

State of Iowa Department of Corrections Policy and Procedures

Policy Number: OP-MTV-01

Applicability: Institutions

Policy Code: Public Access

Iowa Code Reference: N/A

Chapter 5: OFFENDER PROGRAMS

Sub Chapter: MAIL, TELEPHONE, AND VISITING

Related DOC Policies: N/A

Administrative Code Reference: [201-20.4](#), [201-20.5](#)

Subject: INCARCERATED INDIVIDUAL CORRESPONDENCE

PREA Standards: N/A

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Effective Date: May 1, 2026

Authority:

1. PURPOSE

To describe opportunities Iowa Department of Corrections (IDOC) Incarcerated Individuals have for maintaining written correspondence with non-Incarcerated Individual members of the community.

2. POLICY

It is the policy of the IDOC to encourage constructive correspondence between Incarcerated Individuals and their family and friends that supports law-abiding behavior. Correctional administrators shall structure policies to ensure Incarcerated Individual responsibility for accuracy and honesty in official and personal correspondence. Institutions are responsible for a safe, secure, and orderly procedure for Incarcerated Individual use of the mail.

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3. DEFINITIONS: As used in this document:

- A. Immediate Family - An Incarcerated Individual’s spouse, mother, father, sister, brother, child, grandparent, established legal guardian, or other who acted in place of parents and step or half-relation if the step or half-relation and the Incarcerated Individual were raised as cohabitating siblings.
- B. Justifiable Cause - (includes but not limited to) The correspondence presents a threat to the order and security of the correctional institution or any complaint or request from a recipient of Incarcerated Individual correspondence suggesting the correspondence violates correctional principles or is inappropriate or inaccurate.
- C. O-Mail - This system is similar to email but is not connected to the internet. Electronic mail that can be sent to and from Incarcerated Individuals and public. The guidelines outlined in this policy apply to electronic mail (O-Mail).

4. PROCEDURES

A. General Provisions

- 1. Non-Confidential mail may be read. This may be on a random, selected or blanket basis.

2. Non-confidential mail may be read when there is suspected abuse of correspondence or potential threat to the order and security of the institution. Each facility shall develop specific procedures for authorization of regular monitoring of mail to and from designated individuals.
3. In attempting to prevent the introduction of contraband mail items in the correctional facility, the Iowa DOC contracts with two vendors that specialize in receiving mail from the public and producing copies of the mail for Incarcerated Individuals as a service to the department. The two approved mail vendors are Ameelio Connect and Pigeonly Corrections.
4. All incoming Incarcerated Individual non-legal mail must either come directly from Ameelio Connect, Pelipost or be sent to Pigeonly Corrections at the following address:

**Incarcerated Individual Name
Incarcerated Individual Number
Iowa DOC Facility Name – Facility ID Number (see below)
PO BOX 96777
Las Vegas, NV 89193**

Iowa DOC Facility Name - ID Number

Anamosa State Penitentiary (ASP) - 1106
Clarinda Correctional Facility (CCF) - 1107
Fort Dodge Correctional Facility (FDCF) - 1114
Iowa Correctional Institution for Women (ICIW) - 1109
Iowa Medical & Classification Center (IMCC) - 1108
Iowa State Penitentiary (ISP) - 1110
Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility (MPCF) - 1113
Newton Correctional Facility (NCF) - 1111
North Central Correctional Facility (NCCF) - 1112

5. All non-legal mail is opened at this central facility operated by Pigeonly Corrections, screened for contraband, and scanned into a printed copy. The printed copy will be shipped from the central processing facility to the Iowa prison for distribution to the Incarcerated Individual recipients. Originals are temporarily stored and securely destroyed. Originals will not be returned to the sender.

6. Correspondence from financial institutions, religious institutions or groups, educational institutions, periodicals, private businesses, health care facilities, and third-party mail are non-legal and must be processed through Ameelio Connect, Pigeonly or Pelipost.
7. Correspondence from government agencies is considered non-legal but shall be issued to the Incarcerated Individual via the confidential correspondence process.
8. Mail may be held as evidence for hearing or prosecution.
9. Correctional staff shall inspect all non-confidential correspondence and packages, both incoming and outgoing. Each institution shall have guidelines for the amount and type allowed consistent with the security and life safety requirements of the institution.
10. Except as authorized by this policy, no mail lists will be maintained restricting persons from writing to Incarcerated Individuals or Incarcerated Individuals writing to persons in the public.
11. Mail to a particular individual may be restricted for justifiable cause upon written request or by phone of that individual. The Incarcerated Individual shall be informed of the request and ordered to cease all correspondence to that individual.
12. All letters mailed by Incarcerated Individuals shall be left unsealed for inspection of the contents only.
13. Envelopes shall contain letters to the addressee only. The Warden or designee may make exceptions for immediate family members residing at the same address.
14. With the exception of weekends and holidays, incoming and outgoing letters are held for no more than 24 hours and packages are held for no more than 48 hours prior to distribution. Correspondence requiring further security review or translation per the provisions of this policy may be held for up to five days prior to a decision regarding distribution. Additional time for review may be approved by the Warden. In such cases, the Incarcerated Individual shall be notified in writing.
15. Circumstances such as disturbance, natural disaster or similar constraints, may result in a longer time period prior to distribution.
16. Incarcerated Individuals may correspond in a foreign language. Such correspondence may be inspected and translated.

17. Stamped, return-addressed envelopes for all outgoing letters are available for purchase by the Incarcerated Individual through IPI canteen services.
18. The sender's full name shall be signed in full and printed at the end of the letter. The sender's printed name and address shall appear in the upper left-hand corner of the envelope. The Incarcerated Individual's name, number, address, city, state, and zip code shall also appear on the envelope. All Incarcerated Individuals identified as transgender, shall receive incoming mail in their legal name (applies to all external correspondence).
19. No limit shall be placed on the number of letters mailed. Incarcerated Individuals in an indigent status shall be given assistance, which may be recoverable. Assistance limitations shall be set by the institution but shall not be less than two envelopes per week if requested and used by the Incarcerated Individual.
20. Incarcerated Individuals are prohibited mailing the "Bill Me Later" subscription cards available in magazines, as this is seen as entering into a contract.
21. Incarcerated Individuals are prohibited from correspondence that includes confidential information such as social security numbers, bank account numbers, etc. of a third person.

B. Correspondence Guidelines

1. Generally, mail privileges should be no more restrictive than visiting privileges.
2. Using verbally abusive, or threatening language shall not be allowed in personal mail/O-mail.
3. Current IDOC employees and contract staff who are members of the Incarcerated Individual's immediate family may be approved mail privileges with approval by the Warden or designee.
4. Former IDOC employees, and contract staff who left employment in good standing, who are not immediate family may be allowed mail/O-mail/telephone privileges six months after they have left employment with approval by the Warden or designee.
5. Former volunteers, who left volunteer status in good standing may, upon approval of the Warden, be allowed mail/O-mail privileges with Incarcerated Individuals six months following termination of volunteer status.

6. Former volunteers who were removed from volunteer status as a result of misconduct shall not be allowed mail/O-mail privileges unless a familial relationship exists with the Incarcerated Individual. Where a familial relationship exists, the Warden may consider authorization of mail/O-mail privileges. The nature of the misconduct shall be a significant factor in the approval decision.
7. Persons under correctional supervision or detention in the community shall not be allowed to correspond with Incarcerated Individuals; exceptions may be made for immediate family. Institutional procedures shall identify the designated approval authority for these exceptions and shall, at minimum, include provisions for Incarcerated Individual notification, documentation in generic notes, and notification of mailroom personnel. Communication between spouses should be authorized unless there is a justifiable cause such as a valid, documented security concern. Codefendant status alone is not justification to deny communication between spouses.
8. Correspondence between Incarcerated Individuals and former Incarcerated Individuals shall not be permitted for a minimum of six months following discharge from supervision. Exceptions for members of the immediate family may be made. After six months, correspondence between Incarcerated Individuals and former Incarcerated Individuals may be authorized by the Warden when such correspondence is determined to be in the best interests of the Incarcerated Individual and poses no threat to security. All exceptions shall be determined through procedures established at each facility.
9. Mail/O-mail privileges may be restricted or suspended between an Incarcerated Individual and a person for justifiable cause pose a potential risk to the security of the institution. This applies but is not limited to, individuals whose correspondence contains references to Security Threat Group affiliation or activity or correspondence written in code. Where such correspondence is discovered it may be rejected, with written notice of rejection provided to both. Where such correspondence continues after several rejections and notice provided to both that continued correspondence of that nature might result in suspension of the correspondence privileges. The Warden may suspend correspondence privileges for a period of up to one year. The decision of the Warden may be appealed by letter to Assistant Deputy Director of Institution Operations.
10. Incarcerated Individuals may not have any contact, including by mail or through third parties, with victims or the victim's household of their commitment offense or previous offenses. All exception requests shall be considered during classification meetings in accordance with the recommendations of the Office of Victims and Restorative Justice.

11. Sex offenders with minor victims are prohibited from correspondence and photographs with minors. Sex offenders with minor victims shall normally be allowed correspondence privileges with minors in their immediate family unless a victim of the current or previous offense is a member of the immediate family. All exception requests shall be considered during classification meetings in accordance with the recommendations of the Office of Victims and Restorative Justice.
12. Incarcerated Individuals are prohibited from mail and o-mail contact with a person who is the protected party of an active no-contact order. Incarcerated Individuals with a modified order that may allow mail or o-mail contact remain subject to applicable prohibitions of this policy.
13. Persons under the age of 18, who are not immediate family, must provide the institution notarized written permission of the parent or legal guardian before corresponding with an Incarcerated Individual.
14. Misuse of mail shall result in institution discipline and/or be reported to the United States Postal Inspector or other state or federal agencies for action.
15. Additional security procedures may apply to Incarcerated Individuals who are placed in any type of segregation status.
16. Wardens/Designees may make individual exceptions. In cases involving victims, their immediate family, or minor victims of sexual abuse, consultation with the Office of Victims and Restorative Justice is required.
17. It is permissible for Incarcerated Individual to mail manuscripts to another party, so as long as the Incarcerated Individual does not violate departmental rules related to entering into a business contract.

C. Confidential

1. Incarcerated Individuals may write confidential letters to:
 - a. Officers of federal, state or municipal courts (judges, judge's law clerks, prosecuting attorneys, military personnel records, court administrators).
 - b. Federal agencies' chief administrative officer, elected, appointed officials, and including Consulate or Diplomatic Representative of Incarcerated Individual's country of citizenship.

- c. State agencies' chief administrative officer, elected or appointed officials.
 - d. Clerk of Court
 - e. The sentencing State Department of Corrections chief executive officer and deputy directors
 - f. Sentencing State Board of Parole
 - g. Attorney
 - h. The Citizens Aide Office/Ombudsman's Office
 - i. Any additional exception by law or policy
 - j. Civil Rights Commission
2. Envelopes containing confidential correspondence should be marked as "confidential" by the sender.
 3. Mail to or from the Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman shall not be opened for inspection by staff. Incarcerated Individuals are not required to open the mail at the direction of staff that is to/from the Ombudsman office. Mail from the Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman to Incarcerated Individuals will be sent via the state contracted courier service.
 4. Mail from the confidential listing shall be photocopied and the original documents shall either be shredded or returned to the sender at the cost of the Incarcerated Individual or the sender. If the Incarcerated Individual is determined to be indigent, the facility will provide a suitable envelope or package for returning the original documents to the sender by the return address on the original parcel. At no time shall the Incarcerated Individual receive the original documents. The following process shall be maintained when handling incoming confidential mail.
 - a. Confidential mail shall be photocopied utilizing only the designated copier.
 - b. Mail shall be opened in the presence of the Incarcerated Individual identified on the parcel.
 - c. The contents shall be checked to verify the intended recipient and ensure no obvious contraband is present.

- d. The Incarcerated Individual receiving the parcel shall be directed to assist with photocopying the parcel using the designated copier under direct supervision of a staff person.
- e. Upon completion of copying each page, the Incarcerated Individual shall check to verify all original documents have been copied appropriately.
- f. The Incarcerated Individual shall choose to have the original documents either sent out at their expense or destroyed by shredding in the presence of the Incarcerated Individual. If the Incarcerated Individual is determined to be indigent, the facility will provide a suitable envelope or package for returning the original documents to the sender by the return address on the original parcel.
- g. The return parcel shall be appropriately addressed and verified by the Incarcerated Individual.
- h. The original documents shall be placed into the return parcel by the Incarcerated Individual and the parcel shall be sealed by the Incarcerated Individual.
- i. Staff shall place the sealed parcel in the mailroom for processing and the return to the original sender.
- j. All paperwork returning to the facility with an Incarcerated Individual who has been out of the facility for a court appearance, shall also be copied. No original documents shall be allowed to be in the possession of the returning Incarcerated Individual. This also includes all blank paper if present.
- k. The copying process shall be completed as previously described.
- l. The Incarcerated Individual shall choose to have the original documents either sent out at their expense or destroyed by shredding. If the Incarcerated Individual is determined to be indigent, the facility will provide a suitable envelope or package for returning the original documents to the sender by the return address on the original parcel.
- m. Documents that are chosen to be sent out shall be placed in an appropriate parcel and sealed. The parcel shall be addressed by the Incarcerated Individual.
- n. Documents that the Incarcerated Individual has determined to be destroyed shall be placed into a designated shredder by the Incarcerated Individual.

- o. Processing of all confidential mail shall be completed under the direct supervision of staff and shall be documented with the use of a body camera.
 - p. Mail to/from the Office of Citizens' Aide/Ombudsman does not get opened by staff.
- 5. Confidential mail may not be read without order of the court. Staff may search outgoing confidential mail for contraband in the presence of the Incarcerated Individual and request the Incarcerated Individual to seal the envelope in their presence after the search.
- 6. Attorneys may not send in flash drives/thumb drives to Incarcerated Individuals.
- 7. All correspondence from private investigators, hired by the Incarcerated Individual or attorney of record, shall only be accepted as confidential if coming from the attorney of record's office.

D. Non-Confidential Incoming Mail

Correctional staff shall inspect all non-confidential correspondence and packages. To facilitate institutional inspection of first-class mail, enclosures other than the written correspondence shall be limited to the following:

- 1. Photographs including either personal or commercially produced, snapshots or digital photos are acceptable and must adhere to these standards: Female breasts, as well as genitalia and buttocks of both males and females, must be substantially obscured, or substantially covered by clothing (including swimwear or undergarments) or any other object, which is not considered pornographic or obscene. Lewd display of genitalia by males or females, clothed or unclothed, is not allowed. Single sheets of multiple photographs, thumbnail or other sizes, must adhere to these standards. Additional restrictions may apply for treatment purposes.
- 2. Multiple copies of the same, or like same, photograph are not allowed. Exceptions may be made for photos of the Incarcerated Individual (himself/herself) and with approval of the Warden or designee.
- 3. Photographs that contain security threat group (STG) hand gestures, or other identified STG symbolism, are not allowed. This includes photos that contain attempts at covering up the STG hand gestures such as with emoji's or other like items.

4. Clippings from authorized published material.
5. Copies of Internet material, unless deemed a security risk/threat. Each institution shall have guidelines for the amount and type allowed consistent with the security and life safety requirements of institution.
6. Attachments/enclosures sent in with mail may be limited to ten pages or pictures.
7. Each institution shall have written procedures for the forwarding of first-class letters and packages after an Incarcerated Individual's transfer or release.
8. In the event incoming mail is rejected for violating this policy, the sender will be notified by mail or email of the rejection and the reason for rejection. The sender may protest the decision in writing to the warden within 10 days of the mailing or emailing of the notice to the sender.

E. Non-Confidential Outgoing Mail

1. All outgoing mail must be sent directly to the individual that the correspondence is written to using the individual's full name.
2. All items using parcel post outgoing mail shall be packed and sealed by staff.
3. All outgoing mail shall only contain a return address, which includes the Incarcerated Individual's printed full name and number as well as the institution address and institution specific number designated by Pigeonly Corrections. All Incarcerated Individuals identified as transgender may send out mail in their preferred name.
4. At the directive of staff, Incarcerated Individuals shall discontinue correspondence with individuals who have expressed in writing or by phone the desire not to receive additional correspondence from a particular Incarcerated Individual.
5. Incarcerated Individuals shall be denied mail privileges with persons for justifiable cause that might present a risk to the order and security of the institution.

F. O-Mail

1. O-mail for Incarcerated Individuals shall be governed by institutional procedures. By its very nature, O-Mail is not confidential. All incoming and outgoing O-mail may be inspected and read.
2. Incarcerated Individual family and friends shall be responsible for signing up on the corrlinks internet site to enroll in the O-mail system: <http://www.corrlinks.com>.
3. O-mail is limited to 14000 characters, approximately two pages and no attachments per message.
4. There is a cost for sending O-mail, which shall be the responsibility of the sender.
5. The guidelines outlined in this policy apply to electronic mail.

G. Internal Revenue Service – “Blue Bag Program”

1. Institutions shall secure any mail designated specifically for the IRS. A “blue bag” will be set up for each facility.
2. Mail designated specifically for the IRS shall be mailed directly to the IRS office where it will be reviewed and processed. The institution will incur postage. If fraud or illegal activity is discovered, the postage cost will be reimbursed by the Incarcerated Individual through the institutional discipline process.

H. Disposition of Contraband

1. Each institution shall develop procedures regarding the process whereby Incarcerated Individuals resolve correspondence issues. The institution may develop an internal appeal process or use the statewide grievance process.
2. Each institution shall have written procedures for disposition of contraband.
3. When mail is rejected, the mail shall be returned to the sender with postage costs assessed to the Incarcerated Individual. When mail includes items of contraband which are not illegal to possess under the law, the correspondence (if otherwise in accordance with this policy) may be forwarded to the Incarcerated Individual.

Replaces IN-V-64

Originated: Oct. 2006. Revised: Dec. 2006, March 2008, Nov. 2008, Feb. 2009, April 2009, May 2009, Aug. 2009, April 2010, Jan. 2011, April 2012, Sept. 2013, Nov. 2013, Oct. 2014, Dec. 2014, April 2016, May 2017, Dec. 2017, Nov. 2018, Jan. 2020, March 2020, Feb. 2021, May 2021, July 2021, Aug. 2021, Sept. 2021, Nov. 2021, June 2022, July 2022, Aug. 2022, Oct. 2022, July 2023, June 2024, July 2024, June 2025.

Reviewed: May 1, 2026.

Such contraband items may, at the direction of the Incarcerated Individual, be returned to the sender with postage costs assessed to the Incarcerated Individual, destroyed, or donated (as appropriate) to a charitable organization designated by the Warden or designee.

Replaces IN-V-64

Originated: Oct. 2006. Revised: Dec. 2006, March 2008, Nov. 2008, Feb. 2009, April 2009, May 2009, Aug. 2009, April 2010, Jan. 2011, April 2012, Sept. 2013, Nov. 2013, Oct. 2014, Dec. 2014, April 2016, May 2017, Dec. 2017, Nov. 2018, Jan. 2020, March 2020, Feb. 2021, May 2021, July 2021, Aug. 2021, Sept. 2021, Nov. 2021, June 2022, July 2022, Aug. 2022, Oct. 2022, July 2023, June 2024, July 2024, June 2025.

Reviewed: May 1, 2026.