



FAMILY SURVIVAL GUIDE

The First 72 Hours After Arrest

The InmateLink Family Survival Guide



Clear steps. Calm support.

Confirm where the person is, understand what may happen next, and focus on one verified fact at a time.

Independent information resource. Educational information only. Not legal advice. Procedures vary by jurisdiction.

OPENING PROMISE

Breathe. You are not alone.

When someone you love is arrested, the first hours feel like chaos. Phones ring. People panic. Information conflicts. Everyone is guessing.

Where are they right now?

Are they safe?

When will they get out?

What do we do first?

How much will this cost?

This guide is designed to help you organize the first steps and focus on one verified fact at a time.

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Stabilize First

The first 72 hours are usually about stabilizing information and next steps, not resolving the entire case.



FIRST STEP

First: Take a Breath

Before anything else, remember this: the first 72 hours are usually about stabilizing information and next steps, not resolving the entire case.

You do not need to solve the entire legal case tonight.

01 Confirm where the person is being held

02 Understand what happens next

03 Avoid costly mistakes

04 Keep your family calm and organized

That is it. Everything else can happen in stages.





BOOKING AND INTAKE

What the Person Inside Is Experiencing

After arrest, many people are taken to a jail or detention facility for booking or intake. Confirm the local process with the facility.

Processing

Booking may include fingerprints, photographs, property inventory, medical screening, and housing or classification steps, depending on the facility.

Temporary intake

They may remain in a temporary intake or housing area until processing and classification are complete.

Unknowns

They may not yet have clear information about hearing timing, release decisions, or phone access. Confirm locally.

Your role

Keep communication focused on safety, verified facts, and the next practical step.

A Typical First 72-Hour Timeline

Timing varies. Use this as an organizing sequence,
not a guarantee or deadline.



EARLY HOURS

Booking and Intake

What may be happening

The person may be in transport, booking, intake, or another facility-specific processing step.

Online records can lag

An official online search may not show a record right away, and delays can have more than one cause.

If you cannot find them

Check the official facility instructions or call the official jail information line where available. Do not submit personal details to an unverified site.

Start one shared family note. Write down what you know, who told you, and when you checked it.

FIRST COURT EVENT

Release or Detention Decisions

The first court event may be called an initial appearance, first appearance, arraignment, or another local term.

What it may address

A first court event often addresses release or detention, not final guilt.

Possible decisions

Depending on the jurisdiction and charge, a judge may order release, set conditions, set bail or bond, or keep the person in custody.

Confirm locally

Check the official court or facility source for the hearing name, timing, location, and current release information.

AFTER THE FIRST COURT EVENT

What May Become Clearer

After booking and the first court event, some practical details may become clearer. Each facility sets its own timing and rules.

Housing or location information may be available

Phone access instructions may be available

Commissary instructions may be available

Visitation eligibility and scheduling may be available

This is when families should focus on gathering accurate information.

FAMILY CONTROL SHEET

Key Information to Collect

Before making decisions or contacting providers, collect what you can from official sources.

FACILITY NAME

FACILITY PHONE

ADDRESS

FULL LEGAL NAME

INMATE ID NUMBER

DATE OF BIRTH

BOOKING DATE AND TIME

CHARGES AND BAIL

NEXT COURT DATE / TIME / LOCATION

HOLDS, IF ANY

HOUSING UNIT

Keep this worksheet private. Do not enter case, custody, medical, payment, or identity details into the guide download form.

CAUTION

Three Mistakes to Avoid

Under stress, it is easy to act before key facts are confirmed. Slow down and verify the basics first.

MISTAKE 1**Calling providers before confirming facts**

Before contacting bail providers, verify charges, bail or bond amount, release conditions, and the next court date from official sources.

MISTAKE 2**Discussing case details on regular jail calls**

Use regular calls for safety and logistics. Avoid discussing case details; ask an attorney about privileged communication options.

MISTAKE 3**Posting case details publicly**

Avoid posting incident or case details while facts are still developing. Ask an attorney before sharing anything about the case online.

NEXT STAGE

What Happens If the Person Is Not Released

If bail or bond is set and not posted, the person may remain in custody while the case continues. Confirm locally.

Detention or preliminary hearings

Status dates or motions

Attorney meetings

Plea discussions or trial preparation

For a full explanation, see the Criminal Court Process Guide.



COMMUNICATION

Talking to Your Loved One

When you receive the first call, emotions may be high. Keep the conversation calm.

- ☐ Confirm where they are
- ☐ Confirm the next hearing date
- ☐ Let them know you are gathering verified facts and next steps
- ☐ Use regular calls for safety and logistics; ask an attorney about privileged options

What helps most is stability, not interrogation.

ORGANIZATION

Keeping One Shared Record

Keeping one shared record can reduce duplicate calls, missed details, and confusion.

☐ Track charges☐ Track bail per charge☐ Track court dates☐ Track lawyer contacts☐ Save bail paperwork

Record the source and time for each detail. Recheck time-sensitive information directly.

RESOURCE MAP

The InmateLink Guide Library

This guide belongs to the InmateLink guide library, built to explain common stages and help families organize next steps.

Available on InmateLink

- Facility information
- Official inmate search links

Available on InmateLink

- Bail company directory
- This First 72 Hours guide

Coming Soon

- Bail and pretrial guide
- Criminal court process guide

Coming Soon

- Choosing counsel guide
- Public defender guide

Coming Soon

- Jail communication and mail guides
- Money and commissary guide
- Visitation and release-day guides



NEXT STEPS

Continue with InmateLink

Visit InmateLink to open official inmate search links, find facility details, and compare available bail company listings. Confirm current details directly with the official source or provider.

[Open InmateLink Survival Guides](#)

InmateLink does not show live custody results and does not guarantee provider availability, pricing, placement, release, or legal outcomes.



IMPORTANT DISCLAIMER

A quick note before you use this guide

Independent resource.

InmateLink is a private information and organization platform, not a court, jail, sheriff's office, law enforcement agency, government agency, or law firm.

Educational information only.

This guide is not legal advice. Procedures vary by jurisdiction. Confirm current information with the official facility, court, attorney, or licensed professional.

Protect private information.

Do not send case, custody, medical, payment, or identity details through the guide download form. Keep personal worksheets private and verify time-sensitive facts directly.

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