

No Good Deed... (Cont.)

Saturday

October 5, 2013

Shortly after being "temporarily unassigned" from my position in the library, I received a "rules violation report," more commonly referred to as a "115," because that's the number of the form it's written on. I can't exactly say that I was surprised to receive a write-up. After all, without it, they had no standing to remove me from my position, even temporarily, but what did surprise me was that the nature of the allegations had changed somewhat. Somewhere along the line, someone had convinced the principal of the Education Department, the person who actually wrote the 115, that using a spreadsheet for its intended purpose wasn't actually a violation of the rules and regulations, particularly when the Education Department has a vocational class teaching us to do exactly this. Instead, the allegations now reflected that I was a "threat to the safety and security of the facility" for "misusing an inmate access computer outside of parameters of my work assignment." Specifically, that I'd used it to do everything from writing a letter to assisting other inmates with their legal documents.

The title for my position is a generic one, and doesn't accurately reflect my actual duties. As someone with both the skills and the experience, I'm often called upon to do everything, and I mean everything, when the person working in that position wasn't able to make it into work. I've shelved books, checked out books, worked in the reference section helping inmates with their research, handled the entire law section on my own, you name it, I've done it. Recently, I was asked to provide assistance to the inmates who've been determined to be "developmentally disabled prisoners" (DDP).

Inmates in the DDP program usually aren't capable of taking care of their most basic of needs, things like having clean clothes, taking a shower, cleaning their cell, etc. Initially, the prison didn't do anything to help them, but eventually, someone stepped in and filed a lawsuit on their behalf. Now, the prison is required to provide them with some sort of assistance, and while far from sufficient, it's far more than what they previously had.

Assistance generally comes in two forms. The first is from the prison staff themselves, where they identify those inmates who are developmentally disabled. Once identified, these inmates are given special supervision, with officers going so far as to actually schedule shower time for the inmate, and following up to make sure the inmate actually took a shower. The other form of assistance comes from the inmates themselves. They're officially appointed to do everything from making sure the inmate makes it to his assigned appointments on time (such as shower appointments, medical appointments, etc.), they clean the cells of their charges and make sure that they have clean clothes and their meals. Other inmates are assigned to provide other forms of assistance, such as reading and writing their letters, helping them prepare their legal documents, inmate appeals, etc. It was this position that I was temporarily asked to fill.

While I didn't want to lose my position as a library clerk, the DDP Clerk works only a few feet away from me, which would allow me to do both my duties as a library clerk and the duties of the DDP Clerk, even if it did mean working 12 hours a day. Because of this, and because these guys truly needed someone to help, I had no problem with the extra work load. Besides, truth be told, I have a lot of respect for my employer, "Mr. R.," and the new employee hired to supervise the DDP Clerk, "Mrs. N." Both were easy to work with, very understanding and compassionate and both went out of their way to help the inmate population get the assistance they were required to receive. As a result, I didn't even give it a second's thought when asked to help her until she could find a clerk.

For those of you who've read my previous article on this subject, you already know what happened next. An elderly gentleman from South Korea came in, needing assistance, but there was no one there to speak his language. After much effort, we finally located another inmate, learned the nature of his problems, and set out to help him the best way we could. I personally wrote his request for reasonable modification (1824), and along with it, I attached a letter, written in CDCR "memo format," in which I explained who I was, how I'd helped him, the nature of the problem, and where an interpreter could be found, as well as what the gentleman from South Korea was asking for as a "reasonable accommodation." In this particular case, he simply wanted an interpreter.

Long story short, things really hit the fan when these documents made it to their intended destination. The powers that be wanted to know why he'd been here so long (6-months) without receiving his property, why he'd had no one to interpret for him, etc., and rather than simply acting to fix the problem, the principal, "Mr. G.," took it upon himself to ensure that I couldn't provide such effective assistance from this position ever again.

He wrote me a 115, which allowed him to remove me from my position. I'm pretty sure he knew I wasn't going to be found guilty at the hearing for the 115 (I wasn't), but this wasn't his intent. He simply wanted the documentation generated, which would remove me long enough to give him an opportunity to assign someone else to the position, someone who neither had the skills nor the experience to do anything that might make him look bad. His tactics worked, and the guy who was assigned to this position has absolutely no inkling as to how to go about performing his duties, let alone the knowledge needed to perform them.

When I went to the hearing for my 115, the Lieutenant in charge was surprised to learn that I was calling my bosses as witnesses. He hadn't had a chance to review the 115 yet, but based on the nature of the allegation (misuse of an inmate computer outside of work parameters), he'd naturally assumed that it was my boss who'd written the report. When he found out the truth, he made a phone call, verified my story, and promptly dismissed the alleged violation. Now, I'm just waiting to go back to classification to get reassigned. As I've already told my previous employers, while I like and respect them tremendously, I've no wish to place myself in any position that subjects me to the authority of their supervisor, someone who's already shown that he's capable of retaliating and holding a grudge, not to mention forging evidence. (I was fired on the 3rd, and for reasons I've yet to understand, he seemed to feel that the evidence in support of his 115 wasn't good enough, so he manufactured some additional evidence, dated the 5th, to support his claims that I was a "threat to the safety and security of the facility." Ironically, had I written the document in question, I still would have been found not guilty, due to the fact that the document was something normally generated by someone doing the work I'd been doing.)

As always, I welcome any and all feedback, either here to the blog, to my e-mail address (shawnlperrot@hotmail.com), or directly to me at the address listed below. Should you choose my e-mail address, please keep in mind that I don't have access to the Internet, but I do have a friend who checks, downloads, prints and snail mails any messages to me, so please be patient. E-mail responses are sent in the form of a scanned document (.pdf).

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