

Adopt an Inmate

Calling all Angels

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2 Comments

Letters From Prison: Our loved one, their ward

Please share this story widely, this family needs answers.



Donna and her son Chuck Coma

On February 27, 2016, I received a devastating phone call from my mom. My mom is almost 74 and was diagnosed with metastatic bone cancer about a year ago. It has been a tough road for her. I could hear my mom's voice crack when she informed me that my brother, Charles Coma, was involved in a incident at the Lewisburg Federal Prison in Pennsylvania.

My brother, also known as Chuck, is a Desert Storm veteran who was diagnosed with 100% disability due to post traumatic stress disorder. Because he never received the proper treatment, he made poor decisions and one of them was robbing a bank which landed him in a federal prison.

Mom told me that they did not expect my brother to survive. My heart dropped. Was this a nightmare? If so, I desperately needed to wake up. She said a chaplain from the prison called and told her. The chaplain refused to tell her anything else and said on Monday we would be told more. The devastation in my mom's voice was painful to hear. To be told that your child may not make it is any mother's worst fear. Over the weekend, my family called to try to get answers but no answers came. So we waited... our fears were overwhelming. To inform a family that someone they love may die and then make them wait without any updated information was immoral, uncompassionate, and apathetic. That act alone let me know what type of facility we were dealing with.

When Monday finally arrived, I was so angry. No phone call came. We finally called them. We talked to my brother's counselor. He told us that Friday night Chuck was found with no heart beat so he was moved to an off campus medical facility. He refused to tell us what happened. I said my mother is my brother's power of attorney; therefore, under the law if my brother is incapacitated, she would make all of his decisions and you have to tell her what happened. He said that he did not. He claimed that Chuck is their ward and they will make all of his decisions.

Out of the blue, the counselor stated that he had great news. He said it's a miracle. Chuck is up. He is trying to walk and talk. Really? Two days earlier, his heart stopped! This information made me very suspicious. I then knew that we would have to try other avenues in order to get information. Mom demanded to see my brother and was denied.

From that point on, it's been a very long road. I've contacted several groups in order to get help. Here are some of them: Federal Bureau of Prisons, Veterans, Senator Cantwell, Congressman Kilmer, get Jessie, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Out of all of these groups only one of them responded; the ACLU stated that they could not help. My mother got a hold of the Lewisburg project who is an advocate for families of inmates. Dave who represents that organization has been very helpful and supportive. He is the person who told my mom that there was an FBI investigation going on. Why didn't the prison tell us that? Dave also told us to get a hold of Marcia Moore. She is a reporter for a newspaper in Pennsylvania called the *Daily Item* ([here \(http://www.dailyitem.com/news/mom-seeks-info-about-inmate-son-s-near-death/article_49b415da-e28e-11e5-b706-375d95acd0a7.html\)](http://www.dailyitem.com/news/mom-seeks-info-about-inmate-son-s-near-death/article_49b415da-e28e-11e5-b706-375d95acd0a7.html) and [here \(http://www.dailyitem.com/news/mother-troubled-by-son-s-condition-following-incident-at-prison/article_f8d4f2f2-f065-11e5-8984-3b58414dd613.html\)](http://www.dailyitem.com/news/mother-troubled-by-son-s-condition-following-incident-at-prison/article_f8d4f2f2-f065-11e5-8984-3b58414dd613.html)). She wrote a couple of articles which gave us some exposure. We believe the articles pressured the prison into acting a tad bit more civilized.

My mom talked to the counselor weekly in order to get updated information about my brother's condition. We know that at one time he had pneumonia and a tracheostomy tube removed. My mom was allowed to talk to my brother one time on March 18. She said that he did not recognize her voice and some of the things he said did not make sense. Part of that will be due to medication but what percentage, we do not know. He needs to have a physical and mental evaluation in order to indicate how much brain damage there is. The counselor promised my mom that he would keep her informed of any changes. He didn't.

On April 1st, Dave informed my mother and I that Chuck was moved to Butner FMC. This is a federal medical center. We have not been able to get a hold of them yet but hopefully this facility will be more helpful and compassionate, and allow my mom to visit my brother.

I created a Facebook page called Rights for Federal Inmates and their families (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1097939980227778/>). If you need emotional support or would like to join, please visit. My goal is to change some laws so no other family has to go through this.

Sincerely,

Tracey Coma