

YOUTH SERVICES POLICY

Title: Mail Precautions	Type: A. Administrative Sub Type: 2. Personnel Number: A.2.30
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References: ACA Standard 2-CO-5D-01 (Administration of Correctional Agencies); and YS Policy Nos. A.1.8 "Emergency Operations Plan" and C.5.2 "Regional Office Duty Officers, and Facility Administrative Duty Officers (ADOs) Reporting of Serious Incidents"; Division of Administration, Office of Risk Management, Loss Prevention Manual; Websites: www.cdc.gov/anthrax and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricin	
STATUS: Approved	
Approved By: E. Dustin Bickham, JD, Interim Deputy Secretary	Date of Approval: 06/11/2020

I. AUTHORITY:

Deputy Secretary of Youth Services (YS) as contained in La. R.S. 36:405. Deviation from this policy must be approved by the Deputy Secretary.

II. PURPOSE:

To establish uniform procedures relating to the receipt and handling of all mail and/or packages received from external sources. The guidelines, though applicable to a wide variety of circumstances, are particularly oriented in response to suspected letters and packages that could possibly be contaminated with potential biochemical agents (i.e. Anthrax, Ricin, etc.).

III. APPLICABILITY:

All YS employees. Each Unit Head is responsible for ensuring that all appropriate procedures are in place to comply with the provisions of this policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

Abrin - A toxin found in the highly ornamental rosary pea. It is similar to Ricin but even more toxic.

Anthrax - A spore-forming bacteria (*bacillus anthracis*) originating in cattle and other plant-eating mammals that has been used as an effective biological weapon. Humans can contract anthrax spores in three ways: through a cut or opening in the skin, by inhalation, or by eating infected meat. Vaccines can protect against anthrax, and antibiotics can treat the disease in its early stages. Detected at exposure, anthrax is an easily treatable disease.

Ricin – A naturally occurring protein from the castor oil plant (*ricinus communis*), which is highly toxic and poisonous if inhaled, injected, or ingested, acting as a toxin by the inhibition of protein synthesis. Oral exposure to Ricin is far less toxic.

Ricin is resistant, but not impervious, to digestion by peptidases. By ingestion, the pathology of Ricin is largely restricted to the gastrointestinal tract where it may cause mucosal injuries; however, with appropriate treatment, most patients make a full recovery. Because the symptoms are caused by failure to make protein, they emerge only after a variable delay from a few hours to a full day after exposure.

Unit Head – For purposes of this policy, the Deputy Secretary, Facility Directors, and Regional Managers.

V. POLICY:

It is the Deputy Secretary's policy that every precaution shall be taken to ensure the safety of staff and youth in the care of YS. This includes the careful inspection of incoming mail and packages to ensure protection against potential biochemical agents.

All employees shall take appropriate steps to protect themselves, youth and others from exposure.

VI. PROCEDURES:

- A. Each Unit Head shall ensure the availability of latex gloves and protective face/eye wear, which protects the exposed areas of the body from foreign material, for use by employees. In most cases, latex gloves and long-sleeved garments are sufficient.
- B. All employees shall be alert and watchful for packages and letters as follows:
 - 1. Those which are unusual in appearance or appear different from mail normally received;
 - 2. Odd sizes, excessive postage or excessive packaging material such as masking tape, string, etc., not customarily received;
 - 3. Marked with any suspicious or threatening language;
 - 4. Leaking, stained or emitting a strange or unusual odor;
 - 5. Having a powdery residue;

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6. Having a city and/or state postmark that is different from the return address; or
 7. Other suspicious signs, i.e. excessive weight, ticking sound or protruding wires or aluminum foil.
- C. Particular attention shall be exercised when opening mail.
- D. If a suspicious or threatening package or letter is discovered, employees shall take the following steps:
1. Do not open;
 2. Notify immediate supervisor;
 3. Do not sniff, taste, or look closely at it or at any contents which may have spilled;
 4. Contain the package or letter by placing it in a:
 - a. Plastic zip lock (triple bag);
 - b. Garbage bag (triple bag);
 - c. Steel can;
 - d. Poly containment vessel; or
 - e. Simply cover it with available material.
 5. Evacuate and seal off the immediate area; and
 6. Wash hands with soap and water. If it is determined by supervisory staff to be a credible threat, the Unit Head and the Facility Administrative Duty Officer/Regional Office Duty Officer shall be notified immediately, pursuant to YS Policy No. C.5.2.
- The Unit Head shall then verbally notify the appropriate Regional Director, Assistant Secretary and the Deputy Secretary.
- E. Coordination of further response with State Police shall be handled by the Deputy Secretary. Instructions relative to site cleanup shall be provided by State Police.
- F. Employee responsibilities in the event of discovery of a potentially dangerous substance are as follows:
1. Remain calm;
 2. Contact immediate supervisor;

3. Thoroughly wash hands with soap and water;
 4. Do not clean or brush clothes;
 5. Carefully remove contaminated clothing, jewelry, etc. if possible (unless doing so would add to contamination) and place into appropriate sealable containers;
 6. Do not attempt to clean or collect powder;
 7. Upon release by appropriate authorities, shower with soap and water at home as soon as practical;
 8. Change into fresh clothing; and
 9. Seek medical attention from family doctor or facility medical staff.
- G. Supervisory responsibilities in the event of discovery of a potentially dangerous substance are listed below:
1. Evacuate immediate area as appropriate;
 2. Isolate contaminated individuals from other employees; however, do not allow the contaminated individual to leave the premises until they have been released by appropriate emergency response personnel;
 3. Isolate suspicious packages and restrict access to affected area; and
 4. Make a list of all persons either directly affected or in the immediate area of exposure.
- H. As required by the Division of Administration, Office of Risk Management, mail precaution/suspicious mail language specific to each unit, shall be included in the Standard Operating Procedures as part of the Emergency Preparedness Plan. (Refer to YS Policy No. A.1.8)
- I. All employees are encouraged to access the Center for Disease Control website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/anthrax/> to examine further guidelines for handling mail and packages.
- J. All employees are encouraged to access the Wikipedia website at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricin> to learn more about the latest threat via mail.

Previous Regulation/Policy Number: A.2.30

Previous Effective Date: 06/04/2019

Attachments/References: