



**UPAN Newsletter** Volume 12 Number 2 | **FEBRUARY 2025**  
*"Empowerment and Growth Through Knowledge and Unity"*

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**Keep Relationships Strong – Medical Info for Families – Tour of Carrant: Dental -  
 Two *Dell Discussions* : Recent Activities and Flowers to Dell –  
 How to Advocate for Loved Ones – Hepatitis C: What You Need to Know**

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**Next Meeting:** Monday, February 10, 2025 6:30 – 8:30 pm. **Guest Speakers:** UPEP Director Andy Eisen & Education Director Darcy Gomez. **Join all meetings at** <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>

**Following Meetings:** Monday, March 10, 2025 6:30 – 8:30 pm. **Guest Speakers:** Oasis Perez Utah's 211 Directory  
**Monday April 14, 2025 6:30- 8:30 pm. Guest Speaker:** Sam Arungwa, PhD, Director for Prevention Science here in Utah And Co-Chair for PRWG, National Prevention Science Coalition to Improve  
**Meetings Available on UPAN Facebook Live and on UPAN's Facebook page afterwards. Visit UPAN Facebook page for newsletters. Visit website (page 10) to subscribe to the UPAN Newsletter, or Utah Prisoner Advocate Facebook Page for link to current monthly meeting. Free to the public. Zoom link:** <https://bit.ly/UPAN-Meet>

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**Disclaimer:** *Formulate your own opinions about the information presented. This information is presented for the reader's enlightenment and evaluation.*

**February! When Love is the main theme! "Love is friendship that has caught fire. It is quiet understanding, mutual confidence, sharing and forgiving. It is loyalty through good and bad times. It settles for less than perfection and makes allowances for human weaknesses." Ann Landers**

**Tips for Keeping Family Relationships Strong While Serving a Prison Sentence.**

By Molly Prince, LCSW

For every person sentenced to prison, there are family members also serving time for a crime that they didn't commit. The observance of Valentine's Day this month can be especially difficult to deal with. The emotional stress of having an incarcerated spouse or relative is heightened during this time. Please note that many of these tips are relevant for other types of relationships in addition to that of spouse or partner.

**Preserving Your Relationships While in Prison**  
 Incarceration can take a serious toll on a relationship

regardless of if it is marriage, unmarried romantic relationship, or relationships with parents, children, friends, and other people in your support system. Even the strongest relationship can be affected. In addition to the pain of separation, many family members on the outside may also be dealing with feelings of anger, shame, and betrayal. The actions that have led you to prison will have long-lasting effects on you and others.

You might have harmed some family relationships on your way to incarceration. According to an article on the

Prison Fellowship website (prisonfellowship.org), it is important for you, as the person who did something that resulted in incarceration, to take some steps to repair and maintain those relationships.

The article states, "You're responsible for some damage. Before any relationship can go forward, you'll need to call, write, or in a visit, confess, acknowledge and, apologize." The website provides some suggested reading including *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande, and *Choosing Forgiveness: Your Journey to Freedom* by Nancy Leigh DeMoss. *Note, UPAN cannot comment on how helpful these two books are because we have not read them prior to seeing them cited in this article.*

In this same Prison Fellowship article, Steve and Donna Varnam share their thoughts on how they kept their marriage intact while Steve was in prison. More than 80% of prisoners are male, but imprisoned wives can learn from these tips, too. We are reprinting these tips here and would like to remind you that they are, for the most part, relevant to any relationships with family and friends:

### **10 TIPS FOR INCARCERATED SPOUSES**

Set aside any self-pity and accept responsibility for the actions that put you in prison. Only then can you get a fresh start on life and your marriage.

Learn to communicate with your spouse (or other family members) honestly. The choices that led to your conviction have damaged their trust and confidence in you. Rebuilding their trust will take time and is essential to saving the relationship.

Be sensitive to what your loved one in the community is going through. They are forced to assume many new

responsibilities by themselves. They, too, feel alone. Listen to their needs first.

Encourage your spouse with letters, telephone calls, and visits. Don't tear them down. Communication *from* you is as important to them as their communication *to* you is to you.

Protect their feelings. Don't be afraid to say something nice to them. Disagree when necessary, then let it go. Look for solutions where no one loses.

Overlook the little things that irritate you. Keep talking. Silence becomes a barrier.

Children should unite you, not divide you. Don't let them play one of you against the other, and don't take the child's side against your spouse. Discuss parenting issues out of earshot of the children. Don't let the shared responsibility to the children interfere with your responsibility and loyalty to their other parent.

Tell your spouse how you feel about what got you into prison. Express your regret. If you are sorry, say it. Acknowledge how your choices have impacted them. It will mean so much to your spouse and other family members to hear these words.

Don't abandon your role as a parent. Make it easy for your spouse to tell you about what is happening at home. Discuss decisions related to the family, while remembering that your spouse is in the trenches handling everything out in the community, so be careful to not be demanding about those decisions.

Trust your spouse. Do not let others plant suspicion in your mind. Do not let the disappointing experiences of other prisoners make you doubt your spouse's faithfulness and commitment to you.

Most information in this article is adapted from: <https://www.prisonfellowship.org/resources/support-friends-family-of-prisoners/prisoner-resources/how-to-survive-prison/10-tips-for-incarcerated-spouses/>

***"To make best use of your time in prison, practice empathy – put yourself in your family or spouse's shoes. Imagine what they must be going through." Joseph Nolan***

### **Family Medical Phone Line, Communication with CHS, and Release of Medical Info**

By Molly Prince, LCSW

**The Family Medical Line** has been in place since the COVID Pandemic. It is a crucial communication channel that provides the opportunity for families to call and leave messages regarding concerns about the health of their loved ones, ask questions, and receive information from Correctional Health Services (CHS). The Family Medical Line phone number remains **801-522-7293**, M–F 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. The number for CUCF is the same, or you can call **435-528-6000 ext. 3**.

The main Family Medical Line functions Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding holidays and weekends with the option to leave a message after hours. Have your loved one's name and offender number handy, and a concise summary of the situation

you are concerned about. Leave your own name and phone number. You can also send the relevant information to Jade Watkin or Karen Tapahe in the Public Information Office with Constituent Services. It is our understanding they will log the concern and forward the email to the appropriate person.

[jwatkin@utah.gov](mailto:jwatkin@utah.gov)    [ktapahe@utah.gov](mailto:ktapahe@utah.gov)

**The Impact of Civil Communication** UDC has a dedicated operator of this phone line. The role of handling the Medical Line calls is time consuming and demanding. It involves listening to the messages, gleaned the relevant information in order to research the situation, and responding.

We want to remind those calling the family line that the DHHS administrators overseeing CHS, UDC administrators and staff are involved. They, and the UPAN Med Team, all share the concerns of families and incarcerated patients with each other. While it may not be apparent to everyone who has a loved one incarcerated who has missed medications or has not received timely medical care, UPAN's Med Team is working on a regular basis (sometimes daily) with DHHS and UDC administrators to advocate for those housed in Utah's prisons.

The fears and frustration that families and patients go through are understandable. The executive teams of UDC and DHHS understand this. We would like to acknowledge that the stress that correctional staff and medical providers experience is also difficult.

We have found that resolving concerns is the result of thoughtful and courteous communication, whether it is in writing emails, phone calls, or in meetings. While it is easy when under stress to give in to emotion and forget our communication skills, we want to urge everyone who will be leaving messages, emailing, or talking to correctional staff to strive to be courteous, no matter how fearful or upset we are.

*Please see article on Advocating for Incarcerated Loved Ones in this issue (pages 6 - 9).*

#### **The Role of UDC Staff**

The staff managing the Family Medical Line are there to facilitate sharing concerns and information with CHS providers. The Medical Phone Line staff cannot formulate policies or provide direct care. They want to help. They are similar to customer service representatives, tasked with ensuring your message reaches the right professionals. We should treat them with the same respect and civility we expect in return.

UDC staff answering the Family Medical Line must follow the HIPPA laws as well as prison policy about what type of information they can share with family members. They cannot share anything if the prison's

Medical Information Release Authorization has not been filled out by the incarcerated patient naming the person that UDC is authorized to talk to about their medical status. **(Re-read that paragraph and take action if necessary. Ed.)**

Family Medical Line staff do not have to remain on the line if the caller is becoming verbally abusive or using inappropriate language. ***Tina is has been in this position for quite some time, and UPAN wants to acknowledge her dedication to helping families share concerns with CHS and receive information when possible.***

#### **The Medical Information Release Authorization**

The only way UDC staff can give you information about medical status is if your loved one has completed the Medical Information Release Authorization Form. Otherwise, UDC cannot share information with you about their medical status. They can receive your concerns, but won't be able to answer your questions. We are told that this Medical Information Release Authorization is actually titled Limited Power of Attorney to Request and Receive Private Medical Records and Information from the Utah Dept. of Corrections. Please make sure your loved one has completed this form and submitted it to Correctional Health Services.

#### **A Call to Unity**

UPAN has made significant strides in fostering professional relationships and open communication with UDC's current administration and Correctional Health Services. It's a collective endeavor that requires the cooperation of all parties involved—UDC staff, UPAN directors, and most importantly, incarcerated patients and you—the families of the incarcerated. Your engagement is crucial in continuing to build upon these relationships, leading to enhanced medical services and overall improvement for Utah's incarcerated population.

We thank you for being part of the solution and for your continued support in challenging times.

### **USCF Carrant Tour: The Dental Service** by Molly Prince, LCSW

**Marcus Wisner, DMD** is a Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry. He has been a dentist for over 24 years and has worked in private practice and in the military. He was the Dental Director for UDC for approximately 15 years during which time he improved timeliness of seeing dental patients and streamlined the process for incarcerated patients to receive treatment in a timely manner.

In 2023, Dr. Wisner joined the Utah Department of Health and Human Services where he took on the role as **Correctional Health Services Director for DHHS** when DHHS began overseeing the Correctional Health Services within the Utah Dept. of Corrections.

On December 12, 2024, he guided UPAN directors and some other advocates on a tour of the Dental Service in USCF. The USCF dental office has three separate dental chairs in spaces for patients to be seen. He introduced us to two of the five dental assistants, Cindy Taylor and Ann Winsness. The dental assistants have 50 years of experience between them working in private practice, specialty clinics and in Utah's prison system. There are several dentists between CUCF and USCF and Dr. Wisner states, "All our dentists have extensive experience."

**Number of dentists in each prison.** In USCF, five dentists work five days per week to accommodate over 3000 incarcerated individuals' dental care needs. CUCF now has its own dentists dedicated to that office. This

includes two part time dentists as well as one full-time dentist five days a week. Sometimes the dental director (a dentist) goes to CUCF one day per week.

**Number of dental assistants in each prison.** Some of the longest tenured staff members work in the dental department. There are a total of five dental assistants at USCF and two full-time dental assistants at CUCF.

**Approximate number of dental patients seen per month.** Between 400 and 500 patients are seen per month at USCF. In CUCF, between 200 and 300 patients are seen on average each month. Most of those visits will be routine care.

**Process that dental patients must go through to be seen for emergency problems.** These might include problems such as abscesses, broken teeth, serious bleeding in the gums, etc. We were told that individuals can let officers or any CHS team member know of the emergency. According to Dr. Wisner, emergencies are triaged the same day they are reported and should be scheduled to be seen within 24 hours. They are usually seen the same day if the triage warrants it.

**Average wait time to get a dental appointment for non-emergent dental care.** For routine care such as cleanings, treatment planned fillings, starting dentures, and routine extractions, the Healthcare Request process is the best way to request to be seen. There is an expected wait time of 4 weeks for routine care. However, if a patient has started a service like dentures or a root canal therapy, they should not have to submit a HCR. The dental team should schedule the patient back until the service is completed. If this does not occur, please submit a healthcare request.

**“The dental team has a tremendous amount of experience,”** states Dr. Wisner. He wants people to know that the dental team will discuss treatment plan options and various things to be considered when patients leave the prison.

It was stressed that is important to remember that a lifetime, or even an extended period of neglect or abuse, cannot be overcome in a single dental visit. Consistent dental visits and working to complete the treatment plan are keys to success in keeping your teeth and gums healthy.

### *Dell Discussions* Recent Activities in Dell for Women & their Families by Molly Prince, LCSW

The Intergenerational Program under Reentry & Rehabilitation at USCF hosted some of the following holiday events over the past few months.

**Halloween-themed Kids Day** event was held for the mothers in October. This is similar to the one that was held in June 2024 for fathers around Father's Day.

**Holiday Crafts for Kids Day** was held in December so mothers could make holiday cards and ornaments to send home for their children.

This was spearheaded by the intern in the Intergenerational Program. The program reserved an entire day in the Emerald Chapel (Emerald is a housing unit that is not occupied with residents).

Over 200 women signed up and attended the event. Anyone who had Chapel privileges and had children could attend. The program hosted five one-hour sessions with 50 women invited to each hour. Anyone that had chapel privileges and children was invited to attend.

University of Utah's Prison Education Project contributed significantly to this event by donating craft supplies and

baked goods for the women to eat while they crafted holiday cards. The Intergenerational Intern and his family also donated a significant amount of craft supplies.

This event was deeply appreciated and it is uplifting to learn of these events for the mothers who need help and support trying to stay connected with their children. We appreciate all of those that collaborated to make this event happen for the women in the Dell housing unit!

**Reasoning behind increasing special events in Dell.** The reasoning behind creating these events is because many women don't get visitors. The Intergenerational Program wanted to provide a way for them to connect with their kids over the holidays.

The women made adorable holiday cards and the staff took updated photos of each of the women to print and mail home with their cards.

Director Trisha Reynolds states, "We know women love to share updated photos with their families. One of our residents crocheted Santa hats for the photos which were adorable. We mailed hundreds of holiday cards (UDC covered the postage). It was amazing and I hope we can do more events like this in the future."

***“Keep love in your heart. A life without it is like a sunless garden when the flowers are dead.” Oscar Wilde***

### *Dell Discussions* : Partnership with Small & Simple Farms: Bringing Flowers to Prison

By Molly Prince, LCSW

2024 brought fresh flowers into Utah State Correctional Facility in the Dell Women's Unit. One woman wrote after one of the events, "It's been 16 years since I smelled a flower." Think about it. This brings tears to my eyes as I write this.

Intergenerational Program Director Trisha Reynolds, LCSW shared the uplifting positive experience with this project in which Emily Sinkovic, owner of a small flower farm in Nephi, Utah called Small and Simple Farms is bringing flower gardening knowledge to the women in Dell. In addition, she has been bringing life lessons and the beauty of flowers from her farm into the steel and concrete of the women's unit.

While the gardening program within Dell has various aspects and is a huge undertaking, Director Reynolds shared information about her involvement in one portion of the gardening program. She explained that Ms. Sinkovic and her farm support the Women's Garden and some other projects in Dell.

In addition to owning Small and Simple Farms, Emily Sinkovic also has an educational background in restorative justice and peacekeeping, which is part of why she cares so much about incarcerated women.

Ms. Sinkovic had reached out to Director Reynolds in the past to offer fresh cut flowers for placement in what was originally designed to be the mother and baby nursery in Dell when the prison was built. Due to some changes in focus based on national research and trends advocating diversion programs in the community rather than placing pregnant women in prison, the plans for a baby nursery in USCF were cancelled.

Emily Sinkovic had dreamed of bringing fresh cut flowers to the women's facility to share the soothing and healing energy that flowers offer human beings. There were a variety of challenges getting permission for that through the leadership at the facility. It did not happen quickly, but finally it was realized in September 2024.

**Dell Community Garden Project.** During the summer of 2024, after Deputy Warden Zorn and his staff announced the Dell Community Garden Project, Dir. Reynolds reached out to Ms. Sinkovic again. That proved to be a positive move, and it has evolved into an amazing relationship between Small & Simple Farms and USCF in which she has done several things to support the women of Dell.

**In person presentation on how farming relates to life.** In September, 2024, Emily Sinkovic did an in-person presentation to dozens of the women. The topic focused on how farming relates to life. She shared several life lessons that she has learned from farming. It touched and moved the women in attendance and was very well received.

Ms. Sinkovic and several of her friends who are also flower farmers donated fresh cut flowers for the event. According to Small and Simple Farms social media post, Emily was thrilled to bring the flowers and teach the women. She wrote, "This month was a big one for our farm... we've achieved a dream I've had for several years now. Our flowers went to prison... It felt so good to walk through those gates with my arms full of flowers!"

She was able to take in baskets of flowers to teach some of the women how to create floral arrangements. These photos were posted on the Utah Dept. of Corrections Facebook page and other social media. The smiles on their faces as they learned to make arrangements and the happiness at being able to just BE with the flowers, and the energy they bring, are evident in the photos.

The completed flower arrangements were then allowed to be placed throughout the facility. Director Reynolds shared that during the event, Ms. Sinkovic reminded everyone that "spring always comes," no matter how long, dark, and cold the winter might seem.

She also taught that it's better for the soil (and people) to grow SOMETHING rather than nothing, even if you are not able to grow what you ideally want to grow right now. This applies to life as well as gardening.

She wrote on the board the following tips and talked about each as they apply to both gardening and life:

- 1- You have to kill plants to grow plants.
- 2- Weeds are inevitable. Grow flowers anyway.
- 3- Always look deeper.
- 4- Don't ignore connection and cooperation.
- 5- Spring always comes.
- 6- It's better to grow something (than nothing at all)
- 7- It takes a whole season
- 8- "By small and simple things."
- 9- It's never "just" \_\_\_\_\_ .

These are good reminders to ponder and see how they apply to each one of us.

The women took notes and were given time to process and write down their thoughts after the event. Here are two that were shared on social media and with UPAN about that day.

"The flowers are beautiful, but your message touched me the most. I've had / am having a dark period in my life and you reminded me to not give up and just hold on. I will reach inside and look deeper and hold on to that until spring."

"Tonight we arranged flowers. It was my first flower arrangement. It was so therapeutic. It reminds me of when my church branch would have vases of arranged flowers. The smell is so fresh. It's been 16 years since I smelled a flower. Thank you so much."

Emily and the Farm have donated fresh cut flowers to the facility several times and also donated wreaths for the holidays to the women's unit, according to Dir. Reynolds.

**Scholarships for Dell women to attend virtual workshops on starting and running a flower farm.**

There is a company called Floret Farm that offers online virtual workshops to teach people how to start and run a flower farm. The workshop is costly, but they give out a



few scholarships each year. With UDC's permission, Emily Sinkovic applied for a scholarship on behalf of the women in the garden program, and it was granted! Out of nearly 3,500 applicants and only 23 scholarships awarded, eight fortunate women were able to attend on the one scholarship awarded to Small & Simple Farms for the women in Dell.

Everyone was thrilled and upon accepting the scholarship on behalf of UDC's Women's Garden Program, Emily wrote "Learning to grow flowers alongside fruits and vegetables will benefit the women physically and emotionally and give them skills they can use when they are released. Additionally, the flowers the women grow and arrange will improve the prison atmosphere and be donated to local schools, nursing homes, and hospitals." Source: internet link below.

**Future guidance from Emily Sinkovic.** Trisha Reynolds explained that Ms. Sinkovic will provide some guidance as the women start to plant things in the garden. For now, they have just been amending the soil (it's terribly salty) and have planted a few trees.

[https://www.floretflowers.com/meet-the-2025-floret-scholarship-winners/?utm\\_source=ActiveCampaign&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=Meet%20the%202025%20Floret%20Scholarship%20recipients%21&utm\\_campaign=10-10-24%20%2F%20Scholarship%20winners%20announced&vqo\\_ee=0TwAZ8cG4ilCmFJUJL0%2F%2Bi3flX%2BobDkw8dzgmvDNwvHGtFzeMw%3D%3D%3Av%2FByAiAma8mnay6yVe0hTJCB6GHtudBw](https://www.floretflowers.com/meet-the-2025-floret-scholarship-winners/?utm_source=ActiveCampaign&utm_medium=email&utm_content=Meet%20the%202025%20Floret%20Scholarship%20recipients%21&utm_campaign=10-10-24%20%2F%20Scholarship%20winners%20announced&vqo_ee=0TwAZ8cG4ilCmFJUJL0%2F%2Bi3flX%2BobDkw8dzgmvDNwvHGtFzeMw%3D%3D%3Av%2FByAiAma8mnay6yVe0hTJCB6GHtudBw)

***When you love someone, you love the whole person as he or she is, and not as you would like them to be." Leo Tolstoy***

### **Advocating for Incarcerated Loved Ones: A Comprehensive Guide from UPAN's January 2025 Meeting**

*The Utah Prisoner Advocate Network (UPAN) hosted a comprehensive 2-hour presentation on January 13, 2025, to guide families and advocates through the challenges of advocating for the incarcerated in Utah. The presentation included tips on advocating for general conditions and opportunities in Utah's prison system. The presentation highlighted strategies for individual and systemic advocacy, offering tools to support family members while working toward meaningful reforms in the Utah prison system.*

#### **Part 1: Basics of Prison Advocacy by Molly Prince, LCSW**

Molly Prince, LCSW, UPAN Director and Co-founder, opened the session by defining advocacy and introducing participants to the types of advocacy that play a role in Utah's criminal justice system.

#### **Types of Advocacy in Utah Criminal Justice System:**

**Individual Advocacy** focuses on addressing the needs of a specific incarcerated individual. Examples include advocating for specific medical, mental health, dental or eye care, access to jobs, education and programming opportunities, safety in housing assignments, or resolution of grievances. UPAN is deeply involved in this on a daily basis and works to help families learn how to advocate for their incarcerated loved ones.

**Systemic Advocacy** targets broader reforms within the criminal justice system to improve conditions, policies, and practices. Examples include promoting better healthcare policies within the prison system, increasing safety in housing within the prison, increasing

communication and contact between incarcerated and families which has been proven to improve outcomes both within the facility and upon release, reducing recidivism through programming, or lobbying for legislative, systemic change within the criminal justice system. UPAN is deeply involved in systemic advocacy with our various directors over the myriad of divisions and issues within the prison system.

**Floral arranging is also a marketable skill they can use when they leave.** It is anticipated that Emily of Small and Simple Farms will continue to partner with UDC by contacting some of her other professional contacts who might donate time to teach some specific floral arrangement classes.

Ms. Sinkovic's knowledge and advice is not limited to flowers. She also has provided some very useful suggestions for the gardeners on growing foods that could be incorporated into meals to improve the women's nutrition.

Director Trisha Reynolds conveyed to UPAN her deep appreciation for Emily Sinkovic's dedication to helping the women in Dell learn more about gardening and how to apply gardening principles to life while bringing fresh energy and skills to the women in the program.

**Legal Advocacy** is intended to ensure incarcerated individuals have access to fair trials, appeals, clemency petitions, and representation. Legal advocacy includes the work of organizations like the ACLU of Utah (<https://www.acluutah.org>); Disability Law Center (<https://disabilitylawcenter.org>) and the Rocky Mountain Innocence Center (<https://rminnocence.org>). Other

organizations focused on legal issues include (but are not limited to) smaller non-profit organizations such as Justice by Objectives or Paige Norton Advocates. Clean Slate Utah advocates and assists with expungements.

**Family and Community Advocacy** provides support networks for families of incarcerated individuals to share resources and strategies for navigating the prison system. Locally this includes (but is not limited to) organizations like UPAN, Prisoner Advocate Group, Journey of Hope, and Justice by Objectives.

(UPAN Link) <https://utahprisoneradvocate.org>

**UPAN's Advocacy Focus.** UPAN combines individual and systemic advocacy to address critical areas in Utah's prisons and jails. The organization's goals include:

**Protecting Inmate Rights:** Advocating for humane living conditions, fair treatment, and access to appropriate, timely and adequate healthcare, educational and other resources including contact with support systems among other things.

**Promoting Rehabilitation:** Supporting programs for mental health, education, vocational training, risk reduction programs (such as MRT, Victim Impact, Unlock Your Thinking; Communication, Impact of Crime, Anger Management), and personal growth courses, such as Inside Out Dad, Addiction Recovery, Captain Your Story, Toastmasters, Emotional Resilience; New Path Transition Discovery; 7 Habits of Highly Effective People; and Defy Ventures to name a few. This includes programming opportunities that should be available in all IPP county jails but are not always provided by all IPP jails as required by the contracts.

**Improving Conditions of Confinement:** Addressing issues like insufficient and timely access to healthcare, lack of mental health providers, housing issues, safety concerns, and poor access to legal resources.

**Strengthening Family Connections:** Advocating for better communication and visitation policies, including reducing the cost of phone calls access to video visits, and increasing access to in-person visits. This is particularly important for incarcerated and families who are significantly impacted by the Inmate Placement Program due to the varied policies between counties and the significantly higher costs of being housed in a county jail versus a prison, despite being a state inmate.

**Supporting Reentry:** Collaborating with UDC Re-Entry Division and community organizations to provide

## **Part 2: Preparing for Effective Communication by Amanda Bixman**

Amanda Bixman, UPAN's Director of Programming Issues at CUCF, provided practical steps for preparing and delivering impactful communication that will help promote understanding and result in solutions with Utah Department of Corrections (UDC) administrators.

### ***Steps to Prepare for Effective Communication***

**Gather Information.** Document specific information about the situation: dates, incidents, what your loved one

resources for housing, job placement, and reintegration after release.

## **Dealing with Frustration and Strong Emotions Associated with the Prison Journey**

### ***There are Two Parts to Every Problem:***

**1. The Emotional Component:** Advocacy often arises from feelings of frustration, anger, or sadness about the way the system operates. Taking time to reflect and manage emotions ensures clearer communication and more effective action.

When we are highly emotional, cognitive processes are lowered and our brains do not process information objectively or rationally. This makes it difficult to communicate calmly and effectively. When information or the situation is filtered through anxiety or anger, it limits our ability to look at and understand the entire situation accurately. *Anger is a secondary emotion, stemming from fear or pain.* These are reasons why stepping back and allowing some time to pass before reviewing and hitting send on that email or making that call is helpful.

**2. The Practical Component** is the actual problem and its causes, its impact and potential solutions. The Who, What, When, Where, Why and How of the situation. This involves gathering specific details about the issue, such as dates, names, and policy references, to build an understanding of the problem and potential solutions.

**Attention to both parts of the problem will provide the focus and emotional detachment necessary to communicate in an effective manner.**

### ***Steps to Resolving Problems Effectively:***

1. Work through your emotions to maintain clarity.
2. Gather detailed accurate information about the issue.
3. Communicate respectfully with staff or administrators, focusing on solutions.
4. Remember that those in charge in UDC are also human. In general, Wardens, Deputy Wardens, and those in Administration have a goal for improved conditions and reduced problems in the prison facilities. Use language that demonstrates empathy and understanding that sometimes they are restricted by various laws and policies in what they can tell us about specific practices or situations.
5. Work to build those bridges of open communication and be receptive to whatever they share with us, even if we do not receive the answers we want or agree with what we are told. It is more information to help us in our future advocacy efforts.

has done to resolve the problem, and responses from staff. It is important to understand your loved one's role in the issue to present an accurate account.

**Know the Policies.** Visit the UDC website (link below). Explore the “Family/Friends” section for policies on grievances, communication, and inmate management (link below). Regularly check the homepage or “News” section for updates. <https://corrections.utah.gov>  
<https://corrections.utah.gov/index.php/family-friends>.

**Manage Your Emotions.** Reflect on your feelings before acting. Process them and use whatever skills you have to reduce feelings of anger, fear, and/or frustration that may come out as aggression in your communication. Seek feedback from trusted individuals about the situation. It often helps to talk things through with someone who understands the situation to help us get our emotions expressed and under control.

### **Creating Effective Communication**

1. Begin with a clear introduction, stating your purpose and relationship to the incarcerated individual.
2. Present facts objectively and use bullet points or lists for clarity.
3. Suggest actionable solutions based on your understanding of the policies and procedures in place while trying to look at the big picture of how those solutions might impact other areas of concern.

## **Part 3: Legislative Advocacy in Utah prepared by Karen Thompson and Shane Severson**

Presented by Molly Prince, the final section of the presentation focused on when and how to engage with Utah legislators to advocate for systemic reforms.

### **When to Contact Legislators**

- When prison administration is unable to address systemic issues effectively or if there are laws in place that prevent UDC from making significant changes in the direction desired.
- If the issue involves policy changes or broader reforms, such as was done after the Legislative Audit of prison Medical a few years ago for improving healthcare access.
- Other purposes might include advocating for increased funding for expanding rehabilitation programs, or when you support or oppose a proposed piece of legislation in the current session.
- Contact legislators about your concerns that are not included in current proposed legislation outside the active legislative session. When our legislators are involved in the current session, they do not have time to take on new issues. For concerns that are not already on track to be presented and voted on in the current session, reach out after the session is over.
- 2025 Legislative Session begins January 21, 2025 and ends March 7, 2025.

### **How to Find Your Legislators**

1. Visit Utah’s Legislative Website: <https://le.utah.gov>.
2. Use the “Find My Legislator” tool: <https://le.utah.gov/GIS/findDistrict.jsp>.
3. Enter your address to locate your state representatives and senators and note their contact information and committee assignments.

4. If you are unsure of policies, processes, or how things work, as well as details of the situation you are contacting them about, ask for specific information.
5. Maintain a respectful tone and avoid confrontational language while writing an email or preparing notes for a phone call.
6. Step back and let it rest for a period of time (from an hour to overnight if possible.) Proofread your message or ask someone to review it before sending it. Revise it if necessary.
7. Check for spelling and clear wording so that the message is clear for the reader.

### **Choosing the Right Communication Method**

- Email is ideal for creating a written record and allowing time to craft thoughtful messages.
- Phone calls should be planned far ahead of dialing. Prepare notes to stay focused. Remember that the person answering may not have the authority to resolve your issue. They can relay messages and concerns to the appropriate division / person.
- In meetings, remember to be professional and prepared, even when discussing emotional topics.

The general mailing address for Utah legislators is: 320 State Capitol, Salt Lake City, UT 84114  
Their offices are often included in the address, but you need to go to the above website to find the specific mailing address.

### **Suggestions for Writing to Legislators:**

*Craft a Clear Message.* Introduce yourself and explain your connection to the issue. Present concerns and potential solutions using facts and evidence. Give history if necessary to help them become familiar with the problem.

*Be Professional* in your communication. Avoid accusatory, emotional, or foul language. Focus on constructive communication to foster collaboration. Offer ideas and solutions to the problem.

*Follow Up.* Send a polite follow-up if you don’t receive a response. You will generally receive at least an automated response saying they received the email. Outside of the legislative session, follow up and discuss the issue with your legislator(s). Be patient, as legislative processes can take time. Remember that your legislator is going to have to become familiar with hundreds of pieces of legislation they will be voting on each year.

### **Key Takeaways From Meeting on How to Advocate**

The UPAN presentation underscored the importance of preparation, professionalism, and persistence in advocacy. By combining clear communication, detailed research, and emotional resilience, families and



advocates can support their loved ones while contributing to systemic change. For more information:

- UPAN Website: <https://utahprisoneradvocate.org>
- UDC Website: <https://corrections.utah.gov>
- Utah Legislature: <https://le.utah.gov>

- Find the video of the entire presentation at the Utah Prisoner Advocate Network Family Facebook Group or on the UPAN Website.

***“Love looks not with the eyes, but with the mind, and therefore is winged Cupid painted blind.”***  
**William Shakespeare**

### **Hepatitis C and What You Need to Know**

By Maureen Parker, RN, MSN, ARNP-BC, UPAN Med Team

**Let us start with the basics.** What is hepatitis C? “Hepa” refers to the liver. When one sees this prefix, you now know that this is about the vital organ, the liver. “itis” means inflammation. Any time this is attached to a word it means inflammation.

***Hepatitis means an inflammation of the liver.*** Liver inflammation can be caused by viruses, alcohol, medications, genetics, autoimmune disorders, diet, and toxic chemicals.

***The liver is a vital organ*** (one cannot live without the liver). It sits below your lungs on the right side of your abdomen and is the largest solid organ in your body. It has a large reservoir of blood vessels that travel through. This organ is essential for detoxifying your body and breaking down medications. Think of it as a washing machine with a filter that can remove toxic substances from the blood stream and your body. Your liver works hard to keep you well. The liver helps to keep you safe from infections, make clotting factors in the blood, helps with absorption of nutrients and removes waste products and toxins from the body. It helps in making hormones and proteins which are essential for life, stabilizes blood sugar, stores large blood sugar molecules and creates a storehouse for vitamins and minerals. Thank your liver for all it does to keep your body healthy!

In this article I will explain hepatitis C, which is far more common in the US prison system than in the general population. It is estimated that 30- 40% of prisoners in our country have hepatitis C. It varies from state to state and from prison to prison.

**There are five viruses that can cause hepatitis.** Briefly: ***Hepatitis A*** is foodborne, spread through contaminated water and food that has been tainted with fecal material that carries the virus. This is one of the reasons that food handlers must wash hands after using the bathroom and should wear gloves when preparing food.

***Hepatitis B*** is transmitted through blood, needles used by others and shared, dirty syringes, and body fluids. It is a virus with a tough outer shell and can live on counter tops for days. It can be quite harmful to the liver and can cause chronic liver disease.

***Hepatitis C*** is spread through the blood also. It is more fragile of a virus than hepatitis B. This infection can lead to chronic liver disease.

***Hepatitis D*** can only coexist with hepatitis B.

***Hepatitis E*** is found in Africa, South America and Asia. We do not see it in this country.

**Hepatitis C is spread through direct contact with the blood of an infected person.** The most common cause of transmission is IV drug use. Sharing needles, syringes and other drug use equipment that has been touched by blood of another is how this virus is transmitted. Those who snort drugs and share the utensils with others can transmit hepatitis C if they are infected.

Tattoo equipment that isn't sterilized and is used on someone with hepatitis C also transmits hepatitis. A person with an open sore, or a cut that is oozing blood and touches another with even a microscopic cut can transmit hepatitis. Sharing razors and toothbrushes, getting a blood transfusion, or being born to a mother with hepatitis C can result in an infection. Unsterile medical equipment and needle sticks can also transmit this infection.

**There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. Additionally, if one has hepatitis C they should also be tested for HIV and hepatitis B.**

**Avoiding infection.** If someone's blood touches you, immediately wash the area off vigorously with soap and water to destroy the virus. If possible, use a diluted bleach to clean areas contaminated with blood and wear gloves if you are exposed to blood. Avoid exposure to someone else's blood when possible.

Hepatitis C is not spread through hugging, kissing, coughing, sneezing, sharing eating utensils and does not live in the water or food. The virus cannot survive stomach acids and cannot penetrate unbroken skin. It is very rare that this virus is spread through sexual contact but is more common in men having sex with men. *Most people who are infected with hepatitis C do not know that they have it and have no symptoms when it causes infection.*

**Exposure and testing.** If you are exposed to hepatitis C and it causes an infection, it will take 4-12 weeks to test positive on a blood test.

The 1<sup>st</sup> blood test for hepatitis C is an antibody level (anti-HCV). If this test is positive, then one should have a test to check for the virus in the blood. This test is called HCV-RNA by PCR. This also checks for viral

load, or how much virus is in the blood. If the HCV-RNA by PCR is positive, the next appropriate test is called the genotype. This tells us what type of hepatitis C is causing the infection.

**A false negative test** could happen if one was infected with the virus before the infection had a chance to cause the body to make antibodies. If this happens then a person should be retested in approximately 8 weeks.

**A false positive test** can happen if one has other disease processes going on such as autoimmune disorders. The test for viral load and genotype of the virus will show that there is no hepatitis C if this occurs.

**If you have been infected with hepatitis C**, you will always test positive for the antibodies. Having antibodies does not mean that you have the infection. More testing is needed.

**There are six hepatitis C genotypes** (specific genetic material present in an organism). It is important to know this so that the appropriate medication is chosen. A liver biopsy is not needed to diagnosis this infection, but it can be helpful to determine the degree of liver inflammation and damage.

**In most cases hepatitis C is curable with treatment.** Treatment is recommended for all who are infected unless the person has a shortened life expectancy. Untreated hepatitis C leads to liver inflammation, damage, suffering, cirrhosis and places one at much higher risk for liver cancer.

There is great benefit to getting treatment. It will reduce the spread of infection and improve one's health, and you will suffer far less than not getting treated.

*Editors' Note: DHHS is requesting additional funding from the Utah Legislature this session to fund expanded Hepatitis C Treatment in USCF and CUCF. According to the National Hepatitis Corrections Network, Hepatitis C treatment guidelines published by the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease and the Infectious Diseases Society of America, and the Federal Bureau of Prisons have stated that all people with hepatitis C are candidates for treatment. However, they state that healthcare providers, including in prisons and jails, should prioritize patients with the greatest need for medical treatment. Unfortunately, because there are so many people with hepatitis C in prison and jail, this means treatment options are often very limited. <https://hcvinprison.org/resources/state-by-state-info> For more information visit <https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis-c/index.html>*

**Quick Hint – Read, read, read. Reading reduces stress; exposes us to new ideas; increases empathy; grows vocabulary; improves communication skills; improves mood; and strengthens the brain.” Cornerstone University**

**“Love isn't something you find. Love is something that finds you.” Loretta Young**

#### **Couple of Smiles and Maybe a Laugh**

Who always has a date on Valentine's Day? A calendar ~ What do you tell a pig on February 14? Happy Valen-swine's Day ~ What's a dog's favorite musical instrument? A trombone ~ What is the most important use for cowhide? Holding the cow together ~ What did the paper clip say to the magnet? I find you very attractive.

***Love makes the world a better place, no matter where you are. Maintain and cherish love. You're cool. Ed***

#### **Utah Prisoner Advocate Network Contact Info:**

##### **Our Contact Information:**

Utah Prisoner Advocate Network  
P. O. Box 464, Draper, UT 84020

Website: UtahPrisonerAdvocate.org  
Email: [contact@utahprisoneradvocate.org](mailto:contact@utahprisoneradvocate.org)  
Facebook: [Facebook.com/UtahPrisoner](https://www.facebook.com/UtahPrisoner)

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world, indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead.**

Current medications used to treat do result in cures. Treatment time is usually 8-12 weeks. Interestingly, some people can eradicate this infection on their own, without treatment. It is not known exactly what percentage recover on their own. It is estimated that 25-30% will clear without treatment. Do not assume that this will be you. Better to be safe than sorry.

**Chronic liver disease is tough to live with.** This disease affects your daily life by causing fatigue, joint pain, poor appetite, more frequent infections, higher risk for liver cancer and lymphoma, higher risk of diabetes, blood clotting disorders, higher risk of kidney disease and it can affect your ability to think clearly. As the liver deteriorates you will become sicker because the liver is not functioning. Remember all these important things your liver does to keep you well and no longer can when the cells are dying.

**What to avoid if you have hepatitis C.** It is important to avoid drinking alcohol. There is no safe level of alcohol use if you have this infection. Alcohol will cause the liver damage to progress more rapidly. Cigarette smoking and metabolic problems like prediabetes and fatty liver disease will also hasten the deterioration of the liver tissue.

Additionally get vaccinated against hepatitis B. Do not share razors, needles, or other things that can have microscopic amounts of blood on them. Cover all wounds. Do not donate blood or semen and eat a healthy diet.

If you do not know your status and have risk factors, get tested and follow up with your health care provider.