



# Virginia Department of Corrections

## Inmate Management and Programs

### Operating Procedure 803.4

#### *Central Mail Distribution Center*

**Authority:**

Directive 803, *Inmate and CCAP  
Probationer/Parolee Correspondence*

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5-ACI-7D-06, 5-ACI-7D-08, 5-ACI-7D-09;  
4-ACRS-6A-07, 4-ACRS-6A-08; 2-CO-5D-01

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**REVIEW**

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

**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

**Canine Team** - The combination of a Canine Officer and a canine, trained and certified as a team in one of the following areas: Contraband Detection, Mantrailing, Narcotic Detection, or Patrol.

**Central Mail Distribution Center** - A DOC unit under the office of the Security Operations and Emergency Preparedness Administrator 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 from a vendor, commercial photographs, and other publications before these items are forwarded to a facility for issuance to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.

**Commercially Distributed Photographs** - Printed images that are produced for public distribution and are purchased through a vendor that provides mail order service to the public.

**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.

**Ion Scanner** - A device that detects trace amounts of illegal substances.

**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.

**Narcotic Detection Canine Team** - A canine team trained for the detection of narcotic odor.

**Office of Law Enforcement Services (OLES)** - DOC sworn law enforcement staff conducting criminal and administrative investigations.

**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.

**Security X-Ray Screening Unit** - A radiographic imaging system used to detect contraband concealed in packages and other items



## PURPOSE

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

## PROCEDURE

- I. Processing Legal Correspondence (5-ACI-7D-01; 4-ACRS-6A-07; 2-CO-5D-01)
  - A. Individuals must send inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee legal correspondence to the Central Mail Distribution Center (3521 Woods Way, State Farm, Virginia 23160) for screening and inspection, prior to delivery to the facility.
    1. Facility mailroom employees are responsible for:
      - a. Returning all legal correspondence received at the facility that was not first mailed to the Central Mail Distribution Center for screening and inspection.
      - b. Notifying the sender that the correspondence and any enclosed documents must be sent to the VADOC Centralized Mail Distribution Center and not the facility.
      - c. Delivering legal correspondence and legal documents received from the Attorney General's Office to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.
      - d. Delivering legal correspondence and legal documents received from a Judge or a Clerk of the Court to the inmate. Staff should contact the clerk's office when they need to verify the sender or are otherwise in doubt about the legal correspondence.
    2. Facility mailroom employees must prepare a *Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence* 803\_F2 and provide the sender and the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee with a copy of the notice when legal correspondence must be returned to the sender.
  - B. Initial Check-in Process
    1. All legal correspondence must be received in the screening area where it will be screened by a Narcotic Detection Canine Team and scanned using a security X-ray screening unit, ion scanner or any other reliable DOC approved detection equipment.
    2. Central Mail Distribution Center employees will conduct a preliminary review to confirm the validity of the legal correspondence prior to forwarding the legal correspondence to the Central Mail Distribution Center's processing area for labeling and tracking. Central Mail Distribution Center employees may not:
      - a. Open an inmate's or CCAP probationer's/parolee's legal correspondence under any circumstances.
      - b. Reject or return legal correspondence to the sender without approval from the Central Mailroom Distribution Supervisor. 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. Once legal correspondence is screened, and if no contraband is detected, Central Mail Distribution Center employees 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.

C. Screening and Inspection (5-ACI-7D-08; 2-CO-5D-01)

1. If the Narcotic Detection Canine Team, security X-ray screening unit, ion scanner, or other reliable detection device indicates the presence of contraband, an employee 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. The employee must:
    - i. verify the address is legitimate;
    - ii. contact the law office to confirm the legal correspondence with the attorney;
    - iii. verify the attorney's bar number if provided on the outside of the envelope; and
    - iv. document the results of the verification in the Central Mail Distribution Center's electronic log system.
  - b. A security employee will contact the facility and arrange for a polycom using the telejustice system.
    - i. The security employee 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, the security employee 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, the security employee must notify the Office of Law Enforcement Services (OLES) who will arrange for a Canine Officer or OLES Special Agent to pick-up and hand deliver the evidence to the inmate's or CCAP probationer's/parolee's assigned facility to maintain the integrity of the chain of custody process.
  - d. When contraband is found, a Central Mail Distribution Center employee 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 compromises an investigation. (5-ACI-7D-05; 4-ACRS-6A-08)
  - e. Central Mail Distribution Center employees must not reject legal correspondence without approval of the Central Mailroom Distribution Supervisor.
2. When contraband is not detected, a Central Mail Distribution Center employee will forward the unopened legal correspondence to the center's "all-clear area" where the legal correspondence will be sent by USPS priority express delivery daily to the appropriate facilities for processing and delivery to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee in accordance with Operating Procedure 803.1, *Inmate and CCAP Probationer/Parolee Correspondence*. (5-ACI-7D-09)

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

- A. The following publications and inmate or 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. Books, newspapers, and magazines donated to the facility for inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee access.
  2. Books, newspapers, magazines, and any other publications purchased by the inmate, CCAP probationer/parolee, or a third party.
  3. Religious correspondence and publications purchased or donated.
  4. Photobooks, personal photographs purchased from a vendor, and commercial photographs.



- B. 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.
- C. Facility employees will confiscate and dispose of any of the items below received at the facility that were not screened and inspected at the Central Mail Distribution Center before delivery to the facility:
1. Books.
  2. Newspapers.
  3. Magazines.
  4. Photobooks.
  5. Personal Photographs (from a vendor).
  6. Commercial Photographs (purchased by the inmate, CCAP probationer/parolee, or a third party for delivery to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee).
  7. Religious Correspondence and Publications.
- D. A Central Mail Distribution Center employee will pick-up all inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee publications and correspondence from the post office daily or will receive these items directly from the United Parcel Service (UPS) and FedEx.
- E. Security employees will ensure a Narcotic Detection Canine Team inspects the items and will scan the items using a security x-ray screening unit.
1. When no contraband is detected, the security employee will forward the item for tracking by a Central Mail Distribution Center employee who will:
    - a. Enter the inmate's or CCAP probationer's/parolee's name and DOC number in the tracking software using a handheld device to generate a tracking number and barcode.
    - b. Take a photo of the package to document the Central Mail Distribution Center physically received the item.
  2. When contraband is detected:
    - a. Central Mail Distribution Center employees will enter the information into the tracking software.
    - b. Security employees will maintain custody of the item by securing it as evidence; see Operating Procedure 030.1, *Evidence Collection and Preservation*, for guidance on the collection, documentation, control and preservation of evidence.
  3. The tracking system, including photos taken, allows for verification of the item's receipt, journey and physical status at different points in the process from the Central Mail Distribution Center to the facility.
  4. Central Mail Distribution Center employees will return the following mail to the post office as "Return to Sender":
    - a. Mail with incomplete identifying information.
      - i. Inmate and CCAP probationer/parolee mail should have the inmate's full name and DOC number.
      - ii. A reasonable attempt will be made to determine which inmate is the intended recipient, however if unsuccessful, the item will be returned to the sender.
    - b. Packages received from a private residence, regardless of the sender.
- F. Once the tracking label is attached to the item, security employees will ensure that the item is physically searched.
1. When no contraband is detected during the search, the item will be packaged for delivery to the facility.
  2. When contraband is detected during the search:

- a. A Central Mail Distribution Center employee will enter the information into the tracking software.
  - b. Security employees 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.
- G. Central Mail Distribution Center employees will dispose of packages sent to the Central Mail Distribution Center upon receipt when the package contains items unauthorized for possession by an inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee or not obtained in accordance with operating procedures.
1. CMDC staff will document the receipt of the package and notate that the package was disposed of.
  2. The inmate will be notified of this disposal via *Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence 803\_F2*.
- H. At least once per week, employees will box the items and ship them using the tracking software, to the appropriate facility for issuance to the inmate or CCAP probationer/parolee.
- I. Once the publication or correspondence is received at the facility, facility employees must:
1. Scan each tracking label into the tracking software to update the location of the items as received.
  2. Issue the item 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 CCAP Probationer/Parolee Correspondence*  
Operating Procedure 803.2, *Publications, Commercially Distributed Photographs, and Media Files*

## ATTACHMENTS

None

## FORM CITATIONS

*Notice of Unauthorized Correspondence 803\_F2*

