

Jail Pastoral Assessment Example: Allen County

The composure/breadth of pastoral care available at the jail

How many paid and volunteer chaplains does the jail have?

- 3 paid, 70 volunteer

What religious services are available to the prisoner? Is there a space for worship? Are materials provided?

- 2 services of “no specific religious orientation” are held every evening, Mon-Thurs. Each “block” (sections of jail where prisoners are housed, often determined by their gender and offense) therefore has access to a religious service twice a month. There is also a Substance Abuse class offered (3 times a week for men, 3 times a week for women) with a highly spiritual approach, a “Life skills” class, and a Domestic Violence class. The jail no longer hosts a GED course, due to decreased funding and the revised state requirements (now only accessible by computer).
- Book carts are taken to blocks throughout the week, many of which contain Bibles and books of a religious nature. This is a huge component (and often a good starting point) of ministry, as even people who are not heavy readers will read while in jail. Books/magazines often have to be soft backed, staple free, and with limited images/color, as inmates have been known to use the pigment to create tattoos.

What is the make-up of your occupancy at this time (religious, ethnic, age, avg. sentence/offense).

- Received jail statistics sheet. Currently 850 inmates. Mainly misdemeanor crimes being served at ACJ, some federal defendants as well; many charges are drug related. (see difference here <http://www.attorneys.com/felonies/the-difference-between-misdemeanors-and-felonies>)

What are the jail’s current Pastoral Visitation Guidelines?

- There are certain hours dedicated to “Pastoral Visitation”. In Allen County, the jail has a responsibility to provide the inmate with access to a representative of the prisoner’s faith, but not access to a particular person.

Do priests regularly come to the jail? Do the chaplains ever have requests for a Catholic priest that they cannot fulfill? Is there a Catholic presence on the chaplaincy board of directors?

In what areas does the chaplaincy need support?

- The majority of most jail chaplains’ salaries are donation-dependent. This means much of their time is spent on administrative tasks/fundraising. Their abilities are largely determined by sheriff/county administration. On top of serving the spiritual needs of the prisoner, chaplains also relay death notifications to the prisoners, handle hospital calls, and arrange for unique dietary needs.
- Law enforcement officers often have a high turnover and suicide rate.

Do you hold training for interested jail volunteers?

What paperwork needs to be completed in order to volunteer? What needs to be in place in order to visit inmates “one-on-one”?

How accessible/visible are the opportunities for pastoral care

When does the chaplain meet a prisoner/how do they know the chaplaincy exists?

- Is there a way for the inmate to declare his/her religious affiliation/denomination/community at intake?
- Oftentimes prisoner, or a member of the prisoner's family, requests to see the jail chaplain. The Allen County Jail Chaplain receives approx. 900 requests/year. He then asks the prisoner if they belong to a particular church, and then calls on that church's pastor.
- Services are well attended (approx. 9,000 inmates participate annually) and inmates look forward to being able to go to break up the monotony of the day.
- Baptisms (and "re-baptisms") are performed three times a year (300 baptisms annual average).
- "Non-denominational" (Protestant) Bible studies take place on the women's and men's block once a week.

(Other things worth noting)

How do prisoners purchase hygienic necessities? (Everything, aside from the first blue uniform is purchased by the inmate, through the commissary. The commissary will usually wait two weeks to see if the prisoner receives any donation/money from family. If not, the chaplains are able to give them donated underwear, etc.)

How is medical attention sought and paid for? (Doctors come to the jail daily; any specialist appointment is arranged off site; QMAs deliver meds daily).

Is there a psychiatrist/psychologist that regularly comes to the jail? (Park Center, Tuesdays and Thursdays; no existing prescription makes it past intake).

What other recreational/exercise/interaction is available for the prisoner? (no outside time, no gym; meals delivered in blocks).

How often do inmates return after serving a sentence (what is the recidivism rate)?

How many people are employed by the jail?