



Oregon CURE

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Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants

A Newsletter for Families and Friends of Incarcerated Individuals

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Oregon CURE Updates by Gretchen Vala

As with all organizations, whether for profit or not for profit, the end of one year and the beginning of the next offers an excellent time to examine our mission (reason for being) and our goals (what we'd like to accomplish).

Our mission statement is constant: "To reduce crime by advocating for effective criminal justice policies and practices".

Our goals are well managed: 1. Provide information and education to the public, 2. Continue to develop a positive working relationship with the Oregon Department of Corrections and other related agency partners, 3. Increase membership funding base and support to incarcerated citizens, their families and friends, 4. Develop and maintain the administrative infrastructure necessary to achieve the above goals.

We have identified two issues that we will focus on for 2013 with the Department of Corrections. The first is increasing educational opportunities for people in prison, and the second is to enhance reentry services to better prepare people for their transition back into our communities. The Department of Corrections is a state agency and is governed by laws, rules and regulations in the same way that individual citizens are governed.

Included in this newsletter are House and Senate bills before the 2013 Oregon State Legislature that, if passed, could have a huge impact on furthering our mission statement and moving our focus points forward in a positive direction. If you have access to a computer, you can follow these bills on the Oregon State Legislature Website; and if you can e-mail, write or phone the bill sponsors or committee members, you can have a voice in this legislative process.

The Commission on Public Safety reported their findings to Governor Kitzhaber on December 17, 2012. In Justice Paul De Muniz (Commission Chair) foreword he stated: *Oregon also has been handing down longer sentences for all offense types, including nonviolent offenses. Despite a growing body of research that points to the diminishing public safety returns of longer prison sentences, Oregon offenders are staying longer in prison today than they have at any point in the last decade. This report provides analysis and policy options. The Commission considered these recommendations and options and agreed to forward them to the Governor and legislature for consideration and action in the 2013 legislative session.*

The House and Senate bills that we will follow, are for the most part (I believe) a direct result of the Commission on Public Safety's efforts to evaluate and recommend adjustments to sentencing, prison terms, transition assistance, post prison supervision and possibilities of expunging a felony offense, just to name a few!

In a recent article published by mailtribune.com, *HB 3194 would make 19 policy changes designed to do a better job of preventing people from re-offending while spending less money. The measure would make changes in sentences for carefully selected crimes and shift the system's emphasis from incarceration to community corrections, drug and mental health treatment and post-prison supervision. Probation, which has been shown to be effective in preventing repeat crimes, costs \$12.00 a day, compared with prison costs of \$85.00 a day. But community corrections funding has been shrinking. So has funding for mental health and drug treatment. It's important to note that nothing in HB 3194 would shorten the sentence of anyone now in prison or cause them to be released. It would apply only to sentences imposed in the future. It is also important to note that Oregon is not breaking new ground with these changes. In fact, it's playing catch up. Other states have successfully made similar changes, saving taxpayers money while keeping them safer by reducing recidivism.*

Oregon CURE appreciates the efforts put forth by the Commission and we hope that our lawmakers will follow the guidance of a non-partisan group of knowledgeable people who have the interests of the entire State of Oregon at the heart of their recommendations.

Publication Notice

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The opinions and statements contained in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of Oregon CURE.

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Oregon CURE is an all-volunteer organization. Oregon CURE volunteers typically work at other jobs.

Oregon CURE is not a service organization. Do not send us any legal documents. We are not a legal service. We are not qualified to assist you in

Bills before the 2013 Oregon Legislative Assembly of Interest to Oregon CURE (as of 2.26.13)

HOUSE BILLS:

HB2334 (at the request of Governor John Kitzhaber, M.D. FOR Dept of Corrections) eliminates sunset of provision authorizing supervisory authority to place offenders on inactive post-prison supervision.

HB2549 (at the request of House Interim Committee on Judiciary) directs Dept of Corrections to establish risk assessment tool applicable to sex offenders.

HB2552 (at the request of House Interim Committee on Judiciary) eliminates obligation to report as a sex offender if person is required to report solely as result of juvenile court adjudication for act committed when person was under 16 years of age.

HB2574 / SB58 (at the request of House Interim Committee on Judiciary) reduces minimum duration of special alternative incarceration program from 270 days to 240 days.

HB2986 (Chief Sponsor Representative Michael Dembrow) directs Dept of Transportation to work with Dept of Corrections, after consultation with Judicial Department, to assist individuals in obtaining their driver's license after release from Dept of Corrections institution.

HB3054 (Sponsor Judiciary) modifies circumstances under which person arrested, charged or convicted of offense may have arrest, charge or conviction expunged.

HB3194 (Public Safety) relating to crime, appropriating money, declaring an emergency; providing for criminal sentence reduction that requires approval by a two-thirds majority.

SENATE BILLS:

SB70 (at the request of Senate Interim Committee on Judiciary) eliminates July 1, 2013 sunset of provision that limits length of incarceration court may impose when certain probationary sentences are revoked for reasons other than commission of new crime.

SB78 (at the request of the Senate Interim Committee on Judiciary) modifies rate of reimbursement that city or county may seek from inmate confined in local correctional facility.

SB93 (at the request of the Senate Interim Committee on Judiciary) authorizes the Dept of Corrections to make grants to counties for provision of reentry support and services to certain offenders under 19 years of age.

SB187 (at the request of Governor John Kitzhaber, M.D. for Dept of Corrections) modifies time period within which Dept of Corrections must comply with court's direction to prepare certain proposed release plans.

SB 463 (Chief Sponsor Senator Chip Shields, Regular Sponsor Senator Jackie Winters) requires Oregon Criminal Justice Commission to create, upon request of member of Legislative Assembly, racial and ethnic impact statement for proposed legislation or state measure. *Referred to the Senate Judiciary Committee and is awaiting a hearing.

SB464 (Chief Sponsor Senator Chip Shields) requires the court to inform the jury of certain mandatory minimum sentences prior to deliberation.

SB620 (Chief Sponsors Senator Betsy Close and Senator Betsy Johnson) defines "rate of recidivism" for purposes of evaluations conducted by Oregon Dept of Administrative Services, Dept of Corrections, Oregon Criminal Justice Commission and other public bodies.

SB638 (Sponsor Judiciary) approves adoption of and modifications to rules of Oregon Criminal Justice Commission.

If you have access to a computer – you can keep tabs on these bills by visiting the Oregon State Legislature Website: www.leg.state.or.us/13reg/pubs/index.pdf

You can read more about how a bill becomes a law in the state of Oregon by visiting: www.leg.state.or.us/citizenguide/

"Education Behind Bars" by Kristine Vala

"Education Behind Bars - A Win-Win Strategy for Maximum Security" is the title of Christopher Zoukis's informative text on the importance and benefits to society of providing a college education in our country's correctional institutions. Not only does Mr. Zoukis's work show how our nation can save \$60 to \$70 billion a year, amounts we are spending in building new prisons, but how our society can be transformed into safer communities. Providing skills for ever growing numbers of our population to be able to find work and be contributing members to our society is a far less costly endeavor than continuing with the counterproductive warehousing policies in place now.

Mr. Zoukis's refers to research done in the last 20 years to show the correlation between levels of education and rates of recidivism. These are the statistics that he provides to demonstrate that education is our most powerful tool for reducing recidivism:

- 13.7% recidivism for those who achieved an AA degree
- 5.6% recidivism for those who achieved a Bachelor's degree
- 0% recidivism for those who achieved a Master's degree

As Mr. Zoukis explains: "Education leads to job opportunities and ex-prisoners with good jobs contribute to society."

In a recent radio interview on "Prison Pipeline" a former prisoner phoned in to say, "if you want people to act better, you need to teach them to think better." What better way than through educational classes!

Mr. Zoukis gives the example of the successful partnership with two-year community colleges which are geographically close to current institutions, such as Lassen Community College in Susanville, California. This collaboration provided a minority student population wanting to rebuild their lives, and saved the college, which was "on the brink of failure".

We want prisoners to change their practices and become positive, successful citizens, perhaps we, as citizens, legislators, and institutions, must set the first example, and focus our policies on funding the direction we want our communities to take.

Tel-Mate by Gretchen Vala

National CURE initiated the ETC (Equitable Telephone Charges) campaign over 10 years ago to encourage each state's correctional system to reduce the cost of calls. At that time, interstate calls from an Oregon prison could cost as much as \$25.00 or more for a 30 minute phone call. This exorbitant rate severely restricted the calls a person in an Oregon prison could make to their loved ones out of state or if incarcerated at Snake River in Ontario or Warner Creek in Lakeview, Oregon – the charges were equal to interstate calls due to the location of the prisons.

Oregon CURE began advocating for affordable phone rates with the Oregon DOC in January of 2009 at our annual meeting with (then) Director Max Williams. At that time, we were informed that the current phone carrier contract was soon to expire and that the DOC would put out a Request for Proposal to other prison phone services. During the next few months, we learned that one of the DOC's goals was to arrive at an average costing structure so that a call from Snake River in Ontario or Columbia River in Portland would cost the same.

Years passed, and finally the new carrier was chosen and approved! As with any new system, there were glitches that needed to be worked out, but we all managed to get through the process of confirming our numbers and using the new system. One of the DOC's goals was achieved with phone rates "flattening" which meant that regardless of where the call originated or where the call was going (within the U.S.) the rates were leveled to \$.16 per minute. This was a benefit to many who had been unable to phone home and maintain contact with their loved ones. For those of us who had local numbers; calls tripled in cost, but we managed our phone budgets by talking for shorter time periods. It certainly helped that the access charge was removed – so regardless of the time spent on the call – the cost is still \$.16 a minute.

One of the additions to the phone system is the opportunity to have a Tel-Mate Video Visitation. If you have a computer and a webcam – you can have a video visit! It takes a little bit of time to set up and I know several people who called Tel-Mate dozens of times to figure it out! It helps if you follow the directions carefully, but if you get lost in the process, call Tel-Mate! The support staff is available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day, and each time I phoned, the customer service representative would walk me through the steps and offer guidance. The Tel-Mate staff is to be commended for their patience and kindness.

A Grandmother's Video Phone Call by Gretchen Vala

My youngest son has been incarcerated since November of 2004. His first two years were spent at Oregon State Penitentiary in Salem and although it was a rather frightening experience to visit at the oldest prison in Oregon, we met some sincere and caring people from the men in the Lifer's Club who manned the photo / jewelry / games desk to the staff who were kind and efficient in processing people who came in to visit. Living in the Portland metropolitan area made a weekend visit a breeze and weekday visits possible by taking a few hours of vacation from work.

My family is extremely supportive of my son and they were able to take advantage of the 45-minute trip to OSP and visited frequently. My son had a full visiting list, which included his grandmother, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends. When my son was transferred to Snake River in Ontario – the frequency of the visits were limited to once a month and less often in the winter months. Family members who manage the winter drive over 3 mountain passes understand the harrowing experience it can be with snow, ice, poor visibility and a really long drive. The alternative is to scrimp on household necessities, fly into Boise, rent a car and stay in a hotel or one of the available hospitality houses in the Ontario area.

But – we do it – because we know how important it is to visit our incarcerated loved ones – to touch their faces, give them a hug and let them know that we continue to hold them in our hearts. My mother, however, was not able to make the trip to Ontario and hasn't seen my son in over 6 years. They've stayed in contact through letters and phone calls and while that has been good – it isn't the same as seeing your loved one in person.

My son urged me to visit the Tel-Mate web site and follow the instructions so that we could talk and see each other using the new video phone service. He set up the first call and we had technical difficulties. I was frantic as my sister was visiting from out of town and I so wanted the phone call to be successful! My room-mate assisted and we were able to complete about 20 minutes of the hour we'd set up, and although we couldn't talk the whole time – we laughed hilariously as we compared our muscles and really took advantage of the video opportunity to see each other! It was a fabulous 20 minutes and since then we've worked out the bugs and have scheduled additional phone calls, which have worked like a charm!

We then made arrangements for an hour-long call with my mother and two more of my sisters. As I mentioned earlier, my mom hasn't seen my son for over 6 years. The 45-minute trip to Salem was okay for her – but the 6 plus hour trip to Ontario is challenging for a woman who just celebrated her 91st birthday. My son scheduled the call for a Sunday morning, everyone arrived at my house in advance of the sign in time and we were in position for the call to begin! I logged in and had my camera ready so I could capture the looks on the faces of my mom and sisters. It is difficult to express the joy and love that shone on my mom's face as she saw her grandson for the first time in 75 months. The web cam was positioned so my son could see everyone (one tip: sit back from the web cam for a more flattering view). Everyone talked and laughed and yes, my mom shed a few tears at the beginning.

Sometimes it's difficult to talk on the phone – there is all kinds of background noise – and you never really know what your loved one is experiencing on their side; but with the video phone call; you can SEE their reactions – and their smiles and laughter – and it's incredible. Imagine if you can, the faces of my mom, my son and my sisters – and you'll see a little slice of heaven!

The drive – and even the flight to Boise are beyond my mom's physical capabilities. I hope and pray for a valley side move when my son reaches a minimum custody level, but until we can all meet again in person – the video phone call option is the next best thing to being there! The video calls are expensive, \$19.80 for a 30 minute call; however, if you're hesitant to drive and the expense of flying is beyond your reach, or you're older and not able to make the trip due to physical limitations, then – try a video phone call! You will cherish the time spent with your loved one and although you miss the physical hugs and kisses, just seeing your son or daughter, spouse or sibling will warm your heart and soul.

A Grandmother's Video Phone Call was translated from English to Spanish by a very dear friend who took time out of her extremely busy schedule to assist us in our work and to help get the message out to families and friends about the benefits of video phone calls. Don't ever give up – on people you love – or on new methods of telecommunications!

La vídeo visita de una abuela traducido por Gabi Gonzales

Mi hijo ha estado encarcelado desde noviembre del 2004. Sus primeros dos años los paso en la Penitenciaría de Oregon en Salem, y aunque el visitar la prisión mas vieja de Oregon fue una experiencia muy aterradora, conocimos a gente muy cariñosa y sincera; desde personas que pertenecen al Lifer's Club (familiares de personas que cumplen una condena perpetua) hasta personas que solo trabajan atendiendo a la gente que llega a visitar. El vivir en el área metropolitana de Portland también hizo que las visitas entre semana fueran posibles.

Gracias al apoyo que mi familia le ha brindado a mi hijo, pudieron sacarle ventaja al viaje de 45 minutos al OSP (Penitenciaría del Estado de Oregon) y lo visitaban frecuentemente. Mi hijo siempre tenia la lista de visitantes llena, la cual incluye a su abuela, hermanos, tías, tíos, primos y amigos. Cuando mi hijo fue transferido a Snake River en Ontario, la frecuencia de las visitas se limito a una vez por mes y en el invierno esas visitas se limitaban mas. Los miembros de la familia que si pueden ir a visitar tienen que pasar por las montañas tres veces y eso no es fácil cuando se trata de nieve, y hasta hielo en el camino ya que el viaje es muy largo. La otra alternativa es ahorrar dinero, volar hacia Boise, rentar un carro, y quedarse en un hotel o en una casa de hospitalidad que este disponible en el área de Ontario. Nosotros lo hacemos porque sabemos lo importante que es el visitar a nuestros seres queridos que se encuentran encarcelados. El sentir sus rostros, abrazarlos y hacerles saber que continúan ocupando un lugar en nuestros corazones es importantísimo. Mi madre, sin embargo no puede hacer el viaje a Ontario y no ha visto a mi hijo en mas de seis años. Ellos ha estado en contacto por medio de cartas y llamadas telefónicas y aunque esto suena bien, no es lo mismo que ver a tu ser querido en persona.

Mi hijo me pidió que visitara el sitio de internet Tel-Mate y que siguiera las instrucciones para así podernos visitar a través de vídeo. Cuando el creo la primera vídeo visita tuvimos dificultades técnicas. Yo estaba desesperada ya que mi hermana estaba de visita desde fuera de la ciudad y quería que la vídeo visita fuera todo un éxito. Mi compañera de cuarto nos ayudo y pudimos completar mas o menos 20 minutos de la hora que se había planeado. Y desde entonces hemos trabajado en los errores y se han programado visitas adicionales que ha funcionado como todo un encanto.

Después hicimos arreglos de visitas de una hora con mi madre y dos mas de mis hermanas, y como les mencione anteriormente mi madre no había visto a mi hijo en mas de seis años. El viaje de 45 minutos a Salem estaba bien para ella, pero el viaje de mas de seis horas a Ontario es un reto para una mujer que acaba de celebrar su cumpleaños numero 91. Mi hijo hizo una visita un domingo por la mañana así que todos llegaron a mi casa con anticipación para poder estar listos para la visita. Me registre y mantuve mi cámara lista para así poder capturar las expresiones en los rostros de mi madre y hermanas. Es muy difícil expresar la alegría y el amor que la cara de mi madre transmitió cuando vio a su nieto por primera vez en 75 meses. Posicione la cámara para que mi hijo pudiera verlos a todos. Todos hablaban, reían, y si mi madre derramo algunas lágrimas al principio. A veces es difícil hablar por teléfono dado a los ruidos que se escuchan y en realidad nunca sabes lo que esta sucediendo al otro lado del teléfono, pero con las vídeo visitas puedes ver sus reacciones y sus sonrisas, y eso es algo increíble.

El viaje sobre pasa las capacidades de mi madre. Espero y rezo para que cuando mi hijo alcance el nivel mínimo de custodia sea transferido cerca del valle. Pero hasta que eso suceda, la opción de las vídeo visitas es la mejor cosa siguiente a estar allí junto a ellos. Las vídeo visitas son algo costosas ya que debes pagar \$19.80 por una llamada de 30 minutos. Sin embargo si no se atreven a manejar, el costo del vuelo va mas allá de su alcance o simplemente usted es mayor de edad y no puede viajar dado a las limitaciones físicas, entonces pruebe las vídeo visitas! Usted apreciara el tiempo que pase con su ser querido y aunque extrañara los abrazos y los besos, el solo gusto de ver a su hijo(a), esposo(a), o algún familiar le calentara el corazón y el alma. Si usted necesita ayuda en español para probar Tel-Mate llame al 866-516-0115.

New Look for Oregon CURE Website

If you haven't been by our website in a while, please take a moment to visit www.oregoncure.org where we have recently updated our website's look and feel. Our mission going forward is to give friends and families of the incarcerated a more dynamic user experience as well as to continually provide more frequent and useful information via the web. The support groups and orientations schedules will continue to be available online and we are in the process of updating most of our publications and resources. Please check back frequently for updates.

In addition to our newsletters, we will be posting informational/blog updates to the site to keep you informed of the work Oregon CURE is doing on a regular basis to advocate for criminal justice reform and ensure relevant, clear information reaches the public regarding the incarceration experience. We warmly welcome your feedback about the site and hope that you will join us in building an online community and conversation. If you'd like to be even more active, Oregon CURE continually seeks volunteers and board members to join us in our efforts.

As always, tax-deductible donations in any amount are warmly accepted and will help us continue to expand our efforts to support you and your loved ones.

Freedom is Relative: Reflections on Release Day by Michele Esser

•December 4, 2012: It's been a long exhausting day, but I'm positive that my experience of today is nothing compared to or even equitable to that of my friend's experience of today. I cannot report to you anything of his perspective on today and any attempt to do so would be unfair, so I can only tell you what today has been like for me as the one on the outside. I have been on the outside this entire time, separate, involved but not implicated. The best thing I can say about today is that this journey, this experience, for me, has ended. Today I received the gift of closure.

My favorite experience today was sitting in the Bipartisan Cafe, relaxing with a cup of coffee and a bagel, as if it were any other day; as if we were just two friends meeting for coffee on a Tuesday. For the first time in two years, there was silence between us, a casual comfort; no communication earnestly taking place, no need to talk, to rush through it, no fear of forgetting to say something important or impart some critical piece of information. It was just a state of being, being together.

The rest of today was spent rushing around, making appointments and arrangements, the business of being a functioning member of society. My daughter called while we were at the cafe, sick with a stomach ache, so we had to go pick her up from school. We met with the PO next, went to the temporary housing location, and then discovered that a critical piece of paperwork was missing, meaning that another trip to the PO had to happen. I left my friend and his mother to make the second trip without me so they could have some time together.

I can tell that the freedom my friend has spent the last two years earning is still somewhat out of reach. He has a long hard road ahead of him with obstacles much harsher in many ways than those found behind the prison gates. For me, today was an ending; for him, it was barely the beginning. I wonder what thoughts will run through his mind tonight as he lays down to sleep and how daunting the task of rebuilding his life must seem.

We created this system, but it runs and manages itself out of our sight and out of our minds unless we have an unfortunate encounter with it. We hold people accountable for their actions, taking their freedom away as a consequence. And then we give it back, but with conditions and with challenges that are beyond what most of us would consider reasonable if we were to face them ourselves. We lock people up, hide them away, and it's an urban myth that the institutions we send them to provide them with the support they need to progress as humans. The result is we are freeing individuals who most of the time are no better psychologically the day they get out than the day they committed the crimes that sealed their fate. As I look back over the day and consider the challenges he faces, I would argue that my friend's incarceration really began today instead of ended.

Trust Account Deposits

There are several options available for people to deposit funds into the trust account for a person incarcerated in an Oregon prison. However, most if not all of the electronic methods have a processing fee that can add quite a bit to the amount that you are depositing.

Please keep in mind, that sometimes, the old fashioned ways work the best and are the least costly. Check with your bank or credit union, they may offer cashier's checks or money orders at no charge or at a nominal fee. Most grocery stores (customer service counter) sell money orders from \$.30 each (Winco) to \$.75 each (Fred Meyer).

You will still need to mail the money order or cashier's check to the DOC, but the price of a stamp and a couple of days of mailing are much more affordable than a \$6.95 processing fee if you deposit electronically.

National CURE

At the 2012 National CURE meeting in Washington D.C., representatives from state and issue chapters formulated a Position on Sex Offender Registry: An Alternative Approach. This position paper and others regarding Alternatives to Incarceration, Control Units, Education, the Death Penalty, Drug Laws, Employment, Labor Reform, Private Prisons and Telephone Charges can be found on the National CURE website at: www.curenational.org.

Members of the 2013 Judiciary Committees:

House: Representatives Jeff Barker, Chris Garrett, Wayne Krieger, Andy Olson, Carolyn Tomei, Jennifer Williamson, Wally Hicks, Brent Barton and Kevin Cameron

Senate: Senators Floyd Prozanski, Betsy Close, Jackie Dingfelder, Jeff Kruse and Arnie Roblan

Please Note:

Due to the high cost of printing materials Oregon CURE will now begin charging \$2 each for booklets requested. **We will continue to provide all items free of charge to incarcerated individuals.** Those booklets currently include: "Sometimes You're the Hammer, Sometimes You're the Nail," "Free-er – but Not Free," and "Keeping Love Alive." When making your request, please include a check made out to Oregon CURE. Thank you.

MEDICARE: Untangling the Bureaucracy while Incarcerated by Becky Smith

Becoming a senior citizen while incarcerated has brought with it a new set of issues for the inmate going through transition. The 61 and older prison population is the fastest growing inmate population, with a 40% increase since 2007. Yet very little has changed with transitional services to help this growing population deal with the many barriers these senior inmates face upon release. I know, because for the past 6 months I have been working on these very issues for my husband, now in his late 60's, who is scheduled to be released this year. In particular, we needed information regarding applying for Social Security and Medicare benefits. ODOC has absolutely no helpful information or resources that address these issues my husband is now facing with his upcoming release.

I thought I was well prepared for this transition stuff after spending the past 9 years muddling through the ODOC experience. Boy was I wrong! I tried asking a multitude of general and release counselors, the DOC liaison with Social Security, several Post Prison Supervisors, four different offices of Social Security/Medicare Administration, not to mention various support groups. The answers I received only clouded the picture, as I was unable to get the same answer twice. Now, I know that Medicare information alone can be daunting even for the ones not incarcerated. But if you are on the inside it can be near impossible to get any answers or help in finding the answers you seek.

I started asking questions because my husband has a serious health condition that is going to require ongoing medical treatment. With the cost of individual medical insurance becoming exorbitantly high I sought a way to get my husband on Medicare by the time he got home this September. From my inquires with ODOC the general consensus seems to be that if an inmate is over age 65 he is pretty much on his own in filing for his Social Security/Medicare benefits when he gets out. They don't have a clue what he needs to do, let alone **when** he needs to do it. If he is in need of ongoing medical attention his only current resources are the available clinics (if any) in his area until his Medicare kicks in. This was less than acceptable so I sought my answers directly from the Social Security Administration and Medicare. What I have learned from all of this has been an eye-opening experience. I still don't have solid answers but I have some direction now.

The one thing that I did learn, that I feel everyone should know, is **don't** assume the first answer you get is going to be the right one. Don't be surprised if the answer morphs (or at least turns into a Klingon) along the way. When dealing with Social Security and ODOC different rules apply with different situations. And with these different rules penalties may or may not apply. Different rules exist if an inmate -

- Is applying for disability for the first time, or has been previously denied
- Had been receiving disability benefits **before** incarceration
- Was receiving retirement and/or Medicare benefits **before** incarceration and is seeking to reactivate their case
- **Was not** receiving retirement or Medicare benefits before incarceration

After establishing which of the above applies the inmate has other steps to take such as proof of release and completing a form SSA-1696 - U4 if he wishes to use an "appointed representative" to act on his behalf since Social Security does not recognize any other personal power of attorney documents. It is still unclear if Social Security needs to actually talk to the inmate or even which Social Security office to contact - the one where the prison he is in is located or the one nearest to where he is going to be residing upon release. There is also the important question of **when** does one enroll to ensure Medicare benefits upon release. Is it during the "Open Enrollment" period from January 1st - March 31st or is it 3 months before he is released, or is it some different time? Let's not forget the matter of the 10% penalty for each year that he did not enroll in Medicare after age 65. Is being incarcerated an "exception" to enrolling at age 65? These questions have yet to be answered the same way twice. What do you do when you get conflicting information from the same source?

I am not alone in my quest for adequate Medicare information. One of my friends is going through the same ordeal. She decided to try to sign up her husband through the Social Security Online application process. I am going the more traditional route and I am signing up my husband by going to a local branch office. Already we have vastly different experiences and hopefully we both are able to accomplish the task of getting our husbands enrolled in Medicare. I am optimistic that in the next couple of weeks I will receive definitive answers to pass on to you in my next article "Does He or Doesn't He - Only Social Security Knows."

Support Group Meeting Information Please visit our website www.oregoncure.org for additional information!

Our Support Groups and Facilitators are:

Beaverton: Gretchen (503) 350-0236

Eugene: Ken (541) 935-1182
Dave (541) 344-7612

Medford: Sam (541) 944-3304
Adelia (541) 772-9680

Salem: Alicia (503) 930-0330

SE Portland: Sheri (541) 310-2025

Hillsboro: Lucy (503) 544-0583
Se Habla Espanol

Please note: If you are attending a meeting for the first time, please phone the facilitator to confirm the location, date and time. Meet other people who are making their way through the challenges of having a loved one in the prison system.

Oregon CURE
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- Name:
- Address:
- City, State, Zip:
- Phone / E-Mail:
- Yes – I have a few hours a month and I would like to volunteer! My skills would be well suited for:
Answering Correspondence, Newsletter Articles, Updating CURE Resources, Board of Directors
- Name of Person in Prison:
- SID #. Facility:

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