

THE CITY OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES
ADULT SERVICES

Procedure 01-427

SUBJECT: Mail Delivery to Shelter Clients	APPLICABLE TO: Adult Shelter Facilities	ISSUED: June 29, 1988 RE-ISSUED: November 1, 2000
ADMINISTERED BY: Division of Adult Services	APPROVED BY:  Marcia Stevenson, Deputy Commissioner	

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for the handling and distribution of mail to residents of Adult Services facilities.

II. APPLICABILITY

Applicable to Adult Services shelter staff, Program Analysts, and Program Administrators.

III. FORMS

410A Adult Shelter Rules and Responsibilities

IV. RELATED PROCEDURES

99-410 Adult Shelter Rights, Rules and Responsibilities

V. INTRODUCTION

According to Subsection (d) (11) of Residents Rights, Section 491.7 of Title 18 New York State Code Rules and Regulations: "A resident shall have the right to receive and to send mail or any other correspondence without interception or interference."

It is of vital importance that clients residing in shelters be able to receive mail addressed to them on a timely basis. For example, clients' eligibility for entitlements or housing often depends upon the reliable receipt of correspondence.

Each shelter must have a written procedure that describes its process for mail delivery to clients. This written procedure must be submitted to the Department of Homeless Services and must be given to each client.

The United States Postal Service (USPS) generally delivers mail to a facility approximately the same time each day, Monday-Saturday, according to the postal route. Once the USPS carrier hands over mail to staff at the front desk or directly to the administrative office, it is in the shelter's custody. As such, staff must handle the mail in a systematic and secure manner. All shelters must safeguard mail in a locked room or cabinet/safe until staff distributes it to clients. Only authorized personnel should have access to stored mail.

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VI. GUIDELINES

Shelter Directors are responsible for designating staff ("Mail Clerk") to:

- Handle mail received from the USPS.
- "Date Stamp" (date of receipt) each item.
- Have access to the mailroom and/or cabinet/safe.
- Sort and distribute mail to clients.
- Process items that require special handling, such as checks, packages or unclaimed mail and store valuable mail in a locked safe or cabinet.

Shelters must offer regular "mail call" at least two times per day, Monday – Saturday. For example:

- Mornings between 8:30-11:00 am.
- Afternoons between 1:00 pm-2:30 pm.
- Evenings between 4:30 pm-7:00 pm.

"Mail call" should be preceded by a PA announcement (if available) or the posting of a daily mail list on a bulletin board outside the mailroom.

Clients may pick up mail at the administrative office or mailroom from the Office Manager or Mail Clerk, or clients may receive mail from the House Manager or Social Services staff.

Clients claiming mail must always show personal ID and sign for all items (include date and time the mail was picked-up). Staff should make special arrangements for clients who cannot be available during the shelter's specified hours.

Upon assignment to the shelter, staff must inform clients in writing how mail is distributed. In addition, social service staff must discuss the mail distribution process with each new client within 72 hours of their entry to the facility. It is a good idea to provide clients with a staff phone number for their use to inquire whether any mail was received after discharge or an emergency absence.

If a client has not picked up his/her mail after five business days. Second attempt mechanisms include:

- Written notice placed on client's bed.
- PA announcements.
- Giving the mail to the client's Caseworker for distribution.

Generally, only the addressee may claim his/her mail. A third party – relative or friend – may pick up mail, providing s/he has notarized authorization from the client and shows personal identification.

It is USPS policy to hold undeliverable mail for ten days before returning it to the sender. Shelters should hold unclaimed mail at least **ten days** before returning the unclaimed item to the USPS carrier. Shelters may hold important items for longer periods, such as holding checks for thirty days.

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It is the responsibility of the shelter to either forward mail unclaimed by addressee to the new address (if known) or return it to the Post Office marked "Address Unknown". USPS policy governing the forwarding of mail considers shelters as transient residential facilities in the category of hotels. The Post Office will not forward mail to a new location and will not honor its change of address form, if the old address was a shelter or drop-in center.

Caseworkers should inform or remind clients at time of their departure from the shelter that they should report their change of address to interested parties and that they should continue to pickup their mail from the shelter until the address change is effective. Discharged, absent or transferred clients have ten days to claim mail at their prior shelter residence. When a client changes address, it is his/her responsibility to find out if any mail came to the prior shelter residence and to notify interested parties of his/her new address.

ADULT SHELTER RULES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THESE RULES MAY RESULT IN DENIAL OF SHELTER (FOR APPLICANTS) OR TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SHELTER (FOR CLIENTS).

- * I will carry identification at all times and sign the "bed roster" daily. I will not change my bed without the approval of staff.
- * I will observe curfew rules as posted and I will vacate my bed/room during hours posted.
- * I will not have alcoholic beverages, unauthorized medicines or illegal drugs in the shelter. I understand that they will be confiscated and that I may be subject to arrest.
- * I will not bring weapons or instruments/materials potentially dangerous to other residents or staff, including, but not limited to, box cutters, needles, etc. into the shelter. I understand that these items will be confiscated and that I may be subject to arrest.
- * I will not steal and will not enter into unauthorized areas in the shelter. I understand that these acts may subject me to arrest.
- * I will not fight, or use abusive or threatening language, or harass or intimidate other residents or staff.
- * I will smoke only in authorized (posted) areas, or outside the shelter premises. I will never smoke in dormitories or sleeping quarters.
- * I will eat only in designated areas; I will not cook or bring food into sleeping areas.
- * I will not have electrical appliances, incense or candles or other items in the shelter which may be a fire hazard.
- * I will cooperate with and participate in all fire evacuation and other safety drills.
- * I will not engage in sexual activity in the shelter facility.
- * I will meet with a social service worker on a regular basis, develop, agree to and follow an Independent Living Plan designed to help me develop resources and obtain other housing outside the shelter system.
- * I agree to pay my portion of the per diem cost when required by the Office of Temporary Disability Assistance.

SUSPENSION OF SHELTER SERVICES

I understand that my shelter services may be immediately suspended for up to seven days if I:

- A. Intentionally set a fire or vandalize property or equipment in or around the shelter premises, OR
- B. Possess, sell or use illegal drugs or alcohol in or around the shelter premises, OR
- C. Assault or physically attack another person, or exhibit threatening behavior which is immediately dangerous to another person, or possess a weapon, OR
- D. Am arrested for criminal activity including, but not limited to, trespassing, theft, harassment, extortion, loan-sharking, intimidation or victimization of residents or staff in or around shelter premises.
- E. Smoke in unauthorized shelter areas.

ADULT SHELTER CLIENT RIGHTS

As a Shelter Applicant/Client I Have the Right To:

- * Exercise my civil and legal rights including freedom of speech and worship.
- * Private written and verbal communications, including sending or receiving mail or other correspondence without interception or interference.
- * Present complaints for myself or other residents to shelter administrators or anyone else without fear of reprisal.
- * Join with other residents or individuals to work for improvements in resident care.
- * Manage my own finances, in accordance with shelter requirements and financial eligibility standards.
- * Privacy in treatment and caring for my personal needs.
- * Have my shelter records protected in accordance with confidentiality standards.
- * Leave from my assigned shelter and return there (by curfew).
- * Courteous, fair and respectful treatment by staff.
- * Have my version of an incident in which I am involved included in an incident report.

I Also Have the Right Not To:

- * Be restrained or locked in a room at any time.
- * Be made to perform work by force or threat. I understand that I must, however, comply with all work requirements mandated by Public Assistance Regulations, and that I may be required to participate in work related to my participation in particular shelter programs.
- * Be made to give tips or gratuities to any shelter employee, security guard or other resident. *If anyone should ask for such payment, report it immediately to the Shelter Director.*

I understand my rights as a shelter client and that I have the responsibility to comply with all Adult Shelter Rules and Responsibilities, as well as to respect the rights and private property of other shelter residents. I have received a copy of Rights, Rules and Responsibilities.

Date	Client Print Name	Client Sign Name
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I have reviewed the Adult Shelter Rights, Rules and Responsibilities with the client and have provided him/her with a copy.

Date	Staff Print Name	Staff Sign Name	Staff Title
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