

## **Responding to Prison Mail**

Generally, we mail out responses once a week; usually, on Mondays. Please follow the steps outlined below when receiving and responding to prison mail.

### **1. Receiving and Processing Letters**

- a. Enter the following information on the spreadsheet here: "[P:\Patron Services Department\Prison Mail\PRISON MAIL TRACKING.xlsx](#)"
  - i. Last Name, First Name of inmate
  - ii. Date of letter (or postmark if not dated)
  - iii. Staff assigned to response (highlighting the cell helps identify open requests; use different colors for different staff)
  - iv. Date of response
  - v. Any notes about the letter or request
- b. Create a sub-folder to save responses in this folder: "[P:\Patron Services Department\Prison Mail\Responses](#)"
  - i. Title the folder according to the date of response: YYYY-MM-DD Prison Mail Responses
  - ii. Include a Word template for mailing labels (Avery 5160). Title the document: YYYY-MM-DD Prison Mailing Labels

### **2. Inmate or Family Phone Calls**

- a. Occasionally, an inmate or their family member will call with a request
  - i. We will only mail inmates directly with material requested
  - ii. Ask for the inmate's first and last name and their CDCR/Booking number and their location (name of jail/prison)
  - iii. Take down notes on the information requested

### **3. Responding to the Request**

- a. Gather requested materials from our legal databases or other resources and save in PDF format
  - i. Occasionally, inmates ask for material that exceeds the 50-page limit; we can print case law or law review articles two pages per side, double-sided
    1. For case law, if printing two pages per side, download the case single column
  - ii. Tips for resources:
    1. CDCR currently provides access to a limited number of resources from Lexis; inmates may find material from CEB or Westlaw more helpful.
    2. The Prison Law Office puts together informational resources about current legislation regarding criminal law. They also publish the Prison and Parole Law Handbook. Here is a link to their website: <https://prisonlaw.com/>
    3. For family law issues, try Legal Services to Prisoners with Children: <https://prisonerswithchildren.org/>

- b. Compose a response letter using LALL letterhead
    - i. Double check the CDCR/Booking number, location (name of jail/prison), housing (building/cell number)
      - 1. Housing information may not be available
      - 2. CDCR: <https://ciris.mt.cdcr.ca.gov/>
      - 3. Federal prisons: <https://www.bop.gov/inmateloc/>
      - 4. For county jails, check the sheriff department's website for an inmate locator
    - ii. Save the response letter here: "[P:\Patron Services Department\Prison Mail\Prisoner Letters](#)"
      - 1. Save the file as "Prisoner Letter Response – Last name, First name Booking/CDCR number YYYY-MM-DD"
      - 2. Save as a Word document
    - iii. Indicate the date or postmark of the letter to which you are responding and provide a brief summary of the inmate's request
      - 1. For phone calls, indicate the date of the phone call
    - iv. Provide a brief summary of the services we provide
    - v. Provide a brief summary of what is being provided
    - vi. Notate "Encl." at the bottom of the letter
    - vii. A sample letter is provided at the end of these instructions
4. Printing and Packing the Response
- a. Print 2 copies of the letter
    - i. Attach one copy to the inmate's letter to save for our records (the envelope can be thrown away)
    - ii. Except for federal prisons, color can be used for the letter
  - b. Print the material double-sided
    - i. Print in black-and-white
    - ii. Do not staple the printed material
  - c. Use the Avery 5160 template to print mailing labels
    - i. It's best to use two labels, one with the inmate's name, CDCR/Booking number (and housing information if available), then another label with the address of the jail/prison
    - ii. Do ***NOT*** use the Altalink in the reference closet for labels
  - d. Use a 10x12 (or similar sized) envelope to pack the material
    - i. If less than 10 pages, consider using a #10 envelope
    - ii. Contra Costa County Jails use a mail processing center in Las Vegas, and only #10 envelopes are allowed
      - 1. Unless we can provide information in less than 10 pages, we cannot accommodate requests from CCC

5. Close the request
  - a. Enter the date of the response on the tracking spreadsheet
  - b. Save the response letter attached to the inmate's letter in a box
    - i. When full, boxes are stored on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor
  - c. On the first of the month, send statistics on the number of requests to Sarah Choi (or the current Library Associate for Reference & Collections)
6. Exceptions and Other Matters
  - a. Out-of-State Inmates
    - i. In general, we only provide services to inmates incarcerated within California. However, if an out-of-state inmate has an active case in California, we can provide services.
    - ii. See below for a sample response to out-of-state inmates
  - b. Requests for Over 50 Pages
    - i. As mentioned above in section 3, we can print two pages per side, double-sided for case law or law review articles
    - ii. Sometimes inmate will provide a long list of topics they are requesting information about. Address as many as you can within the 50-page limit.
      1. Consider offering tables of contents or chapter outlines for resources available
    - iii. See below for a sample responses for requests over 50 pages
  - c. Multiple Letters at Once
    - i. Sometimes inmates send two (or even three or more) letters in one week. All letters are combined into one response, limited to 50 pages
    - ii. See below for a sample response to multiple letters
  - d. Non-legal Information
    - i. Sometimes inmates request information that may be for academic/scientific articles or other non-legal information
      1. Consider referring them to a public library that provides assistance to inmates, such as SFPL's Jail and Reentry Services (JARS):  
<https://sfpl.org/services/jail-and-reentry-services>
    - ii. See below for a sample response for non-legal information

## **Sample Response Letter**

August 4, 2025

John Smith  
CDCR #AB1234  
Housing: D4-310  
California Institution for Men  
PO Box 128  
Chino, CA 91708

Dear Mr. Smith:

We are writing in response to your letter dated July 17, 2025, in which you requested information about antagonizing someone with a mental health disorder into committing a crime, as well as rights of inmates in the LA County jails, and what privileges inmates with pro per status have in LA County jails.

LA Law Library provides up to 50 pages per response of legal material printed from database or other sources up to twice a month to inmates incarcerated in California. This is a free service.

Unfortunately, we were unable to locate information specific to antagonizing someone into committing a crime.

Enclosed is information about rights of prisoners from The California Prison and Parole Law Handbook. While it mentions CDCR, many of the laws are constitutional and related to any incarcerated person. We also enclosed a table of contents for information from California Jurisprudence that discusses the rights of the accused. Please let us know if you are interested in seeing any sections in full text.

Lastly, we have enclosed information from the LA County Sheriff Custody Division Manual regarding inmates with pro per status.

Thank you for contacting the LA Law Library.

Sincerely,

Reference Services

Encl.

## **Sample Response to Out-of-State Inmates**

LA Law Library provides up to 50 pages per response of legal material printed from database or other sources up to twice a month to inmates incarcerated in California. This is a free service.

Unfortunately, we are unable to accommodate your request as you are not incarcerated within California. If you have an active case within California, we may be able to provide services upon verification of the active case.

You may wish to contact one of the law libraries listed below that provide services in your area:

(list libraries from: <https://sites.google.com/view/sr-sis/services-for-incarcerated-patrons-standing-committee>)

## **Sample Response for Requests Over 50 Pages**

In order to accommodate your request within the 50-page limitation, we have printed the material two pages per side, double-sided.

-or-

Enclosed, please find information about (*summarize the info*). We are unable to provide information for the remaining topics requested as the 50-page limitation has been reached.

## **Sample Response to Multiple Letters**

We are writing in response to your letters dated July 17 and 19, 2025, in which you requested (*summarize request*).

LA Law Library provides up to 50 pages per response of legal material printed from database or other sources up to twice a month to inmates incarcerated in California. Letters received during a short period of time are combined into a single response, limited to 50 pages.

## **Sample Response for Non-Legal Information**

We are unable to provide (*summarize the request*) as our resources are for legal information only. You may wish to contact a public library to request assistance. (*Suggest a public library like SFPL or LAPL and provide contact information.*)

## **Sample Response for Two Responses Per Month**

We count responses according to the calendar month we mail them out, not by the date of the letter we receive. This mailing will count as your *(list first or second response)* for *(list month and year)*. We can provide one more response mailed out before *(date of the end of the current month)*.

### **Sample Response for Labeling as Legal Mail**

For requests from **CDCR**:

You requested that we label the response envelope with “Legal Mail.” Unfortunately, per Title 15 §3141 and DOM 54010.12.1, LA Law Library is not an organization that qualifies as confidential legal mail and we cannot label mailings as such.

For requests from **LA County Jails**:

You requested that we label the response envelope with “Legal Mail.” Unfortunately, per Title 15 §1063 and LASD Manual of Policy & Procedures 5-03/195.00, LA Law Library is not an organization that qualifies as confidential legal mail and we cannot label mailings as such.

For requests from other county jails or institutions, you will need to look up their local policies/procedures.