



*State of North Carolina
Department of Public Safety
Prisons*

Chapter: D
Section: .1200
Title: **Correspondence**
Issue Date: 10/27/21
Supersedes: None – new policy

POLICY AND PROCEDURE

References

5th Edition Standards for Adult Correctional
Institutions

Related ACA Standards

5-ACI-1A-21

.1201 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures pertaining to correspondence received from constituents, government officials, or media regarding follow up and response preparation. It is the policy of North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Prisons to respond to all correspondence in a timely, courteous, accurate, and efficient manner.

.1202 DEFINITIONS

- (a) Constituent – A member of the general public with an interest in the policies, procedures, and practices within NCDPS Prisons.
- (b) Correspondence – Any communication, whether written (letter, email) or verbal (telephone call), received by NCDPS Prisons requiring a response; or any communication sent from NCDPS Prisons facilities computers, telephones, or remitted on NCDPS Prisons letterhead.
- (c) Government Official – A member of the staff of the North Carolina executive, legislative, or judicial branch making an inquiry to the NCDPS Prisons.
- (d) Media – Any news organization requesting information from NCDPS Prisons.

.1203 POLICY

- (a) Correspondence is received by all Facilities, Region Offices, and Sections. It is the policy of NCDPS Prisons to respond to these inquiries in a timely manner with accurate information.
- (b) All correspondence remitted on NCDPS Prisons letterhead is considered official correspondence. Supervisors are responsible for the content of the correspondence; therefore, clear instruction to staff as to how correspondence should be handled is required.
- (c) The Correspondence Tracking System (CTS) will be used to track all correspondence received by NCDPS Prisons. The CTS User Guide is available by logging into CTS and using the Help feature or by using this link [NCDOP \(state.nc.us\)](http://state.nc.us).

When entering correspondence into CTS, the following steps must be completed:

- (1) Due date
 - (2) Reply indicating whose signature is required
 - (3) Route to designated staff
 - (4) Add comments
 - (5) Upload/Comment regarding the resolution
 - (6) Resolve in CTS
- (d) When responding to constituent email and telephone calls, staff must remain professional and provide accurate information while adhering to D .0600 Access to Information/Offender Records.

.1204 PROCEDURES

- (a) All Correspondence
- (1) Correspondence received by any NCDPS Prisons office must be logged into CTS within 3 business days of receipt.
 - (2) A response must be completed and logged within 14 days. *Correspondence from the Commissioner's Office, Governor's Office, congressional, or North Carolina legislative officials (or their staff) must be answered within 7 business days (5-ACI-1A-21).*
 - (3) If due to the complexity of the request, or extenuating circumstances exist where the above timeframes cannot be met, the Departmental designee must prepare a preliminary response acknowledging receipt of the letter and stating that a more thorough answer shall follow within 30 days.
 - (4) All efforts shall be made to ensure that correspondence referred by the Commissioner's Office is answered within the timeframes established in (a)(2). Only on rare occasions should the preliminary letter and extended timeframes specified in (a)(3) be utilized.
- (b) Preparation of Response
- (1) General Response
 - (A) Responses to an offender or constituent should be clear and concise and address specific concerns.
 - (B) In general, a single, well-constructed paragraph should address the issue, question, or complaint involved. A separate paragraph should be used for each distinct issue.

(2) Response for Commissioner

The designee receiving the correspondence is responsible for ensuring that the reply contains the following three key sections:

(A) Acknowledgement of receipt

The salutation of the letter shall read, "Thank you for your letter of (date) regarding (subject). The Commissioner has asked me to reply directly to you." When preparing responses for the Commissioner's signature to letters addressed to him, the second sentence shall be replaced with: "I appreciate your interest in the North Carolina Department of Public Safety, Prisons."

(B) Response to the Subject Matter

When possible, a single, well-constructed paragraph should address the issue, question, or complaint involved. A separate paragraph should be used for each distinct issue.

(C) Close

"Thank you again for your interest in this matter. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me."

(c) General Rules

In preparing replies to correspondence, the following general rules shall be followed:

- (1) Only public information regarding offenders can be released. Refer to D .0600 Access to Information/Offender Records for the list of public information.
- (2) Provide facts, not opinions or feelings.
- (3) Use clear and concise sentences.
- (4) Limit to one page, if possible.
- (5) Avoid the use of acronyms.

(d) Media Correspondence

Inquiries from the media are subject to D .0500 Public Relations/Media Policy.

(e) Medical and Mental Health Correspondence

- (1) Offender Medical and Mental Health information is not public information. This information can only be released in accordance with D .0600 Access to

Information/Offender Records.

- (2) The Facility Nursing Supervisor/designee shall document in the patient's healthcare record all conversations with the patient regarding their medical concerns.
- (3) If a family member is requesting information about a specific medical concern, the Nursing staff at the facility will obtain a signed DC-436 Authorization for Release of Confidential Information from the offender giving permission for DPS Health and Wellness Services and/or the Facility Medical or Nursing staff to speak with the family member, friend, or interested party. The DC-436 will be specific to the medical concern(s) identified. This release form will be filed in or scanned into the electronic healthcare record.
- (4) When the investigation/review has been completed, and a DC-436 has been signed, DPS Health and Wellness Services Central Office staff or the Facility Nursing/Medical staff will contact the family, friend, or interested party to address specific medical concerns.



Commissioner of Prisons

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Date