

DOS & DON'TS OF AN INMATE PEN-PAL

- 1) **DO** use our generic pen pal name such as Hinda or Mendel when writing to your pen-pal.
- 2) **DO** maintain a professional appropriate yet compassionate relationship. An **INTIMATE** relationship is inappropriate. Remember your mail is being read.
- 3) **DO** share general facts about yourself such as age, gender, marital status, occupation, hobbies & interests.
- 4) **DO NOT** go into details of your life until you get to know your pen-pal over several weeks and letters.
- 5) **DO NOT** share personal information such as your address, SSN or credit card number ever.
- 6) **DO** answer letters promptly and thoroughly. Address all topics you feel comfortable addressing. Ask questions in order to get to know your pen-pal better.
- 7) **DO NOT** ask "What are ya' in for?" Your pen-pal will reveal why they are in prison when they feel comfortable doing so—which is probably never.
- 8) **DO** be supportive of your pen-pal's hopes, dreams & plans; even if they sound somewhat unrealistic.
- 9) **DO NOT** be a "yes person". If your pen-pal seems to be going in the wrong direction, gently ask them to rethink their position. It is not unusual for an inmate to have an unrealistic view of society and of themselves.
- 10) **DO NOT** feel pressured to do things for your pen-pal that make you feel uncomfortable such as sending money, particular books or magazines, calling or write officials or individuals from your pen-pal's past. They can ask a chaplain for help.
- 11) **DO** let your pen-pal give you advice & support under certain circumstances. Many inmates have developed unique strengths and coping skills due to their situation. **REMEMBER** —though you are both cheerleader and coach for your pen-pal, cheerleader is most important.
- 12) **DO NOT** contact your pen pal's family.