



NEWS RELEASE

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION

Commissioner Terra Taylor

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Department of Correction expands enhanced mail screening system to all state prison facilities

Dover, DE -- The Delaware Department of Correction announced today that it is expanding its enhanced mail screening system to all state prison facilities this April to improve mail security and eliminate mail contraband. The system features off-site electronic mail screening and color reproduction that allows prison facilities to receive incoming mail addressed to incarcerated individuals without the risk of contraband and better protect safety of correctional staff while streamlining mail processing.

“Drugs and illicit contraband delivered to our prison facilities through postal mail pose significant and growing risks to health and safety, including overdose and death, and those deadly substances are increasingly hard to detect,” **Department of Correction Commissioner Terra Taylor said.** “We have an obligation to act decisively to protect our employees and individuals in our custody from this threat. Some correctional systems have reacted to this threat by replacing physical mail delivery with scanned images of letters and cards that are viewed by incarcerated people on electronic devices. We recognize the value that holding a letter, card, or photograph has on personal connections with family and friends, and that’s why the Delaware DOC has invested in a mail screening system that delivers high quality color hard copies of mail to incarcerated individuals while cutting off the flow of life-threatening mail contraband into our prison facilities.”

In the Spring of 2022, the DOC initiated a [pilot mail screening system at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center](#), the state's largest prison facility, through a partnership with Pigeonly Corrections, a company with a proven track record in providing mail screening services for correctional systems across the country. That mail screening program has virtually eliminated mail contraband at JTVCC and led to a two-thirds overall reduction in contraband at the facility. After careful consideration of its benefits and other impacts **the DOC will expand this mail screening program to Baylor Women’s Correctional Institution, Howard R. Young Correctional Institution, and Sussex Correctional Institution, effective April 15, 2024.**

Postal mail remains a primary access point to introduce contraband into correctional facilities and interdicting drug contraband via prison mailroom operations is challenging because synthetic marijuana, fentanyl or other substances can be liquified and sprayed onto paper, incorporated into ink, hidden under stamps, or concealed within a piece of correspondence. Current scanning methods are insufficient to

detect and intercept this illegal contraband. For example, during one recent year at James T. Vaughn Correctional Center (JTVCC) nearly 100 incoming inmate mail packages were intercepted as containing suspected or confirmed illicit contraband substances. This prompted the DOC to look nationally for mail security solutions that employ modern technology to:

- eliminate introduction of contraband through the mail,
- reduce officer, staff and inmate exposure to potentially harmful contraband, and
- sustain postal mail delivery to incarcerated individuals

How DOC's enhanced mail screening system works:

Step 1: Non-legal mail, including letters, greeting cards, postcards, etc., is sent to incarcerated people via PO Box to a central processing facility.

Step 2: Non-legal postal mail received at the central processing facility is opened, screened for contraband, and scanned into an electronic document that closely resembles the original hardcopy, including color.

Step 3: The electronic scan of the received mail is shared with the DOC through a secure online dashboard for further screening to ensure that the mail is permitted under DOC policy.

Step 4: The electronic scan is printed, packaged individually in envelopes, and shipped from the central processing facility via Priority Mail to the prison facility for distribution to the inmate recipients, completely eliminating the risk of contraband.

The Department of Correction emphasizes that legal mail sent to incarcerated individuals by their attorney, official documents, printed material sent directly from the publisher, and other pre-approved materials addressed to incarcerated individuals will continue to be sent directly to the prison facility.

Expanded mail screening in Delaware prisons comes as the Department of Correction is working actively with its communication vendor to increase the number of tablets available to incarcerated individuals in prison and community corrections facilities. Tablets are shared among incarcerated individuals and demand for the devices exceeds the number that are currently provided. The DOC has listened to their needs and their requests and is working aggressively to much more closely meet that demand. Increased availability of tablets will not only help meet the strong interest in electronic communication with loved ones and community supports but will also enable the DOC to connect large numbers of incarcerated individuals to tablet-based education, treatment, and programming resources.

The attached informational flyer, [which is also posted online HERE](#), provides additional mail screening program information. This information is being communicated directly with the incarcerated population through printed flyers and electronic tablets, to inmate families, and to the general public through a public education campaign featuring social media posts and informational updates on the DOC website (www.doc.delaware.gov).

For faster delivery family and friends can sign up on www.pigeonly.com to create and send letters, photos, and cards from cell phones, tablets or computers. Pigeonly offers a no-cost “Forever Free” plan to create and send limited mail to one inmate contact per month and a paid subscription plan to send unlimited mail, and these plans help the sender to avoid postage and the cost of purchasing cards, paper, and photos. After release, formerly incarcerated individuals can email support@pigeon.ly to download their scanned mail items for free.

The Department of Correction notes that non-legal mail postmarked by April 15, 2024, and sent directly to BWCI, HRYCI, and SCI will be accepted by those facilities. Non-legal mail sent directly to BWCI, HRYCI, and SCI that is postmarked between April 15 and April 30 will be accepted and

redirected to the central mail scanning processing facility. Non-legal mail sent directly to BWCI, HRYCI, and SCI that is postmarked after April 30, 2024 will be returned to sender.

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