



Building a Relationship with Correctional Staff

We have been asked by KAIROS to help explain how to build a relationship with prison/correctional staff. As is common in the corrections industry, turnover is high. How do you explain to a new Chaplain what KAIROS is? Why it is important? Those are questions we struggle with as we have seen the impact of KAIROS weekend firsthand and know transformations that take place. So, it is difficult to put ourselves in that place.

However, we can give some advice on how to work with your corrections staff. First be mindful of time and how precious it is. Corrections staff are being tasked to do more and more with less help. It is the norm to combine positions and do more with less. So, keep that in mind when you are reaching out. Find the best way to contact staff to get the results you are looking for. If you call, leave messages, and never hear back, that is not the way to contact them. See if email is a more effective way to communicate. Whatever way you find you get the quickest response; make a note of it, and use it as your primary way to communicate.

If you have no current contact at a facility, I suggest contacting the operator and asking for the Chaplain, or Volunteer Coordinator. If neither of those positions are filled or available, ask for a Deputy Warden over Programs/Re-Entry. I would not try and have a lengthy pitch during the first conversation. Explain who you are and that you are with KAIROS. Try and secure a meeting time with them or ask who the best person is to work with at that facility. It could be in person, over the phone, maybe a Zoom or Teams meeting. Give several options. Having a set time to make your presentation will hopefully mean an uninterrupted time to explain the many benefits of KAIROS.

Here are some Do's and Don't when dealing with Corrections Staff:

- **Do** have complete information and all your ducks in a row when you do get a chance to talk with staff
- **Do** have examples of success you have had at other prisons and how it has positively impacted those involved.
- **Do** respond quickly to requests from corrections staff. Once the ball has started to move it is important to keep it rolling.
- **Do** pray for those involved and let God's hand work in bringing KAIROS to those who need it.
- **Don't** get discouraged if things do not happen as fast as you want them. This is a slow process!
- **Don't** expect an immediate call back or email return.