

Another Critical Message for ALL Mentors

Highlights Include:

- Preamble to Mentor Message #45
- Rules violations called to our attention
- Adjustments to Mentor rules and regulations
- Warden Ballinger's mandatory rules and guidelines for ALL volunteers
- Congratulations Chaplain Stroop! State of Georgia Chaplain of the Year

Preamble to Mentor Message #45

Thank you for taking to heart every important aspect of the mentor program at WS F&CB. Rules are being violated by mentors as well as by other volunteers at the prison, which has prompted a set of new guidelines issued by the Warden. This note is not meant to be critical of any individual in our ministry.

Our Group Leaders are holding a conference call in the next few days for us to share why all this has come about. You will be asked to meet with your Group Leader and the others on your team, in the admin section, prior to going inside for your next mentoring session.

When the Faith and Character program began there were no large group visits, no mentoring, no JPAY, no book lending, and no rules regarding our dealings with released prisoners. The prison worked very hard to stay lenient but volunteers got too comfortable. Volunteers forgot that they serve in a medium security prison with manipulators, thieves, murderers, rapists, pedophiles, armed robbers, and drug dealers. The place is SO SPECIAL and the presence of the Gospel is so widespread, that an environment in which the love of Christ controls makes it EASY for us to put caution aside if we are not careful.

Walker reduced the number of reportable prisoner offenses by having a 'zero-tolerance' policy. Expect that to be pushed down to the volunteers especially in view of recent problems. The present leadership wants a tighter environment. Second chances will not be given. We may not understand why they do the things they are doing, but keep in mind that in the past few weeks, volunteer organizations have been disciplined, volunteers have been dismissed, prisoners have been shipped out, etc. because rules were violated. The prison is saying this must stop.

Rules violations called to our attention

1. Mentors have been sending printed booklets and materials to their mentees. This is not allowed. Chaplain called after a mentor was found to be sending "Our Daily Bread" to his mentee. Other mentors have ordered new books from publishers. Only letters may be sent by mail. All mail is inspected.
2. Mentors have been carrying money and wallets into the prison. We are not permitted to carry anything but our Bibles, pen, paper, and materials for study purposes.

3. Mentors have tried to walk in to the prison with cell phones in their pockets. Leave cell phones in the cars. We all have done this, but we face Federal charges if we get through with a phone.
4. Mentors are reminded that we are not permitted to write letters of recommendation to the Parole Board on behalf of our mentees. A mentor will not become involved in a mentee's case by contacting parole or probation officials, State officials, lawyers, or anyone else without the expressed permission of the Chaplain's office. It is unlikely that such permission will be granted.
5. Mentors are not to give home addresses, email addresses, or telephone numbers to mentees. We aren't to have prisoner correspondence sent to our homes. We are aware of men using home addresses rather than having mail sent to them through their churches. This must stop now. There have been instances of offenders, once released, showing up at volunteers' doors. Families have received letters from prisoners who were not their mentees because addresses were left out. Prisoners KNOW they are not to write to home addresses of volunteers.
6. Mentors have been seen accepting candy, mints, Coca Cola, etc. from their mentees. It is a way for prisoners to see if you are a rule keeper or not. If you take what you know you should not, you may become the target of a manipulator. It is not permitted. Other volunteer groups have been seen bringing such items in without permission. Guards then are forced to search for contraband. Do not accept nor give anything.

Adjustments to Mentor rules and regulations

Rules concerning relationship with mentees after transfer to another GDC facility.

The prison has notified us of mentors giving money to their former mentees transferred to another facility, and making contact with their families. Here are the rules we are now to follow. This pertains to incarceration in ANY State of Georgia prison or transition center despite what you have heard or been told in the past:

1. Mentors may NOT have direct contact with their transferred partner's family.
2. Mentors may NOT donate money to their transferred partner's account.
3. Mentors may, at their discretion, provide their transferred partner with their personal home address and phone number, as a way to contact you after they are released from prison.
4. Mentors may be added to their transferred partner's visitation list at the other GDC facility.

Rules pertaining to loaning of materials to mentees.

The Warden has established a policy with respect to loaning books to mentees. It stops items that have gone in from individuals going out again to individuals, making it a challenge for Security to monitor. Also, mentors have tried to bring in new books with high monetary value without first getting approval from the Chaplain. The Chaplain has instituted a new set of guidelines:

1. No books, not even Operation Timothy or similar workbooks may be brought in and given to the prisoner without a proper donation form to the attention of the Chaplain, marked for use by the prisoner. The old rules no longer apply.

2. You may bring individual type-written pages or copied pages used in the course of mentoring, but as long as they are not longer than a few pages. Some men have tried to skirt the regulations by bringing 20-page documents or larger. Twenty stapled pages is the limit without prior approval.
3. All books and workbooks, including Operation Timothy are to be donated to the Chaplain's Library for the use of a mentee, and then for the subsequent use of all prisoners. Otherwise, nothing is to be given. Here is the new process:
 - a) Permission must be received from the Chaplain's office like we always do, through Group leaders, Scott Dale, or myself
 - b) Once approved, the book will be donated using an official WS F&CB donation form, marked that it is a donation for the Chaplain's Library
 - c) On the form, it should be marked that the named mentee would like to be the first to use it. The Chaplain will see that he receives it.
 - d) The prisoner then will return the book to the lending library after use.
 - e) If the Group Leader is aware that the book has been donated, he may write it up in his post-meeting report. We will send a note to the Chaplain that a book was donated and to please provide it to the named prisoner for his use with his mentor.
 - f) Note also, that rules are now modified so that donations may be left after normal business hours in the Security Bunker with the donation form, noting the Chaplain as recipient. Mentors are not allowed to carry in donated books. They must be left in the bunker.
 - g) We are considering donating a full supply of Operation Timothy books to the prison for the exclusive use of our mentees from which they can draw as needed. Stand by on this.

Rules pertaining to photographs

No volunteer is permitted to bring photographs of self, family, or anything else into the prison. Some of us have brought photos of our families into the prison so they can get to know us better. In the future, guards may ask you to take these back to your cars. We are not allowed to mail photos to our mentees in the prison, nor are we allowed to accept their request for photos.

Furthermore, mentors, volunteers, or visitors are prohibited from sending any photographs or videos by JPAY. Keep in mind that this system was put in place by the prison before clear policies were established. Until a formal policy is established, the only transmissions allowed via JPAY are text. Remember that JPAY is monitored by prison officials. As this is a direct order on the part of the Warden, you can expect severe consequences - as can our ministry - if this policy is violated.

More than half of the prisoners at Walker were convicted on sex crimes. Some of us have sent photos of our wives, children, and grandchildren to prisoners. Female volunteers have sent photos of themselves. The Warden determined that it is best to prohibit all photos. We will comply.

Rules pertaining to the use of JPAY

No volunteers except for mentors can use JPAY to communicate with prisoners. You may only correspond with your assigned mentee.

Warden Ballinger's mandatory rules and guidelines for ALL volunteers

On the following pages, you will see a note sent to every volunteer team from the Warden. It is meant to be disseminated to all volunteers. You will notice that some of what has caused this is because of mentors' violations. Others have been caused by other groups' personnel. Read it carefully and you will be able to spot some of the reasons underlying this very unusual release.

In a note recently regarding this, as questions were raised by our Group Leaders, Chaplain Stroop said, "If volunteers are unwilling/unable to comply with GDC policy and procedure, and the Warden's instructions, they may resign their position as volunteers at any time.

Read and heed. See attachment on next page...

Walker Faith and Character Based Prison

Volunteer Policy and Procedure Reminders

Dear Walker Faith and Character Volunteer,

Unfortunately, over the past few month, Walker Faith and Character Based Prison experienced volunteers not following the policies and procedures covered in the Certified Volunteer Training Course. For this reason, the leadership of the prison requested that I send out a mass communication reeducating volunteers of the policy and procedures associated with volunteering with the Georgia Department of Corrections.

- **PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act)** – The Georgia Department of Corrections maintains a zero tolerance policy with regards to volunteer sexual misconduct and inappropriate volunteer/offender relationships. It is a federal offense for volunteers encourage, solicit or engage in sexual relationship or sexual misconduct with an offender. Volunteers who engage in sexual abuse, harassment or misconduct with an offender will be subject to prosecution and/or termination. The only approved physical contact between an offender and a female volunteer is a handshake. A person convicted of sexual assault on an offender shall be punished by imprisonment for not less than one nor more than 25 years or by a fine not to exceed \$100,000 or both. All instances of PREA accusations/reports must be reported by volunteers to appropriate staff members or the Georgia Department of Corrections.
- **E-Mail** – It is against policy to e-mail offenders through JPay. If you have been emailing offenders, please cease from this form of communication. The only exception to this rule is concerning the Community Mentoring Program. Mentors may continue sending and receiving e-mails from their assigned mentee only. Remember all communication into and out of the prison is subject to review and scrutiny.
- **Personal Dealings** – It is against policy for offenders to receive any item of monetary value from a volunteer. Do not provide an offender any item without first having permission from a prison staff member. All items must include a donation form. Personal dealing includes:
 - Sending items in the mail to the offender
 - Putting money on the offender's financial account
 - Contacting the offender's outside friends and family
 - Bringing items into the offender without permission
 - Sending a check or a money order to pay for a class party or meal in an offender's name
 - Sending financial resources to an offender's outside friends and family
 - Taking any item out of the prison without previous permission, this includes written communications and artwork
 - Sending or giving pictures to the offender without permission

- **Volunteer Times and Locations** – Volunteers are only permitted to enter the institution for a specified time and purpose. Volunteers are not permitted to enter the prison during times not scheduled for their specific volunteer function. Volunteers are not permitted to provide ministry or services outside what has been approved by prison staff. This also includes spending additional time on the MP floor with offenders after the approved session has completed.

***Failure to adhere to the policies may result in criminal prosecution and/or termination as a volunteer for the Georgia Department of Corrections.**

Since every group has a certified volunteer with them while conducting business at the prison, ignorance of the rules and policies will not be a valid excuse for infractions.

If you have any questions about volunteer policy and procedure, do not hesitate to contact Chaplain Jeremy Stroop.

Jeremy Stroop

Chaplain

Jeremy.stroop@gdc.ga.gov

706-764-3610 Office

Sincerely,



Pamela Ballinger

Warden

Congratulations Chaplain Stroop and closing message.

When you see Chaplain Jeremy Stroop, please take time to congratulate him on being recognized as Chaplain of the Year in the State of Georgia Department of Corrections!



It also is noteworthy that our own Mark Casson attended the awards ceremony and was recognized as a runner-up in the Volunteer of the Year category. In past years, two of our mentors received Volunteer of the Year award, the mentor ministry won Volunteer Organization of the Year award, Walker was recognized as the Prison of the Year. Recidivism is below 5% vs. a State rate of 40% and a national average of over 60%, and now Chap Stroop is recognized. What does all this mean to you? We are functioning in an important and highly visible facility. No one in the country, to our knowledge is doing what we collectively are doing. The Walker leadership is adamant that everyone associated with Walker heed a call to excellence and compliance in every regard whether they are prisoners, staff, contractors, or in our cases, volunteers.

We are a part of something much bigger than all of us. Praise God. It is our privilege to serve alongside you.

Alan Bonderud

Oh, magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together. (Psalm 34:3)