
 <p><b>COLORADO</b> <b>Division of Youth Services</b></p>	<b>POLICY S-18-2</b>	<b>PAGE NUMBER</b> 1 OF 4
	<b>CHAPTER:</b> Communications: Mail, Visits, and Telephone	
	<b>SUBJECT:</b> Youth Correspondence	
	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE:</b> September 26, 2023	
<b>THIS POLICY RELATES TO:</b>  Detention Youth Centers Treatment Youth Centers	 <b>Anders Jacobson, Director</b>	

I. POLICY:

Youth in the Division of Youth Services youth centers shall be afforded the right and ability to communicate through written correspondence with members of their family and other persons or organizations, which may be subject to the limitations necessary to maintain appropriate order and security of the youth center.

II. KEY TERMS: See the Division of Youth Services website for detailed definitions.

 [DYS Policy Key Terms](#)

- A. Censored
- B. Coded Language
- C. Contraband
- D. Correspondence
- E. Currency

III. ASSOCIATED FORMS:

None

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#### IV. PROCEDURES:

- A. Written rules governing correspondence shall be made available to all youth and employees, and reviewed annually and updated if needed.
- B. Mail And Stamp Limits:
  1. Youth center employees shall stamp mail on behalf of youth.
    - a. Family correspondence, legal correspondence, and correspondence with the Child Protection Ombudsman shall be unlimited.
    - b. General correspondence shall also be unlimited. If a youth is sending an unreasonable amount of general correspondence, the youth center director or designee may investigate the youth's use of mail, and limit the amount of mail the youth may send for general correspondence.
  2. If a youth receives stamps from an external source they shall be maintained by the youth center and used for mail correspondence on the youth's behalf. Stamps received from outside sources shall be either in a book, sheet or individually pre-stamped envelopes.
- C. Inspection of both incoming and outgoing letters and packages shall take no longer than 24 hours to complete during weekdays. Weekends and holidays are excluded from this requirement, but unnecessary delays shall be avoided.
- D. Division of Youth Services (DYS) employees shall wear gloves when inspecting mail for their protection from unknown substances.
- E. In the event the DYS identifies that youth are using the mail system to introduce contraband in correspondence at a youth center, that entire youth center shall be subject to having all incoming unprotected correspondence photocopied, with the copy delivered to the youth and the original correspondence destroyed or turned over to law enforcement.
- F. Protected incoming and outgoing correspondence:
  1. Youth shall be permitted to send sealed letters to specified persons and organizations performing in their official capacity. Protected correspondence includes but is not limited to:
    - a. Courts.
    - b. Legal representatives (including Guardians Ad Litem)

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- c. DYS administrative officials.
  - d. Youth Grievances.
  - e. The Parole Board.
  - f. Health care providers.
  - g. The Child Protection Ombudsman.
2. In the presence of the youth, INCOMING protected correspondence shall be visually scanned but not read for content to ensure it is from the specified class of persons or organizations, does not contain contraband, and is not contrary to the legitimate institutional interest of order and security.
- G. Unprotected incoming and outgoing correspondence:
1. All other incoming and outgoing mail is considered unprotected and may be read for content to ensure the security and safety of the public, DYS employees, contract workers, volunteers, other DYS youth, or the youth center.
  2. Youths' letters and packages shall be opened and inspected in the presence of the youth for contraband, coded and/or cryptic language, and threats made to the safety and security of the general public, employees, contract workers, volunteers, and other DYS youth.
  3. The letter shall be immediately given to the youth if no contraband is found and the content of the letter or package does not present a threat to the safety and security of the public, DYS employees, contract workers, volunteers, or other youth within the DYS.
  4. If a viable threat to the safety and security and/or contraband is found, the letter or package and its contents shall be directed to the supervisor on duty with the action fully documented. The youth shall be advised of the action.
    - a. The youth shall be fully informed when incoming or outgoing mail is withheld in part or in full.
    - b. The reason for the action taken shall be fully documented in the Colorado Trails Database. If the Colorado Trails Database is not available, documentation shall be placed in the youth's permanent file.

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- c. Correspondence that is withheld shall be placed in the youth's property and clearly marked as "withheld," and returned to the youth upon release from the youth center.
  - d. Correspondence that consists of identified contraband shall be confiscated, discarded, and/or submitted to law enforcement as appropriate. Actions taken shall be documented in an Informational Incident Report.
- H. Publications that dwell excessively on violence, drugs, or sex are generally considered to be unacceptable within an institutional environment. Confiscated publications shall be placed in the youth's property and returned to the youth upon release from the youth center.
- I. Letters from former employees of the DYS that contain content outside of the boundaries of a professional relationship shall be given to the youth center director or designee for approval. If there is a valid concern with the letter, it shall be placed in the youth's property and given to them at the time of release from the youth center.
- J. A list of contraband, including money, shall be available to the youth, and each youth shall be made aware that letters and packages will be inspected for contraband and/or safety concerns.
- K. Youth released or transferred shall be permitted to take all personal mail. Subsequently received letters and packages shall be forwarded to the youth unopened. If no forwarding address is available, the mail shall be returned, unopened, to the sender or to the post office.
- L. FOR CURRENCY RECEIVED FOR YOUTH THROUGH THE MAIL, PLEASE FOLLOW PROCEDURES OUTLINED IN DYS POLICY S-2-5 YOUTH PERSONAL FUNDS AT SECTION A, "COLLECTION AND RETENTION OF YOUTH FUNDS."