

LOVED ONES SELF-ADVOCACY TRAINING: SUMMARY

Session Notes: Tuesday, April 23, 2024

Topic: Transfers in the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC)

On Tuesday, April 23, 2024, Restore Justice's Loved Ones Self-Advocacy Training hosted Jane Moskus, Acting Manager of the Transfer Coordinator's Office at IDOC, and Areda Johnson, Chief Inspector at IDOC.

In these notes, we attempt to summarize the conversation as accurately as possible. IDOC did not permit us to record the conversation. All information in this document was presented verbally and we cannot guarantee consistency across all institutions.

Q: *If someone has been approved for a transfer at the facility level, how long does the process take for Springfield to approve this transfer?*

A: Ideally once the Transfer Coordinator's office receives the paperwork for the transfer, the staff will pull the file and will look it over. Transfers all come over on the transfer bus on Wednesdays, and the Transfer Coordinator's office usually receives them by Thursday. They try to get them processed in 1-2 weeks, but even when a transfer is approved the wait time will depend on bed space availability and other factors. When your loved one requests a transfer, it is not 100% guaranteed that they will get transferred to the facility they originally requested, based on bed space availability and other factors. When considering the transfer, they consider security level, ADA and medical considerations, disciplinary history, request for family visitation, vulnerabilities, and bed space.

Q: *How often can my loved one request a transfer?*

A: Your loved one can request a transfer every year; it used to be every 3 years.

Q: *If my loved one is denied a transfer, can they request a different facility?*

A: If a transfer your loved one requested is denied, they must wait 1 year before applying for another transfer.

Q: *If my loved one is denied a transfer, is there a way to appeal or find out why?*

A: If it's not approved at the facility level, they can appeal it with the Transfer Coordinator's Office. They can get the information on how to appeal with the Transfer Coordinator's Office from their counselor. Transfer Coordinator's Office decisions cannot be appealed, as they are made on behalf of the Director.

Q: *How soon can I visit my loved one in person after a transfer? What about video visits?*

A: You should be able to visit your loved one immediately following a transfer. Reach out to the receiving facility's visitation coordinator to ensure the visit is scheduled; if you don't hear back from the visitation coordinator, reach out to constituent services. Your loved one should NOT have to fill out a new visiting list and have the list approved again following the transfer. Video visits should also proceed normally after a transfer.

Q: *Where can we contact Constituent Services and how soon can we expect a response back?*

A: You can reach Constituent Services by phone at **217.558.2200, ext. 6226** and by email at DOC.Constituent.Services@illinois.gov. Responses back usually take about a week. Constituent Services are down two staff members at the moment and are averaging about 1200 calls a week, so responses are taking longer than usual.

Q: *Where can I or my loved one obtain a list of the criteria needed to be able to transfer into a specific facility? Is there a place on your website where I can find the criteria for different facilities?*

A: Your loved one can speak to their assigned counselor to find out about their eligibility. The criteria is not on the website. Jane Moskus will check to see if the information can be put on the website, but it depends on a number of different factors including requirements about time to release date, security level, and number of tickets. There is a link that reviews some of the [criteria](#) with information for the [Adult Transition Centers](#).

Q: *What does it take to get transferred into Kewanee?*

A: There is an application process for Kewanee. Your loved one can request to be reviewed for that program through their counselor; Kewanee makes the decision after reviewing applications.

Q: *Are there other considerations for people to transfer if they don't meet the criteria? For instance, if someone has more time to serve than 7 years, could they be considered for Kewanee.*

A: You would need to contact admin services for more information on Kewanee specifically. There are strict time criteria as far as minimum security facilities are concerned - even if you are classified minimum, no one with more than 10 years left will be in a minimum security facility.

Q: *How can we review the status online for a transfer?*

A: The transfer approval status is not available on the website. Once your loved one has moved, the Individuals in Custody search will reflect their current location.

Q: *Can my loved one get any updates on the status of his transfer?*

A: To check on the status of the transfer, your loved one should go to his counselor.

Q: *If the counselor is not assisting my loved one with transfer requests, can I reach out to the facility or elevate it to Chief Johnson?*

A: Facilities will be limited in what they can share with you, but reaching out through constituent services is an avenue that can be pursued.

Q: *My loved one received a ticket and was reclassified, and the ticket was later thrown out. How will this impact his eligibility for transfers? What if they refuse to reclassify him?*

A: Reclassification happens every year, so your loved one will not be immediately reclassified. If the ticket is thrown out, it will not count against them, and they should immediately be returned to their previous classification. If not contact their counselor at the facility. If you do not receive a resolution, contact Constituent Services (see information above)

Q: *What are the plans to move people out of Stateville and Logan?*

A: IDOC is still in the information gathering stage, and are not sure how it's going to play out yet. If people are transferred, considerations including medical, mental health, programming, and other needs will be taken into account. They believe they are going to "do their best to limp it along" and keep the women at Logan in place while rebuilding the facility, but there is no solid plan yet. They have heard that it will take 3-6 years to rebuild the facilities, but no other sense of timeline.

Q: *If they are planning to close two facilities (Stateville and Logan), does that mean there are far fewer beds available at other facilities for transfers?*

A: We have space available to absorb the people who will be moving, so it should not impact overall bed availability.

Q: *Why is someone who has a long mental health history in the IDOC be transferred to Menard without any mental health access?*

A: Menard does have mental health professionals; Jane Moskus recommends they should contact the facility with any concerns.

Q: *If I contact a facility with my concerns, do I need to be worried about retaliation against my loved one? What steps should I take if the staff is threatening retaliation if I continue to call?*

A: IDOC has zero tolerance for retaliation or any threats of retaliation. That should not be occurring. Reach out with more information to Areda Johnson through constituent services to review and investigate this.

Q: *Who can I contact if there are issues with my loved one's property not being sent out during the transfer process?*

A: The first step your loved one must file a grievance proces, indicating the missing property; the grievance officer will reach out to coordinate with the prior facility; often concerns will be elevated to Chief Inspector Areda Johnson.

Q: *If someone has a minimum classification and is in a medium facility will their transfer speed up because of the lower classification? Does this hold true for Maximum to Medium?*

A: "It does put you on the radar;" annual reclassification is supposed to identify and start this process.

Q: *How does a hardship request transfer work? Is this only for short timers or folks who have been incarnated for many years?*

A: Hardship transfers are for anyone who has any kind of hardship. Frequently they are accompanied by a note or other documentation from a doctor, for instance, if a family member has a serious medical condition that makes them unable to travel long distances to visit. The Transfer Coordinator's Office also looks at other considerations when reviewing the hardship transfer requests.

Q: *What do I need to do to request my loved one to be transferred closer to Chicago?*

A: Your loved one can request the transfer. If it's approved at the facility level, it will come to the transfer coordinator's office for approval. If it's not approved at the facility level, they can appeal it with Jane Moskus at the Transfer Coordinator's Office.

Q: *What does IDOC consider "long distance" when reviewing transfers to be closer to home?*

A: Decisions are based on what is too far for the individual loved one to travel. No defined distance.

Q: *How can I help advocate and move the transfer process along for my loved one?*

A: Since the process starts at the facility level, you can call and ask the facility to inquire about eligibility, but the process is really initiated by the person who is incarcerated.

Q: *I am a pen pal, not a blood relative. Will a counselor talk to me if I call on behalf of my loved one?*

A: Depends on the availability of the counselor and the information requested from the counselor; for instance, medical information is protected by HIPAA and would require medical release of information form.

Q: *If my loved one is transferred from Menard Max to Menard Medium, does that count as an official transfer or an internal facility transfer?*

A: Jane Moskus would consider that to be an internal transfer or internal placement decision.

Q: *My loved one is currently in Joliet Treatment Center, and is worried he will be transferred. Is there anything he can do to not be transferred? If not, how can I help make sure he is moved to a facility that offers the same programs?*

A: He should talk to his counselor. Decisions for placement at JTC come from Mental Health, not the Transfer Coordinator's Office.