

Douglas County Sheriff's Office

GENERAL ORDER

9.31 Inmate Mail

Effective: May 1, 2011

Issued by: Chief Deputy Stan Copeland

The following policy and procedures will replace the existing one in its entirety.

Policy:

It shall be the policy of the Douglas County Jail to allow inmates to receive or send correspondence in accordance with all applicable statutes and facility regulations, unless the safety or security of the institution, staff, visitors, or other detainees would be jeopardized by such correspondence.

Procedures:

Incoming Mail

- a. All incoming mail, with the exception of legal mail and money orders, must be in the form of a metered postcard (Minimum size: 3.5 Inches by 4.25 inches. Maximum size: 4.25 inches by 6 inches). Postcards mailed with a stamp will be rejected. Incoming mail is subject to being opened / searched for contraband or money orders. Incoming mail will not normally be read unless there is a compelling state interest to do so.
- b. Money orders will be accepted by mail. Money orders must be contained in a white envelope marked "For Deposit Only". The inmate's name and identification number must be written on the money order. Improperly marked envelopes or envelopes containing letters, pictures or other items will be rejected and returned to the sender. Cash will not be accepted.
- c. Mail containing any of the following will be rejected:
 - i. Material describing, depicting or advocating disruption or violence in the facility or against officers.
 - ii. Materials written in code.
 - iii. Explicit sexual material.
 - iv. Materials that advocate racial or religious hatred or creates a serious threat of violence.

- v. Material that encourages or instructs in the commission of any criminal offense.
 - vi. Material that jeopardizes the security and safety of the inmates, staff, facility or the general public.
- d. Incoming mail shall be delivered to the addressee only. If the inmate is no longer incarcerated in the Douglas County Jail, the mail will be returned to the sender if possible.
- e. Mail will be delivered each weekday (excluding holidays, emergencies or other special circumstances). All incoming and outgoing mail must be addressed as follows, including the senders full name and return address in the upper left corner:

Inmate's Name
Douglas County Jail
Unit # ____
6840 W. Church Street
Douglasville, GA 30134

- It is the responsibility of the inmate to notify family and friends about how mail should be addressed. Mail not addressed as described above will be returned to the sender if possible or disposed of as contraband. Incoming mail must be clearly marked with this senders name and return address or it will not be delivered and will be destroyed.**
- f. Postcards in the following form will not be accepted and will be returned to the sender when possible:
- 1. Defaced or altered postcards
 - 2. Plastic or wrapped postcards
 - 3. Postcards marked with paint, crayon, or marker
 - 4. Postcards with any type of labels or stickers
 - 5. Postcards with watermarks or stains
 - 6. Postcards with biohazards including perfume or lipstick
 - 7. Postcards depicting nudity, weapons, or gang references
 - 8. Oversized postcards
 - 9. Postcards written in code
 - 10. Postcards mailed with a stamp.

- g. With the exception of legal correspondence and money orders, any correspondence contained within an envelope will not be accepted. Unacceptable items will be returned to the sender.
- h. Photographs will not be accepted. Postcards may be "picture postcards". Any photographs will be returned to the sender if possible.
- i. Newspapers, magazines, or books will be accepted as long as they meet the following criteria:
 - i. Must be sent directly from the publisher or a bookstore with a verifiable return address.
 - ii. Must be bound with a soft cover. Hardback books are not allowed.
 - iii. Must not exceed 3 books and/or magazines in a 30 day period.
 - iv. They must be addressed to you as outlined in section b.
 - v. Must not violate United States Postal Regulations, Georgia state law or promote behavior that is prejudicial to an inmate's good conduct. Inmates may appeal any mail refusal through the grievance procedure as outlined in section 18 of the Douglas County Sheriff's Office & Jail Inmate Handbook. Reason(s) for the refusal will be provided back to the inmate.
 - vi. Must not be based on false information or misrepresentation.
- j. In the event the volume of correspondence being sent by an inmate should begin to disrupt the orderly operation of a housing unit, the Jail Administrator may place limitations on the inmate's correspondence privileges. The inmate will be notified in writing by the Jail Administrator if any such limitations are imposed.
- k. Mail will not be forwarded. Mail will be returned to the sender if possible; otherwise it will be returned to the U.S. Postal Service for disposition.
- l. You may be held liable for contraband mailed into the facility. Inmates who utilize the mail for smuggling or other illegal purposes may have their mail privileges revoked or highly restricted.
- m. Correspondence between inmates in this facility and any other local, state, or private corrections facility/prison is subject to approval.
- n. Religious printed material (pamphlets, booklets, etc.) received from a religious organization will be accepted. Correspondence accompanying the religious printed material will be subject to the procedures and guidelines set forth under "Incoming Mail". Religious materials should be sent from a recognized religious establishment; any materials sent in by family, friends, or other independent party

will not be accepted. Religious materials (booklets, pamphlets, etc.) are counted as books/magazines and are subject to the same quantity restrictions.

- o. The Sheriff, Chief Deputy, Jail Administrator or Operations Manager may restrict **all** mail correspondence (except legal) with any inmate if any of the following becomes a chronic problem:
- The correspondence is with a juvenile and not approved by a parent or guardian
 - The volume of mail is proving disruptive to the facility
 - Its content is dangerous or illegal in nature
 - It contains instructions on manufacturing dangerous instrumentalities or unlawful substances
 - It advocates violence or serious disruption of the safety or security operation of this facility
 - It is material that encourages criminal or deviant sexual behavior within the institution

Inmates may file a grievance to appeal any decision to restrict or deny mail correspondence.

Outgoing Mail

- p. Outgoing mail should be sealed, when applicable, and placed in the mailbox located in the cellblock. Mail will not normally be opened or read unless circumstances present a compelling state interest to do so. The following types of mail will not be opened except in your presence or by specific jail personnel:
- i. Legal or Official Mail – Mail addressed to or received from a court, attorney, court official or other legal entity will not be opened unless it is in the inmate's presence. The mail may be opened to verify that the mail is legal mail, and the opening will be done in such a way as to avoid violating the confidentiality of the communications. Legal or official mail must be clearly marked as to be easily identified as "privileged" correspondence. Falsely labeling mail as legal may result in disciplinary action.
 - ii. Grievances – Grievances should be placed in the mailbox to be picked up by the mail officer. Grievances should be written on a grievance form or marked "Grievance" where it can be easily identified. Improperly submitted grievances will not be answered.

- q. Outgoing mail shall be placed in the mailbox located inside of the inmate's housing unit. Mail will be picked up Monday thru Friday, excluding holidays, emergencies, or other special circumstances.
- r. In the event the volume of correspondence being sent by an inmate should begin to disrupt the orderly operation of a housing unit, the Jail Administrator may place limitations on the inmate's correspondence privileges. The inmate will be notified in writing by the Jail Administrator if any such limitations are imposed.
- s. Inmates are permitted to send mail to addressees outside of the jail on metered postcards which may be purchased from Commissary. Indigent inmates can request in writing an "Indigent Kit" from Commissary, which will contain a designated amount of pre-metered postcards and envelopes for legal correspondence.
- t. The inmate's full name, identification number and complete facility mailing address must be written on the postcard. The postcard must not contain any of the following:
 - i. Material describing, depicting or advocating disruption or violence in the facility or against officers.
 - ii. Materials written in code.
 - iii. Explicit sexual material.
 - iv. Materials that advocate racial or religious hatred or creates a serious threat of violence.
 - v. Material that encourages or instructs in the commission of any criminal offense.
 - vi. Material that jeopardizes the security and safety of the inmates, staff, facility or the general public.
- u. Excluding legal correspondence, all outgoing mail may be inspected and reviewed to determine if the safety and security of the facility or the general public is threatened.

Legal Correspondence

- v. For incoming mail to be processed as legal mail, it should be clearly marked as being sent from an attorney, court official, government official or consulate.

- w. Legal mail shall not be opened unless it is in the inmate's presence. The mail may be opened to verify that the mail is legal mail, and the opening will be done in such a way as to avoid violating the confidentiality of the communications.