



# Virginia Department of Corrections

## Offender Management and Programs

### Operating Procedure 803.4

#### *Central Mail Distribution Center*

#### **Authority:**

Directive 803, *Offender Correspondence, Publications, & Telephone Access*

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<b>Content Owner:</b>	Yulonda Wyche Security Program Coordinator	<i>Signature Copy on File</i>	5/31/22
		Signature	Date
<b>Reviewer:</b>	Randall C. Mathena Director of Security & Correctional Enforcement	<i>Signature Copy on File</i>	6/1/22
		Signature	Date
<b>Signatory:</b>	A. David Robinson Chief of Corrections Operations	<i>Signature Copy on File</i>	6/1/22
		Signature	Date

### **REVIEW**

The Content Owner will review this operating procedure annually and re-write it no later than three years after the effective date.

*The content owner reviewed this operating procedure in July 2023 and necessary changes are being drafted.*

### **COMPLIANCE**

This operating procedure applies to all units operated by the Virginia Department of Corrections (DOC). Practices and procedures must comply with applicable State and Federal laws and regulations, American Correctional Association (ACA) standards, Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards, and DOC directives and operating procedures.

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## DEFINITIONS

**Central Mail Distribution Center** - A DOC unit under the office of the Director of Security and Correctional Enforcement that has the responsibility to receive and inspect inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee incoming legal correspondence, incoming religious correspondence, books, newspapers, magazines, photobooks, personal photographs, commercial photographs and other publications before these items are forwarded to a facility for issuance to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.

**Community Corrections Alternative Program (CCAP)** - A system of residential facilities operated by the Department of Corrections to provide evidence-based programming as a diversionary alternative to incarceration in accordance with COV §53.1-67.9, *Establishment of community corrections alternative program; supervision upon completion*.

**Facility** - Any institution or Community Corrections Alternative Program.

**Inmate** - A person who is incarcerated in a Virginia Department of Corrections facility or who is Virginia Department of Corrections responsible to serve a state sentence.

**Legal Correspondence** - Correspondence sent to or received from verified attorneys, officers of state, federal, and local courts, the Virginia State Bar, and tort claims filed with the Division of Risk Management; the sender must clearly identify outer envelopes and contents as legal correspondence.

**Probationer/Parolee** - A person who is on community supervision as the result of the commission of a criminal offense and released to the community under the jurisdiction of Courts, paroling authorities, the Virginia Department of Corrections, or other release authority; this includes post release supervision and Community Corrections Alternative Programs.

**Publication** - Any communication such as newspapers, magazines, newsletters or other periodicals, books, brochures, catalogs, or pamphlets that can be subscribed to or ordered from a vendor.



## PURPOSE

This operating procedure establishes and provides guidelines for the Department of Corrections (DOC) Central Mail Distribution Center to receive, screen, and inspect all legal correspondence, books and magazines mailed to inmates and probationers/parolees housed in a DOC facility.

## PROCEDURE

- I. Legal Correspondence Processing (5-ACI-7D-01; 4-ACRS-6A-07; 2-CO-5D-01)
  - A. All inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee legal correspondence must be mailed directly to the Central Mail Distribution Center at 3521 Woods Way, State Farm, Virginia 23160 for screening and inspection, prior to delivery to the facility and issuance to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.
    1. Facility mailroom staff will return all legal correspondence received at the facility that is not received from the Central Mail Distribution Center to the sender and will notify the sender of the reason for return using the *Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence* 803\_F2.
    2. Facility mailroom staff will provide the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee with a copy of the *Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence* as notification that the correspondence was returned.
  - B. Initial Check-in Process
    1. Upon receipt of legal correspondence, Central Mail Distribution Center staff will enter the following information into the center's electronic log system:
      - a. Date received
      - b. Inmate or CCAP Probationer/Parolee Name
      - c. DOC Number
      - d. Sender's information from the outer envelope
      - e. Correspondence Acceptance or Rejection based on but not limited to the following: (5-ACI-7D-05)
        - i. Unable to identify recipient due to full name or DOC number not provided
        - ii. Package does not appear to be legal correspondence
        - iii. Unable to identify sender as an attorney, law firm, legal services provider, court, or governmental office
    2. Central Mail Distribution Center staff will conduct a preliminary review to confirm the validity of the legal correspondence prior to forwarding the incoming legal correspondence to the screening area for inspection.
      - a. Central Mail Distribution Center staff must not open legal correspondence under any circumstances.
      - b. Central Mail Distribution Center staff must not reject or return the legal correspondence to the sender without approval from the Central Mailroom Distribution Supervisor.
      - c. When applicable, the reason for rejection, i.e., unable to verify law office, or attorney denies affiliation, etc. must be provided unless doing so would compromise an investigation.
    3. After completing the preliminary review, Central Mail Distribution Center staff must forward the legal correspondence to the screening area before the legal correspondence is returned to the sender.
  - C. Screening and Inspection (5-ACI-7D-08; 2-CO-5D-01)
    1. All unopened legal correspondence, accepted and rejected, must be forwarded to the screening area where it will be screened by a Canine Detection team and scanned using a security X-ray screening unit, ion scanner or any other reliable detection equipment.
    2. When the Canine Detection team, security X-ray screening unit, ion scanner or other reliable detection device indicates the presence of contraband, staff must immediately notify the Central Mailroom



Distribution Supervisor and secure the legal correspondence as evidence; see Operating Procedure 030.1, *Evidence Collection and Preservation*, for guidance on the collection, documentation, control and preservation of legal correspondence as evidence.

- a. Staff will verify that the address is legitimate, contact the law office to confirm the legal correspondence with the attorney, and verify the attorney's bar number if provided on the outside of the envelope; the results of verification must be documented in the Central Mail Distribution Center's electronic log system.
  - b. Security staff will contact the facility and arrange for a polycom using the telejustice system.
    - i. Staff will open the legal correspondence in the presence of the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee. (5-ACI-7D-05, 5-ACI-7D-06; 4-ACRS-6A-08)
    - ii. Prior to opening the legal correspondence, security staff will establish ownership from the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee and will record the event.
  - c. In the event a telejustice polycom is not feasible, staff will notify the Special Operations Unit Drug Task Force Team who will arrange for a drug task force agent, Canine Officer, or Special Investigations Unit (SIU) Special Agent to pick-up and hand deliver the evidence to the inmate's or CCAP probationer's/parolee's assigned facility in order to maintain the integrity of the chain of custody process.
  - d. When contraband is found, Central Mail Distribution Center staff will provide written notification of the rejected, nondelivered correspondence to the sender using the *Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence* 803\_F2 with a copy provided to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee unless doing so would compromise an investigation. (5-ACI-7D-05; 4-ACRS-6A-08)
  - e. Central Mail Distribution Center staff must not reject legal correspondence without approval of the Central Mailroom Distribution Supervisor.
3. When contraband is not detected, staff will forward the unopened legal correspondence to the all-clear area where the legal correspondence will be sent by USPS priority express delivery to the appropriate facilities daily for processing and delivery to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee in accordance with Operating Procedure 803.1, *Inmate and Probationer/Parolee Correspondence*. (5-ACI-7D-09)

## II. Publications and Religious Correspondence Processing (5-ACI-7D-04)

- A. The following publications and inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee correspondence must be mailed directly to the Central Mail Distribution Center at 3521 Woods Way, State Farm, Virginia 23160 for screening and inspection, prior to delivery to the facility and issuance to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.
1. Publications and Correspondence
    - a. Books, newspapers, and magazines donated to the facility for inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee access.
    - b. Books, newspapers, magazines, and any other publications purchased by the inmate, CCAP probationer/parolee, or a third party.
    - c. Religious correspondence and publications purchased or donated.
    - d. Photobooks, personal photographs purchased from a vendor, and commercial photographs.
  2. Publications not purchased by the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee such as advertisements, newsletters, brochures, catalogs, etc. will be mailed to the inmate's or CCAP probationer's/parolee's assigned facility for processing.
  3. Books, newspapers, magazines, photobooks, personal photographs, and commercial photographs purchased by the inmate, CCAP probationer/parolee, or a third party for delivery to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee and all inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee religious correspondence and publications received at the facility and not received from the Central Mail Distribution Center will be returned to the sender.



- B. Central Mail Distribution Center staff will pick-up all books, newspapers, magazines, photobooks, personal photographs, commercial photographs, and all inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee religious correspondence and publications daily from the post office and/or will receive these items directly from the United Parcel Service (UPS) and FedEx.
- C. Central Mail Distribution Center staff using handheld devices will scan the carrier barcode of the sender and will enter the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee name and DOC number in tracking software to establish that the Central Mail Distribution Center physically received the items.
1. Once the scanning process has been completed, Central Mail Distribution Center staff will:
    - a. Remove the contents of each package.
    - b. Print and attach a new delivery label generated by the tracking software to the item.
    - c. Photograph each item and the generated delivery label.
  2. The tracking system, including photos taken, allows for verification of the item's journey and physical status at different points in the process.
  3. The photograph provides information on the status of the item and the tracking label is used to identify the item and the intended inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee recipient.
  4. All packing is destroyed.
- D. Once the tracking label is attached to the item, security staff will ensure that the item is inspected by a Canine Detection team, physically searched by staff, and scanned using a security X-ray screening unit and narcotic detection itemiser.
1. When no contraband is detected, the item will be packaged for delivery to the facility.
  2. When contraband is detected, Central Mail Distribution Center staff will enter the information into the tracking software and security staff will maintain custody of the item and will secure the item as evidence; see Operating Procedure 030.1, *Evidence Collection and Preservation*, for guidance on the collection, documentation, control, and preservation of legal correspondence as evidence.
- E. At least once per week, staff will box the books, newspapers magazines, photobooks, personal photographs, commercial photographs, religious correspondence, and publications and will ship them, using the tracking software, to the appropriate facility for issuance, when applicable, to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.
- F. Once received at the facility, facility staff will scan each tracking label into the tracking software at the facility updating the location of the items as received.
- G. Facility staff will issue the book, newspaper, magazine, photobook, personal photograph, commercial photograph, religious correspondence, and publication to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee recipient in accordance with Operating Procedure 803.1, *Inmate and Probationer/Parolee Correspondence* and Operating Procedure 803.2, *Incoming Publications*.

## REFERENCES

COV §53.1-67.9, *Establishment of community corrections alternative program; supervision upon completion*  
Operating Procedure 030.1, *Evidence Collection and Preservation*  
Operating Procedure 803.1, *Inmate and Probationer/Parolee Correspondence*  
Operating Procedure 803.2, *Incoming Publications*

## ATTACHMENTS

None



## **FORM CITATIONS**

*Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence 803\_F2*

