





San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department

Juvenile Hall Policy and Procedures Manual

Chapter 5 - Youth Rights

Policy Number:	5.08
Policy Name:	Mail
Authority:	Title 15, 1375, 1390
Replaces:	19.1 Mail (05/01/2000)
Effective Date:	January 1, 2019
Revision Date:	December 1, 2018
Related Policies and Procedures:	5.01 - Youth Legal Access 5.03 - Youth Rights and Responsibilities
Related Forms:	Mail/ Parcel Rejection Form
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Chief Probation Officer:	Katherine Weinstein Miller 

I. POLICY

Juvenile Hall administration and staff shall enable youth to send and receive mail in accordance with the following:

- A. There is no limitation on the volume of mail that youth may send or receive. [Title 15, 1375(a)]
- B. Juvenile Hall shall provide all youth with unlimited paper and other letter writing instruments and postage for at least two letters per week. [Title 15, 1375(b)]
- C. Youth may correspond confidentially with state and federal courts, any member of the State Bar or holder of public office, and the Board. Authorized Juvenile Hall staff may open and inspect such mail only to search for contraband and in the presence of the youth. [Title 15, 1375(c)]
- D. Juvenile Hall staff shall not read any incoming or outgoing mail except when there is reasonable cause to believe facility safety and security, public safety, or youth safety is jeopardized. [Title 15, 1375(d)]
- E. Juvenile Hall staff shall never restrict legal correspondence. (Policy 5.01 - Youth Legal Access for more details governing legal correspondence)
- F. Mail may never be restricted as a form of discipline. [Title 15, 1390(j)]

If a Juvenile Hall staff member believes there is a need to read the mail, he or she shall notify the Officer of the Day and the youth in advance. Both the Officer of the Day and the youth shall be present when the mail is opened, read, and any contraband shall be removed. (See Policy 10.11 – Contraband)

II. PURPOSE

Mail correspondence helps youth to maintain contact with family, friends, advocates, and community while in Juvenile Hall. Mail access may be the

only means some youth have for substantive communication with members of his or her broader support network who are unable to communicate or visit due to distance, cost, or other restrictions. As such, mail may be an important tool for building and maintaining the youth's pro-social relationships, behaviors, and connections while in detention.

Additionally, mail communication provides youth with an additional avenue for legal correspondence and access to rights, services, educational and enrichment materials. Incoming and outgoing mail should be processed as expeditiously as possible with any pending required searches, questions, or incidents documented and brought to the youth's attention as soon as possible. An efficient and comprehensive mail policy serves these youth needs as well as ensures the youth's right to privacy and needs for supportive continued communication.

Definitions:

**Legal
Correspondence**

Mail to a specified class of persons, including attorneys and authorized representatives, that a youth may send or receive with the insurance that it will not be read.

Rejected Mail

Mail or parcels that have been refused by the Juvenile Hall administration and will not be delivered to the youth.

Contraband

Any item or article in the possession of the youth or found in the facility that has not been officially issued or has been prohibited from being brought into the facility by statute, rule, local procedure, policy, or direction of the facility Director (unless specifically approved in writing by the Director of Juvenile Hall or Designee). In some instances, contraband may also exceed the quantities of approved items.

The Board

Board of State and Community
Corrections (BSCC).

III. PROCEDURES

- i. Youth may send or receive an unlimited amount of mail.
 - a. Juvenile Hall is committed to supporting, through both supplies and encouragement, unlimited amount of youth correspondence that furthers the youth's access to rights and supportive communication.
 - b. Juvenile Hall shall provide postage for all legal correspondence and letters. [Title 15, 1375 (a)]
- ii. Juvenile Hall staff shall not read or tamper with youth letters, both incoming and outgoing, unless there is reason to suspect there is contraband present and/or there is reasonable cause to believe facility safety and security, public safety, or youth safety is jeopardized. [Title 15, 1375(d)]
 - a. In such instances, staff may only open mail in the presence of the youth and the Officer of the Day.
 - b. If any contraband is found, the letter and its contents shall be directed to the youth's Probation Officer. If no contraband is found, the letter shall be immediately given to the youth.
- iii. Juvenile Hall staff shall not impede a youth from corresponding confidentially with State and Federal Courts, any member of the State Bar or holder of public

office, and the State Board of Corrections unless there is an authorized purpose for doing so. [Title 15, 1375 (c)]

- a. Juvenile Hall staff shall never open or tamper with legal correspondence.
 - b. Authorized staff may open and inspect such mail only for safety reasons including necessary searches for contraband conducted in the presence of the youth.
[Title 15, 1375(c)]
- iv. All Juvenile Hall staff shall accept outgoing mail from the youth and deliver it to the Admissions Office for mailing by the end of the day.
- a. Juvenile Hall staff shall not restrict to whom the youth sends mail too except when prohibited by law or internal policy designed to promote the safety of youth.
 - b. Juvenile Hall staff may refuse to accept an outgoing letter if there are safety considerations that require further inquiry.
 - c. Juvenile Hall staff shall inform the youth that they may address the issue by changing the envelope and resubmitting the letter if they wish. Juvenile Hall staff are also encouraged to explore this as an opportunity to discuss this issue. (Policy 8.05 – Counseling and Supporting Youth)
 - d. Juvenile Hall staff shall assist youth who request authorizations for exceptions of any restrictions in place (i.e., youth requesting to send letters to incarcerated parents).

- v. Admissions Office staff shall sort the mail daily into an outbox which the On-Duty Probation Officer will collect daily and deliver to the Mail and Records Room located in the Probation Services building. Mail Room staff are responsible for recording, stamping, and sorting all youth mail for collection by the U.S. Postal Service.
- vi. Juvenile Hall staff shall distribute incoming mail to youth within 24 hours of receipt.
- vii. Juvenile Hall staff shall remove cash, checks, or money orders from the incoming mail and immediately place the money in the security box and place a corresponding receipt signed by the youth in the youth's personal property.
- viii. When a youth is released or transferred, Juvenile Hall staff shall allow him or her to maintain possession of all personal mail.
 - a. Additional mail received after the youth's release from Juvenile Hall shall be forwarded, unopened, to the youth's Probation Officer for distribution to the youth.
 - b. If the youth is not assigned a Probation Officer, the mail shall be returned, unopened, to the sender through the U.S. Postal Service.

A. Packages, Books, and Periodicals

- i. As a rule, packages are not allowed in the facility. Packages received for a youth will be immediately forwarded to the youth's assigned Probation Officer for review and proper disposition.
- ii. Youth may not receive books or periodicals through the mail. Youth have access to a wide assortment of books

and periodicals through the Woodside Public Library. Exceptions to this rule will be made only on a case-by-case basis.

B. Cause for Rejection

- i. Juvenile Hall staff shall reject any material meeting any of the following criteria:
 - a. Instructions for the manufacturing for explosives, drugs, or other unlawful substances.
 - b. Material advocating violence within the facility.
 - c. Material advocating hatred towards groups.
 - d. Material containing nudity or encouraging sexual or other behavior that is criminal or in violation of facility rules.

C. Mail or Parcel Rejection

- i. If a Juvenile Hall staff member rejects mail, he or she shall notify the Officer of the Day and pass the rejected mail to the youth's Probation Officer.
- ii. Staff shall verbally notify youth when mail or parcel(s) are rejected.
- iii. The staff member making the rejection shall always document the information in an incident report as soon as possible.
- iv. Staff shall inform the youth of his or her right to file a grievance about any decision to withhold mail.

- v. The package will be forwarded to the youth's assigned Probation Officer.