

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, **the Department will implement the following new processes immediately:**

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.

Electronic Scanning of Non-Privileged Incoming Mail

Beginning **immediately**, IDOC facilities will scan and/or photocopy incoming non-privileged mail.

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

- Publications.
- Official documents, including but not limited to birth certificates and Social Security Cards, mailed from a government entity.
- Correspondence from IDOC staff sent to an individual in custody.
- Any mail received that is identified as “unauthorized mail” in accordance with [IDOC's incoming mail policies and procedures](#).
- Any mail addressed to the facility that will be returned to the sender of that mail.
- The Director has the authority to exclude incoming mail from the electronic mail and mail copying processes.

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

Beginning on **September 30, 2025**, all publications intended for individuals in custody will only be accepted through the mail and must be mailed directly from the publisher to the individual. Visitors may no longer drop off books, magazines, and/or other publications at any facility for a specific individual in custody. 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.

Visitors will be prohibited from dropping off publications at any facility **after September 30**. Publications being mailed to individuals in custody **after September 30** must be sent directly from a publisher. Publications received with a postmark of **September 30 or earlier** will be accepted. Any publications with a postmark **after September 30** will be returned to the sender.

FAQ*

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

A: Non-privileged mail received for an individual at the facility will be opened and inspected for contraband. Mailroom staff will scan, in color, the front and back of the envelope and each item within, including letters, greeting cards, and photographs. PDF images of the scanned documents will be uploaded to the individual's Bulletin Board. An individual will receive a notification that new scanned documents are available to be downloaded and viewed on their tablet. Instructions on how to access scanned mail were provided to individuals.

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. 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, IDOC does not intend to limit the number of photos or pieces of paper that can be sent in a single envelope.

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.

Individuals may request that a specific piece of mail be printed by filling out an “Individual In Custody Request Form (DOC 028) with the following information:

- “Mail Print Request”
- The document number for the requested piece of mail. This number will be handwritten and located on the document. The document number will begin with the individual’s IDOC number. Ex. Y12345-091925-1

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 who do not have access to a tablet for any reason will receive paper photocopies of their mail.

Q8: What if I want the original copies of the general correspondence back after it is scanned?

A: IDOC is unable to return original mail documents to the sender after the documents are scanned. You may want to consider mailing a copy of the correspondence and keeping the original.

Q9: 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 the copying, scanning, imaging, or otherwise reproducing privileged and legal mail in any form.

In the coming weeks, IDOC will issue guidance on a multi-factor authentication system for legal mail, enabling the Department to confirm the identity of the sender of the piece of mail **without opening** the envelope.

Until that notification is made, legal mail will continue to be handled under the Department’s current policy.

Q10: 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.

Q11. 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.