



POLICY DIRECTIVE

Policy:	DOC 3.3.5 OFFENDER AND STAFF COMMUNICATION METHODS
Effective Date:	05/01/1998 Page 1 of 2
Revision Date(s):	06/20/2012; 04/24/2026
Signature/Title:	/s/ Eric Strauss, Director

I. POLICY

Department facilities will establish a system for offenders to communicate in writing with facility staff using an approved *Offender/Staff Request (OSR)*. In addition to using the *OSR* process, offenders and staff are encouraged to engage in respectful dialogue to promote the safe and secure operation of the facility.

II. APPLICABILITY

Secure facilities Department-owned and contracted, as specified in contract.

III. DEFINITIONS (see Glossary)

IV. REQUIREMENTS

A. General Principles

1. Proper and effective communication between offenders and staff is essential to the safe, secure, and orderly operation of facilities and to the successful completion of the offender's corrections plans.
2. Offenders and staff communicate verbally, in writing, and non-verbally via manner, tone, and body language.
 - a. Staff and offenders are jointly responsible for ensuring communication methods are appropriate to properly and effectively convey intended information and ideas to others.
3. Offenders will communicate with staff in a civil and respectful tone and manner.
4. Staff will communicate with offenders in a professional manner appropriate to the circumstances that fosters respect and confidence.
5. Offenders are encouraged to communicate and resolve any concerns at the lowest level possible within the facility organizational structure.
6. If concerns cannot be readily resolved at low levels or using the *OSR* process, offenders have the option to use the Department's internal grievance and appeal process in accordance with *DOC 3.3.3 Inmate Grievance Program*.

B. Facility Responsibilities

1. Each facility administrator is responsible for ensuring:
 - a. the development and maintenance of an offender and staff written communication method that conforms to the general requirements of this policy;
 - b. all offenders are provided information regarding the of the content of this policy; and
 - c. development of a tracking and filing system for *OSR* forms to ensure that safety, security, and case management issues are addressed and retained on file as deemed necessary by appropriate facility staff.

C. Offender Use of OSR Forms

1. Offenders wishing to communicate with staff in writing must use the *OSR* form provided by the facility.
 - a. Exceptions to the use of the *OSR* for offender to staff communication will be made when the correspondence requires use of the following:
 - 1) grievance forms;
 - 2) medical and dental health care requests; and/or
 - 3) classification and disciplinary appeals.
2. Offenders may be subject to disciplinary action for communicating with staff in writing by using other than an approved form (for example, by card, note, or letter).
3. Offenders will limit each *OSR* to one issue, use only the space provided on the form, and may not send attachments with the form. Offenders are prohibited from sending the same or a similar *OSR* to multiple staff members in a manner that burdens the system.
4. The *OSR* is intended for use by an individual offender; an offender may not send an *OSR* form from multiple offenders.
5. Offenders will not use demeaning, threatening, profane, or vulgar language.
 - a. Offenders may be subject to disciplinary action if they misuse the *OSR* process or if they use the system to harass or abuse others.
6. *OSR* forms will be mailed through the facility internal mail system either sealed or unsealed and will be addressed to the appropriate staff member.
7. Offenders may provide additional information pertaining to their *OSR* questions or concerns when requested by staff to do so.
8. Offender noncompliance with the requirements of this policy may result in the *OSR* being returned unanswered to the offender.

D. Staff Use of Request Forms

1. Staff will ensure that *OSR* forms are readily available in each housing unit and from unit management staff.
2. Staff response to the *OSR* may be either written or verbal.
 - a. If staff cannot provide a timely answer to a request, they will acknowledge receipt of the request and provide the offender with an anticipated date of response.
3. If staff determine that the issue addressed in the *OSR* is an emergency or involves safety or security issues, the *OSR* must receive immediate attention. Staff will provide a response to the offender within 24 hours from receipt of the *OSR*.
4. When the receiving staff member determines that an alternative communication method (such as grievance or disciplinary appeal) is more appropriate, the staff member will provide this explanation to the offender on the *OSR* form.
5. No staff member will intercept, stop, destroy, delay or otherwise attempt to interfere with *OSR* forms that comply with the facility's *OSR* process.

V. CLOSING

Questions about this policy should be directed to the facility administrator.

VI. REFERENCES

- A. *DOC 3.3.3 Offender Grievance Program*

VII. FORM

Offender/Staff Request (OSR)