

JAIL BULLETIN

Number 81

NOV/DEC, 1991

INTAKE AND ADMISSIONS - PART I

Intake and admissions is the initial reception and processing of inmates into your jail.

As jail officers, you must be very concerned about this process because you have a legal obligation to provide safe and secure detention to all your inmates. The intake process may be the most dangerous aspect of jail operations because you are often dealing with people whom you do not know.

Often, you may be dealing with clients whom you have had before; during the admissions process, however, you cannot be certain of their physical or emotional condition. Therefore, you cannot predict their behavior.

You can be held personally liable and face possible court actions for problems which result from the improper handling of inmates at admission.

The benefits of having a good intake and admissions process are:

- Fewer problems in receiving inmates;
- Better security without violating inmate rights;
- Identifying and meeting special needs of inmates;
- Providing safe and secure housing for inmates.

I. INTRODUCTION

The booking and admissions process has legal, security, health, and human relations aspects. All forms used at admission must be carefully designed. You must have adequate documentation from the moment that an inmate enters your facility. Without the proper arrest or commitment

The Jail Bulletin is a monthly feature of the Crime Commission Update. The Bulletin may be reproduced and used to supplement your jail staff in-service training program. The contents of the Jail Bulletin represent the views of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect official views or policies of the Nebraska Crime Commission or the Nebraska Jail Standards Board.

papers, a person cannot legally be confined. It is your responsibility to be sure that anybody who brings an inmate to your jail has appropriate documentation.

The booking and admissions procedure is, in most instances, the inmate's first contact with the jail. First impressions are important; the way that you handle incoming inmates can set the tone for their entire stay at your facility. If inmates are handled courteously and in a professional manner, you reduce the likelihood of having problems at admission or during their confinement.

II. SECURITY DURING ADMISSIONS

A. Weapons

The first rule for security during admissions is that **no person should ever be allowed to carry a firearm inside the jail**. This is true in any jail facility, including the small jail. Instances where jail staff have been relaxed about firearms in their jail have often resulted in tragedy.

You should provide some sort of a secure armory for gun storage near the booking area. You should be sure that any incoming law enforcement personnel store their weapons in the storage area prior to entering the security area of the jail.

B. Vehicles

Ideally, you should have a "sally-port" adjacent to your booking area. A sally-port is a **secure vehicle entrance** which can be closed after a transporting vehicle has entered it. A sally-port allows you to bring vehicles close to the admissions area and to increase facility security. If you have a sally-port, be sure that you use it as it was designed.

If you do not have a sally-port, which is the case in many small jails, you are familiar with the dangers involved in bringing inmates from vehicles into the jail. Consider developing some sort of a sally-port arrangement near your admissions area. This does not have to be a covered area; many jails have been able to add sally-ports using chain-link fences. These types of sally-ports can provide security without major expense.

If you don not have any kind of sally-port, be sure that your procedures for admission are clear, and that all officers who will be bringing inmates to the jail fully understand your admissions procedures.

C. Searches

Another important aspect of security during admissions is to have each transporting

officer thoroughly search inmates who are to be admitted to the jail. You must make it clear to all law-enforcement and other officers who will be bringing inmates to your custody that they are expected to have searched inmates prior to initial entry into the building. Even though you have informed all officers about this, do not assume that they have done so. Treat all incoming inmates as though they have not been searched and be sure that your staff understand that until they have personally searched inmates, they should not assume they are safe.

D. Holding Cell

Finally, it is important to have some kind of holding cell near your booking area. In a small jail, holding cells are usually not available. If you do have one, you may often use it as an area for detoxifying short-term inmates.

Having a secure holding area near your booking area is very important. It allows you to book only one inmate at a time; you do not have to worry about any other inmates who might be waiting for admission. It also provides you with a place where you can more readily observe the behavior of newly-admitted inmates. If you do have someone who is drunk, under the influence of drugs, or whom you suspect might be self-destructive, a holding cell can be a good place to keep him for close observation.

If you do not have a holding cell, consider making arrangements to define a space for that purpose. Consider redesigning your booking and admissions area. Think about the problems which you may have had with that area, and try to solve them with a new design or arrangement. One big problem is that admitting officers are not adequately protected from incoming inmates. Typewriters and other equipment which might be used in the booking process are often being used by incoming inmates as weapons. Try to lay out your booking area so that everything that is within the inmate's reach is secured, and other items which may be damaged by an inmate or used as a weapon are out of his reach.

III. RECEIVING THE INMATE

A. Commitment Documents

The officers in your jail who admit inmates must be thoroughly familiar with confinement orders and other commitment papers for each inmate. Booking officers must be able to know whether or not a document is legally valid before admitting an inmate. This will require training, which you can provide or which can be provided through your local courts.

Some guidelines for commitments are:

1. Commitment papers should contain the legal charge held against the inmate.
2. Persons sentenced to the jail should be legally confined by a commitment order issued by the court.
3. Any person bringing an inmate to the jail must furnish the booking officer with proper credentials; a badge or uniform alone is not proper identification. The booking officer should ask for law enforcement credentials to be shown if the arresting officer is not known by the jail staff.
4. The booking officer must be very familiar with the laws of the state governing the confinement of special types of inmates, especially juveniles.

B. Medical Screening

One of the biggest problems which you might face is whether to admit an inmate who appears to be sick or injured. You may often be under pressure from arresting agencies to accept inmates who are not in good condition. The booking officer should not accept any inmate into the jail who appears to be sick, injured, or unconscious until the arresting officer has taken the inmate to receive proper treatment and presents a signed release certificate from the attending physician.

Once you admit an inmate to the jail, your agency is responsible for providing adequate medical and health care to him/her. Legally, the jail is then responsible for the inmate's well-being. It is, therefore, in your best interest to carefully screen inmates **before** they are admitted to be sure that any problems which they bring with them to the jail are the responsibility of the arresting or transporting agency.

The American Medical Association recommends that the following types of new inmates **not** be accepted:

- Inmates who are unconscious;
- Inmates who are having, or who have recently had convulsions;
- Inmates with any significant external bleeding;
- Inmates with any obvious fractures;
- Inmates with signs of head injuries;
- Inmates with neck or spinal injuries;
- Inmates with any type of serious injury;
- Inmates who cannot walk under their own power;
- Inmates who display symptoms of possible internal bleeding;
- Inmates with abdominal bleeding;
- Inmates displaying signs of drug or alcohol abuse;
- Pregnant women in labor;
- Pregnant women with other serious problems;

- Inmates who claim they are taking medication but do not have their medicine with them.

It is crucial that all persons who function as booking officers, whether part-time or full-time, be thoroughly trained in health screening procedures. They must understand the screening process, and they must know how to identify a potential health problem. Such training can be provided at your jail with the assistance of your jail physician or local health department.

When a sick or injured inmate is admitted to your jail, you assume the following responsibilities:

1. The cost of any medical care becomes your responsibility.
2. Confinement of the inmate at a hospital will be your responsibility and could drain your work force.
3. You face the threat of costly litigation by an inmate or his family as the result of alleged inadequate medical and health care at the jail.
4. The inmate may die in the jail as the result of an injury or illness.
5. You must provide special attention to the sick or injured inmate once he/she is confined in the jail.
6. The sick or injured inmate may commit suicide once he/she is incarcerated.

By admitting the wrong inmates to your jail, you assume the liability and the costs associated with their care.

*This Jail Bulletin is a reprint of material
available in the National Institute of
Corrections, Small Jail Resource Manual.
Copies of the manual may be purchased from
CRS Inc., (207) 685-9090.*

QUIZ

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of in-service training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement in-service training if an officer studies the Bulletin, completes the quiz and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during jail inspections.

SUBJECT: INTAKE AND ADMISSIONS, PART I

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1991

NUMBER 81

NAME _____

DATE _____

1. Two of the benefits of having a good intake and admission process are:

2. You must have adequate _____ from the moment that an inmate enters your facility.
3. Only trained staff should be able to carry firearms inside the jail.
TRUE FALSE
4. A sally-port is a _____ .
5. You can safely assume that all inmates have been thoroughly searched prior to being brought to the jail.
TRUE FALSE
6. If a sick or injured person is admitted to your jail, the arresting agency will pay all medical care.
TRUE FALSE

CREDIT: One hour credit for Jail Inservice Training requirement

Nebraska Jail Standards require that jail staff receive eighteen (18) hours of in-service training each year. The Jail Bulletin may be used to supplement in-service training if an officer studies the Bulletin, completes the quiz and this process is documented by the jail administrator for review during jail inspections.

SUBJECT: INTAKE AND ADMISSIONS, PART I

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1991

NUMBER 81

NAME _____
DATE _____

1. Two of the benefits of having a good intake and admission process are:
 - Fewer problems in receiving inmates.
 - Better security without violating inmate rights.
 - Identifying and meeting inmate rights.
 - Providing safe and secure housing for inmates.

2. You must have adequate **DOCUMENTATION** from the moment that an inmate enters your facility.

3. Only trained staff should be able to carry firearms inside the jail.
TRUE FALSE

4. A sally-port is a **SECURE VEHICLE ENTRANCE.**

5. You can safely assume that all inmates have been thoroughly searched prior to being brought to the jail.
TRUE FALSE

6. If a sick or injured person is admitted to your jail, the arresting agency will pay all medical care.
TRUE FALSE

CREDIT: One hour credit for Jail Inservice Training requirement