



**DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
MONTANA STATE PRISON
OPERATIONAL PROCEDURE**

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| Procedure No.: MSP 3.3.5 | Subject: INMATE/STAFF COMMUNICATION METHODS |
| Reference: DOC Policy No. 3.3.5 | Page 1 of 3 and one attachment |
| Effective Date: June 10, 2002 | Revision: (new effective date) May 13, 2009 |
| Signature / Title: /s/ Mike Mahoney / Warden | |
| Signature / Title: /s/ Gayle M. Lambert / MCE Administrator | |

I. PURPOSE

To allow and encourage inmates to communicate verbally and in writing with staff in accordance with established procedures. To facilitate the exchange of information between staff and inmates through the use of a standard Offender/Staff Request (OSR) form.

II. DEFINITION

Emergency - a condition that would result in serious physical or psychological harm to someone, or would constitute a threat to the safe, secure operation of MSP.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. Inmates and staff will use a standard Offender/Staff Request (OSR) form to exchange written information.
1. Inmate Requirements (noncompliance with these requirements may result in the OSR being returned to the inmate)
 - a. Inmates who have questions or problems requiring a written response from facility or Department staff must use an OSR form, because staff will not accept other written forms in place of the OSR to address these concerns. If an inmate communicates with staff by card, note or letter, disciplinary action may result. Inmates must submit medical and dental *Health Care Request (HCR) forms* to the Infirmary to address their medical concerns (*see DOC 4.5.17, Sick Call*), classification appeal forms to address their concerns about their classification reviews (*see MSP 4.2.1, Inmate Classification Program*), disciplinary appeal forms to address their concerns about their disciplinary hearing decisions (*see MSP 3.4.1, Inmate Discipline*), and the grievance forms noted in *MSP 3.3.3, Inmate Grievance Program* to initiate, file, or appeal a grievance.
 - b. OSR forms will be readily available upon verbal request from housing unit staff.
 - c. Inmates must limit each OSR to one issue with the written contents limited to the space provided on the form, and must not attach anything to the OSR or it will not be accepted. An inmate may only provide additional information pertaining to the issue when requested to do so by staff.
 - d. Inmates will use the institutional mail system to submit completed OSR forms to staff members. OSR forms may be mailed either sealed or unsealed, and the inmate must address it to the appropriate staff member.
 - e. Multiple inmate signatures on an OSR will not be accepted.
 - f. When an inmate submits multiple OSR forms referencing a particular issue to multiple staff the forms may be forwarded to the appropriate staff member for a

response. If the issue has been previously addressed the OSR will not be accepted.

- g. Noncompliance with these requirements may result in an OSR being returned to the inmate unanswered.
- h. An OSR containing demeaning, threatening, vulgar, or profane language or any violation of a policy, rule, or law will not be answered and may result in disciplinary or legal action against the inmate. The Warden may limit an inmate's use of the OSR system if the inmate is using it to harass or abuse staff.

2. Staff Requirements

- a. As inmates must use an OSR form to submit written questions or problems to facility and Department staff, staff will not accept other written forms in place of the OSR to address these concerns, however no staff member will intercept, stop, destroy, delay or otherwise attempt to interfere with an inmate using an OSR to communicate with staff.
- b. Housing unit staff will make OSR forms readily available to inmates. OSR forms will conform to the general guidelines set forth in *DOC 3.3.5, regarding format as reflected in the attached sample.*
- c. Staff response to the OSR must be written, and must be timely. Staff members wishing to discuss the issue in person with the inmate must say that in the response. If an immediate response is impossible, the staff member must acknowledge receipt of the request and provide an anticipated date of response to the inmate.
- d. All staff receiving an OSR form from an inmate will first determine whether its contents reveal an emergency, safety, or security issue. Emergency, safety, and security matters will receive immediate attention. If the staff member determines the issue addressed in the OSR is an emergency, they must respond to it within 24 hours from receipt of the OSR. The staff member must forward a copy to the Security Major.
- e. If the staff member who receives the OSR determines another person should address the issue they will forward the OSR to the appropriate staff member.
- f. Staff responding to an OSR dealing with safety and security issues must forward a copy to the inmate's housing unit staff who will file it in the unit mini-file and/or Records file as deemed appropriate by the Unit Management Team.
- g. OSRs dealing with matters other than security and safety may contain information that may be important to properly classify the inmate(s), or to investigate subsequent inmate claims. Therefore, staff will evaluate all requests to determine whether or not they should be copied and appropriately filed, to assure all potentially pertinent requests are retained.
- h. When the receiving staff member determines an alternative communication method (such as grievance, medical request form, or disciplinary appeal) is more appropriate, the staff member will provide this explanation to the inmate on the OSR form.

B. Verbal Communications

Staff and inmates are encouraged to base their verbal communications on dignity, integrity, honesty, decency and mutual respect.

1. Staff and inmates will only speak to each other concerning facility related issues.
2. Staff and inmates will not speak to each other outside of the staff members work hours.
3. Inmates are encouraged to address all staff members by their proper title (i.e. Captain, Lieutenant, Sergeant, Officer, Mister or Missus) followed by their last name.
4. Staff are encouraged to address inmates by their last names preceded by "Mister".
5. Staff and inmates must not speak to others using demeaning, threatening, vulgar, or profane language. Violations may result in disciplinary action.

IV. CLOSING

Questions concerning this operational procedure will be directed to the immediate supervisor.

V. ATTACHMENTS

Sample DOC OSR form

attachment A

