Correspondence of Youth (Title 15, Section 1375)

Effective Date:	8/12/25
Revised Date:	8/12/25
Issuing Authority: Chief Probation Officer	

608.1 PURPOSE:
To establish guidelines for the distribution and review of incoming and outgoing mail/ correspondence of youth in Juvenile Detention and Assessment Centers (JDACs) and Treatment Facilities (TFs).

608.2 DEFINITIONS:
Immediate Family: For purposes of this procedure, immediate family is defined as parents, spouses, children, siblings, stepparents, grandparents, foster parents, and legal guardians.

Mail/Correspondence: Conventional letters, postcards, and photographs no larger than 4x6 inches are permitted.

Special Mail: Mail from the President and Vice President of the U.S., attorneys, Members of the U.S. Congress, Embassies and Consulates, the U.S. Department of Justice (excluding the Bureau of Prisons but including U.S. Attorneys), other Federal law enforcement officers, State Attorneys General, Prosecuting Attorneys, Governors, U.S. Courts (including U.S. Probation Officers), and State Courts may be opened only in the youth's presence to be checked for contraband. This procedure occurs only if the sender is adequately identified on the envelope and the front of the envelope is marked "Special Mail — Open only in the presence of the youth." Other mail may be opened and read by staff. (28 CFR § 540.12)

Confidential Mail/Correspondence: Confidential mail/correspondence sent to or received from State and Federal Courts, the youth's attorney or the attorney's authorized designee, any member of the State bar or holder of public office, and the Board of State and Community Corrections, officials of this department, elected officials, government officials and officers of the court. Authorized facility staff may open and inspect such mail only in the youth's presence to check solely for contraband.

Personal Mail: All mail other than Special Mail and Confidential Mail/Correspondence.

Contraband: Any object, writing, or substance that would constitute a crime under the laws of the State of California, pose a danger within a juvenile facility, or would interfere with the orderly day-to-day operation of a juvenile facility. Contraband also includes any item defined as such by the facility Superintendent or designee.

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Dead Mail: Mail that cannot be delivered or returned.

Mail Screening Device: Device used for the purposes of detecting and presumptively identifying illicit substances and cutting agents secreted in articles of mail.

608.3 GUIDELINES:

A. Youth may send and receive mail without restrictions on quantity, provided it does not jeopardize the safety of staff members, visitors, or other youth, or pose an unreasonable disruption to the orderly operation of the facility.

B. There is no charge or limitation on the volume of correspondence youth send or receive.

C. Youth may store only a limited amount of mail in their housing unit as determined by the facility Superintendent or designee. Excess mail will be stored with the youth's personal property and returned when the youth is released.

D. All mail shall enter and exit the facility via the United States Postal Service. Mail shall not be hand delivered by visitors or staff.

E. All incoming mail and items included therein are subject to be scanned via the mail screening device.

F. Mail received for youth no longer in custody will be considered dead mail and returned to the sender. If no return address is available, dead mail will be forwarded to Postal Service Address: Mail Recovery Center, Atlanta, GA., 30378-2400.

608.4 RESPONSIBILITIES:

Responsibilities:

I. Mail:

A. Intake Probation Corrections Officers (PCO):

1. Present and explain the Notice of Correspondence Form (located in ProbTools) to youth upon intake and ensure youth sign indicating they understand the definition of Special Mail.

B. PCO:

1. Check the unit mailbox for incoming mail at least once per shift and distribute it within 24 hours of arrival.

2. Ensure all mail (including, but not limited to, personal, special, and confidential mail) is screened via the mail screening device prior to distribution.

3. Screen mail for persons prohibited by the Probation Officer or the facility Superintendent or designee.

(a) Staff shall complete an Incident Report (IR) should any of the following circumstances exist upon inspection of the mail:

i. Escape plans

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ii. Conspiracy to smuggle drugs, weapons, or other contraband into the facility

iii. Attempts to arrange assaults or other violations

iv. Plans which would jeopardize the safety and security of the facility

v. Criminal activity or conspiracy

vi. As directed by a supervisor

4. All contraband, including mail identified by the mail scanning device as containing illicit material, shall be handled in accordance with the Handling of Contraband and Evidence procedure and, where applicable, the New Crimes in Detention and Treatment Facilities procedure.

5. Ensure each youth has time set aside every week to write letters and provide the youth with supplies such as pencils, paper, and envelopes.

6. During room searches, open non-confidential mail may be inspected.

7. Ensure outgoing mail is properly addressed with destination, return address, and written in proper English containing no gang signs, slogans, or symbols. Mail should be unsealed and delivered to the facility's outgoing mailbox by the end of the shift.

8. Enter a "Correspondence Log" note in the youth's Caseload Explorer (CE) file for all incoming and outgoing correspondence distributed by the end of the shift.

C. Probation Corrections Supervisor I (PCSI):

1. Ensure compliance with this procedure.

2. Notify the Watch Commander (WC)/Treatment Facility Supervisor (TFS) when contraband is found in correspondence.

D. Probation Corrections Supervisor II (PCSII)/Watch Commander (WC)/ Treatment Facility Supervisor (TFS):

1. Ensure compliance with this procedure.

2. When contraband and/or information is revealed that jeopardizes the safety and security of the facility:

(a) Create an action plan addressing concerns as discovered in the youth's mail.

(b) Notify the facility Superintendent or designee, or On-Call Director regarding the concerns.

II. Personal Mail:

A. PCO:

1. Shall open all incoming personal mail.

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2. Thoroughly inspect the contents for contraband.
3. Remove any stamps, stickers, staples, paper clips, etc.
4. Ensure all prohibited items are removed before distribution to youth.
5. Incoming and outgoing mail, excluding Special Mail and Confidential Mail/ Correspondence, may be read by staff only when there is reasonable cause to believe that the safety and security of the facility, public safety, or the safety of the youth is jeopardized.
6. Personal mail is subject to review and inspection to identify any material that could jeopardize the safety, order, and security of the facility, public safety, or the rehabilitation of youth including, but not limited to:
   (a) Contraband
   (b) Escape plans
   (c) Criminal activity or conspiracy
   (d) Threatening statements
   (e) Obscene or sexually explicit material
   (f) Coded messages
   (g) Attempts to arrange assaults or incite disorder
   (h) Communication that may further contribute to the delinquency/ victimization of the youth (e.g., gang activity, prostitution, etc.)
   (i) Communication between perpetrators/victims
7. Place mail containing personal items of value such as money, ATM/Debit Cards, Calling Cards, etc., in the youth's Intake Property. The property form shall be updated and signed by the youth.

B. PCSI:

1. Ensure staff complete an Incident Report when applicable.

III. Prohibited Mail:

A. PCO:

1. Complete a Correspondence Authorization Form (located in ProbTools) for all mail not delivered to youth and submit the form to the on-duty PCSI.
2. All correspondence between probationers and/or other detention facilities is prohibited unless pre-approved by the facility Superintendent.
   (a) Place denied mail in the youth's personal property in booking.
   (b) Other prohibited items include but are not limited to:
      i. Envelopes larger than 8.5 x11 inches
      ii. Packages

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iii. Books

iv. Periodicals

v. Any multilayer photographs such as Polaroids.

(c) Youth do not have an expectation of privacy with personal mail.

i. Youth's mail may be photocopied when necessary to further safety, security, order, rehabilitation, and other legitimate governmental interests.

ii. Mail may be admitted as evidence in criminal proceedings and should be handled as such.

B. PCSI:

1. Ensure a Correspondence Authorization Form is completed for all mail not delivered to a youth. Document reason for denial in CE-New Event-Institution-Institution Note.

2. Forward a photocopy of correspondence as applicable to the assigned Probation Officer or designee and facility Superintendent for approval.

3. Review requests for correspondence with other facilities and/or prohibited persons and ensure they are processed on a Request for Correspondence Form (located in ProbTools) and submitted to the Superintendent or designee for authorization.

C. Superintendent or designee:

1. Review Correspondence Authorization Forms and approve them as appropriate.

2. Mail shall not be sent to or received from other adult or juvenile custodial facilities, camps, or placements under private, local, state, or federal control unless authorized by the facility Superintendent or designee.

(a) The only exception to this shall be immediate family members who are incarcerated, as long as the communication does not promote the criminal activity of the youth and/or compromise the safety and security of either facility, the youth, or the public.

(b) Immediate family members who are co-parts/co-defendants and have not been adjudicated shall not be allowed to correspond until their matters reach disposition.

3. Complete a Request for Correspondence Form and forward it to the other institution (county jail, prison, camp, etc.) for review and approval as appropriate.

4. Correspondence will only be allowed after written approval has been received from the administrators of both facilities on the Request for Correspondence Form.

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5. Process and maintain a copy of each Request for Correspondence Form in a binder labeled, "Request for Correspondence Forms" for the duration of one year.
6. Follow up with receiving facilities if a response has not been received after thirty (30) days.
7. Upon receiving an approval or denial from the receiving facility, notify the youth in writing on the Correspondence Authorization Form.
8. Ensure the original and completed copy of the Correspondence Authorization Form is given to the youth and a copy scanned and imported to CE-Documents in the youth's file.
9. Monitor adherence to this procedure by periodic review of logs, incident reports, safety reviews, and other safeguards conducted in the normal course of business.
10. Review and approve intra/inter-facility correspondence between immediate family members as appropriate. A Request for Correspondence Form is not required for intra/inter-facility correspondence.

IV. Special Mail and Confidential Mail/Correspondence:

A. PCO:

1. Shall open all Special Mail and Confidential Mail/Correspondence (incoming and outgoing) only in the youth's presence.
2. Thoroughly inspect the contents solely for contraband.
3. Remove any stamps, stickers, staples, paper clips, etc.
4. Ensure all prohibited items are removed before distribution to youth.

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