Not Essential To Salvation.* Do give the Gospel, but **don't preach or make negative remarks against other religions** and practices. Just give them Jesus! Typical topics to stay away from are infant baptism, or baptism by immersion, speaking in tongues, etc. Our role is the basics of the faith - to be like the Holy Spirit, called alongside as a friend and helper. If an unusual situation occurs, quietly seek the advice of your leaders. However, *in longer term relationships and teachings*, in a very neutral way, help them discern the differences, always offering them free choice & understanding.

4. *Do Not Ask About Their Crime.* If this matters to you, you need to serve elsewhere, not in prison/jail ministry. One reason you as a volunteer don't want to ask about the crime is that **attorney client privilege extends only to ordained ministers and professional counselors.** It does not apply to volunteers, even if they are working directly under an ordained minister, etc. Also, attorneys don't want these things discussed. Be prepared to **cut off any conversation about any crime or current charges.** If you know these things, you could be compelled to testify against them. You don't want to work against the people you are trying to help. So tell them why you don't want to hear these things, but that you want to help them move forward with a new life. If they really need to talk about such things for their own healing, refer them to an ordained minister or professional counselor. It is OK to inquire "How much time do you have left?" or "Are you qualified for work release?"

5. *Discuss Frequently What You are Doing with Experienced Volunteers, even if you are experienced.* Make time to spend this kind of time. Grow your experience. Also, set a schedule to keep reviewing training material over and over. You will see new things as you do the actual work.

6. *Always be aware of and seek to minister to emotional and spiritual issues.* As we all do to some degree, these folks have programmed-in wrong thinking. They have painful wounds with sensitive feelings. They carry

unresolved spiritual issues such as: being rejected, not loved; bitterness, anger, hatred, acting out; fears & anxiety; true & false guilt / shame; envy & jealousy; double minded confusion; occult experience; etc. 80% are addicted. **As best you can, minister to these issues in Biblical ways. Get training in this. No matter how equipped you are to deal with these issues, always be aware that they are there under the surface. Be at peace. Don't be surprised - be patient. You can be encouraging & accepting - just as Christ accepted you - speaking truth in love. Just being like this is very powerful.**

Presented by: Rev. Dom Duarte
Restoration House Ministries

[CD1, Track 3](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (10 minutes)

7. Be Determined To Be A Friend, No Matter What. **Your primary role** is to walk alongside as a friend, to build a relationship and to be Christ to them. **Meet them on their own level.** Constantly let them know that you are there for them. Raise them up little by little. Beware, that in the little things you say or do, they can easily see you as putting yourself above them. They are sensitive about that. Teaching and Bible study can come later after relationship or a program for it is established. Do not preach.
8. Be Yourself. You will succeed in making this relationship work when **you are just you.** You don't have to be a professional or highly experienced volunteer to make a big impact. Be personable, genuinely real and honest. Don't put on religious (or any other) air of pretense. Inmates and ex-offenders can smell this miles away.
9. Be Relaxed. Stay relaxed inside, be at peace, and trusting the Lord. Take your time. As you do your part, trust the results to God. Trying too hard in your own strength causes stress.
10. Be on Time - Set Times. At institutions arrive early and enter as a group. **Stop on time** even if you did not start on time. On the outside, tell how long you plan to meet.
11. Do Only Your Assignment And Go Only Where Assigned. Should an inmate or ex-offender ask you to do something or go somewhere not expected, immediately check with leadership, don't just go with the request.
12. Seek Assistance. If you are getting in over your head with issues beyond your capacity, quickly seek assistance from experienced leaders. Let inmates or ex-offenders know up front that you can be their friend, but that you cannot solve their problems - that you will get back to them.
13. Leave Your Personal Problems At Home. Be a purposefully positive encourager. Prison and ex-offender work is no place to focus on your problems - just don't do it! **This time is for them!** However, *briefly sharing* a real life problem you had and how you overcame it, can be helpful in building respect and trust.
14. Confidentiality. Within the limits of the law, friends **never break confidentiality.** Tell them your commitment about this. It will help them to open up and to talk.

Presented by: Chris Ammons
Ex-offender / SCM Volunteer

[CD1, Track 4](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (6 minutes)

15. Be A Good Listener. Let **them** talk. You must **earn** any right to be heard by them. Listening and giving feedback with empathy is the key skill. Keep eye contact and give natural feedback signals like "uh, hum," nodding, etc. They are not used to really being listened to and loved. *Control your instincts to finish their sentence or to fill the silence. Do not push your own agenda. Lecturing, especially on moral and spiritual issues, or giving authoritative advice, kills the emotional atmosphere.* **Don't be over-zealous, or pushy, with political, social or religious beliefs.** In group settings, be attentive to individuals. As much as possible, keep to the topic discussed. Gently draw out the quiet types, and take assertive but loving control of the overly talkative ones.
16. Use Ordinary Words. Do not use their phrases, voice tones, etc. Avoid pat, simplistic answers or religious and psychological formulas to problems. It is better to tell a participant you are not sure. Say you will find the answer to their question and get back with them. **However, make sure you keep your word and do get back.**

17. Be Consistent And Faithful To Your Word. Your faithful presence **week after week** says far more than you can ever say with your mouth. To them, that may be the first miracle they see. Be very careful to **keep the smallest promise.** They will think about what you may have said lightly. For example, show up when you say you would, or call a potential employer if you said you would. Should something happen that you can't keep your word, immediately tell them what happened.
18. Encourage Them To Help Others. The quicker you can get them to think about helping other people, the sooner they will start moving from a self-centered focus on "poor me." Offer to assist them in helping another person.
19. Be In Harmony With The Other Volunteers. No matter what, show unity of purpose and mindset with other volunteers. Settle any differences elsewhere. As far it depends upon you, seek to be at peace. Never put down other ministry staff, volunteers, or prison staff. They will know if you are unsettled with other ministry staff or volunteers.

Presented by: Tommy Belk
SCM Ex-offender Program Director

[CD1, Track 5](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (18 minutes)

20. Don't Act Shocked Nor Seem Judgmental. Inmates and ex-offenders may have many pent-up negative feelings, and yet usually they hunger to be genuinely accepted. Don't be surprised that even though you love them, **they may reject you.** They may test you to see if they can trust you. Sometimes they may try to get you to reject them. Be patient and accepting.
21. Don't Believe Everything You Hear. Watch for a Manipulative Criminal Mind-set to Slip Back In. Check it out first. The grapevine is highly active in prisons and jails. Be very careful about information you share. Even though they may be truly spiritual and making progress, *they can have old programming to "game people,"* especially nice church people. Lovingly, but firmly help them see what they are doing. Trust and relationship building is are so important.
22. Don't Make Decisions For Them. Help them make their own decisions and achieve their own goals. They got incarcerated for making bad decisions in the first place. Inmates have been in an environment where most all decisions are made for them. Yet once out, a hundred decisions a day instead of a handful is suddenly thrust on them. *They need people to reflect with them* what they are doing, especially the first 6 months out. It will take some time to believe that trusting folks and being teachable is a wise idea, not an insult.
23. Never Get into an Argument. Do not be argumentative or try to dominate.
24. Don't Be Their Emotional "Dumping Station". They may start venting about unfair things or griping about things that go wrong. You want to listen up to a point, but then **use good questions to move on** and deal with the real issues. Help them see that this won't deliver them from problems like self-pity, blaming instead of taking responsibility, anger, bitterness, fear, & other root spiritual problems.
25. Don't Expect Inmates To Be Consistent. If you do, you may get irritated, blame them, etc. *Don't expect instant results;* instead *patiently expect* it to be slow, sometimes difficult work.
26. Don't Expect Thanks Or Gratitude. Generally, inmates and ex-offenders are appreciative of volunteers, but they may not know how to express it. The conditioning of prison and jail culture often works against it. This, of course, varies very much with the individual.
27. Don't Sell Anything. Do not sign up inmates and ex-offenders for any business opportunity or cause.
28. Never Visit Their Family. You don't want to become an unwanted "go between" in a negative situation.
29. Don't Give Your Phone Number And Home Address. Even though they might look these up, you don't want to encourage them. If they do get these, explain it is SCM's policy to have no phone contacts.

B. "Do's & Don'ts" - INMATE Ministry

Presented by: Rev. Terry Merritt

His Perfect Love Ministries

[CD1, Track 6](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (7 minutes)

1. Always Secure Your Car. Before going into the facility, remember to take keys out of your car and then lock it.
2. Carry Identification. Always carry your picture ID plus ID for the particular institution.
3. Be Faithful to Stay in Touch with and to Follow Ministry Leaders. Stay close to them.
4. Work As A Team. Our ministry is a team effort. Unless otherwise approved by the SCM office, we minister with two people or more. **As a general rule, don't be one-on-one with an inmate.**
5. In Group Discussion Settings Be A Facilitator. Discussion groups are not for preaching, or at first, for teaching or Bible study. Learn to draw out people in discussion and get them to share. Focus on the quiet person. Gently, but firmly, calm the big talker. Be submissive to the table leader even if you think you have a better way. Discuss it with him or the person in charge later. In the meeting, leaders lead! Followers follow!
6. Stay On The Group's Agenda. Do not jump to other Scriptures or ideas to prove your point. Use the group agenda, materials, and the dynamics of the group to help the inmates discover truth for themselves. Do allow the conversation to drift into the inmates' personal issues. Then, return to the group lesson, not to your own agenda. It is not important to cover all the material, but to apply some of the material's concepts appropriately and practically to their real life circumstances.
7. Report Threats Immediately. If you learn directly from an inmate about anything that may be a threat to order or the security of the institution, or about a threat of bodily harm to an inmate or others, this must be reported to the leadership immediately.
8. Use Only Your First Name. If an inmate asks your name, give your first name only.
9. Do Not Be A Carrier. Don't bring anything into (or take anything out) of the institution for an inmate, **no exceptions.** Don't carry items, mail, or even messages in or out for inmates, no matter what their story. Do Not Give, Receive, Or Exchange Money With Any Inmate! Do not have more than \$10 in your pockets.
10. No Hard Back Books. Hard back Bibles or Bible covers are not permitted in maximum-security prisons, or in any jail. These can be used to conceal items and are not allowed.
11. Do Not Give Any Unauthorized Materials To Inmates. Each facility will have someone in charge of distributing Bibles and other religious materials. The Bible translation that people are using can be contentious. Be sensitive. Please check with the SCM office concerning this.
- 12a. Do Not Give Out Your Address, Telephone Number, Or Email To An Inmate! If an inmate wants to correspond with you, make sure it is **only male-to-male, female-to-female.** Then, obtain ministry cards from the office and write your name on it for an inmate. **Give the ministry your address and we will forward the correspondence.**
- 12b. Do Not Discuss or Give Out Legal Advise with an inmate. Do not discuss any bonding issues!

Presented by: Rev. Lee Gant

SCM Volunteer

[CD 2, Track 1 \(Overall Track 7\)](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (3 minutes)

13. Do Not Wear Perfume Or Cologne Or Heavy Make-Up. You want to be extra careful to convey an image of purity, not sexuality to men or women in this situation. Remember some of these people have been incarcerated for a long time.
14. Ladies, Do Not Carry A Purse Into The Facility. For most units, you must have picture ID. You may want a cardholder, or have pockets in which to carry ID.

15. Do Wear Modest Dress. Clothing appropriate for Sunday, may not be appropriate for prison/jail. Do not wear anything that will bring attention to yourself, especially any that focuses on your gender like tight fitting or suggestive clothing like tank tops, shorts, or T-shirts. **Shorts are never appropriate** unless specifically authorized. **No open toed shoes.** In South Carolina don't wear white pants or jeans of any color. Be careful not to wear clothing with metal brackets or metal objects in your hair inside prisons and jails. These might be quickly taken off and used as a weapon. If you have any questions concerning this, please contact the SCM office.

16. Ladies, Always Stay In The Presence Of A Male Volunteer, When Ministering In A Male Facility.

17. Ladies and Men, Avoid Physical Contact With Male Inmates Or Ex-Offenders Of The opposite sex. There are no concrete rules; most units allow handshakes, but no hugs. Some units allow NO contact between males and females. Check with the Group Leader concerning the unit rules.

18. Do Not Give Out Personal Information. Politely change the subject or, if necessary, remove yourself from this particular situation.

19. Females Should Minister Only To Females. Men Should Minister Only To Men. Ladies are called to **present a Godly example of sisterhood in Christ.** This is often foreign to inmates and they need to be shown, in love, that ladies are more than sexual objects. Often wholesome body language is the best way to show sisterly love.

Presented by: Angela & Ryan Tolman,
SCM Volunteers

[CD 2, Track 2 \(Overall Track 8\)](#)  mp3  wma (11 minutes)

21. Be Exactly On Time And Stop On Time. If you are leading, participating or speaking in a group discussion, **watch your time.** Don't get caught up in your own thing and violate the schedule. Appoint a timekeeper in your group to help you.

22. Do Evangelism Without Trying To Be Evangelistic. Often these programs reach inmates who do not attend the worship services and Bible studies held at the unit.

23. Be Courteous And Obedient To Facility Staff. You are in a security-based society. The staff, in a sense, is also incarcerated. They have to be there many long hours. Good relationships between volunteers and the officers provide for inmates an excellent witness, and a Christian role model of God's principle of submission to authority.

24. Obey All Rules And Show High Respect To The Unit's Staff!! **Do not call the officers guards!** Address each as: "Officer [name]". If the officers say it is time to leave, or give any other direction, show eagerness in your body language and words to do what they say. **Never resist!** Be prepared for a security check including being frisked, search of your belongings, going through a metal detector, etc. Do not get involved if an inmate tells you how unfair things may (or may not) be happening. They often do this.

25. Watch Your Fluid Intake Before Entering The Unit. At many units, restrooms are not usable or available.

26. Bring NO Medications. Don't bring any medication - over-the-counter, or prescription. They must be left in your vehicle, unless they prescribed by your doctor for your own possible emergency.

27. Bring No Potential Weapon Material. Do not bring sharp keys, pocketknives, or any sharp objects like scissors, knives for cutting cake, ice picks, etc. Do not wear metal bracelets or hair bows. Do not bring ink pens or mechanical pencils into the facility. Do not bring in paper clips or staples. Check paper materials for these before going.

28. Take NO Pictures. Don't bring a camera or a picture phone. Never take pictures without prior approval from leadership.

C. "Do's" & Don'ts" - EX-OFFENDERS

Presented by: Rev. Jimmy Bention Sr.

Pastor

[CD 2, Track 3 \(Overall Track 9\)](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (10 minutes)

1. Find Out Any Probation Or Parole Restrictions. Ask what probation rules or any legal issues they are under so you won't contribute to breaking them. For example, they may be required to stay in the county or to attend given meetings.

2. Encourage Good Decisions. Without forcing your opinion as a friend, encourage ex-offenders to make good decisions and warn them of the consequences of wrong ones. Always remember that they went to prison or jail because they made bad choices. *Find out and discuss important pending decisions.* Gently help them see how they may be about to justify some wrong decisions. A positive, tactful way to think through a decision is to ask questions:

- "How are you going to handle this?"
- What if ____?
- What do you really want?
- What need are you seeking to fill?
- What are you actually doing about it?
- How well is that working?
- What would be a better plan?"

Remember, if you try to force and make their decision for them, they will never learn for themselves, or may even fight against you.

3. Watch For Backsliding into old, wrong sinful or criminal mind-set habits. Always be watching out for drifting back to old habits, people or places - especially when their pressures of a new life seem stressful. This may not even be a decision, but just a habit reaching back to what they thought used to make life work when stress hits. **Lovingly help them catch** what they are doing, think about it, and where the consequences lead. Never accuse and never bring shame.

4. Giving Or Lending Money Is Always A Bad Idea. It changes the nature of the relationship. Pointing them to a source can be good. You might even secretly contribute without them knowing.

Presented by: Lee Little

Ex-offender Reentry Specialist / SCREEN Coordinator

[CD 2, Track 4 \(Overall Track 10\)](#)  [mp3](#)  [wma](#) (6 minutes)

5. Don't Try To Do Too Much. Your role is to be an unconditionally accepting and encouraging friend in the Lord - one who also tells them the truth. You walk with them as they go through their own struggle to make good decisions. *You help them achieve **their** acknowledged goals with their own efforts and available resources.* You don't empower them when you do too much for them.

6. Don't Be A Problem Fixer. Some volunteers have a "co-dependant" type of need to give too much. This gets them into trouble and must be honestly identified in this kind of work. You must make yourself accountable to other volunteers about this. If you have this false need, it can be sensed by those who have a criminal mind-set still lingering in their personality. They will instinctively start to work you as a source. This is especially true for people with a substance abuse history - which includes 80% of inmates. This is the opposite of helping them become self-sufficient and achieve their goals in God's way.

7. Be Very Careful About The People To Which They Are Exposed. Too many Christians don't really live out the Christian walk. You must help your ex-offender avoid people who might confuse him or her with double standards, lead them down a wrong track, or just get them in trouble. They might involve them in inappropriate relationships, sexual temptations or substance abuse, even without meaning too.

8. Don't Try to Impress. Do not have a superior attitude, subtle or not. Do not be holier than you are. Do not talk down. Do not expound your knowledge of the scriptures. Do not use all your good Scripture vocabulary.
9. Be Faithful About Keeping Good Communication With Ministry Leaders, even if you are a leader. For the Area Network ex-offender strategy to work, regular brief reports are needed as part of the helping process. You are not alone helping your person. If things are happening so that you can't keep your commitments, then promptly communicate what going on right away. This way ministry leaders can support you and the participant and avoid extra stress.
10. Don't Over-Commit. Keep your focus on how much you can do for them - **given your limited time and capabilities.** For example, you may be doing discipleship work with them, but they need help in with jobs or budgeting. Go to leaders in the ministry and request more team members for a more total approach. *In Mark 2, it took a TEAM of FRIENDS to carry their hurting friend to Jesus.*

APPENDIX.

Information about Covenant Prison Ministry - the Area Network's Initiator

SCM's Mission Statement.

Covenant Prison Ministries' MISSION is to exhort, equip, and mobilize its partners to be more effective in changing the lives of prisoners, ex-offenders, and their families. Covenant Prison Ministries partners with churches, faith-based organizations, community and government service providers, businesses, and civic groups.

SCM's Statement Of Faith.

We believe in one God, Creator and Lord of the Universe, the coequal Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We believe that the Bible is God's only inspired and authoritative Word, which is our guiding authority for all of belief and conduct.

We believe that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is fully God and fully man. He is the only mediator between God and man through His substitution, atoning death, resurrection and ascension. He will return in glory to complete salvation and judgment.

We believe that all people are sinners and cannot see the Kingdom of God except through the new birth. All of salvation is by God's Grace through faith in Christ alone and is applied by the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the universal Church of Jesus Christ, which includes all those who are truly saved by God. Its purpose is to: worship God in Christ; to fulfill, with love, Christ's commission of evangelism and discipleship; to be a loving community with one another; and to provide compassionate service to the needs of mankind.

Volunteer Training Process [\(Listen to Tommy Belk explain\)](#) [wma \(5 minutes\)](#)

EVERYONE SHOULD PARTICIPATE

We encourage all volunteers to participate in this training program, regardless of their past experience. This way more experienced volunteers can share what they have learned with newer volunteers. It will help all of us understand the whole picture work together better.

WHY TRAINING AND DOCUMENTATION IS NEEDED

- The world of prisons, jails and ex-offenders is a very different cultural experience than most people in churches have experienced. The mind-set and life issues of inmates can be quite foreign to those not previously exposed to this environment.



- Because we are working among the criminal element there are security precautions that must be observed. But it is not just about protecting us.
- To be effective in working with this population, and to actually change their lives for the Lord, experienced people need to pass on what they have learned to new or less experienced people.
- To work together in unity for the Lord, we all need to know what each team member does.
- Because we live in a legally active society and are working in the criminal justice area, certain documents need to be signed, obtained or understood to best serve and protect everyone.
- It would be irresponsible to let volunteers loose without training, understanding, and standards of commitment.

Most of all, we are called to **excellence as stewards of the Lord's work**.

TRAINING STEPS

1. Attend an entire Mentor Team Training Event either Friday night or Saturday morning
2. Fill out Mentor Team Application / Legal Release
3. Submit a copy of Drivers License and other ID / Complete the background check form.
4. Come visit Monday night dinner Fellowships with ex-offenders, volunteers, and families, and / or come visit Thursday night teachings at Restoration House. Do this at least three times.
5. Process:
 - a. Attend a live, full "Do's" and "Don'ts" training session or listen to CD with handout
 - b. Take the test
 - c. Attend a training session with an experienced volunteer to discuss Do's and Don'ts.
6. Obtain a Letter of Recommendation from your pastor or SCREEN partner organization leader.
7. Attend special training sessions for specific volunteers roles.
8. Receive volunteer Certification Award.

5 "L" WORDS FOR MENTORING

Listen to them

Learn about them

Lend a hand

Love their hearts

Lead, after winning the right to be heard