Prison Wife Prep for 2026: Practical Checklist

1. Know Your Loved One's Physical Reality

- ■ Current unit name, address, and phone number
- ■ Building, section, dorm, cell, and bunk number
- ■ DOC/BOP number
- ■ Custody level and line status

2. Understand Their Medical Situation

- ■ Diagnosed medical conditions + dates
- ■ Current medications, dosages, refill frequency
- ■ When meds should be taken (w/ or w/o food)
- ■ Medical accommodations (e.g., heat score, mobility aids)
- ■ Unit medical provider name
- ■ Grievance/escalation process for delayed/denied care
- ■ HIPAA or PHI form status (signed/current)

3. Learn the Structure of Their Unit

- ■ Warden, assistant warden, and major names
- ■ Classification and grievance contacts
- ■ Count, chow, rec, and phone schedules
- ■ Where to find official DOC/BOP policies
- ■ Understand the unit's informal culture

4. Keep Your Own Records

- ■ Track emails, calls, letters, faxes, grievances, transfers
- ■ Use the Chapters and Chains Information Tracker PDF
- ■ Track medical incidents and delays
- ■ Know your state's phone recording laws (consent required?)

5. Have an Emergency Communication Plan

- Code word/phrase agreed with loved one
- Agreed-upon monitored-call strategy
- List of emergency contacts: - Attorneys - Advocates - Ombudsmen - Media/supporters (if applicable)

6. Set Your 2026 Boundaries

- Decide call/email volume you can handle
- Set financial limits for phone/commissary
- Plan for burnout days + missed calls
- Clarify emotional availability
- Review Couples Communication Guidebook

7. Prepare Yourself, Not Just the Paperwork

- Join a support group (e.g., Love Within Walls)
- Do emotional self-checks regularly
- Revisit your goals throughout the year
- See preparation as self-care, not control

You’re not overreacting. You’re being ready. And that’s what 2026 deserves.