



POLICY STATEMENT
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Corrections

Policy Subject: Citizen, Legislative, and Executive Office Inquiries		Policy Number: 1.3.2
Date of Issue: May 30, 2017	Authority: Signature on File John E. Wetzel	Effective Date: June 6, 2017

I. AUTHORITY

The Authority of the Secretary of Corrections to direct the operation of the Department of Corrections is established by Sections 201, 206, 506, and 901-B of the Administrative Code of 1929, 71 P.S. §§61, 66, and 186, Act of April 9, 1929, P.L. 177, No. 175, as amended.

II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to establish policy and procedures to be followed by employees when handling inquiries or complaints from citizens, the legislature, and Executive Offices.

III. APPLICABILITY

This policy is applicable to all Department employees.

IV. DEFINITIONS

A. Department

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

B. Facility

A State Correctional Facility, the Motivational Boot Camp, a Community Corrections Center, and the Training Academy.

C. Facility Manager

The Superintendent of a State Correctional Facility, Director of a Community Corrections Center, or the Director of the Training Academy.

V. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department to ensure that requests for information and complaints received from the public, legislature, and Executive Offices are answered fully and in a timely fashion.¹

VI. PROCEDURES

A. Facility Responsibilities

1. Each Facility Manager shall designate an appropriate member or members of staff to respond to citizen, legislative, and Executive Office inquiries and/or complaints.² This person(s) is not precluded from referring the communication to a more appropriate individual or agency for response, if warranted. All responses for information shall be in accordance with Department policy **DC-ADM 003, "Release of Information."**
2. Local procedures shall be developed to ensure switchboard operators, office secretaries, and other appropriate personnel are provided clear instructions on referring telephone calls to the appropriate personnel.
3. Written inquiries or complaints from citizens should receive a written response within 15 working days of receipt of the request.³ Written inquiries or complaints from the legislature or Executive Office shall be answered within two **working** days of receipt.
 - a. All written communications shall be date-stamped immediately upon receipt.
 - b. If circumstances will not allow a timely answer to the written inquiry or complaint, a letter of acknowledgement should be sent explaining the reason for the delay.
 - c. If the written inquiry is forwarded to another agency, the correspondent will be so advised with a copy of the transmittal letter.
 - d. ***All written responses to legislative inquiries should be copied to the Director of Policy, Grants, and Legislative Affairs.***

¹ 4-4019, 2-CO-1A-26

² 4-4019

³ 4-4019

4. Legislative or Executive Office inquiries and requests for program information received at a facility shall be promptly responded to by the Facility Manager/designee. Written requests received by other facility staff shall be forwarded immediately to the Facility Manager/designee for the appropriate response.
5. Legislative or Executive Office inquiries received at a facility pertaining to information on legislation, laws, and other major policy matters shall be referred by the Facility Manager to the Secretary of Corrections/**Director of Policy, Grants, and Legislative Affairs** for direction in preparing an appropriate response.
6. Requests for information received by the facility regarding specific inmate case records shall be responded to in accordance with Department policy **DC-ADM 003**.
7. Requests for legislative visits, hearings, or investigations received by a facility shall be responded to and coordinated by the Facility Manager/designee in consultation with the Secretary of Corrections/**Director of Policy, Grants, and Legislative Affairs**.

B. Central Office Responsibilities

1. Citizen, legislative, and Executive Office inquiries and complaints received by telephone **or written correspondence** at Central Office may be responded to by the office receiving the call, or referred to a more appropriate office depending upon the nature of the call.
2. All responses for information shall be in accordance with Department policy **DC-ADM 003**.
3. If the request for information is related to a controversial public issue, the Department's Press Secretary **and Director of Policy, Grants, and Legislative Affairs** shall be consulted before a response is given.
4. **All written responses to legislative inquiries should be copied to the Director of Policy, Grants, and Legislative Affairs.**

C. Questionnaires

1. Questionnaires received by Facility Managers may be disposed of at their discretion. Questionnaires requesting statewide information received by Facility Managers should be forwarded to the Secretary of Corrections/designee for response.
2. Questionnaires received at Central Office shall be forward by the Secretary/designee to appropriate staff for coordination of a timely response.

D. Retention Schedule

1. Copies of written correspondence relating to an individual inmate shall be retained in the appropriate inmate's correspondence file for one year.
2. Copies of written correspondence and questionnaires and the responses not related to an individual inmate shall be retained for one year.

VII. SUSPENSION DURING AN EMERGENCY

In an emergency or extended disruption of normal facility operation, the Secretary, or designee may suspend any provision or section of this policy, for a specific period.

VIII. RIGHTS UNDER THIS POLICY

This policy does not create rights in any person nor should it be interpreted or applied in such a manner as to abridge the rights of any individual. This policy should be interpreted to have sufficient flexibility to be consistent with law and to permit the accomplishment of the purpose(s) of the policies of the Department of Corrections.

IX. RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND DISSEMINATION OF POLICY

A. Release of Information

1. Policy

This policy document is public information and may be released to members of the public, staff, legislative, judicial, law enforcement and correctional agencies and/or inmates upon request.

2. Procedure Manual (if applicable)

The procedure manual for this policy is not public information and shall not be released in its entirety or in part, without the prior approval of the Secretary of Corrections or designee. This manual or parts thereof, may be released to any Department of Corrections employee on an as needed basis.

B. Distribution of Policy

1. General Distribution

The Department of Corrections policy and procedure manuals (when applicable) shall be distributed to the members of the Central Office Executive Staff, all Facility Managers, and Community Corrections Regional Directors on a routine basis. Distribution to other individuals and/or agencies is subject to the approval of the Secretary of Corrections or designee.

2. Distribution to Staff

It is the responsibility of those individuals receiving policies and procedures, as indicated in the "General Distribution" section above, to ensure that each employee expected or required to perform the necessary procedures/duties is issued a copy of the policy and procedures.

X. SUPERSEDED POLICY AND CROSS REFERENCE

A. Superseded Policy

1. Department Policy

1.3.2, Citizen, Legislative, and Executive Office Inquiries issued December 11, 2000, by former Secretary Martin F. Horn.

2. Facility Policy and Procedures

This document supersedes all facility policy and procedures on this subject.

B. Cross Reference(s)

1. Administrative Manuals

DC-ADM 003, Release of Information

2. ACA Standards

a. Administration of Correctional Agencies: 2-CO-1A-26

b. Adult Correctional Institutions: 4-4019