

STATE OF OHIO



DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION  
AND CORRECTION

SUBJECT: <b>Correspondence Referred by Director's Office</b>	PAGE <u>  1  </u> OF <u>  3  </u>
	NUMBER: 01-COM-03
RULE/CODE REFERENCE:	SUPERSEDES: 01-COM-03 dated 06/30/08
RELATED ACA STANDARDS: 4-4019; 2-CO-1A-26 4-APPFS-1C-02	EFFECTIVE DATE: October 26, 2011
	APPROVED: 

**I. AUTHORITY**

This policy is issued in compliance with Ohio Revised Code 5120.01 which delegates to the Director of the Department of Rehabilitation and Correction the authority to manage and direct the total operations of the Department and to establish such rules and regulations as the Director prescribes.

**II. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to define the procedures pertaining to correspondence referred by the Director's Office to other departmental staff for follow up and response preparation.

**III. APPLICABILITY**

This policy applies to all employees to whom correspondence addressed to the Director, Governor, congressional, or Ohio Legislative officials is referred for a reply.

**IV. DEFINITIONS**

None

**V. POLICY**

It is the policy of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (DRC) to respond to all correspondence in a timely, courteous, accurate, and efficient manner.

**VI. PROCEDURE**

**A. General**

1. While constituent mail is directed to all institutions, field offices, and divisions by the public, the majority of correspondence is addressed to the Director's Office or forwarded to the Director's Office from the Office of the Governor. These inquiries are generally distributed to other departmental staff for follow-up and reply or for preparing a reply for the Director's signature.

2. All correspondence remitted on DRC letterhead is considered official correspondence. Supervisors are responsible for the content of the correspondence; therefore, they must provide clear instruction to staff as to how these letters should be handled. All correspondence and any release of information must be consistent with Department Policies 07-ORD-02, Public Records, and 01-COM-09, Media Policy.

## **B. Distribution**

1. The Director's Office shall receive, sort, and assign the correspondence and distribute it to the appropriate Department designee for handling.
2. A "route slip" shall accompany each piece or set of mail indicating for whose signature a reply should be prepared and any special handling features.

## **C. Preparation of Response**

The Department designee receiving the correspondence is responsible for ensuring that the reply is processed in conformance with the following general guidelines.

Responses to all constituent mail shall contain three key sections:

1. Acknowledgment of receipt

The salutation of the letter shall read, "Thank you for your letter of (date) regarding (subject). The Director (or Governor, if appropriate) has asked me to reply directly to you." When preparing responses for the Director's signature to letters addressed to him, the second sentence shall be replaced with: "I appreciate your interest in the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction."

2. 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.

3. Close

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

## **D. General Rules**

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

1. Use simple words;
2. Don't be "wordy";
3. Avoid jargon and acronyms;
4. Provide facts, not opinions or feelings;
5. Use short sentences;
6. Limit to one page, if possible.

The above guidelines are provided to assist departmental personnel in preparing professional replies to correspondence. However, they are not intended to constrain the personal style of staff or to inhibit a more personal touch, when suitable.

**E. Timeliness**

1. Replies to constituent mail shall be answered within 14 calendar days of receipt by the Departmental designee. Correspondence referred from the Governor's Office, congressional, or Ohio legislative officials (or their staff) shall be answered within seven calendar days of receipt by the Departmental designee.
2. If due to the complexity of the request, or extenuating circumstances exist where the above timeframes cannot be met, the Departmental designee must immediately contact the Director's Administrative Assistant who shall prepare a preliminary response acknowledging receipt of the letter and stating that a more through answer shall follow within 30 days.
3. All efforts shall be made to ensure that correspondence referred by the Director's Office is answered within the timeframes established in section E.1. Only on rare occasions should the preliminary letter and extended timeframes specified in section E.2. be utilized.

**F. Special Procedures – Governor's Office and Legislative Correspondence**

1. The route slip from the Director's Office will indicate if the response is to be prepared for the Director's signature or if the designee should reply directly.
2. When preparing a reply to an elected official for the Director's signature, the response shall be routed through the Legislative Liaison. When replying directly to the legislative official, a copy of the letter shall be sent to the Legislative Liaison.

**G. Exception**

When replying directly on behalf of the Governor or Director to routine requests, such as for information on an inmate status, parole hearing dates, work assignments, etc., the designee shall retain a copy of the letter for his/her office files, but need not forward a copy to the Legislative Liaison. If there are any questions regarding the exception provision, contact the Legislative Liaison for advice.

**H. Press Correspondence**

Inquiries from the press are to be handled in the same manner as legislative correspondence; except letters for the Director's signature or copies of direct replies are to be forwarded to the Office of Communications.