



Oficina Legal Del Pueblo Unido
P.O. Box 17757
Austin, TX 78760
512-474-5073 | txcivilrights.org

How to Request Medical Care in Prison

Updated October 2022

Note: We prepared the following information as a general guide. We tried to use the most up to date information available, but we cannot guarantee that everything here is current or accurate for your situation. This guide is general information only and does not constitute legal advice. It does not create a lawyer-client relationship between you and Texas Civil Rights Project. We encourage you to contact a lawyer if you wish to file a lawsuit. We can send a lawyer referral and resource list if you write to us and request one.

If you need medical care in prison (TDCJ), you should make a request in writing as soon as possible. There are several steps you can take:

1. Place a sick call.

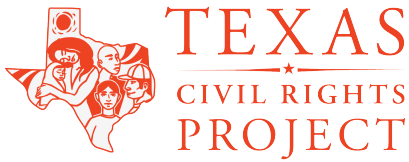
- Complete a sick call form. Clearly describe what your medical problem is. You do not need to use legal jargon like “deliberate indifference.” Just write what your problem is and why you want to be seen.
- Sick call forms are available on your housing unit. Ask staff if you cannot find a form.
- TDCJ policy requires all sick calls to be answered within 48 hours. If you have not received an answer within 48 hours, proceed to the next step.

2. Make an I-60 request.

- If you are not seen after placing a sick call, complete an I-60 requesting medical care.
- An I-60 is a request to prison officials.
- The I-60 form is available on your housing unit. Ask staff if you cannot find a form.
- Clearly describe the problem, and write that you have already completed a sick call. Tell the person who will read the I-60 that you want to be seen by medical staff. Again, there is no need to use legal jargon.

3. File Step 1 and Step 2 Grievances.

- If you are not seen after placing the sick call and making the I-60 request, file a grievance.
- Make sure to file the rules regarding filing grievances carefully. Consult your Offender Handbook for instructions on filing a grievance. We can send you information on filing grievances if you write to us.
- Grievance forms are available on your housing unit and at the law library. Again, there is no need to use legal jargon.
- Only write about the issue you want help with. Each grievance can only address one problem. If you have more than one problem, write a different grievance for each problem. Remember you can only file one grievance per week, so you have to prioritize.
- When you write the grievance, explain who you talked to and what they did (if anything) about your problem. Write that you filled out a sick call request and made an I-60 request.
- Make sure you include how you would like to have the problem solved. For example, if you are sick and need to see a doctor, write “I want to see a doctor.”



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- Do not use indecent, vulgar, or threatening language. TDCJ can refuse to process a grievance with bad language and can take disciplinary action.
- If you can make a copy of the sick call slip and I-60, you can attach them to the grievance. Be careful submitting original forms if you do not have a copy. We recommend keeping originals.
- Be sure to file your grievance within 15 days of learning about the problem, or as soon as possible.
- If your Step 1 grievance is denied, then file a Step 2 grievance. If TDCJ does not respond to your grievance after 40 days without telling you a response is coming, you can file a Step 2. The Step 2 grievance will be reviewed by TDCJ Health Services staff.
- You must file a Step 2 grievance within 15 days of receiving the response to your Step 1 grievance. TDCJ has 40 more days to answer a Step 2 grievance.

4. Contact TDCJ Health Services directly.

- The Health Services Division's Office of Professional Standards investigates prisoners' complaints about health care. You can write them at:

Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Health Services Division
2 Financial Plaza, Suite 625
Huntsville, TX 77340

and

TDCJ Patient Liaison Program
Health Services Division
PO Box 99
Huntsville, TX 77340

- If you have a friend or family member in the free world, they can call Health Services directly at 1-936-437-4271. They can send a fax to 1-936-437-3659. They can send an email to: health.services@tdcj.texas.gov. TDCJ will not send confidential medical information over email.
- Health Services will require you to sign a medical release before they can talk with your friends or family. This is to protect your medical privacy. You can get the release form from the medical department on your unit. The form needs to be renewed and updated every six months.
- A friend or family member can also contact the TDCJ Ombudsman at 1-936-437-6791. The Ombudsman will probably require your family to have a medical release to protect your privacy.
- If you or a friend or family member writes to TDCJ, be sure the letter includes your full identifying information—you name, TDCJ-CID # (your number), your U.S. mailing address, and (for anyone not in prison) a telephone number.



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Tips

- Make sure to document each of these steps by saving copies of the forms or writing in a diary when you made the requests.
- If you can afford to be seen by a free world doctor, you have a right to have one evaluate you (according to Correctional Managed Health Care Policy E-44.2). You will have to pay all the costs associated with this visit, and will have to find a doctor willing to come to the prison to visit you.
- If all else fails, you can try to contact a lawyer for help, or file a lawsuit yourself. It is very difficult for a prisoner to win a lawsuit, even if he or she has a lawyer, so you should always try to find a lawyer before going to court yourself. Lawyers' addresses can be found in the directories in the law library. If you would like a list of resources you can write to us. We cannot guarantee that a lawyer will be able to take your case.

Jails

County jails are not part of TDCJ. They do not follow the same medical request process as TDCJ, but most have similar processes. You can probably file a sick call slip and/or some type of grievance. You should check your handbook if you have one. If you do not have a handbook, you should ask staff.

Our Work

We hope this information is helpful to you. You can write to us and let us know if you have gotten a final response to a grievance and are not satisfied, or if no one will give you information about filing a grievance and you did not receive a handbook. Because of our resource limitations, it is very unlikely we will be able to represent you. Please do not send us any original documents. We may be able to send you additional information about filing grievances or a list of additional references and resources. We regret that we cannot provide individualized assistance in most cases.