

Dept. of Corrections: Switching to photocopied personal mail to address drug concerns

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Madison – The Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) is partnering with a company to start photocopying the personal mail of all adults in its care, a response to the growing problem of dangerous drugs being sent into DOC institutions through personal mail.

DOC has seen an increase of drug incidents among persons in its care, including increased use of [K2](#) and other [synthetic cannabinoids](#), which have no odor and can be difficult to detect. Paper and envelopes can be sprayed with or soaked in these drugs. This paper is then sent into DOC institutions via mail, where some persons in DOC care tear it into small strips, and use it or sell it to others.

Synthetic cannabinoids can cause violent behavior in some cases. In others, it can cause serious medical distress that may require emergency medical treatment.

“Our agency’s mission and core values include protecting the safety of our staff and those in our care, and that is what’s driving this decision,” said DOC Secretary Kevin Carr. “By stopping the original pieces of paper from entering the institutions, we can greatly reduce the amount of drugs coming in and create a safer environment.”

Despite increased searches on living units, K9 searches, increased urinalysis testing and sharing of information about the dangers of synthetic cannabinoids, DOC still had 182 drug incidents in its facilities in the month of September, with 16 of them

resulting in persons in DOC care needing emergency treatment at a medical facility.

DOC saw success when it piloted a photocopying process at Fox Lake Correctional Institution (FLCI), which was the first DOC facility to see a large spike in drug incidents earlier this year. FLCI switched to photocopying mail in mid-April, a month in which the institution had nine potential overdoses and two incidents of violent behavior related to drug use. Numbers in both categories fell in the ensuing months before reaching zero in August.

[Wisconsin DOC](#) cares for about 20,000 people at 36 adult institutions. To photocopy the personal mail for that large a group, DOC is contracting with a mail management service named [TextBehind](#), which already provides mail photocopying services to the corrections agency for the state of North Carolina and around 30 individual counties in multiple states. Personal mail for those in DOC care will be sent to TextBehind, which will do the following within 24 hours of receiving it: open the mail, photocopy the envelope and contents, and send the photocopies to DOC institutions for delivery. TextBehind will make color copies of photos and drawings.

“The amount of copying is too much to ask of DOC staff, so we decided to work with a vendor,” said DOC Division of Adult Institutions Administrator Sarah Cooper. “Also, hiring a group that specializes in this type of work should minimize any issues with the photocopies.”

During the pilot, some persons in DOC’s care at FLCI complained of photocopies that cut off parts of the original mail. Under this contract, TextBehind will be required to hold the original mail for 30 days after receipt. Any person in DOC care with a concern about their photocopied mail will have 14 days from receipt of the mail to file a complaint. Holding the original for 30 days gives TextBehind the time and opportunity to address any complaints.

Wisconsin DOC will begin this new practice on December 6, 2021. Starting on that date, anyone sending personal mail to persons in DOC care will have to mail it to TextBehind, making sure the address on the envelope includes the information below:

PIOC full name (first and last) and DOC #

Correctional Facility name (do not abbreviate)

P.O Box 247

Phoenix, MD 21131

There will be no added cost to persons in DOC care or those exchanging mail with them. Legal, medical and other protected mail are excluded and should not be sent to TextBehind.

Family and friends will also **have the option** to electronically send letters, greeting cards and drawings to their loved ones in DOC care through the TextBehind website or the free TextBehind app for smartphones.