

ECM · COUNTY BIRTHDAY SOCIAL



What to Expect at the Door

A first-timer's guide to arriving, clearing security, and entering the St. Louis County Detention Center

This sheet answers the questions most first-time volunteers forget to ask: what to bring, what to leave in the car, what to wear, and what happens between the parking lot and the party room. Read it once before the social and you'll walk in ready.

1 • Before You Leave Home

What to wear

Dress the way you would for a respectful visit — modest, comfortable, and unremarkable. The facility asks volunteers to follow a few rules, and staff can turn someone away at the checkpoint for a dress-code issue.

- Closed-toe shoes. Sneakers are fine; sandals and flip-flops are not.
- Modest tops and bottoms — no low-cut shirts, no very short shorts or skirts, no sheer fabrics.
- Avoid slogan or graphic tees that could be read as gang-, drug-, or politics-related. A plain tee or polo is safest.
- Solid red or solid blue apparel is best avoided because of gang affiliation.
- Layer for the building — detention centers run cool. A plain hoodie or cardigan is fine.

What to leave in the car

You will pass through a security checkpoint, and many everyday items are not allowed past it. Plan to leave the following locked in your vehicle:

- Cell phones (the lobby photo is taken by ECM staff, who are pre-cleared for it — see below).
- Cameras of any kind, including smartwatches with cameras.
- Lighters, matches, pocket knives, multitools, scissors, mace, pepper spray, and any other weapon — including pocket tools you may not think of as one.
- Chewing gum.
- Large purses or backpacks. An easily inspectable bag for the supplies you're bringing in is usually fine; ask ECM staff if you're unsure.

If you arrive carrying something you can't bring in, you'll have to walk back to your car to stow it — so it's easier to plan ahead.

ID requirement

Bring a current, government-issued photo ID — a driver's license or state ID. Your name must match the pre-approved volunteer list the Family Court holds. If you are not on that list, you will not be admitted, even if your group vouches for you. (This is why the background-check deadline matters — see the Birthday Social Guidelines.)

2 • Arrival (5:30 pm)

Where to park

The St. Louis County Detention Center is at **105 S. Central Ave., Clayton, MO 63105**. Park in the lot in front of the Justice Center; street and meter parking is also available. Plan to arrive by **5:30 pm** — late arrivals are difficult to escort in once the party has begun.

Where to meet

ECM office staff meet the volunteer group in the Family Court lobby, where there is a security checkpoint. Once the checkpoint has been cleared, ECM staff takes a photo for ECM's records. Detention Center staff then arrive with a cart to transport the supplies, food, and gifts to the youth. Volunteers walk in with the cart under staff escort.

3 • At Security

What to expect at the checkpoint

You will be checked against the volunteer list and asked for your photo ID. You will then walk through a metal detector, and any bag you carry may be searched. This is routine — every visitor goes through it. Stay calm, follow staff instructions, and don't take it personally. If the detector alerts, staff will wand you; that's normal too.

If something you brought cannot come in

Don't argue. Staff will tell you to return it to your car or to stow it in a locker, which is available for use in the waiting area of the Detention Center. Lockers do require a quarter, which is returned to you at your departure. If you're already inside and an item is flagged later, please hand it to an ECM staff member or the chaplain — they'll figure out where to hold it for you. The party continues with or without that item.

4 • Inside the Facility

You'll be escorted the whole time

Volunteers do not move through the detention center unaccompanied. Facility staff or the chaplain escorts the group from the lobby to the party location and back out at the end. Stay with your group; do not wander, even to use the restroom — ask staff first, as restrooms require a code or a key.

The chaplain's role

An ECM chaplain (Min. Jerneice Gray, Min. Norman Malloyd, Jr., or Rev. Roy Samson) is the pastoral presence at the party. They know the youth, know the facility, and are your bridge to staff. If you're unsure who to ask about anything during the event, **ask the chaplain**. They will also be the one to follow up with any youth who cannot attend that night — saving their card, gift, and a portion of food for later delivery.

Photography

Only ECM or JDC staff take photos. Volunteers must not photograph inside the facility. Youth faces may not appear in any image; ECM's photos are of the food, the gifts, and the setup, never the children. If a youth asks you to take their picture, the answer is a gentle no — explain it's a facility rule, not a refusal of them.

5 • Quick Checklist Before You Walk In

- Photo ID in pocket.
- Dress code reviewed — closed-toe shoes, no red/blue solids, no slogan tees.
- Phone, camera, knives, lighters, gum left in the car.
- Food, supplies, gifts, and cards accounted for and ready for the cart.
- Arrival by **5:30 pm** at the Family Court lobby.
- Which chaplain is on site for the social?