

A Message to Friends and Family of Incarcerated Inmates

From William L. Wrenn, Commissioner, NH Department of Corrections

and The NH State Employees Association, SEIU 1984, Chapter 255

The increase of illegal drug use is a growing problem for our communities in the State of New Hampshire, as recent articles in the news media affirm. It is also a relevant concern and an escalating challenge in our State Prisons. Through drug testing efforts at the New Hampshire Department of Corrections, we have discovered that the rate of drug abuse is increasing every year. It is imperative that family members and friends of inmates, as well as the public in general, be aware of this serious issue and understand how they can help.

Correctional Officers are tasked with investigating and working collaboratively to prevent the introduction and use of illegal drugs in our prisons. Inmates who use illegal drugs are always scheming to find new ways to introduce drug contraband into the Prison community. Unfortunately, there is always an ample supply of friends and family who may unknowingly support the inmate's use of illegal drugs and enable them to continue their illegal drug use. This support is coming in the form of money orders, checks, and money card transactions called "Green Dot Numbers." Through the use of these money card transactions, drug dealers are profiting and the drug market is expanding.

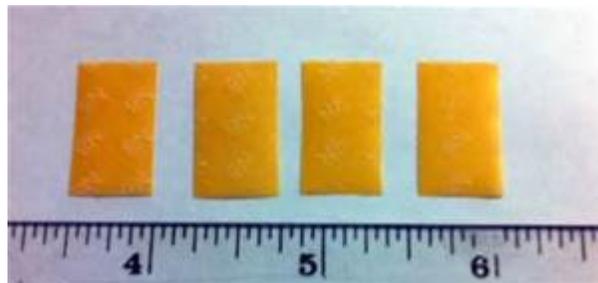
When an inmate tests positive for illegal drugs, the Correctional Officer assigned to investigate the matter often determines that friends and family unknowingly are the source of funds. Here are some actual methods used by some inmates.

- Money order / personal checks: The inmate conveys to friends or family that if they send a check or money order to a certain address, they (the inmate) will be able to obtain books, food, clothing, etc., saying this is cheaper than going through the prison system.
- Money order / personal checks: The inmate may tell friends or family to send a check or money order to a different inmate at the prison to purchase canteen items because he owes them.
- Money card transaction: The inmate asks friends or family to purchase a money card. This money card contains a series of numbers (Green Dot Numbers) that can be reloaded or transferred to a rechargeable Master Card / Visa Card. The inmate may tell you that in doing so they will be able to purchase items more quickly.

Recently, there has been a flood of inmates having friends and family perform these types of transactions. This form of money card transaction is a violation of prison policy. There is no legitimate purpose or reason for an inmate to receive numbers from a purchased money card or to have you send money orders or personal checks to anyone other than the inmate themselves. The inmate having you do this is fully aware it may violate prison policy, and that he/she will be subject to receiving disciplinary action.

Here is a typical drug transaction scenario involving the use of money cards:

Inmate A's girlfriend is prescribed the drug Suboxone (Buprenorphine) in strip form. The girlfriend may be on her parents' medical insurance and receives the medication basically free. Inmate A pressures her to assist him with selling the prescribed Suboxone. The inmate first has his girlfriend purchase a reloadable Master or Visa Card and manipulates her into bringing a few Suboxone strips in with her during a visit. The girlfriend, now involved in the commission of a felony, conspires to conceal the drugs and pass them to Inmate A sometime during the visit. After the visit, Inmate A then brings the Suboxone strips into his housing unit. The paper thin orange strips are broken down into many pieces. The word gets out in the housing unit that pieces of Suboxone are for sale.



Inmate B, desiring to purchase some of the Suboxone, calls a friend / family member with a concocted story that the books he got from them last month have all been read and he is eternally grateful (other times it may be to replace his hot pot, T.V. or to purchase shoes, etc.). Inmate B makes the request, "Please purchase me a money card so I can get more books". He convinces the friend / family member that he has a connection that can get the books for a fraction of the cost and by you getting him the numbers off the back of the money card he will get the needed item/s quicker. The friend or family member of inmate B goes to a retail/convenience store and, at the register, purchases a money card with the series of numbers that can be reloaded to a Master or Visa Card. This 14 digit "green dot" number is then communicated to inmate B.

Inmate B with the green dot number in hand delivers it to inmate C, who will arrange for the drug delivery. Inmate C may have already collected twenty other green dot numbers from other inmates who had friends and family do the same task. Inmate C then delivers the twenty-one green dot numbers to inmate D. Inmate B has no idea of the identity of inmate A or inmate D and no knowledge of their connection to the transaction. Inmate D gets the green dot numbers to inmate A's girlfriend (21 green dot numbers @ \$50 each). Inmate A's girlfriend dials the 1-800 number on the back of their rechargeable Master or Visa Card, or logs in online following the prompts given, and within 15 minutes she has the funds. She inserts this card into an ATM machine to transfer \$1,050 onto their card which is then converted into cash.

Illegal drug use within the prison is powerful, manipulative, and destructive. Many of these inmates themselves may not be bad people; it's the drug use that motivates them to do bad things. As friends and family of those incarcerated, please be duly cautious of enabling behaviors that are not positive in scope. If you are ever asked to send money as outlined above, please think it through. You may also be committing a crime by facilitating these drug transactions. Funding drug use in here hinders any chance of rehabilitation and their chance of success out there!