

SOUTH TEXAS COUNTY JAIL GUIDE

Nueces · San Patricio · Kleberg · Jim Wells

A Practical Resource Guide for Defendants & Their Families

PRINT-FRIENDLY EDITION

Oceanline PI · Licensed Criminal Defense Investigator · South Texas

QUICK REFERENCE CONTACTS

Verify all numbers before relying on them — details change.

Nueces County

Main Jail	901 Leopard St., Corpus Christi, TX 78401
Jail Info Line	(361) 887-2300
McKinzie Annex	745 N. Padre Island Dr. · (361) 241-5234
Sheriff	(361) 887-2222
County Main	(361) 888-0111
CCPD Non-Emergency	(361) 886-2600
Public Defender	506 N. Carancahua St., Ste 401 · (361) 888-3532
District Clerk	(361) 888-0280
District Attorney	(361) 888-0410
Phone/Commissary	ICSolutions · 1-888-506-8407 · AccessCorrections.com
Case Portal	nuecesco.com · Case Search Portal
Release Alerts	FREE: VINELink.com · 1-800-879-5646
Bail Bond Board	nuecesco.com · verify local licensed Bondsmen

San Patricio County

Jail / Sheriff	300 N. Rachal Ave., Sinton, TX 78387
Sheriff Main	(361) 364-9600
Jail Line	(361) 364-9630 · inmate status, bond info
County Main	(361) 364-9300
District Clerk	(361) 364-9377
District Attorney	(361) 364-9390
Inmate Mail	Inmate Name + ID · P.O. Box 1382, Sinton, TX 78387
Phone Service	Securus Technologies · (361) 364-9642
Commissary	JPay · jpay.com
Release Alerts	FREE: VINELink.com · 1-800-879-5646
Case Info	sanpatriciocountytx.gov

Kleberg County

Jail / Sheriff	1500 E. King Ave., Kingsville, TX 78363
Sheriff Main	(361) 595-8500 · Fax: (361) 593-1324
Jail Ext.	(361) 595-8500 ext. 1 — inmate status, bond info
Courthouse	700 E. Kleberg Ave., Kingsville, TX 78363 · (361) 595-8585
District Clerk	(361) 595-8561
District Attorney	(361) 595-8544
Phone Service	Encartele · (361) 595-8500 ext. 1
Release Alerts	VINELink.com · Free & automated

Jim Wells County

Jail / Sheriff	300 N. Cameron St., Alice, TX 78332
Sheriff / Jail	(361) 668-0341 · Fax: (361) 668-0569
County Courthouse	200 N. Almond St., Alice, TX 78332 · (361) 668-5706
District Clerk	(361) 668-5717 press 6
District Attorney	(361) 668-5716 · 79th Judicial District
County Clerk	(361) 668-5702 press 3 · misdemeanor/civil records
Phone Service	Call (361) 668-0341 to confirm current provider
Release Alerts	VINELink.com · Free & automated
Case Info	co.jim-wells.tx.us

Statewide Resources

State Bar Referral	texasbar.com · 1-800-204-2222
TX Legal Aid	texaslawhelp.org · 1-800-622-2520
Crisis / Mental Health	Call or text 988 (24/7)
TX Dept. of Insurance	tdi.texas.gov · verify insurance-backed Bondsmen
VINELink	vinelink.com · 1-800-879-5646, FREE custody alerts

CHAPTER 1

The First 24–48 Hours

After an arrest in South Texas, the person is transported to the county jail and processed. This can take 4 to 12+ hours before any information is available to family. Do not panic if you cannot get information right away — this is normal.

Booking & Processing

Photographed, fingerprinted, personal property collected and logged. Processing on busy nights can take 8+ hours.

Health Screening

Medical staff assess the individual. Emergency medical needs are addressed first.

Bond Is Set

Bond amount is set by schedule or magistrate judge. Call the jail line once processing is complete.

One Free Phone Call

At least one call is allowed. Use it for family, a bondsman, or an attorney. Memorize key numbers — do not rely on your phone's contacts list.

Housing Assignment

After processing, assigned to a housing unit. In Nueces County: Main Jail or McKinzie Annex.

SCENARIO: You've been calling for hours and no one will confirm your family member is there.

Normal during active processing. Keep calling every 2–3 hours using the full LEGAL name and date of birth, no nicknames. Register FREE at [VINELink.com](https://www.vinelink.com) for automated alerts. Do NOT call 911. After 12+ hours, also try CCPD nonemergency (361) 886-2600 for Corpus Christi arrests. An attorney can make inquiries that carry more weight with jail staff.

SCENARIO: The jail says your family member is NOT in the system.

They may still be processing. Check: (1) Are you using their exact legal name? (2) Could they be at a different facility? (3) Ask the jail to search by date of birth. (4) San Patricio County: call (361) 364-9630 specifically. (5) After 12+ hours, contact a criminal defense attorney — they have channels to locate people in custody faster.

Understanding Bond and How to Get Someone Out

Bond is money pledged to guarantee the defendant appears in court. Posting bond gets the person released while the case continues. Bond does NOT mean charges are dropped.

Cash Bond

Pay the full amount directly to the jail. Returned (minus fees) when the case concludes, only if the defendant attends every court date.

Surety Bond – Bail Bondsman (Most Common)

A bondsman charges ~10% of bond as a NON-REFUNDABLE fee. On a \$10,000 bond you pay \$1,000. You are responsible if the defendant misses court. In Texas, attorneys are permitted to post surety bonds as well. You should speak to your lawyer about posting a bond, which could possibly save you the additional cost of hiring a bondsman.

Personal Recognizance (PR) Bond

Judge releases on promise to appear, no money required. Not automatic. Common for first offenses with strong community ties. Request at magistration or ask your attorney to file a motion.

Property Bond

Real estate used as collateral. Involves more time and county paperwork.

Bail Bondsman Red Flags

- Asks for full cash with no written contract
- Cannot show their Texas license number — verify with the county Bail Bond Board where one exists (Nueces County has one) or at tdi.texas.gov for Bondsmen backed by an insurance company
- Charges less than 8–10% (may be unlicensed)
- Claims they can “get charges dropped” — Bondsmen have NO power over charges
- Pressures an immediate decision

Always get a signed receipt. Read everything before you pay.

SCENARIO: Bond is \$50,000 and the family can't afford 10%.

Options: (1) Attorney can file a bond reduction motion. (2) Some Bondsmen accept collateral. (3) Request a PR bond hearing. (4) If bond was set without a hearing, you have the right to request one. The first number is not the final number.

Getting an Attorney

Anyone charged with a crime that could result in jail time has the right to an attorney under the Sixth Amendment. If you cannot afford one, the court must appoint one. Never waive this right.

Option 1 – Private Criminal Defense Attorney

- Can begin working immediately, sometimes before the first court date
- May visit the defendant in jail before a court-appointed attorney would
- More individual time and attention per client
- Can negotiate directly with prosecutors early in the process

State Bar of TX texasbar.com/find-a-lawyer · 1-800-204-2222

Search online Avvo.com · Google “criminal defense attorney Corpus Christi TX”

Option 2 – Court-Appointed Attorney / Public Defender

At magistration, tell the judge you cannot afford an attorney and request one be appointed. Complete a financial affidavit. You do NOT choose your attorney. Request appointment at magistration — it is not automatic.

Nueces Co. Public Defender 606 N. Carancahua St., Ste 401 · (361) 888-3532 · Mon–Fri 8–5

San Patricio County Rotating private attorney list. Request at magistration. District Court: (361) 364-9310

Kleberg County Rotating private attorney list. No public defender's office.

Jim Wells County Rotating private attorney list. No public defender's office.

Ask for a Court-Appointed Investigator

Every defendant has the right to ask their attorney to seek appointment of a licensed criminal defense investigator at NO cost if indigent. Investigators locate witnesses, photograph scenes, gather evidence, and serve subpoenas. Ask at your very first meeting. If your attorney won't request it, ask the judge directly. A free, prefilled version of this motion is available at oceanlinepi.com to make the request easier.

SCENARIO: You cannot reach an attorney and the weekend is starting.

Leave a detailed voicemail: defendant's name, charge, facility, callback number. Search “Corpus Christi criminal defense attorney emergency.” Tell the defendant: say ONLY “I am invoking my right to remain silent and I want an attorney.” Nothing else. Monday morning, an attorney can get case number and bond info faster than family can.

Know Your Rights

Rights That Protect You

Right to Remain Silent

You are NOT required to answer questions beyond basic identification. Say: "I am invoking my right to remain silent. I want an attorney." Then say nothing more. Anything said in the patrol car, at booking, on the phone, to other inmates, can be used against you.

Right to an Attorney

Once you ask for an attorney, all questioning must STOP. If it continues after you invoke this right, that is a constitutional violation your attorney can use in your defense. Do not keep talking while "waiting" for one.

Right to Know What You Are Charged With

Formally addressed at magistration, typically within 24–48 hours. The booking charge is NOT always the same as what will be filed. Charges can be upgraded, downgraded, added, or dropped entirely before formal filing.

Right to Refuse Consent to Search

You may refuse consent to search your home, car, or phone. Say clearly: "I do not consent to this search." Do not physically resist, but your refusal on the record matters in court.

Right to a Court Interpreter

If English is not your primary language, Texas law guarantees you the right to a court interpreter at no cost. Request one at your very first court appearance. Corpus Christi-area courts regularly accommodate Spanish-language proceedings.

What Can Be Used Against You

Jail Phone Calls – Every Word Is Recorded

Every call from county jail is recorded and monitored. Prosecutors regularly pull recordings. Do NOT discuss what happened, where evidence is, or any facts of the case, even in code or slang. IMPORTANT: Attorney calls are confidential, but you must register your attorney's number with the facility or through ICSolutions first.

Your Phone – The Passcode Problem

In Texas, officers generally need a warrant to search phone contents, but voluntarily unlocking it may waive that protection. Say: "I do not consent to a search of my phone." Never unlock it without speaking to an attorney first.

Social Media

Posts, photos, timestamps, check-ins, and private messages (via subpoena) have all been used as evidence. Tell every family member: post NOTHING about the case, the arrest, or the defendant's whereabouts.

Talking to Other Inmates

Jails sometimes place informants in cells. Even casual conversation about what happened can end up in a prosecutor's report. Discuss the case only with your attorney.

Statements at the Scene

"I only had two beers" or "we were just arguing" can become the prosecution's key exhibit. Stay calm. Stay silent. Ask for an attorney.

What Your Family Does and Says

Family members are not protected by your right to remain silent — they have their own. If a detective contacts a family member, they should say: "I need to speak with an attorney before answering any questions." They are not required to cooperate.

SCENARIO: A detective contacts your sister and says they just want to "verify your whereabouts."

Your sister is under no obligation to speak. She should say: "I would like to speak with an attorney before I answer any questions," then hang up. This is not obstruction. She should immediately call the defense attorney and relay what was asked.

What Detectives Are Allowed to Do and What to Say

One of the most important chapters in this guide. Understanding these legal tactics is your best protection.

Police Can Legally Lie to You

Officers can say: “Your friend already told us everything.” “We have you on video.” “The DA said cooperate now and you’ll get a deal.” None may be true — the U.S. Supreme Court has upheld this practice. The only protection: say nothing until you have spoken to an attorney.

“Come In and Tell Your Side” Is a Tactic

A detective asking you to “come in voluntarily to clear things up” may be building a case against you. You are NOT required to go. Consult an attorney before speaking to any detective, even informally, even on the phone.

Miranda Rights Are Not Always Required When You Think

Miranda warnings are only required when in custody AND being interrogated. Officers can ask questions during a traffic stop or at your door without reading Miranda. Your right to remain silent exists regardless — you do not have to wait to be “Mirandized” to use it.

They Don’t Have to Tell You If You’re a Suspect

Officers can approach you as a “witness” while actively investigating you. Ask directly: “Am I free to go?” If yes, leave calmly. If no, you are detained — invoke your rights immediately.

Consent to Search Can Be Withdrawn – But Act Fast

If you said yes and change your mind, say: “I withdraw my consent to this search.” Anything found before you withdrew may still be admissible. Refusing from the beginning is always the better choice.

SCENARIO: A detective calls and says your son confessed and if you come in now they’ll “help him out.”

This is a textbook interrogation tactic. Do NOT go in. Do NOT answer questions on the phone. Say: “I need to speak with an attorney before I can speak with you,” and hang up. Call a criminal defense attorney immediately. Going in “to help” without counsel has resulted in many innocent people being charged.

Evidence: What to Do If It Exists in Your Favor

Time is critical — some evidence disappears within 24–72 hours.

- **Surveillance Camera Footage.** Businesses, ATMs, traffic cameras, and doorbells often capture relevant footage. Most systems overwrite within 30–72 hours. Tell your attorney immediately so they can send a legal preservation letter.
- **Witness Statements.** Witnesses move, forget details, and become harder to locate. Get names and contact information to your attorney as soon as possible. A court-appointed investigator can interview witnesses formally.
- **Text Messages & Digital Records.** Screenshots of texts, emails, or social media that support your story should be preserved. Do NOT delete anything. Let your attorney decide what matters.
- **Medical Records.** Injuries, medical conditions, or mental health history at the time of an incident can be critical. Request records and bring them to your attorney immediately.
- **Physical Evidence Not Collected by Officers.** If police failed to collect something relevant, document it in writing now. Photograph anything accessible. Bring that documentation only to your attorney.

This evidence will not wait for a court date. A licensed investigator, court-appointed or privately retained, can begin work within days: sending preservation letters, canvassing for footage, and locking in witness statements before memories fade or footage is overwritten.

SCENARIO: You have text messages proving you weren't there but police didn't ask for your phone.

Do NOT delete anything. Bring screenshots to your attorney. They can subpoena cell tower records and phone logs. If surveillance footage exists nearby, say so immediately — preservation letters must be sent fast.

SCENARIO: The officer's report says something that is not true.

Write down your version of events in detail NOW while memory is fresh, and give it ONLY to your attorney. Body camera and dash cam footage have been used to contradict officer accounts — some is deleted after 90 days if not flagged. Act fast.

Friday and Weekend Arrests: The Weekend Problem

Arrests on Friday evenings, Saturdays, or Sundays create real hardships because most courts and attorney offices are closed.

Courts Are Closed Saturday & Sunday

Regular bond hearings and arraignments do not happen on weekends. Formal proceedings resume Monday morning.

Bail Bondsmen Work 24/7

If bond has been set, a bondsman can post it over the weekend. Search “Corpus Christi bail bonds open now” — many are 24-hour operations.

Weekend Magistration May Be Available

In some cases a magistrate is available to set bond before Monday. Call Nueces (361) 887-2300 or San Patricio (361) 364-9630 and ask specifically.

Private Attorneys Can Still Help

Leave a voicemail with: defendant's name, charge, facility, and callback number. Many attorneys check messages on weekends.

Be Ready for Monday Morning

Have financial information ready, know the bond amount, and have an attorney contact lined up. Monday morning court dockets move quickly.

Gather This Immediately After a Friday Arrest

Full legal name · Date of birth · The charge if known · Government-issued photo ID · Money or credit cards for a bondsman · List of attorneys to call Monday morning

Nueces County: Detailed Guide

Visiting an Inmate

- Up to two 20-minute non-contact visits per week, call ahead to confirm schedule
- Video visitation widely used, call (361) 887-2300 for scheduling
- Bring government-issued photo ID, dress code strictly enforced. No one under 17 inside without an adult
- All visits may be recorded

Phone Calls & Sending Money

Phone Service	ICSolutions · 1-888-506-8407 · AccessCorrections.com
Commissary	Kiosk at jail, accepts cash and credit/debit cards
Call Rate	Verify current rate with ICSolutions; rates are subject to FCC regulation and may change
Attorney Calls	Confidential and NOT recorded; must register attorney's number with facility or ICSolutions first
Call Length	15-minute sessions; all non-attorney calls are recorded
Mail	Personal mail uses JailATM.com — see Chapter 12 for full details

Court Process Timeline

Day 1, Arrest & Booking	Processing 4–12 hrs. Bond set. One phone call.
Day 2–3, Magistration	Charges confirmed, bond reviewed, rights advised. Attorney assignment begins.
Wks 1–4, Formal Charging	DA reviews evidence. Misdemeanor: information filed. Felony: Grand Jury indictment.
Wks 2–8, Arraignment	Defendant formally hears charges and enters a plea.
Mo. 1–6+, Pretrial/Discovery	Attorney reviews evidence, files motions, negotiates. Delays are completely normal.
Resolution	Plea/Dismissal/Trial — case ends by agreement, dropped charges, or jury/judge verdict.

San Patricio County: Detailed Guide

Jail – Key Facts

Jail Address	300 N. Rachal Ave., Sinton, TX 78387
Sheriff Main	(361) 364-9600
Jail Direct	(361) 364-9630 — inmate status, bond info
Capacity	236 beds, medium security, male and female offenders
Phone Service	Securus Technologies · (361) 364-9642
Commissary	JPay · jpay.com
Inmate Mail	Inmate Name + ID · P.O. Box 1382, Sinton, TX 78387
Release Alerts	VINELink.com · Free & automated

Key Court Contacts

Courthouse	400 W. Sinton St., Sinton, TX 78387
District Court	(361) 364-9310 — 36th, 156th & 343rd District Courts
District Clerk	(361) 364-9377
District Attorney	(361) 364-9390
County Attorney	(361) 364-9338
County Clerk	(361) 364-9350 — misdemeanor/civil records
Court at Law	(361) 364-9325
Case Search	sanpatriciocountytx.gov

Visiting an Inmate

- Visits by last name: Tue (A–K), Wed (L–Z) 2–4 PM; Sat (A–K), Sun (L–Z) 8–10 AM
- On-site by appointment, 26 minutes per session
- Call (361) 364-9630 to confirm current rules before going
- Bring government-issued photo ID, dress code enforced

Getting an Attorney

San Patricio County does not have a public defender's office. Court-appointed attorneys are from a rotating private attorney list. Request appointment at magistration and complete the financial affidavit. Private attorneys from Corpus Christi frequently handle these cases.

SCENARIO: Arrested in Portland or Ingleside — which county handles it?

Portland, Ingleside, Gregory, Aransas Pass, Sinton, Odem, Mathis, and Taft are all in San Patricio County. You may be held at the San Patricio County Jail in Sinton. Some cities have small holding facilities before transfer. Call San Patricio Jail at (361) 364-9630 first. If not found there, call the city police

department non-emergency line.

Kleberg County: Detailed Guide

Kingsville, TX

Jail – Key Contacts

Jail / Sheriff	1500 E. King Ave., Kingsville, TX 78363 · P.O. Box 1360, 78364
Sheriff	(361) 595-8500
Jail Line	(361) 595-8500 ext. 1 — inmate status, bond information
Phone Service	Encartele · call (361) 595-8500 for setup
Inmate Roster	klebergcoso.org — public online roster
Release Alerts	VINELink.com · Free · 1-800-879-5646

Court Contacts

Courthouse	700 E. Kleberg Ave., Kingsville, TX 78363 · (361) 595-8585
District Clerk	(361) 595-8561 · P.O. Box 312
District Attorney	(361) 595-8544
County Attorney	(361) 595-8583
District Judge	(361) 595-8533
County Judge	(361) 595-8585

Kleberg County does not have a public defender's office. Court-appointed attorneys are from a rotating private attorney list. Request appointment at magistration. Private attorneys from Corpus Christi frequently handle Kleberg County cases.

Jim Wells County: Detailed Guide

Alice, TX

Jail – Key Contacts

Jail / Sheriff	300 N. Cameron St., Alice, TX 78332 · P.O. Box 1286, 78332
Sheriff	(361) 668-0341
Jail Line	(361) 668-0341 — inmate status, bond information
Phone Service	Call (361) 668-0341 to confirm current provider
Commissary	Call jail to confirm current provider
Release Alerts	VINELink.com · Free & automated
Inmate Roster	jimwellscounty-tx.gov

Court Contacts

Courthouse	200 N. Almond St., Alice, TX 78332 · (361) 668-5706
District Clerk	(361) 668-5717 press 6
District Attorney	(361) 668-5716 · 79th Judicial District · P.O. Box 3157
County Clerk	(361) 668-5702 press 3
County Attorney	(361) 668-5708 — misdemeanor prosecution
Case Portal	co.jim-wells.tx.us

Jim Wells County uses court-appointed attorneys from a rotating private attorney list, no public defender's office. Request appointment at magistration. The 79th Judicial District covers both Jim Wells and Brooks counties.

Staying Connected: Mail, Phone Calls and Visits

Always call the jail to confirm current rules before visiting or mailing anything.

Sending Mail

Nueces County	See JailATM.com note below — personal letters are NO LONGER mailed physically
San Patricio Co.	Inmate Full Name + ID# · P.O. Box 1382, Sinton, TX 78387
Kleberg County	Inmate Full Name + ID# · Call (361) 595-8500 to confirm address
Jim Wells County	Inmate Full Name + ID# · P.O. Box 1286, Alice, TX 78332

Every piece of mail must include the inmate's full legal name and inmate ID number on the outside of the envelope. Missing either will likely result in the mail being returned. Mail without a return address will not be delivered.

Nueces County: Personal Mail Now Uses JailATM.com

Nueces County no longer processes physical personal letters. All personal letters and cards must be sent through JailATM.com, which scans and delivers mail electronically to the inmate. The physical letter is destroyed after scanning. You can also send electronic messages directly through JailATM.com at any time. EXCEPTION: Legal mail from attorneys is still sent physically to: P.O. Box 1529, Corpus Christi, TX 78403-1529.

What You Can Include in a Letter

- Plain white paper, standard lined or unlined notebook paper
- Ink only, blue or black pen. Pencil is generally not accepted
- Standard envelopes, no padded mailers or bubble wrap
- Photos, standard 4×6 prints ONLY. No Polaroids, no home-printed photos. Most jails limit to 5 photos per envelope
- Cards and postcards, plain, no pop-ups, no glitter, no stickers
- Books and magazines must be sent DIRECTLY from publisher or Amazon/Barnes & Noble. Paperback only

What Is Not Allowed in Mail

- Stamps — do not include loose stamps inside the envelope
- Cash, checks, or money orders — use the approved commissary deposit method
- Staples, paper clips, rubber bands, or binding of any kind
- Glitter, stickers, wax, lipstick marks, or scented products
- Polaroid photos or photos printed at home
- Hardcover books, newspapers, or magazines from home (must come from publisher)
- Sexually explicit content; missing return address

Postage: A standard First-Class stamp currently costs \$0.82 for a one-ounce letter. Each additional ounce adds \$0.29. The inmate cannot receive stamps in the mail. Add funds to commissary if they need to write back.

Phone Calls

Inmates CANNOT receive incoming calls. All calls are outgoing only — the inmate calls you. You must register with the jail's phone service provider before calls can be made.

Nueces County	ICSolutions · 1-888-506-8407 · icsolutions.com
San Patricio Co.	Securus Technologies · securustech.net · (361) 364-9642
Kleberg County	Encartele · call (361) 595-8500 for setup
Jim Wells County	Call (361) 668-0341 to confirm current provider

Call rates are regulated by the FCC and subject to change — always verify current rates with your provider before funding. Calls are typically 15-minute sessions. A prepaid account keeps funds in your control; a debit account transfers funds directly to the inmate.

SCENARIO: Every Jail Call Is Recorded and Monitored

Do NOT discuss the case, charges, evidence, witnesses, or the incident on a jail call under any circumstances. Prosecutors regularly request and listen to recordings. Keep calls to emotional support and family updates only. EXCEPTION: Calls to a verified attorney's registered number are confidential and NOT recorded.

In-Person Visits

Always call the jail the day before to confirm the schedule, whether the inmate has any holds, and ID requirements. Showing up without calling is a wasted trip.

ID required for every visit. Acceptable: current state driver's license or ID, U.S. passport, military ID, or permanent resident card. Expired IDs are not accepted. Foreign nationals should bring their passport.

Dress code: No all-orange, all-gray, or all-white clothing. No gang symbols, offensive language, or revealing clothing. Jeans and a plain shirt are almost always acceptable. Children must bring a birth certificate and be accompanied by an adult guardian.

Leave in your car: Cell phones, cameras, food/drinks, bags/purses, weapons of any kind, tobacco, excessive jewelry.

Video Visitation

All four counties offer video visitation. Often schedulable online, no need to travel. All video visits are also recorded and monitored.

Nueces County	Call (361) 887-2300 for scheduling
San Patricio Co.	Call (361) 364-9630
Kleberg County	Call (361) 595-8500
Jim Wells County	Call (361) 668-0341

SCENARIO: You drove 45 minutes to visit and were turned away at the door.

Most common reasons: expired ID, prohibited clothing, inmate moved units, inmate has a hold, or schedule changed. Always call the day before: (1) confirm inmate is still at that facility, (2) no restrictions, (3) exact schedule for their unit, (4) your ID is current.

For Families: What to Expect

The First Few Days

Processing is slow. Court appearances may be brief and feel unsatisfying. Bail amounts can feel impossible. This is normal. Take it one step at a time: locate the person, confirm the bond amount, then address the attorney.

Attending Court

Most hearings are open to the public, family is allowed to attend. Dress professionally (business casual). Arrive early. Turn your phone completely off. Do not react visibly to testimony or rulings.

Civilian Clothing for the Defendant

If the defendant is in custody and will appear in court, family CAN sometimes bring civilian clothing — this matters especially for jury trials as jurors are influenced by appearance. Contact the jail the day before about the clothing dropoff process.

Communicating Carefully

All jail calls are recorded. Focus calls on emotional support, logistics, and practical needs like commissary. Never discuss the facts of the case on a jail call.

Managing Finances

Between bond, attorney fees, and commissary, costs add up quickly. Prioritize: (1) attorney first, (2) bond if affordable, (3) commissary for basic needs. Ask the attorney about payment plans — many accept them.

Taking Care of Yourself

Family members often experience significant stress, anxiety, and financial strain. Seek support from friends, community, or a counselor. You cannot help your loved one if you are not taking care of yourself.

Crisis / Mental Health	Call or text 988, Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, 24/7
TX Legal Aid (civil)	texaslawhelp.org · 1-800-622-2520
TX Fair Defense Project	texasdefenders.org — indigent defendant advocacy
TDCJ (after sentencing)	tdcj.texas.gov · (512) 475-3250

Red Flags, Do's and Don'ts

Red Flags With Your Court-Appointed Attorney

- Has not contacted the defendant or family after several weeks
- Cannot explain the charges or what the prosecution's evidence is
- Pressures a quick guilty plea without explaining other options
- Will not return phone calls or respond to written communication
- Has never visited the defendant before a critical hearing
- Cannot explain what a court-appointed investigator is, or refuses to request one

If these occur: document everything with dates. You may petition the judge to appoint a different attorney via a written motion.

Red Flags With Bondsmen & Third Parties

- Anyone who claims they can make charges “go away” for money — this is fraud
- Large cash demands without written paperwork or receipt
- Bondsman cannot produce their Texas license number — verify with the county Bail Bond Board (Nueces County has one) or at tdi.texas.gov for insurance-backed Bondsmen
- Anyone posing as a court official asking for money over the phone

Do's

- Say: “I invoke my right to remain silent. I want an attorney.” — immediately
- Memorize key phone numbers — you may not have access to your phone
- Show up to every court date — missing adds an arrest warrant to your problems
- Keep a written log: case numbers, court dates, attorney contacts, all calls made
- Preserve all evidence favorable to you — give it ONLY to your attorney
- Register with VINELink for automated jail status updates, vinelink.com (free)
- Ask your attorney about a court-appointed investigator
- Tell family: say nothing about the case on social media

Don'ts

- Discuss the case on jail phone calls — they are all recorded
- Post about the arrest or case on any social media platform
- Consent to phone or property searches without speaking to an attorney
- Pay anyone cash without a signed written contract and receipt
- Speak to detectives without an attorney present, even “just to help”
- Assume a court-appointed attorney will appear automatically — always ask

- Believe everything an officer or detective tells you during questioning

Court Dates and Property Release

Missing a court date triggers an automatic arrest warrant.

How to Find Out Your Court Date

Check the County Case Portal Online. Nueces: nuecesco.com · San Patricio: sanpatriciocountytx.gov · Kleberg: co.kleberg.tx.us · Jim Wells: co.jim-wells.tx.us. Case numbers, charges, and court dates appear once the case is filed.

Call the District Clerk's Office. Provide the defendant's full legal name and date of birth. Nueces: (361) 888-0280 · San Patricio: (361) 364-9377 · Kleberg: (361) 595-8561 · Jim Wells: (361) 668-5717 press 6.

Ask the Attorney. The assigned attorney is required to notify the defendant of all court dates. Not doing so is a red flag.

Register with VINELink. vinelink.com · 1-800-879-5646, free automated alerts for custody and case status changes.

SCENARIO: You found out about a court date the night before and the defendant is still in jail.

In-custody defendants are transported to court by the jail — confirm transport is scheduled. If the defendant is OUT on bond, they MUST appear in person; call the attorney immediately. A missed court date while on bond triggers an immediate arrest warrant.

Releasing Personal Property After an Arrest

Belongings are collected at booking. To retrieve them while the defendant is in custody, most jails require a written property release authorization signed by the inmate plus your valid photo ID. At release, check all items against the booking receipt before leaving. Cash held at booking is held in the inmate's trust account, NOT automatically applied to bond or commissary. Ask the jail about the cash return process. Always get a property receipt. Request a written copy of the property inventory at booking — this is your only documentation if items go missing.

Impounded Vehicles – Act Fast

Storage fees accumulate every day and can reach hundreds of dollars within a week. Contact the arresting agency immediately for the tow company name. Under Texas law (Occupations Code Ch. 2308), a tow company can place a lien after just 20 days and may seek to sell the vehicle at auction. Send a family member to retrieve the vehicle as quickly as possible. If you cannot afford tow fees, contact the tow company — some will negotiate.

Protective Custody

Separation from general population for your own safety, not a punishment.

Anyone who believes they are at risk may request protective custody (PC). Final placement decisions are made by jail administration.

Who Typically Qualifies

- Informants who fear retaliation
- Defendants charged with offenses that carry risk in general population (crimes against children, certain sex offenses)
- Former law enforcement or corrections officers
- Those who have received credible threats from other inmates
- Individuals with significant mental health vulnerabilities

How to Request It

The inmate makes a verbal or written request to a correctional officer stating specifically why they feel unsafe. Family members can also contact the jail to express documented safety concerns.

What PC Looks Like

PC inmates are housed separately, often in a smaller unit or single cell. Movement may be more restricted. Access to medical, the chaplain, and programming should still be available.

If the Threat Is Serious

Notify your attorney immediately. In documented, serious safety situations, counsel may be able to request a transfer to a different facility through the court.

Bond Reduction: How to Ask the Court to Lower Bond

Texas law allows defendants to request a bond reduction hearing. Judges grant them regularly, especially for first-time offenders, nonviolent charges, and defendants with strong community ties.

Who Files the Motion

Your attorney files a written motion for bond reduction with the court. This is standard, routine practice, not adversarial. If you have a court-appointed attorney, ask them to file one at the earliest opportunity.

What the Judge Considers

Severity of the charge and prior criminal history; risk of flight (family ties, employment, length of residence); danger to the community; financial ability to pay; time already spent in custody; medical conditions or family responsibilities.

What Helps Your Argument

Letters of support from employers, family, clergy, or community members, addressing character and community ties — NOT the facts of the case. Employment history, no prior record, and local roots are all strong factors.

Conditions the Judge May Add

Electronic monitoring (ankle monitor), travel restrictions, no-contact orders, drug testing, or pretrial supervision check-ins. These are manageable alternatives to remaining in custody.

SCENARIO: Bond is \$75,000 for someone with 20 years in the community and no prior record.

Strong candidate for reduction. The attorney should file immediately with: an employer letter confirming job and tenure; family letters on community ties; documentation of medical conditions; a financial affidavit showing inability to pay. Judges regularly reduce bond in these circumstances, sometimes dramatically. The first number is not the final number.

Medications, Medical Care and the Jail Nurse

Every Texas county jail is required by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards to provide medical, mental health, and dental services.

Screening at Booking

A nurse screens every new inmate at intake. Disclose all current medications (name, dose, prescribing doctor), chronic conditions, mental health diagnoses, and allergies. Be specific — vague answers lead to gaps in care.

The Sick Call Process

Submit a written “sick call slip” to a correctional officer. Non-emergency requests: seen within 24–48 hours. Emergencies: handled immediately, notify an officer and say it is an emergency.

Existing Prescriptions

Jails are NOT required to automatically continue every prescription. The jail physician reviews all medications. Narcotics are commonly substituted. Critical medications (insulin, seizure meds, psychiatric, blood thinners) should be flagged immediately at booking, and by family to the medical unit directly.

How Families Can Help With Medications

Fax or deliver to the jail medical unit, labeled MEDICAL INFORMATION ONLY: inmate's full name, DOB, booking number, list of medications with doses, prescribing doctor's name and phone, pharmacy name and number. Do NOT include anything about charges.

Medical Co-Pays

Some jails charge a small co-pay (\$5–\$15) from commissary for sick call visits. IMPORTANT: Inmates CANNOT be denied care for inability to pay — this is Texas law. Keep commissary funded, but know this right.

Mental Health Services

Texas jails must provide mental health screening and access to a mental health professional. If the defendant has a diagnosed mental illness, tell the attorney immediately — it affects bond, plea options, and housing. Nueces County has a dedicated Mental Health Public Defender's Office at (361) 888-3532.

Accessing Medical Records

The inmate must sign a HIPAA Release of Information form to authorize family access. Request this form through a sick call slip. Once signed, family can discuss care with the jail medical unit.

If Medical Care Appears to Be Withheld

Document every request with dates. Have the defendant submit written sick call slips and keep copies. Family can write a certified letter to the Sheriff. An attorney letter to the jail medical unit carries significant

*weight. Texas Jail Project: texasjailproject.org · Texas Commission on Jail Standards: tcjs.state.tx.us —
file a formal complaint.*

Your Attorney and the Jail Chaplain: What You Should Know

What to Do If You Are Unhappy With Your Attorney

Step 1 – Communicate in Writing

Write to your attorney with specific questions: What evidence has been reviewed? What motions have been filed? Send by certified mail or email. Keep copies. This creates a record and often produces a response when phone calls have not.

What “Bad Representation” Means Legally

Disagreeing with strategy is NOT grounds for a new attorney. The legal standard, ineffective assistance of counsel, requires showing that performance was objectively deficient AND changed the outcome. An attorney who is unreachable, fails to review discovery, never visits the client, or misses key deadlines may meet this threshold.

Requesting a New Court-Appointed Attorney

File a written motion explaining specifically what the attorney has failed to do. You can also raise it verbally at the next court appearance. Ask the District Clerk how to file a pro se motion — the clerk can provide the form.

Hiring a Private Attorney

If you can retain a private attorney at any point, they file a substitution of counsel with the court. This is straightforward.

SCENARIO: You haven't heard from your court-appointed attorney in two months and court is in three weeks.

1. Call and leave a documented voicemail with the date and time. 2. Send a certified letter asking for a case status update. 3. If no response, tell the judge at the next appearance: “Your Honor, I need to raise a concern about my counsel.” 4. Ask the District Clerk how to file a pro se motion requesting new counsel. Act now, not the day before court.

The Jail Chaplain – An Underused Resource

Most Texas county jails provide access to a chaplain, available to all inmates regardless of faith background. The chaplain provides spiritual counseling, emotional support, may relay emergency messages (such as a family death), and can connect inmates and families to community resources.

How to Request

The inmate submits a written request to a correctional officer. Family members can call the jail and ask to leave a message for the chaplain.

Note on Confidentiality

Chaplain conversations may carry clergy-penitent privilege protections, but this varies by jurisdiction. Do NOT treat chaplain conversations as a substitute for attorney-client privilege. All case discussions belong only with the attorney.

GLOSSARY OF LEGAL TERMS

Arraignment

A court hearing where the defendant is formally told the charges and asked to enter a plea (guilty, not guilty, or no contest).

Bail / Bond

Money or property pledged to the court to secure release from jail while a case is pending. Paying bond does not mean charges are dropped.

Bail Bondsman

A licensed professional who posts the full bond amount on your behalf in exchange for a non-refundable fee (typically 10%). Verify licensing through the county Bail Bond Board where one exists (Nueces County has one) or, for Bondsmen backed by an insurance company, at tdi.texas.gov.

Booking

The intake process after arrest: photographing, fingerprinting, logging personal property, and initial processing into the jail system.

Cash Bond

Paying the full bond amount directly to the jail. Returned (minus fees) when the case concludes if the defendant attends all court dates.

Court-Appointed Attorney

An attorney assigned by the judge to represent a defendant who cannot afford to hire one. Must be requested at magistration, not automatic.

Defense Investigator

A licensed professional who gathers evidence, interviews witnesses, and builds the defense case. Can be court-appointed at no cost for indigent defendants, ask your attorney.

Discovery

The process by which the defense attorney reviews evidence collected by the prosecution: police reports, witness statements, video footage, and lab results.

District Attorney (DA)

The elected prosecutor for the county who decides what criminal charges to file and how to prosecute cases.

District Clerk

The county office that maintains official court records, case files, and schedules. Can provide court dates and case status.

Grand Jury

A group of citizens who review evidence in felony cases to decide whether there is enough evidence to formally charge someone. Proceedings are secret.

Indictment

A formal written charge issued by a grand jury in a felony case. Required before a felony case can proceed to trial in Texas.

Information

The formal written charge used in misdemeanor cases (instead of an indictment). Filed by the District Attorney after reviewing evidence.

Magistration

The defendant's first formal appearance before a magistrate judge, typically within 24 to 48 hours of arrest. Bond is reviewed, rights are read, and attorney appointment process begins.

Miranda Rights

Constitutional rights read before custodial interrogation: the right to remain silent and the right to an attorney. You can invoke these at any time, you do not have to wait to be "Mirandized."

Motion

A formal written request to the court asking the judge to do something, such as reduce bond, dismiss a charge, or exclude evidence.

No Contest (Nolo Contendere)

A plea meaning the defendant does not admit guilt but accepts the punishment. Has the same legal effect as a guilty plea in most Texas criminal cases.

Personal Recognizance (PR) Bond

Release from jail based solely on the defendant's promise to appear in court, no money required. Granted at the judge's discretion.

Plea Agreement / Plea Bargain

An agreement where the defendant pleads guilty or no contest in exchange for a reduced charge or lesser sentence.

Pretrial Hearing

A court hearing before trial where motions are argued, evidence issues are resolved, and the case may be discussed for possible resolution.

Property Bond

Using real estate as collateral to secure release instead of cash. Requires more paperwork and county approval.

Protective Custody (PC)

A jail housing classification separating an inmate from general population for their safety. Not a punishment, can be requested by the inmate.

Surety Bond

A bond posted by a licensed bail bondsman on behalf of the defendant. The bondsman charges a non-refundable fee, typically 10% of the bond amount.

VINELink

A free automated notification service that alerts registered family members when a defendant's custody status changes. Register at vinelink.com or 1-800-879-5646.

Warrant

A court order authorizing law enforcement to arrest a person or search a location. Missing a court date while on bond triggers an automatic arrest warrant.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

State Bar of Texas	texasbar.com · 1-800-204-2222. Attorney referrals.
Texas Legal Aid	texaslawhelp.org · 1-800-622-2520. Free civil legal help.
TX Fair Defense Project	texasdefenders.org . Indigent defense advocacy.
Texas Jail Project	texasjailproject.org . Jail conditions complaints.
TX Commission on Jail Standards	tcjs.state.tx.us . File formal jail complaints.
TX Dept. of Insurance	tdi.texas.gov . Verify insurance-backed bondsmen.
Nueces Co. Bail Bond Board	nuecesco.com . Verify local licensed bondsmen.
VINELink	vinelink.com · 1-800-879-5646. Free custody alerts.
Crisis / Mental Health	Call or text 988. 24/7 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline.
TDCJ (after sentencing)	tdcj.texas.gov · (512) 475-3250.
CCPD Non-Emergency	(361) 886-2600. Corpus Christi Police.
Nueces Co. Case Portal	nuecesco.com .
San Patricio County	sanpatriciocountytx.gov .
Kleberg County	co.kleberg.tx.us .
Jim Wells County	co.jim-wells.tx.us .

A FINAL WORD

Facing a criminal charge in Nueces, San Patricio, Kleberg, or Jim Wells County is serious, but thousands of people have walked this road and made it through. Knowledge is your most powerful tool. Use this guide as a starting point, push for the representation you deserve, and do not underestimate how much a single piece of evidence or a single witness can change the outcome of a case.

Ask Your Attorney for a Court-Appointed Investigator

If you have a court-appointed attorney and cannot afford private help, you have the right to ask the judge to appoint a licensed criminal defense investigator at no cost to you. Investigators find and interview witnesses, preserve and photograph evidence, serve subpoenas, and review discovery. This resource is routinely underused, especially in smaller counties. Ask at your very first meeting with your attorney. If your attorney will not request it, ask the judge directly at your next court appearance. A free, prefilled motion requesting appointment of an investigator is available at oceanlinepi.com — print it and bring it to your attorney to make the request easier.

THIS GUIDE IS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

OCEANLINE PI

Licensed Criminal Defense Investigator · South Texas

A licensed investigator works alongside your defense attorney to build the strongest possible case on your behalf. Services include:

- Locating and interviewing witnesses before memories fade
- Preserving surveillance footage and physical evidence
- Photographing and documenting crime scenes
- Serving subpoenas and locating hard-to-find individuals
- Reviewing discovery for inconsistencies in officer reports
- Conducting background research on witnesses and complainants
- Providing written reports your attorney can use in court

Phone	(361) 299-0286
Website	oceanlinepi.com
Email	services@oceanlinepi.com
Service Area	Nueces · San Patricio · Kleberg · Jim Wells · Surrounding Counties