

California Department of Corrections Procedures

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Mail and Telephone Calls

In addition to visiting, there are two other ways for family and friends to remain connected to prisoners during incarceration: mail and telephone calls.

A. Mail

Prisoners are allowed to receive mail from anyone other than an incarcerated person or one released from prison within the last year. To receive mail from another prisoner or those recently released, the prisoner must seek the Warden's approval. There is no limitation on the number of people who may correspond with the prisoner or the number of mail items a prisoner may receive. The only restriction on content of written communication is that it may not contain anything that is a threat or potential threat to another (including discussion of a future criminal act, discussion of an escape, discussion of disrupting the security of the prison, coded messages, maps depicting the area in which the prison is located, gang-related comments or photographs, or photographs of nudity or sexual conduct).

All mail sent to or from prisoners is inspected to the extent necessary to ensure that there is nothing unacceptable in the envelope and to ensure that the content does not contain anything that presents a danger or threat of danger to any person. As a practical matter, that means that any mail sent to the prisoner is opened by mailroom staff, which checks the envelope for enclosures and quickly examines the written content, although it may be more thoroughly reviewed at any time.

IMPORTANT: Correspondents may send prisoners letters (not more than 10 pages in one envelope), cards (without embellishments such as stickers or glitter), photographs (limited to 10 per envelope and not larger than 8" x 10"), drawings, children's schoolwork, articles cut from newspapers or magazines, etc. Correspondents may not send the following directly to a prisoner: books, magazines, newspapers, or packages; such matters must be sent through approved vendors and the prisoner can advise his/her family and friends about that procedure.

All mail should be addressed to the prisoner with his/her full name, his/her CDCR number, his/her housing, and the address of the prison. Most prisons have a post office box number to which prisoner mail is to be sent. The address for prisoner mail at the

prison you are going to send mail to can be obtained on the CDCR website or by calling the prison.

You may enclose a money order or check in an envelope sent to a prisoner. Mailroom staff will take the money order or check out when the mail is inspected and send it to trust accounts, where it will be credited to the prisoner's account. Money may also be sent to a prisoner by credit card through an approved telephone vendor (i.e., Western Union, J-Pay), but there is a charge for that procedure.

The prisons try to deliver mail to a prisoner within seven days of its arrival at the prison, but the amount of mail, turnover of mailroom staff, and mailroom vacancies may cause additional delays. Overnight or express mail will arrive at the institution more quickly, but will not be searched, reviewed, or delivered any differently than first class mail. Correspondents can help prevent unnecessary delay in the mail by ensuring the address is clear and complete, and that the mail contains no unauthorized material. Legal mail will be delivered on an expedited schedule.