

## **Prisoner Advocacy Network**

National Lawyers Guild, San Francisco Bay Area Chapter

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### Who We Are

The Prison Advocacy Network (PAN) is a volunteer network of activists, attorneys, legal workers, and law students. We began our efforts in 2013 in response to needs identified by hunger strikers and their loved ones, and officially launched in November 2015.

We are supervised by attorneys and thus operate under attorney-client privilege and can use legal mail. However, PAN is an advocacy network, *not* a litigation team. We are an all-volunteer organization. We have 5 volunteer attorney mentors who train, mentor, and supervise advocates. The advocates are responsible for working directly with correspondents to meet identified needs and contacting prison or state officials. Many advocates have very little experience with the criminal system or CDCr's many challenges, and are generally not attorneys. No experience with the criminal or legal system is required to become an advocate. We view this work as a partnership, where we utilize outside resources available to us, and you educate us about your experiences and knowledge of the prison system.

We do not share personal information or contact prison officials on our inside-partners' behalf without explicit permission. PAN does not charge for services. PAN will cover most, if not all, mail costs and fees for accessing records.

### Who We Work With

There is a huge need for advocacy work in CDCr, but we seek to work with people facing the worst conditions while still fighting for their and others' rights. We only work with people in CDCr, not in other prison systems or jails. We prioritize people in any kind of isolation (including disciplinary, administrative, and gender-based segregation), jailhouse lawyers, those suffering retaliation as a result of their activism, and those with serious unmet medical needs. We also support family members of those on the inside who are experiencing retaliation and mistreatment. PAN calls the individuals on the inside who we support correspondents.

### What We Do

Our volunteers are trained in advocacy strategies and can assist with: requesting C-FILE and medical records; performing basic legal, medical, or similar research; assistance with internal appeals; writing letters to the Warden, Ombudsman, medical staff, and Inspector General; classification issues especially related to solitary or ad-seg status; overturning wrongful 115s; property issues; help preparing for parole; psych reports; making copies; calling prison officials; keeping copies of documentation of prison abuses; and supplying resources and information.

### What We Don't Do

We will not represent you in court. We cannot file civil suits or *habeas* petitions. We cannot represent you in criminal appeals, resentencing petitions, civil rights suits including 1983 claims and constitutional violations or file other lawsuits on your behalf. Although we recognize that there is a serious need for

legal representation for people in CDCr, we do not currently have the capacity to litigate these matters. We are not a lawyer referral service, and we cannot hire or provide an attorney to represent you.

We prioritize ongoing harms, as it is much more difficult to address past harms, especially if the 602 process was never started. We also cannot: send books; file/legal drafting; speak to the media; and certain medical issues may also be out of scope.

### Intake/Referral Process

Referrals often come through people on the outside who have direct contact with potential Correspondents. We have an intake form on our website that people can use to make referrals: <http://www.nlgsf.org/form/prisoner-advocacy-network-intake-form>.

We also have a paper intake form that people on the inside can fill out and mail to us in order to refer themselves or another person. If you would like an intake form, write to us at the address above and request one. We train and pair people twice a year (September and February). Occasionally, we are also able to match people during other months of the year. Due to the nature of the mail system, and because we usually review cases and match correspondents only twice a year, there will be delays in communication with PAN until you are matched.

### Confidentiality

We will only share information with people outside of the PAN network if we have explicit permission. This means we will do our best to protect letters and files from being seen by others, and we will not write advocacy letters without permission. Any letters that we do write on will be sent to the correspondent as well as the prison official.

In order to maintain the confidentiality of correspondence with us, correspondents must write to the lawyer listed above and be sure to mark letters as LEGAL CONFIDENTIAL on the outside.

### Partner with PAN

If you would like to partner with us on an issue you are facing, we can work with you as advocates. Our experience is that outside advocates are most effective once you have begun the administrative appeal process, unless there is an emergency situation. Once you have started the 602 process we can write to and call the warden, ombudsman, mailroom, property room staff, medical staff, and others as necessary. We can also assist you by finding basic resources and materials and sending those to you, though we cannot send you books or other items of that sort.

Once we receive an intake form and determine whether the request fits into our scope, we will write the correspondent with ideas we have for advocacy and ask for additional information that may be useful in advocating on their behalf. This information might include relevant guards' or medical staff names, the date of the incident, any copies of documents or evidence regarding this issue. If you send us documents, we will copy them and mail back the originals to you (and then you will have a safe copy in our office). **NOTE: IT MAY TAKE UP TO 5 WEEKS FOR PAN TO PROCESS MAIL. PLEASE SEND PAN COPIES, EVEN IF HANDWRITTEN, INSTEAD OF ORIGINALS IF THE ORIGINAL IS NEEDED FOR A TIME SENSITIVE DEADLINE (e.g., due back to CDCR for as a higher level appeal within 30 days of the day you mail the letter to PAN).**