

Issues Regarding Illegal Drugs in Corrections

From Helen E. Hanks, Commissioner, NH Department of Corrections
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Illegal drug use is a growing problem for our NH Communities and the United States as whole, as national news and local media continue to report on. It continues to be a relevant challenge in our State Corrections Facilities. Through drug testing efforts in the New Hampshire Department of Corrections, we monitor the rate of drug abuse monthly. It is very important that family members and friends of people under our care, custody and/or supervision, as well as the public in general, be alerted of this serious issue and understands how they can help.

Correctional staff are tasked with investigating and working to prevent the introduction and use of illegal drugs in our facilities. Men and women who use illegal drugs are always finding unique ways of introducing drug contraband into the facilities.

Unfortunately, friends and family are both deliberately and many time unknowingly supporting their friend or family member's use of illegal drugs. You may be asking yourself, how is this happening? What is it I am not aware of that I may be contributing to? 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, drugdealers are profiting and the drug abuse is expanding.

Here are some actual methods used to solicit monies to support bad activities:

- Money order / personal checks: The man or women conveys to friends or family that if they send a check or money order to a certain address, they (the resident) will be able to obtain books, food, clothing, etc., saying this is cheaper than going through the prison system.

Fact: NHDOC provides food, clothing and access to books. We are also going to be expanding to digital technology to access education, books and other media.

- Money order / personal checks: The man or women may tell friends or family to send a check or money order to a different resident at the prison to purchase canteen items because he owes them.

Fact: This activity is a rule violation that can result in a change in housing to more restrictive unit. The money is not likely for canteen but to purchase illegal drugs.

- Money card transaction: The resident 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 resident may tell you that in doing so they will be able to purchase items more quickly.

Fact: NHDOC does not process purchases using Green Dot Numbers.

We have had residents talk friends and family into completing these types of transactions. This form of money card transaction is a violation of prison policy. There is no legitimate purpose or reason for a resident to receive numbers from a purchased money card or to have you send money orders or personal checks to anyone other than the resident themselves. The resident having you do this is fully aware it may violate prison policy, and that he/she will be subject to receiving disciplinary action.

It is also important to understand that supporting the introduction of illegal drugs may result in criminal charges being filed against you. We do prosecute for criminal acts. Please reach out to our Public Information Officer at Jeffrey.Lyons@doc.nh.gov if you have questions about what the policy is so you do not accidentally engage in activities that violate rules and/or State laws.

Here is an example of an illegal drug transaction scenario involving the use of money cards:

Resident 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. Resident A pressures her to assist him with selling the prescribed Suboxone. The resident 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 Resident A sometime during the visit.

After the visit, Resident 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.



Resident B, desiring to purchase some of the Suboxone, calls a friend / family member with a pretend 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.). Resident 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 resident 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 resident B.

Resident B with the green dot number in hand delivers it to resident C, who will arrange for the drug delivery. Resident C may have already collected twenty other green dot numbers from other residents who had friends and family do the same task. Resident C then delivers the twenty-one green dot numbers to resident D. Resident B has no idea of the identity of resident A or resident D and no knowledge of their connection to the transaction. Resident D gets the green dot numbers to resident A’s girlfriend (21 green dot numbers @ \$50 each). Resident 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 the opposite of what we are trying to achieve which is rehabilitation and sobriety. Supporting this type of activity allows other resident to be manipulative and destructive.

Many of these residents themselves may not be bad people; it’s the addiction to drugs 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. Contact us if you have question so we can teach you the rules and how to help your friend or family member.

You may also be committing a crime by facilitating these drug transactions. Funding drug use interferes with rehabilitation and a person’s successful return to the community.

If you have a person in our custody who is in need of help with addiction, tell them to go to behavioral health staff as they provide free access to treatment and are there to help them to recovery.