



Charleston County Sheriff's Office Policy and Procedures Manual

Sheriff Carl Ritchie

18-21

Inmate Correspondence

- ☐ New
- ☒ Revised
- ☒ Reviewed

ACA Standards Reference: 2E-18; 5B-05, 06, 07, 08, 09, 10, 19; 6A-02, 04
CALEA Standards Reference:
NCCHC Standards Reference:
SCLEA Standards Reference:
SC Minimum Standards: 2032; 2032(a); 2032(d)

This policy dated 1/29/2025 replaces prior policies cited above and supersedes all previously issued directives.

I. Purpose:

To describe the procedures that will be used by the Charleston County Sheriff's Office to process inmate mail and packages at the Detention Center.

II. Policy:

The facility will permit inmates to correspond with family, friends, officials, and other significant community contacts, with a minimum of interference. The facility will not place limits on the volume of lawful mail an inmate may send or receive. Limitations may be imposed only when clear and convincing evidence exists to justify such limitations for reasons of public safety, or facility safety and security. Guidelines for inmate correspondence shall adhere to existing laws and rules governing the management of mail. (REF: SC Min. 2032, 5-ALDF-5B-05)

III. Definitions:

A. For purposes of this procedure, the word "deputy" applies to all agency employees with a certification classification of Class I, Class II, Class III, or Reserve Deputy, as defined by the South Carolina Criminal Justice Academy.

The following terms are used interchangeably; however, they carry guidance to specific employees based on the usage of the term:

1. Deputy, deputies, deputy sheriff, detention deputy, sworn employee, uniformed sworn employee, sworn administrative employee, and
2. civilian, non-sworn employee.

B. *Employee*: When used without further clarification, the term employee is inclusive of all agency members (sworn and non-sworn).

C. *Indigent Inmate*: An inmate without funds for fourteen (14) days and has less than two dollars (\$2.00) in their commissary account)

D. *Legal Mail*: Mail addressed to or received from attorneys, the courts, or public officials

E. *Rejected Mail*: Correspondence or material that is sexually explicit poses a threat to the security or order of the facility or implies criminal activity.

IV. Procedure:

A. The Sheriff Al Cannon Detention Center (SACDC) inmate mail operation

provides for the convenient deposit and distribution of mail daily. The inmate mail operation is the dual responsibility of the Security Captain and Administrative Services Captain.

- B. Inmates will be advised of the requirements of this directive during inmate orientation and in the Inmate Orientation Handbook.
- C. Receipt of Mail and Packages
 - 1. All mail, excluding legal mail, is sent to a processing digital mail center. Once the mail has been received, it is scanned immediately to the corresponding inmate's tablet for viewing. (REF: 5-ALDF-5B-o8)
 - 2. The Lobby will receive and sort mail. Mail and packages will be searched immediately via the X-ray scanner and sniffed by K-9. Personal mail will receive instructions to send the mail to the digital processing center, which will be marked "Return to Sender", and sent back through the U.S. Postal Service. The Lobby Deputy will utilize the Jail Management System (JMS) to locate inmates and expedite the delivery of legal mail to each housing unit.
 - 3. All mail must have a return address. If a return address is not on the envelope, it will be placed in the inmate's property.
 - 4. Inmates no longer housed in the detention center will have their correspondence marked, "Return to Sender", and returned to the U.S. Postal Service. (REF: 5-ALDF-5B-19)
 - 5. Incoming mail will be monitored and inspected for security purposes, including for the interception of money orders, physical contraband or to uncover threats that may disrupt the orderly operation of the facility. During this process, the following items will be removed from the envelope's industrial staples, clasps, stamps, and labels. (REF:5-ALDF-5B-o8)
 - 6. Money orders received will be verified, and a money receipt generated. The letter, together with a copy of the money receipt, will be sent to the inmate. The procedure for handling money orders is as follows:
 - a. Money orders must have the inmate's name and number in the memo section and be made payable to the SACDC.
 - b. Money orders that are incorrectly completed will be returned to the sender.

- c. Checks received in the mail made payable to an inmate, such as Social Security checks and Internal Revenue Service checks will be marked return to sender through the U.S. Postal Service.
 - d. All personal checks will be returned to the sender.
(REF: 5-ALDF-5B-o8)
 - e. Inmates will receive notification of all items that have been returned to the sender or placed within their property.
- 7. Certified or registered mail will be signed after verification by a Lobby Deputy, that the inmate is presently incarcerated. Certified or registered mail is processed in the same manner as all other incoming mail.
- 8. Inmates in special management housing units may send and receive letters on the same basis as inmates in the general population except for post-conviction inmates from the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). Post-Conviction inmates will only be allowed to receive official correspondence for the first seventy-two hours unless otherwise directed by the Detention Director or designee.
(REF: SC Min. 2032 (a) 5-ALDF-2E-18)
- 9. There is no limit on the amount of mail an inmate may send or receive. The length, language, content, or source of mail or publications will not be limited except when there is a reasonable belief that limitation is necessary to protect public safety or maintain the order and security of the facility. Incoming inmate mail may be rejected based on a court order or if it contains or conflicts with the following:
(REF: SC Min. 2032 (c), 5-ALDF-6A-o4)
 - a. envelope size will not be larger than 8.5" X 11";
 - b. photograph and/ or picture size will be limited to 4" X 6";
 - c. musical, flashing, sound, voice recording, and battery-operated greeting cards, unless the music and/or battery pieces are removed by the sender;
 - d. information regarding the manufacture of explosives, weapons, or drugs;
 - e. suspected or established gang or hate group affiliated publications, material, photos, tattoos, signs, drawings, or graffiti, promoting gang or hate group activities, memberships,

- or other such propaganda;
 - f. content intended to encourage or assist in disrupting the orderly operation of the SACDC, such as through a criminal act, riot, work-stoppage, or other breaches of SACDC rules; or
 - g. Material that would encourage deviant or sexual behavior.
10. Contraband discovered in the mail will be removed and may be placed in the inmate's personal or valuable property. The Lobby will remove items such as:
 - a. Polaroid pictures
 - b. Excess photographs, new envelopes, writing paper, and magazine articles from inside of the inmate mail and place the items in the inmate's property.
 11. Inmates may retain up to five photographs and/or personal greeting cards in their cells.
 12. Incoming mail containing contraband will be processed as follows:
 - a. An Incident Report will be written to document the incident. The Security Sergeant will review and approve the report.
 - b. If contraband found is needed for a criminal investigation or prosecution, the Security Sergeant will promptly deliver it to the Security/Housing Lieutenant.
 - c. The Security/Housing Lieutenant will secure the contraband and notify Central Control to have a deputy respond.
 13. Inmates and the sender will be notified by written notification when incoming or outgoing mail is withheld in part or in full. The Lobby Detention Deputy will complete a Mail Rejection Form (SACDC Form-514) and notify their immediate supervisor. The copy of the rejection form will be given to the inmate during normal mail delivery. The inmate will receive a property receipt documenting all money and items intercepted in the mail. Inmates may grieve the decision to withhold mail in accordance with the Inmate Grievance Policy. A copy of the form and/or receipts will be scanned into the inmate's multi-media file in JMS.
 14. If the Security Threat Group (STG) Detention Deputy screens mail and notices mail that poses a threat to an inmate or the facility, the STG

Detention Deputy will complete a Mail Rejection Form (*SACDC Form-514*) and notify their immediate supervisor. The inmate will receive a property receipt documenting all monies and items intercepted in the mail. Inmates may grieve the decision to withhold mail under the Inmate Grievance Policy. A copy of all Forms and/or Receipts will be scanned into the inmate's multi-media file in JMS.

15. Mail content that may constitute a violation of law may be referred to the postal authorities.
16. Incoming and outgoing mail will not be held for more than twenty-four (24) hours and packages for more than forty-eight (48) hours, excluding weekends and holidays, unless otherwise provided.
(REF: 5-ALDF-5B-10)
17. Personal packages addressed to inmates will not be accepted or opened. The Lobby Deputy will stamp the package "Return to Sender" and will place the packages in the outgoing mail for the next mail pickup.
18. Third-class mail and newspaper inserts such as catalogs, circulars, and advertising brochures, will not be distributed to inmates.
19. Inmates may subscribe to newspapers if purchased by subscription only on the inmate tablet.
(REF:5-ALDF-5B-07)
20. Inmate correspondence privileges will not be revoked as a punishment. Mail can only be stopped by a court order or by direction from the Detention Director or designee for investigation purposes for a reasonable period of time.

D. Legal Mail:

1. Inmate packages marked as "legal mail" will be permitted, inspected, and processed immediately.
2. Inmates will be permitted to send and receive sealed letters from those persons and organizations defined as official mail. Official mail is defined as mail from officials or organizations including, but not limited to courts, counsel, media, officials of the confining authority, government officials, politicians, administrators of grievance systems, Department of Corrections, Jail and Prison Inspection Division, Department of Juvenile Justice, members of the Parole Board and Board of Elections and Voter Registration.
(REF: 5-ALDF-5B-09)

- a. All received envelopes and packages marked "legal mail," must have the name of the attorney and the attorney's return address stamped on them.
- b. Legal mail and official mail will only be opened and inspected by detention staff in the presence of the inmate to whom it is addressed, unless waived in writing by the inmate or in circumstances which may indicate contamination, such as a letter that is leaking, stained, emitting a strange or unusual odor, or which has a powdery residue. (REF: 5-ALDF-5B-09)
- c. The original legal mail will be copied in the presence of the inmate and the copy given to the inmate. The original will be shredded in the presence of the inmate.
- d. If contraband is found in legal mail, it will be rejected, and the procedures listed in Sections C-12 through 14, of this policy will be followed. (REF: 5-ALDF-6A-02)

E. Processing Mail:

1. A Deputy will pick up the inmate mail from the Lobby and deliver it to the appropriate housing units each night.
2. The Housing Unit Deputy will:
 - a. receive the previously opened and searched mail;
 - b. search the mail again to ensure that contraband does not enter the housing unit;
 - c. enter the received mail into the JMS Mail Log (ML) under the inmate's record and document:
 - 1.) The date of delivery;
 - 2.) The sender's name;
 - 3.) Any other comments noted, such as "legal mail" or "personal letter"; and
 - d. distribute the mail to the inmate to whom the mail was addressed.
3. The Housing Unit Deputy will forward any misdirected inmate mail to

the appropriate housing unit or if the inmate is no longer incarcerated; return the opened mail to the Lobby to be redirected to the Postal Service.

4. If any contraband to include money or money orders is found, such contraband will be redirected to the Lobby for processing.
5. The Housing Unit Deputy will verify that outgoing inmate mail from the housing unit does not contain contraband by inspecting the envelope prior to it being sealed.
6. The inmate will seal the envelope in the presence of the Deputy.
7. The Housing Unit Deputy will ensure that the return address has:
 - a. the inmate's name;
 - b. the inmate's number; and
 - c. the return address of the SACDC.
8. The Housing Unit Deputy will hand deliver the mail to the Lobby, at least once during each shift, to await pickup by the Postal Service.

F. Mail Postage

1. Inmates will be allowed to add postage to letters going out of the country or legal envelopes for no charge by sending a request via the kiosk to the lobby supervisor.
2. The lobby supervisor will answer the kiosk request and pick up the letter or envelope needing the additional postage.
3. The lobby supervisor will ensure the mail is sent to the County postal service for metered mail and then routed to the Post Office for delivery.
(REF: SC Min. 2032 (d), 5-ALDF-5B-06)
4. The lobby supervisor will scan the inmate's request and/or the envelope for additional postage in the inmate's multi-media for records.
5. The SACDC will provide inmates who are indigent with supplies including two postage-paid envelopes.