* Rejected mail doesn’t get returned to the family. For example, photos sent in that were rejected and they have just been lost.

When mail is sent in, it becomes the property of the individual. Whatever is done with that mail at that point is up to the individual. There is an appeal process for the individual and the sender. After that appeal process is resolved, then it’s up to the I/I to say how they want it disposed of. Family member can put the funds on their account, can provide what they want. It becomes the property of the I/I. That was the intended recipient. That’s in accordance with the policy.

* Person relayed that in policy there is supposed to be a 30 day timeframe for people to be notified and allowed to pay for it to be returned prior to shredding. DOC claimed that they sent notification.

Mail rejection notice is the documentation – you can appeal, etc. With the policy revision, it didn’t contain enough information. Wanted to make sure that not just the incarcerated individual, but also the sender. If we hear nothing within this 30 day timeframe, then it’s disposed. If we do hear from them, then it’s 30 days from that final review. Policy 450.100

* When things are rejected, they notify you and send the stuff back to the sender. But although notification is sent to the external person, the incarcerated person would have the code/log and would have to fill out a form to have it sent back. Also have to give them an envelope and you have to have enough money in your postage account. Why is the burden on the incarcerated person rather than the external person who may have an easier time to communicate and whose property it was in the first place?

Same as above.

* Costs a lot of money to send back. Sent greeting card in and when he sent it back out because it was rejected, he had to send it certified mail so it cost $5.

Should not be sent certified. Notify Tracy about that kind of issue. If they want to, they can, but totally up to them.

* Mailroom doesn’t specify what’s being rejected – is it a big envelope or a little envelope that’s needed? Very confusing.

Information on the mail rejection notice – have worked very hard to make sure that mailroom staff are painting that clear picture on the mail rejections. It is my expectation for there to be sufficient information to identify what was rejected and I think it would cut down on further mail rejections if the loved one knows why it is rejected.

* Four pictures in one picture (collage) – they counted each picture in the collage as individual pictures.

Specifically noted in policy. There used to be no limit to pictures and unfortunately what happens is that sometimes the pictures that are sent in are not considered sexually explicit, but they are risqué.

* Rejecting colored envelopes now – why? What’s the purpose?

We are not rejecting them; we are not allowing them in the facility. Two or three years ago we stopped allowing legal mail envelopes to come in. We would maintain the envelope and provide that to the individual. The reason for that is the amount of serious contraband, narcotics in legal mail envelopes. There are so many ways that people can send contraband in.

\*a new envelope needs to be provided so the contents don’t go missing – including the copy of the envelope and the contents.

Where there’s material and they have to photocopy the envelope, we will. Mail is placed in a mailbag, when we do photocopies, it won’t just be placed in with the rest, it will be in its own envelope, placing all the material in that, so it’s not just loose in the mailbag. The mailroom could put everything in a large manila envelope and hand it out like that. There should be no reason it should be separated, shouldn’t be loose in the mailbag. The mailbags are these large duffels. So the manila envelope will be a different one where staff know these are items that they need to be cautious with.

\*copy of envelope needs to be both sides of the original envelope, and not just the front side.

Why is that needed? Tracy will look into whether mailroom staff could photocopy the back side if there’s something there.

* Reason number 1 on DOC's "Rejection Reasons" list that is sent out with mail rejections is worded as "Not specifically authorized by Department policy or facility procedures".

This is something that Tracy has been working on. Wants mailroom staff to not use this catch-all. If it is used, the policy or procedure should be noted (like if it is rejected due to the recreation policy, then the recreation policy should be noted).

No report to know how frequently Reason 1 is used versus Reason 2. Doesn’t know if that’s a report that can be run.

* The excessively Puritanical policing of romantic written language in letters between spouses needs to be addressed, because this makes it impossible for married couples to maintain anything at all resembling marital normalcy during incarceration.

Sexually explicit material does have a very specific definition. It’s in place for a variety of issues. I understand the concern and I understand the frustration. We do have the telephone. These are conversations that you can have over the telephone. But when it comes to the mail or JPAY, it just can’t happen. If the language is reasonably intended to be for sexual gratification or it displays or describes any behavior described in WAC, won’t be accepted. This is something that can be appealed. They can write to the mailroom sergeant and have that appeal processed.

* Looking at continuous quality improvement – appreciates hearing about getting data. One of the things that’s very challenging is that there was discussion around staff training and retribution. If I looked at all the data of his mail rejections, probably over 80% have been overturned. That says that there’s something wrong with the individual or something else. But this data around mail rejections and being overturned. I would prefer not have them overturned. Wants to know how many are being rejected/overturned and is it being used for training?

One of the things we have been doing is looking at opportunities to introduce data to support our work. The other thing that would help us is if we could create a process consistent across all facilities, and then we could feed that report back to the Superintendents.

* Mailed a book that was rejected, and I tried to call the mailroom and their office hours are different than mine. I wanted an email and no one would give me one. But I still have not received a mail rejection letter. Should I have received one?

No – if a book was sent, you wouldn’t have received one because often there is not an invoice or other notification of who is the sender. Amazon or B&N would receive the rejection notice. One important thing to understand – when a publication is sent into the facilities and it’s rejected there’s no appeal process. When a book is rejected, it’s reviewed by publication review committee, which is staff at HQ and State Library. It meets every other Monday. They are the ones that make the decision. The I/I receives a copy of the rejection notice, so at that time they can appeal the rejection. The appeal comes to me, but it comes through the Mailroom Sergeant.

You are correct that if a book is allowed at one facility, it should be allowed at another facility. There is a three year list – typically policy changes every three years, so if we keep that database the same and rejecting for the same reasons, so it makes sense for it to fall off. When mailroom staff are reviewing them, before they write a rejection themselves, they are supposed to be reviewing the database.

But there are reasons why someone else could have it but it wouldn’t be allowed at the next facility.

* A WAC Code – 137-48-020 – sexually explicit language. There are meetings that the public can attend the WAC meetings to give their feedback?

Would have ot check with local legislator for when they are coming up for review.

* Who is the policy holder?

Tracy Schneider

* Family Service Specialists are beginning ot help review mail and this seems like an issue on many levels, including lack of training, and a conflict of interest to have family service specialists reading personal correspondence

Based on COVID operations, we had multiple staff who are doing additional duties in order to help things along. Probably it’s some misinformation that specialists were doing all of the facilities – three were helping at some of the largest facilities due to an overload of JPAY messages. They’ve been doing it for several months. They don’t do rejections – anything they think is questionable is provided to the mailroom sergeant. Tracy also says that she personally trained them. To give everyone an idea, the mailrooms have been inundated due to the loss of visiting.

* Mailroom staff shut down due to furloughs?

It’s the mailroom processors.

* Educational material – son has received material from OU – everyone seems to get notification that the material is approved other than the mailroom.

Should be no delay in them getting their material, so if there are delays, then I want to know. It’s also the form that’s used where people have to initial, the only one that doesn’t have to initial is the mailroom. Lisa can talk to the policy author to get the form fixed.