


Youth Correspondence

Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS)
Juvenile Justice Services (JJS)
Statewide Policy

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APPROVED BY:	Sharon Anderson, Deputy Administrator – DCFS 
DATE:	08/26/2022
SUPERSEDES:	New Policy
APPROVED BY:	Dr. Cindy Pitlock, Administrator – DCFS 
DATE:	08/29/2022
REFERENCES:	NRS 62B.510.10; Documentation Standards (DCFS/JJS 100.13); Youth Rights (DCFS/JJS 300.03)
ATTACHMENTS:	Attachment A: Correspondence Authorization Form

I. SUMMARY

The Division of Child and Family Services (DCFS) Juvenile Justice acknowledge youth have the right to correspond with approved family members, other persons, and organizations in writing. DCFS recognizes the youths' need for and right to maintain contact with persons outside the facility and asserts they may do so with a reasonable degree of privacy.

There may be limitations necessary to maintain security of a facility or program.

II. PURPOSE

To provide guidance for how youth committed to the State may correspond with related individuals outside a juvenile justice facility.

III. DEFINITIONS

As used in this document, the following definitions shall apply:

- A. Confidential Correspondence: Mail to a specified class of persons a youth may send and receive which is only inspected for contraband in the presence of the youth.

Youth Correspondence

- B. Contraband: Any item(s) introduced or found in a facility, including improperly possessed drugs (whether illegal or legal) and weapons, which are expressly prohibited by those legally charged with the responsibility for the administration and/or operation of a facility.
 - 1. *Weapons* include items which have been made or adapted for use as weapons and may cause injury or bodily harm.
 - 2. *Illegal Drugs and/or Alcohol* includes possessing or using any unauthorized substance, including controlled substances or intoxicants (including alcohol) and medications which have not been prescribed.
 - 3. *Other contraband* includes all items prohibited by agency or facility management based on written policy.
- C. Correspondence: Communication to or from youth through letters, postcards, greeting cards, or parcels.
- D. Indigent Youth: A youth without a means of financial support or whose primary means of support is through government subsidy.
- E. Money: Cash, checks, stamps, money orders, or drafts.
- F. Prison Rape Elimination ACT (PREA): A federal law supporting the elimination, reduction, and prevention of sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual misconduct within correctional facilities. This law applies to all federal, state, county, local, and private facilities.
- G. Sensitive Correspondence: Mail or written communication which includes medical, mental health, or substance abuse information.

IV. DEVELOPMENT OF YOUTH CORRESPONDENCE LIST

- A. Upon admission to a facility, the facility will send a youth's parent/guardian the Correspondence Authorization Form (Attachment A) within 24 hours of youth's arrival.
 - 1. The Correspondence Authorization Form may be sent by mail or email prior to a youth's admission to a facility.
- B. Upon return of the Correspondence Authorization Form, the facility shall consult with the youth's assigned Youth Parole Counselor (YPC) to ensure the list does not include:
 - 1. Any current or former victim of the youth
 - 2. The family of any current or former victim of the youth unless the victim was a member of the youth's family
 - 3. Any individual known by DCFS to be a gang member
 - 4. Any current or former co-defendant of the youth
 - 5. Any current youth in the custody of a juvenile probation department or DCFS Juvenile Services
 - 6. Any non-family individual incarcerated in any prison or jail
- C. All individuals approved to have correspondence with the youth will be:
 - 1. Verified or added as Related Individuals in the youth's record in the DCFS web-based case management system, and

Youth Correspondence

2. Added as Approved Visitors with the Authorization Status of “Authorized” in the youth’s current facility booking (DCFS/JJS 100.13, Documentation Standards).
- D. In the event a Correspondence Authorization Form is not returned by a parent or guardian, the youth may work with facility staff to submit a suggested correspondence list using the Correspondence Authorization Form.
1. Youth’s assigned YPC will be consulted before approving any individual.
- E. If a YPC determines someone on the Correspondence Authorization Form is a prohibited person, notice shall be sent to parent or guardian explaining why an individual was not approved.
- F. The youth’s attorney or other legal representatives shall always be approved on the Correspondence Authorization Form.
- G. A youth may request someone be added or removed from their correspondence list at any time following review by the parent or guardian and their YPC.
- H. The facility shall adopt procedures to ensure the accuracy of the contact information provided to prevent correspondence being delivered to or received from an unauthorized individual.
- I. The facility shall maintain each youth’s correspondence list for the duration of the youth’s stay at the facility.
1. Records may be maintained in the DCFS web-based case management system.

V. INCOMING MAIL

- A. Facility staff shall document all incoming correspondence in the youth’s record of the web-based case management system as a New Activity > Letter Received, including summary of the physical contents in the Notes section of the activity (e.g., card, photos, letter, book).
- B. Facility staff will deliver correspondence to a youth within 24 hours of receipt excluding weekends and holidays.
1. Parcels shall be delivered within 48 hours.
- C. The amount of correspondence a youth may receive is unlimited from authorized individuals on the youth’s correspondence list.
- D. Regular (non-sensitive and non-confidential correspondence) will be opened and inspected for contraband and to ensure the content does not put facility order or security at risk before delivery to the youth.
- E. Sensitive correspondence shall be opened and inspected for contraband and reviewed by clinical staff for content prior to delivery to the youth.

Youth Correspondence

1. In the event the content of the sensitive correspondence needs medical or mental health explanation, medical or mental health staff shall deliver the correspondence to the youth in a confidential setting and provide the appropriate explanation within 24 hours of receipt by the facility, if possible, unless it falls on a weekend or holiday. In this case, the subsequent business day.
- F. Items considered to be contraband (e.g., risqué photographs) or unauthorized (such as staples and paperclips) will be removed prior to delivering mail to youth.
- G. Youth shall be informed if any mail, or portion of correspondence, is withheld, and the reason why.
 1. If appropriate, undeliverable mail shall be placed in the youth's property to be given to youth at release.
 2. All incoming undeliverable mail shall be documented in the youth's record of the web-based case management system as a New Activity > Facility Undeliverable Mail, including reason for being undeliverable in the Notes section of the activity.
- H. Money is considered contraband and may be confiscated and returned to sender. Facility discretion is authorized.
 1. Receipt of any monies shall be documented in the youth's web-based case management record with a detailed explanation of who received the money, where the money will be stored, or whether money was returned to sender.
- I. Mail received after a youth's release shall be forwarded unopened to the youth's last known address.
 1. If no forwarding address is available, the correspondence will be returned to the sender unopened.
- J. Staff shall ensure youth with disabilities have access to and assistance with handling incoming correspondence.

VI. OUTGOING MAIL

- A. Mail will be collected and sent out daily, Monday through Friday, excluding state and national holidays.
- B. There is no limit on the amount of correspondence a youth may send to individuals on their authorized correspondence list, except in the event of an indigent youth.
 1. The facility may set limits through a procedure given its budgetary restrictions.
- C. Outgoing mail shall be inspected for contraband and any risks to the order and security of the facility or the public.
 1. Any contraband items or unauthorized items will be withheld and processed as outlined in the facility standard operating procedure (SOP).

Youth Correspondence

2. Youth shall be informed if mail is not sent and provided a reason why.
 - a. If appropriate, undeliverable mail shall be placed in the youth's property to be given back to youth at release.
 - b. All outgoing undeliverable mail shall be documented in the youth's record of the web-based case management system as a New Activity > Facility Undeliverable Mail, including reason for being undeliverable in the Notes section of the Activity.
- D. Youth may not send any type of mail to their victims or family members of their victims.
 1. Any such mail will be reported to the superintendent or designee.
- E. Youth are permitted to send sensitive correspondence in a sealed envelope when approved by the Superintendent or designee.
- F. Staff shall ensure youth with disabilities have access to and assistance with handling outgoing correspondence.

VII. CONFIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENCE

- A. Youth are permitted to send and receive unlimited confidential letters in a sealed envelope to or from their legal representative, youth parole, State PREA Coordinator, member of the clergy, any local or state crisis center, or any other persons and organizations specified by statute.
 1. In the event the facility is paying for the postage for an indigent youth, the facility may set postage restrictions based on budgetary allotments.
- B. All incoming and outgoing confidential correspondence will be inspected only for contraband in the presence of the youth.
 1. The correspondence will not be read by any staff (DCFS/JJS 300.03, Youth Rights).
- C. All incoming confidential correspondence shall be delivered to the youth within 24 hours of arrival at the facility.
- D. All outgoing confidential correspondence shall be mailed within 24 hours of receipt from the youth.

VIII. CONTRABAND AND PROHIBITIONS

- A. A list of contraband will be provided to youth within 72 hours of admission to the facility.
 1. Youth will be made aware correspondence will be inspected for contraband.
- B. Notice of the Division's policy and the facility's operating procedures related to correspondence shall be provided to each youth's parent or guardian within 24 hours of the youth's arrival at a facility.

Youth Correspondence

- C. Staff handling mail will inspect all mail for contraband on flaps of envelopes, stamps, address labels, stickers, and seams of envelope, including postcards.
 - 1. If contraband is found, the letter and its contents will be given to the supervisor on duty and documented as directed in the facility's SOP.
- D. Staples, paperclips, or other metallic items shall be removed from correspondence prior to delivery to the youth.
 - 1. In the event of confidential correspondence, any such items shall be removed in front of the youth prior to delivery.
- E. The withholding of youth mail without reason is a grievable issue within seven days from the date of receipt of the mail received.
- F. Any sexual harassment through incoming or outgoing correspondence is considered contraband and must be reported to the superintendent or designee and the facility Compliance Manager.
- G. Delivery of publications shall be prohibited if they pose a direct or immediate danger to security or contain any sexually explicit material.
- H. Access to correspondence consistent with this policy may not be denied as discipline.
- I. Access to correspondence consistent with this policy shall not be used as a youth incentive.

VI. STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

- A. Each facility shall create standard operating procedures consistent with this policy, to include:
 - 1. Procedures to send parents/guardians correspondence information, including communication of unauthorized correspondence.
 - 2. Position(s) responsible for maintaining correspondence authorization lists, including:
 - a. Procedures to ensure the accuracy of the contact information provided to prevent correspondence being delivered to or received from an unauthorized individual.
 - b. Procedures to update related individuals and authorization status in the web-based case management system.
 - 3. Training youth and staff on correspondence procedures.
 - 4. Position(s) responsible for managing youth correspondence, including:
 - a. Documentation of all correspondence.
 - b. Procedures for sensitive correspondence.
 - c. Process for finding contraband or any unauthorized items in youth incoming mail.
 - d. Process for finding contraband or any unauthorized items in youth outgoing mail.
 - e. Process for handling money if sent through the mail.

Youth Correspondence

- B. The Youth Parole Bureau shall create standard operating procedures consistent with this policy, to include:
 - 1. Process for approving related individuals on a youth's Correspondence Authorization Form.
- C. The Juvenile Justice Programs Office shall create procedures consistent with this policy, specifically as they relate to PREA.
- D. This policy shall be reviewed every two years or sooner if deemed necessary.