

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

New Processes for Non-Privileged Incoming Mail & Publications

Overview of Changes

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) remains firmly committed to the safety of our staff, individuals in custody, and all who enter our facilities. In response to the growing threat of chemical-laced paper and other dangerous substances, IDOC is taking comprehensive steps to enhance security across our facilities and address this challenge. To better support the safety and welfare of individuals in custody and all those entering IDOC facilities have implemented the following processes.

1. Digitize/photocopy incoming non-privileged mail.
2. Discontinue the practice of visitors dropping off publications at facilities.
3. Require publications to be mailed directly by publishers, as defined by IDOC.
4. Multi-Factor Authentication for Privileged Mail.

Electronic Scanning of Non-Privileged Incoming Mail

Incoming non-privileged mail is scanned or photocopied at IDOC facilities.

The following items will **not** be scanned or photocopied:

- Publications.
- Photos sent directly from photo printing service companies.
- Official documents, including but not limited to birth certificates and Social Security Cards.
- Correspondence sent to an individual in custody through inter-office mail by the Department's Director, Assistant Director, Chiefs and Deputy Directors, or Department attorneys, PREA Coordinator, or American with Disabilities Act Coordinator.
- Any mail received that is identified as "unauthorized mail" in accordance with [IDOC's incoming mail policies and procedures](#).
- Any envelope or paper larger than 8.5 x 14 in.
- Any mail addressed to the facility that will be returned to the sender of that mail.

Loved ones, community organizations, and other stakeholders should continue to send mail to the facility in which the individual in custody is housed. Facility addresses are available on our website [here](#). To ensure prompt processing, the individual in custody's IDOC number

should be placed near their name on the envelope and on each page, photo, or other document contained in the envelope. You can locate an individual in custody's IDOC number and facility using the [individual in custody search](#).

Note: Privileged and legal mail will not be scanned or photocopied. Please see question 9 in the below FAQ for more information on privileged and legal mail.

Publications

Individuals in custody may receive new or used publications, including but not limited to any hard or soft-covered book, booklet, magazine, newsletter, or newspaper that is mailed directly to them by a publisher. A publisher includes any publisher, book club, bookstore, or any other book, magazine, or newspaper distributor, religious organizations or ministries, educational institutions, or units of government conducting mail order business or otherwise delivering publications to readers.

Leather-bound religious scriptures are permitted. Scriptures are Bibles, Torahs, Tanakhs, Qurans, and any other tradition/religious scripture.

All publications shall be delivered promptly if they are free of contraband and do not violate the standards set forth by Department Rule. Section 525.220 Standards for Publications can be found [here](#).

Visitors may no longer drop off books, magazines, and/or other publications at any facility for a specific individual in custody.

FAQ*

Q1: How will facilities process and scan non-privileged mail?

A: Mailroom staff will process incoming non-privileged mail, including letters, greeting cards, and photographs, by:

- Scanning in color, the front and back of the envelope and each item within and digitally distributing it to the individual in custody by uploading it to their electronic device or physically distributing it by printing a copy and delivering it to the individual, or
- Photocopying in color, the front and back of the envelope and each item within and distributing the copies to the individual in custody.

Q2: What type of mail can be sent, scanned, and delivered to tablets?

A: Only written correspondence, greeting cards, drawings, and photos will be accepted for scanning.

When mailing written correspondence, IDOC strongly recommends loved ones write in black ink. The use of light-colored inks or pencils may result in a reduced image quality when viewing the correspondence on a tablet.

IDOC's current list of unauthorized mail remains in effect. A list of common unauthorized items is available on our website [here](#), towards the bottom of the page.

Q3: Is there a page limit on scanned mail?

A: No, there is not a limit to the number of photos or pieces of paper that can be sent in a single envelope.

All incoming non-privileged mail consisting of **10 or more pages** (10 single-sided or 5 double-sided pages) will be provided to individuals via physical photocopy and will not be scanned and uploaded to tablets.

Q4: Can an individual request that a piece of mail be provided as hard copy?

A: IDOC will reproduce cards, drawings, photographs, etc., in color and at no cost, upon an individual's request. Currently, printouts are provided on standard copy paper. In the future, printouts will also be available on cardstock. Individuals will be notified when this option becomes available and may submit new requests at that time.

Individuals in custody that cannot adequately access a piece of mail via the electronic device for reasons including disability or impairment, placement in restrictive housing, technological malfunction, or any other reason, will receive photocopies of their nonprivileged mail. When available, that may also request pieces of mail be printed on cardstock.

To request a piece of scanned or photocopied mail be printed, an individual in custody shall complete a DOC 0286 Individual in Custody Staff Request Form.

Q5: Is there a cost to me or my loved one for electronic mail scanning?

A: No.

Q6: Do individuals in custody know about the electronic scanning of non-privileged mail?

A: Yes, all individuals in custody were notified about this change. Memos sent to IDOC's entire population are also available to the public on our website [here](#).

Q7: What if my loved one does not have access to their tablet?

A: Individuals in custody that cannot adequately access a piece of mail via the electronic device for reasons including disability or impairment, placement in restrictive housing, technological malfunction, or any other reason, will receive photocopies of their nonprivileged mail.

Q8: Do these changes to the non-privileged mail process also apply to privileged and legal mail?

A: No. Any security measures or protocols implemented by the Department to prevent contraband from entering facilities shall not include copying, scanning, imaging, or otherwise reproducing privileged mail in any form. All security measures and protocols for incoming privileged mail shall occur at the facility where the recipient is located.

Information on the Department's Multi-Factor Authentication Mail System can be found [here](#).

Q9: Are there exceptions to the publication rule? What are those exceptions, and who do they apply to?

A: The requirement that publications come directly from a publisher does not apply to materials received for programs under the Office of Adult Education and Vocational Services, other approved programs, the facility library, or religious programs.

Q10. What are some examples of publishers?

A: Under the Department’s policies, “publisher” is broadly defined as "any publisher, book club, or bookstore, any other book, magazine, or newspaper distributor, a religious organization or ministry, an educational institution, or a unit of government conducting mail order business or otherwise delivering publications to readers.”

Book publishers and bookstores refer to entities traditionally thought of in the book industry, such as Random House Books or Barnes and Noble. They would also include online retailers, such as Amazon.com and Walmart.com. Examples of other publishers include Bargain Books Wholesale, Book Depot, Books N Things, and Freebird Publishers.

Book Clubs generally serve a specific purpose of providing books to individuals in custody and uniquely understand correctional security concerns. Examples of book clubs include Books Through Bars NYC, Prisoners Literature Project, and Champaign-Urbana Books to Prisoners Program.

Any Other Book, Magazine, or Newspaper Distributor

- Human Rights Defense Center – Prison Legal News
- YKTV Magazine

Religious Organizations or Ministries conducting mail order business or otherwise delivering publications to readers, such as Crossroads Prison Ministries.

Educational institutions conduct mail order business or otherwise delivering publications to readers such as institutes of higher education, secondary schools, community colleges.

Units of Local Government conducting mail-order business or otherwise delivering publications to readers.

Q11: Will photos be delivered in their original form?

A: Photographs received through the mail for an individual in custody will be delivered to the individual in custody directly and without digitization when they are delivered directly from a legitimate and verifiable business that prints and distributes photographs through the mail, are free of contraband, are unopened, and include the original watermark(s).

Q12: Are individuals in custody allowed to receive leather-bound books?

A: Leather-bound religious scriptures are permitted. Scriptures covers Bibles, Torahs, Tanakhs, Qurans, and any other tradition/religious scripture.