



POLICY & PROCEDURE:	17.01
UNIT:	Detention and Corrections
CHAPTER:	Inmate Communication, Mail, and Visiting
SUBJECT:	Inmate Correspondence and Mail Regulations
ISSUED DATE:	July 1, 1989
REVISION DATE:	December 9, 2025
RELATED ORDERS:	BSCC Title 15 Section 1063 P&P 8.19 , 8.20 GO 8.17
ATTACHMENTS:	Return to Sender Notice CP-52 Mail Log

PURPOSE: To set standards for timely delivery and processing of inmate mail in accordance with The Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC) Title 15 Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities, Section 1063. To also establish restrictions to guard against avenues that can be utilized by inmates to communicate and coordinate escape plans, assaults, and other violent acts, or to promote gang affiliation (Turner v. Safely [1987] 1075 S CT 2254).

POLICY: All mail sent to and from inmates at the Santa Rita Jail (SRJ) that does not violate facility rules, present security concerns, or necessitate withholding due to an ongoing criminal investigation shall be delivered to addressees without undue delay. Mail will be delivered in accordance with this policy and The BSCC Title 15 Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities.

DEFINITIONS:

PRIVILEGED CORRESPONDENCE: Mail between an inmate and attorney(s), legal aid services, other agencies providing legal services to inmates, or para-professionals having a bona fide association with such agencies, attorneys, judges, and clerks of federal, state and local courts, or public officials and their authorized representatives acting in their official capacities, and the Facility Commanding Officer or higher ranking officer.

CONTRABAND: Any item or article in the possession of an inmate, or found within the facility, that has not been issued, purchased in the Commissary, or approved by the Facility Commanding Officer. Additionally, all correspondence sent to SRJ which meets one or more of the criteria outlined on the Alameda County Sheriff's Office Santa Rita Jail "Return to Sender" Notice (Form MR-04) is considered contraband, and the entirety of that correspondence will be returned to the sender, if not retained by Santa Rita Jail as evidence.

JAIL MAIL: Correspondence between inmates in the same facility that does not require postage, prohibited at SRJ unless authorized by the Facility Commanding Officer.

FOREIGN NATIONAL: Any person residing in the United States who is not a citizen.

DIPLOMATIC REPRESENTATIVE: An official representative of a government who conducts relations with another individual, official or government.

LEGAL MAIL: Correspondence between an inmate and his/her attorney, the court, or other legal agency.

PROCEDURE:

A. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1. Body worn camera shall be activated when accepting/receiving legal mail or privileged correspondence from inmates, and when delivering any type of mail, correspondence or publication to inmates in accordance with 8.17 GO.
2. Policy and procedure governing inmate correspondence will be made available to inmates via the Inmate Rules and Regulations Handbook and shall be reviewed and updated as necessary. Policy and procedure governing inmate correspondence will be made available to the public on the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO) website and will be reviewed annually and updated as necessary.
3. All inmates regardless of classification can write and receive correspondence in the same manner, in accordance with this policy.
4. There is no limit on the volume of mail an inmate may send or receive. Limits may be placed on the content within the correspondence consistent with a legitimate penological interest for facility safety and security in accordance with BSCC Title 15 standards (refer to Alameda County Sheriff's Office Santa Rita Jail "Return to Sender" Notice Form MR-04 and the "Prohibited Mail" section of this policy for specific guidelines about correspondence not accepted into SRJ).
5. The number of correspondents for an inmate is unlimited, except when there is reasonable belief that limitation is necessary to protect public safety or facility order and security. Limits may be placed on the use of mail for conducting an inmate business.
6. Mail is to be sent and received through regular channels only through the facility. Under no circumstances will an agency member or contract employee accept or process/send incoming or outgoing mail for an inmate except as outlined within this policy.
7. Inmate mail, both incoming and outgoing, may be opened and inspected for contraband, but will not be censored. Mail is read, and/or rejected, when based on legitimate facility penological interests of order and security, with the exception of legal mail (see legal mail section for further).
8. Incoming and outgoing mail will be processed for delivery without undue delay except for cause when the mail violates facility rules, presents security concerns, or necessitates withholding due to an ongoing criminal investigation. Mail will be delivered Monday-Friday excluding holidays, barring any facility emergency which would supersede mail delivery.
9. Foreign Nationals in custody may write to the diplomatic representative of their country of origin. Foreign Nationals needing assistance contacting their diplomatic

representative will need to contact Re-Entry and Support Services.

B. INCOMING MAIL

1. Mail received for inmates at SRJ must have the following information on the face of the envelope. Incoming mail that does not contain this information on the face of the envelope will be returned to sender unopened, and will not necessitate a "Return to Sender" notice to the inmate.
 - a. The inmate's last name
 - b. The inmate's first name or initial
 - c. The inmate's Person File Number (PFN) (Please note: correspondence with incorrect PFN will be returned to sender unopened)
 - d. Name and address of sender
2. Any mail received in a padded envelope or cardboard box, or an envelope or cardboard box from a shipping service (i.e. FedEx, UPS, Amazon, etc.) will be removed and transferred to a plain paper envelope prior to delivery to the inmate to maintain safety and security of the facility.
3. When contraband is found which is not otherwise illegal, the entire contents of that correspondence will be returned to the sender in the original envelope or package and stamped "unacceptable contents." Prior to re-sealing the envelope or package, a Return to Sender notice will be completed advising the sender of the reason the item is being returned. A copy of the notice will be sent to the inmate and a copy will be filed.
4. If illegal contraband is found in incoming mail, the SRJ Investigations Unit Sergeant and the Classification Unit Sergeant will be notified. The SRJ Investigations Unit will take possession of the illegal contraband and perform any needed testing, evidence packaging and processing, and complete any investigative reports as needed.
 - a. If mail room staff identify a package or mail item that seems suspicious, the package shall not be opened and shall be set aside to limit any potential exposure to harmful substances. The mail room staff shall notify the SRJ Investigations Unit Sergeant and the Classification Unit Sergeant for disposition of the package or mail item.
5. Money orders and cashier's checks are the only form of money accepted through the mail. Personal checks will be returned to sender. Any check sent to an inmate for endorsement must be sent to the Re-Entry and Support Services Unit for approval and facilitation of signature.
 - a. Money orders and cashier's checks must be made out to the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (or ACSO, or Alameda County S.O.) and must have the inmate's name and PFN on the face of the money order or cashier's check.
 - b. Money orders and cashier's checks that have only first initials instead of a first name will be accepted if there is a legible PFN on the face of the money order or cashier's check.

- c. A mailroom clerk will verify the inmate's name and PFN and post the amount of the money order or cashier's check to the inmate's account via the ATIMS Jail Management System.
 - d. The automated system will print a 3-part cash voucher. The original will be delivered to the inmate with their mail, and the voucher will be forwarded with the money order/cashier's check to the Accounting Office for processing. No checks are to be cashed at SRJ.
6. Newspapers can be mailed to inmates directly, and must be received from the United States Postal Service.
7. Books and magazines can be mailed to inmates at SRJ at a limit of six total, per day, directly from the publisher or online bookstore. Refer to the "Prohibited Mail" section of this policy for reasons books and magazines may be rejected and returned to sender.
- a. When books or magazines are properly mailed and accepted into the facility, the mailroom clerk will complete an "Inmate Book and Magazine Receipt" with the following information:
 - i. Inmate's name and PFN
 - ii. Name of the publisher/city/shipped by
 - iii. Total number of books/magazines
 - iv. Book/magazine titles
 - v. Inmate's signature (inmate must sign at the time of delivery)
 - vi. Corpus ID of employee delivering the book(s)/magazines(s)
 - b. Book/magazine receipts signed by the inmate must be returned to the mailroom.
8. Any mail sent to an inmate who has been transferred to another facility or released will be returned to sender.
9. Mail that is not deliverable to the addressee and had no return address on the envelope will be returned to the United States Postal Service for transmittal to the Dead Letter Office.

C. PROHIBITED MAIL:

- 1. Mail exceeding 8-1/2" x 14" is prohibited and will be returned to the sender.
- 2. Books and magazines (limit of six total, per day) will be accepted if mailed directly from the publisher or online bookstore. The online bookstore must have a legitimate website that is verifiable and allows consumers to order directly. Any website that re-directs to another website or utilizes a third-party seller for purchase and/or delivery, is not acceptable. Packages must be professionally labeled and recognized as an online bookstore. Hardbound books are not acceptable. Books and other publications may be rejected if they contain writings or photographs that promote violence or criminal activity.
- 3. Sexually explicit or obscene material including magazines, photographs, or any other pornographic material which includes but is not limited to depiction of partial or full body

nudity of any kind, penetration of the vagina or anus, contact between the mouth and genitals, bestiality, sadomasochism, or any bodily excretory function.

- a. Mail containing sexually explicit or obscene drawings on the mailing envelope and/or on the contents within.
4. Mail, writings, books, magazines, or any other publication that contains instructions for manufacturing explosives, weapons, drugs, or other unlawful substances or materials.
5. Mail, writings, books, magazines, or any other publication that advocates, encourages, depicts, or condones violence, the use of weapons, gang related activities, or other conduct that jeopardizes jail security.
6. Mail, writings, books, magazines, or any other publication that advocates racial, religious, or national hatred or which otherwise contains matter of a character tending to incite murder, arson, riot, or any other form of violence which jeopardizes jail security.
7. Photographs which are altered or blacked out in any manner, exceed 4"x6", exceed maximum limit (10 photos per correspondence, per day)
8. Inmate to inmate correspondence unless approved by the SRJ Operations Captain. This includes mail from other correctional facilities. (Refer to the "Approved Inmate Correspondence" section of this policy for further information)
9. Envelopes, stamps, and writing materials for inmate usage.
10. Plastic or laminated items, stickers, address labels, string, tape, paste, glitter, or glued surfaces
11. Homemade cards, and store bought musical cards
12. Letters/drawings written in crayon, liquid gel pens, or marker
13. Letters/drawings/correspondence on anything other than paper (i.e. cardboard, cloth, etc.)
14. Items which have stains or other bio-hazards such as lip gloss, cologne/perfume
15. Wire bound items, coins, metal, rosary, jewelry
16. Questionable materials will be referred to the Classification Unit sergeant and a decision will be rendered as to their suitability for distribution to the inmate.
17. All prohibited mail that does not contain illegal contraband will be returned to the sender and a "Return to Sender" notice will be generated for both the sender and the inmate the mail/correspondence/publication was intended to be delivered to.

D. OUTGOING MAIL

1. Outgoing mail may be sealed by an inmate prior to collection by jail staff, with the exception of books and magazines. Books to be mailed out from inmates must be sent

to the mailroom, unsealed for inspection before mailing.

2. Outgoing United States Postal Service mail must have a name, PFN and return address. If mail is returned to SRJ and it does not have a return name/PFN, it will be destroyed.
3. All outgoing mail is subject to being opened and read by staff preserve jail security.
4. Mail containing sexually explicit or obscene drawings on the mailing envelope and/or on the contents within will be destroyed.

E. PRIVILEGED CORRESPONDENCE AND LEGAL MAIL (OUTGOING MAIL)

1. Outgoing correspondence to public officials, judges, attorneys, elected officials, the Attorney General, probation or parole officers, jail officials, the Sheriff, ***Tri-Valley Haven***, can be sealed before mailing under the following conditions:
 - a. The inmate sending the correspondence must notify a housing unit deputy of their intention to send a letter to a public official ***or Tri-Valley Haven*** prior to sealing the letter. The deputy shall make a cursory visual inspection, without reading any of the contents. The deputy must be able to verify the inmate's name and PFN by their inmate identification card.
 - b. The housing unit deputy will verify the inmate's name and PFN shown on the return address portion match that of the inmate attempting to mail the correspondence, and that the word "Confidential" appears on the face of the envelope/packet. Once this is completed, the item is to be sealed in the presence of the deputy.
 - c. The deputy will initial and write his/her badge number on the envelope/packet by the word "Confidential" and then place the letter/packet in the mail bag containing the outgoing mail for delivery.
 - d. If "Confidential" mail is sent to the mailroom without a deputy's initials and badge number, it will be returned to the housing unit so the above outlined process can be followed.
2. All inmates may write to the Sheriff, ***jail officials, or Tri-Valley Haven***. This mail will not require postage.
3. Outgoing legal mail and privileged correspondence as defined in this policy will be tracked by the mailroom for a period of two years.

F. DELIVERY OF LEGAL MAIL- (INCOMING)

1. The housing unit deputy will show the inmate that the legal mail is sealed. Once verified, the inmate will sign the envelope in the space provided.
2. The housing unit deputy will write his/her name, badge number and date in the space

provided.

3. The housing unit deputy will open and inspect legal mail in the inmate's presence.
4. If no contraband is found, the contents of the envelope will be surrendered to the inmate and the envelope will be returned to the mailroom, via the outgoing mail, where it will be kept on file for until the inmate is released or transferred from SRJ. At that time, the envelope may be destroyed via confidential shredding.
5. If any contraband is found, the housing unit deputy will confiscate the entire contents of the envelope/package and deliver it to the Classification Unit sergeant with a memorandum outlining the reason for confiscation. The Classification Unit sergeant will notify the Investigations Unit lieutenant, the Litigation Unit lieutenant, and the Visiting unit sergeant for informational purposes and continuity of operations.
6. Incoming legal mail will be tracked by the mailroom for a period of two years.

7. Tri-Valley Haven Legal Correspondence

a. All incoming and outgoing mail to or from Tri-Valley Haven shall be treated as confidential legal correspondence.

b. Confidential Handling

- i. Mail to or from Tri-Valley Haven shall not be read, copied, or reviewed by staff.***
- ii. If a contraband inspection is required, the envelope may be opened only in the inmate's presence, and the contents shall not be reviewed.***

c. Legal Mail List

- i. Tri-Valley Haven and its full mailing address shall be added to the Legal Mail List.***
- ii. Mailroom staff are responsible for ensuring the list remains current and accessible to all staff handling inmate mail.***

d. Legal Mail Log:

- i. Each Tri-Valley Haven mail item (incoming or outgoing) shall be logged by the mailroom staff.***

e. Mailing Address:

***Tri-Valley Haven
3663 Pacific Avenue***

Livermore, CA 94551

- f. This procedure ensures compliance with confidentiality and victim-advocate communication standards under PREA (25 C.F.R. §115.51 and §115.53) and facility mail policy.***

G. INDIGENT INMATE CORRESPONDENCE

1. Inmates who are without funds (indigent) shall be permitted four postage paid envelopes and eight sheets of paper each week to permit correspondence with family members and friends.
2. Inmates who are indigent shall be permitted unlimited number of postage paid envelopes and sheets of paper for correspondence with their attorney and the courts.
 - a. Outgoing legal mail sent by inmates who are indigent will be processed for mailing once received in the mailroom. The mailroom clerk will verify the inmate is without funds, and then will ensure proper postage is present sufficient to mail the correspondence. If additional postage is needed to mail the legal mail, it will be added and sent out, so as not to delay it. Quarterly, the mailroom will provide the Re-Entry and Support Services sergeant with a record of funds spent on indigent legal mail postage for the previous quarter so they may be reimbursed from the inmate welfare fund.
3. Indigent inmates need to place their order for correspondence materials through commissary at no charge.

H. APPROVED INMATE CORRESPONDENCE

1. Inmates are generally prohibited from corresponding with any inmate housed at SRJ or at any other local, state, or federal correctional institution operated outside of Alameda County Jail facilities.
2. Under limited circumstances, a legitimate reason may exist where it is in the best interest of jail operations and the inmate to allow correspondence with another inmate. Correspondence of this nature must be approved by the Operations Captain as follows:
 - a. Inmates are allowed to submit a request form asking to correspond with another inmate. The inmate's request must include a legitimate reason for corresponding. The written request shall be submitted to the Operations Captain via the Classification Unit.
 - b. The Classification Unit will determine if any circumstances exist that indicate that the inmate's correspondence would be a security threat to the jail or the public. The Classification Unit may involve the SRJ Investigations Unit in making that determination, if warranted. The inmate's correspondence request form and the Classification Unit's recommendation are to be forwarded to the Operations Captain for consideration and disposition in a timely manner.

- c. The Facility Commanding Officer Operations Captain is responsible for either approving or denying all requests for inmate to inmate correspondence. The following criteria are considered legitimate reasons to allow correspondence between inmates:
 - i. Immediate family members who are in custody
 - ii. Family emergencies and exigent circumstances
 - iii. Other legitimate reasons at the Operations Captain's discretion
 - d. Correspondence between inmates housed at different facilities requires the approval of the commanding officer at both facilities. This includes facilities outside Alameda County Jail Facilities. The commanding officer of the facility where the inmate is initiating the correspondence request is responsible for obtaining the permission of the other facility commanding officer.
 - e. Inmate to inmate correspondence approved by the Operations Captain shall be reviewed and processed through the Classification Unit. The Classification Unit will inform the mailroom of any approved inmate to inmate correspondence.
 - f. All non-approved jail mail shall be scanned and saved in a digital shared folder by month/year. Scanned copies of jail mail should be sent to the Classification Unit Sergeant and the Santa Rita Jail Investigations Unit Sergeant for review. The original mail can be discarded after it is scanned unless it is determined to be of evidentiary value. If such a determination is made it shall be processed as evidence.
- I. DELIVERY OF MAIL TO THE FACILITY AND DELIVERY OF MAIL FROM THE MAILROOM TO THE HOUSING UNIT
- 1. Mail will be delivered to SRJ by the United States Postal Service Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. Outgoing mail will be delivered to CP-52 by 1130 hours daily and will be given to the United States Postal Service for mailing when they arrive for mail delivery.
 - a. Mail received by the agency member assigned to CP-52 (both incoming and outgoing) will be logged on the CP-52 Mail Log. The mail log will be maintained by month and will be forwarded to the Classification Unit Sergeant for review and filing.
 - 2. Mailroom clerks will inspect and sort incoming mail, then load the mailbags for each housing unit with the mail that has been determined acceptable for delivery. The mailbags will be locked prior to delivery to the housing units.
 - 3. The housing unit sheriff's technician will deliver the mailbag containing all the outgoing inmate mail to the 121(a) closets located outside of each housing unit daily by 1230 hours. When mailbags are not in the 121(a) closets for pickup by mailroom staff, the housing unit staff shall deliver the mailbag to the mailroom the following day by 1000 hours. The 121(a) closet is for mailbag pickup and delivery only. Each mailbag should contain only outgoing United States Postal Service inmate mail, not internal facility mail, QIC codes, message requests or other miscellaneous documents used within the facility.

4. Mailroom staff will pick up and deliver mailbags to and from the 121(a) closet by 1400 hours Monday through Friday excluding holidays.

J. DELIVERY OF REGULAR (NON-PRIVELEGED, NON-LEGAL) MAIL TO THE INMATE

1. Housing unit deputies will make every effort to deliver mail to inmates prior to 2300 hours Monday through Friday, excluding holidays, barring any facility emergency which would supersede mail delivery.
2. Delay in mail delivery may occur if the mail (incoming or outgoing) violates facility rules, presents security concerns, or necessitates withholding due to an ongoing criminal investigation.