

KERN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Detentions Bureau Policies and Procedures

TITLE: MAILING FREE MATTER FOR SIGHT IMPAIRED INCARCERATED PEOPLE F-150

EFFECTIVE:	REVIEWED:	REVISED:	UPDATED:
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APPROVED BY: Detentions Bureau Chief Deputy Cindy Cisneros

REFERENCE: United States Postal Service Publication 347; Title 36 CFR 701.10(b)(2)(i); Title 39 USC 3403; Title 2 USC 135a; Title 2 USC 135a-1; Title 2 USC 135b, DBPPM H-1200

POLICY

It is the policy of the Kern County Sheriff's Office to allow all persons in custody to use the United States Postal Service. This includes incarcerated people who are blind or who cannot read or use conventionally printed matter due to a visual or other physical impairment, as certified by a competent authority. All personal mail may be subject to limitation and regulation as detailed in Detentions Bureau policy F-100 for facility security, safety, order, discipline, and for any other necessary penological interest.

DEFINITION(S):

Competent Authority: Includes doctors of medicine; doctors of osteopathy; ophthalmologist; optometrists; registered nurses; therapist; and professional staff of hospitals, institutions, and public or private welfare agencies (e.g.; social workers, caseworkers, counselors, rehabilitation teachers, and superintendents). In the absence of any of these, certification may be made by professional librarians or by any person whose competence under specific circumstances is acceptable to the Library of Congress (see 36 CFR 701.10(b)(2)(i)). For the purposes of this policy, Correctional Medical Staff nurses and doctors shall function as Competent Authority of the Sheriff's Office.

DIRECTIVE #1

The following provisions shall be adhered to in relation to sending and receiving mail pursuant to this policy:

- Persons who are blind or who cannot read or use conventionally printed matter due to a physical impairment, as documented by a competent authority, are eligible to mail certain items, as stipulated below in Procedure B, free of postage.

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- Staff will not withhold or censor any incarcerated person mail unless it is deemed inappropriate in accordance with Detentions Bureau Policy and Procedure F-100 (Correspondence).

Procedure A: Incarcerated Person Sight Impairment Certification

Incarcerated people requesting to mail free matter for the blind or visually impaired must be certified by a competent authority as unable to read normal reading material. As such, incarcerated people seeking visual impairment certification must submit a sick call slip in order to receive a sight impairment evaluation and certification from Correctional Medical staff.

DIRECTIVE A-1

Security staff shall assist any incarcerated person who asserts they are blind or visually impaired in the completion and submission of a sick call slip.

Upon receiving a request for sight impairment evaluation, Correctional Medical staff will:

- Schedule the incarcerated person for a sight impairment evaluation (nurse/doctor sick call).
- Determine if the incarcerated person is blind or visually impaired (i.e.: unable to read normal reading material).
- Document the visual impairment, or lack of, in the incarcerated person's medical file.
- Provide the results of the evaluation, specifically whether or not the incarcerated person is blind or visually impaired to the point of being unable to read normal reading material, to the Facility Administrative Sergeant.
- If required by the US Post Office, provide a written verification of the incarcerated person's visual impairment.

The Administrative Sergeant will:

- Notify classification of the incarcerated person's visual impairment.
- Advise the dress-out or laundry deputy to give the incarcerated person a "visually impaired" identification vest as described in DBPPM H-1200.

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Procedure B. Sending Free of Postage Mail from a Sight Impaired Incarcerated Person**Staff receiving such mail from a sight impaired incarcerated person will:**

- Verify with the Facility Administrative Sergeant that the incarcerated person has been designated as sight impaired.
- Assist in the addressing and packaging the items to be mailed as necessary;
- Ensure that the outgoing free of postage mail complies with **Directive B-1** below;
- Forward the mail (unsealed) to the facility clerical staff for processing.

Clerical staff receiving such mail will:

- Ensure that the letter or parcel is unsealed and remains unsealed until it is provided to the Post Office for processing.
- Ensure that the words “FREE MATTER FOR THE BLIND OR HANDICAPPED” are placed in the upper right corner of the address side of the envelope or parcel where the postage would normally be placed. The words may be printed, rubber stamped or handwritten.
- Transport the letter or parcel to the Post Office with all other outgoing mail.
- If requested, provide a written certification of the incarcerated person’s visual impairment to the Post Office.

DIRECTIVE B-1

The following matter is eligible to be mailed free of postage by sight impaired incarcerated people:

- Reading matter in Braille or 14-point or larger sight-saving type and musical scores;

Paper, recorded media, and other matter for the production of reading matter, musical scores, or sound reproductions for eligible persons.

Note: Any mail being sent in this manner is subject to postal inspection and must be mailed **unsealed**.

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The following are **NOT** eligible to be mailed free of postage by sight impaired incarcerated people:

- Matter containing advertisements;
- Musical or other sound recordings not specifically designed for use by visually impaired persons;
- Matter having a required charge, rental, subscription, or other fee – unless the fee does not exceed the cost of the item;
- Empty shipping materials for mailing eligible matter;
- Handwritten, printed, or typed letters that are in a type size smaller than 14-point.