

GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE	Transmittal # 17-11	Policy #: 15.6
Applicability: <input type="checkbox"/> All DJJ Staff <input type="checkbox"/> Administration <input type="checkbox"/> Community Services <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Secure Facilities (RYDCs and YDCs)	Related Standards & References: ACA Standards: 4-JCF-3A-07 through 14, 3-JDF-5G-01 through 10 DJJ 8.22, 15.9	
Chapter 15: RIGHTS OF YOUTH	Effective Date: 11/15/17 Scheduled Review Date: 11/15/18	
Subject: ACCESS TO MAIL	Replaces: 4/1/13 Secure Facilities	
Attachments: A – Postage Accountability Log B – Mail Items Rejection Form C – Acknowledgement of Victim’s Request for No Communication	APPROVED:  <hr/> Avery D. Niles, Commissioner	

I. POLICY:

To ensure contact with persons outside of the facility/program, youth housed in Department of Juvenile Justice facilities shall have the right to communicate through written correspondence with approved members of their family and other persons or organizations, subject to the limitations necessary to maintain order and security of the facility/program.

II. DEFINITIONS:

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

Contraband: Any item or article in the possession of a youth and/or staff or found within the facility/program that has not been officially issued or any other property that is prohibited from being brought into a facility by statute, rule, local operating procedure, policy or direction of the facility Director, unless specifically approved in writing by the facility Director. Contraband may also be excess quantities of approved items.

Correspondence: Mail or written communication to or from youth, including letters, postcards, greeting cards, and parcels.

Indigent Youth: A youth that is without a means of financial support or whose primary means of support is through government subsidy.

Money: Cash, coins, checks, credit or debit cards, gift cards, wireless phone cards or codes, stamps, money orders, phone cards or other forms of negotiable currency.

III. PROCEDURES:

A. Each facility Director will ensure that local operating procedures provide for:

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1. The employees with the necessary experience and skills designated by the facility Director to function as the primary mail handler and a back-up mail handler who will handle all mail for youth;
 2. The furnishing of postage stamps weekly at the facility's expense;
 3. Unlimited access to postage provided by parent/legal guardians and not at the facility's expense;
 4. How the youth's additional postage will be stored and accessed;
 5. Access to mail publications;
 6. Standard collection and distribution of mail items; and
 7. Informing youth and parents/legal guardians of mail collection and distribution procedures and items that may be sent and received.
- B. The facility Director will ensure that mail handlers are knowledgeable regarding mail rules and local procedures.
- C. The amount of mail a youth may receive or send is unlimited, except when there is clear and convincing evidence to justify a specific limitation.
1. The Department will provide postage for the mailing personal letters weekly for each youth, when requested.
 2. Youth will not be allowed to possess stamps or stamped envelopes.
 3. Mail handlers will utilize the Postage Accountability Log (Attachment A) to record incoming/outgoing postage. No currency will be accepted.
 4. Youth can send unlimited legal correspondence as needed. The Department will, when requested, provide sufficient postage to mail a youth's legal correspondence. There is no postage limitation for legal correspondence.
- D. Incoming Mail:
1. Mail will be delivered once per day Monday through Friday, excluding state and national holidays.
 2. Incoming letters and packages, including legal correspondence, will be opened and inspected for contraband the day of receipt and before delivery to the youth.
 3. All staples, paperclips, binder clips, etc. will be removed prior to delivering mail.

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4. If no contraband is found, letters and packages will be delivered to the youth on the day of receipt.
5. Contraband items or any unauthorized item will be withheld and processed as outlined in DJJ 8.22, Searches and Contraband Control.
6. The youth will be fully informed when incoming mail is withheld in part or in full. The reason(s) for the action taken will be documented on the Mail/Items Rejection Form (Attachment B) and in the youth's Juvenile Tracking System (JTS) contact log, to include a comment regarding the reason for withholding the mail.
 - a. Mail received from someone at another correctional facility will be returned to the sender. Exceptions for mail received from a family member at another correctional facility may be made by the facility Director on a case-by-case basis and documented in the JTS contact log.
 - b. Youth will not be given mail sent from a youth previously detained at any DJJ facility. Exceptions for mail received from a family member at another correctional facility, may be made by the facility Director on a case-by-case basis and documented in the JTS contact log,

E. Outgoing Mail:

1. Mail will be collected and sent out once per day Monday through Friday, excluding state and national holidays.
2. All outgoing mail will be on notebook paper. The facility return address and the name and address of the addressee will be on the same side of the envelope.
3. Mail and packages may be mailed for youth after inspection for contraband.
4. Inspection of letters for contraband will take no longer than 24 hours. Inspection of packages for contraband will take no longer than 48 hours.
5. Contraband items or any unauthorized item will be withheld and processed as outlined in DJJ 15.9, Youth Property and State Issued Items.
6. The youth will be fully informed when outgoing mail is withheld in part or in full. The reason(s) for the action taken will be fully documented on the Mail/Items Rejection Form and in the youth's JTS facility program notes.
7. Youth may not send any type of mail or other communication to victims and/or their family members, upon the victim's request. When a victim has requested to not receive mail, the Juvenile Detention Counselor will advise the youth that he/she is not allowed to send mail or otherwise communicate in any way with

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the victim and/or their family members. This acknowledgement will be documented on Acknowledgement of Victim's Request for No Communication (Attachment C).

F. Privileged Correspondence:

1. Youth are permitted to send and receive privileged letters to or from specified persons and organizations at no cost to the youth, including courts, legal representatives, Community Case Manager, Office of Legal Services, Deputy Commissioner, and Commissioner.
2. All incoming and outgoing privileged correspondence will only be inspected for contraband in the presence of the youth. The correspondence will not be read.

G. Contraband:

1. A list of contraband will be posted for youth and each youth made aware that letters and packages will be inspected for contraband.
2. Mail handlers will inspect all mail for contraband on flaps of envelopes, stamps, address labels, stickers and seams of envelope or postcards and remove when necessary.
3. If contraband is found, the letter or package and its contents will be directed to the supervisor on duty with the action fully documented in accordance with facility procedures. The youth will be advised of the action via the Mail/Items Rejection Form (Attachment B).
4. Money received in the mail will be returned to the sender along with the Mail/Items Rejection Form (Attachment B). Cash and coins will be returned to the sender in the form of a business check.
5. Rejection of mail is grievable within seven (7) days, from the date of receipt of the Mail/Items Rejection Form.
6. The sender will be informed when mail items are rejected (Attachment B, Mail/Items Rejection Form).
7. After removal of contraband or rejected items or material, the youth will be given any remaining acceptable items, letter, or materials, if this is possible.
8. If illegal contraband is found, the entire package or letter will be secured, a chain of custody maintained (Attachment D, DJJ 8.22, Searches and Contraband Control), and the Office of Investigations immediately notified.

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- H. Youth released or transferred shall be permitted to take all personal mail. Subsequently, received letters and packages shall be forwarded to the youth, unopened. If no forwarding address is available, mail shall be returned, unopened, to the sender or to the Post Office.
- I. For youth who are released or transferred to another secure facility or non-secure residential program whose victim has requested no communication from the youth, the facility Director will notify the receiving facility/program of the victim's request.

IV. LOCAL OPERATING PROCEDURES REQUIRED: YES