AI Basic Training – Mail Processing (Remote)

This document provides remote volunteers an overview of processing USPS prisoner mail and information regarding mail codes. This document is for remote volunteers only. If you are a local volunteer who will assist with processing physical mail, contact Melissa (melissabee@adoptaninmate.org) for local mail processing training.

Described herein:

1) AI Mail Basics
2) Terms and Definitions
3) Processing Mail
4) Mail Codes
5) Wrap it up

1) AI Mail Basics

- We receive anywhere from 400 to 1,000 letters each month from prisoners in every state in the country. Our top five states are (in this order): Texas (50%), California, Florida, Pennsylvania and Nevada. The Texas state prison system is called TDCJ, for Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

- Prisoners hear about AI from various sources, either word of mouth from a loved one or a fellow prisoner, or often from a prisoner resource directory like the PARC Directory or Inside Book Project. These and other resource lists are compiled and mass-mailed to prisoners all over the country once or twice a year.

- We are not a dating site, nor can we provide any legal advice or support. Our goal is to provide friendship and support to prisoners. We do not charge inmates or their families for any of our services.

- All incoming USPS mail is processed by local volunteers: dated, opened, coded, logged, scanned, uploaded, and shredded (or burned). Entering the data can be done by local or remote volunteers.

- Links take you to supplemental material useful while you're completing your tasks.

2) Terms and definitions

- System: We track five systems: county, state, federal, ICE, or military. See AI Facts about Prison Systems. System may also be referred to as *Agency*.

- Facility – Where the inmate is housed. See Facility Primer. Sometimes referred to as *Institution*.
- SASE – This is a standard acronym for **S**elf-**A**ddressed **S**tamped **E**nvelope (pronounced "sase.") Some correspondence we receive includes a SASE or a loose stamp from the prisoner as a courtesy, although some states don't allow it.

- Incoming Mail Codes: The codes written on the front of each envelope indicating the contents.

3) Processing Mail

Local volunteers receive one or more boxes of mail to process at a time. Each box contains one full week of mail. Local volunteers complete the following steps:

a. Stamp the date received on each envelope.
b. Tally counts for both *number of letters* received (Monday – Saturday); and *type* received (by code).
c. Open, read, and code each letter appropriately.
d. Respond to all mail with survey, letter, and/or postcard.
e. Scan and upload to the AI Volunteer Drive.

Scanned mail is then sorted into Tasks and assigned to remote volunteers by the Volunteer Coordinator.

4) Mail Codes

While remote volunteers do not process physical mail, it is important for *all* volunteers to be familiar with the Codes as they are used in many other tasks.

Incoming Mail Codes are handwritten on the front of each envelope to indicate the contents.

SR	Survey Request
SRS	SR + SASE or stamp
S	Completed Survey
SS	S+SASE or stamp
FU	Follow-up
COA	Change of Address
PFP	Poetry
AFP	Artwork
LFP	Letters From Prison (Blog-worthy)
BR	Book Review
WB	Welcome Banner
PIC	Picture (to be returned)
ROM	Seeking Romance
LEG	Seeking Legal Assistance
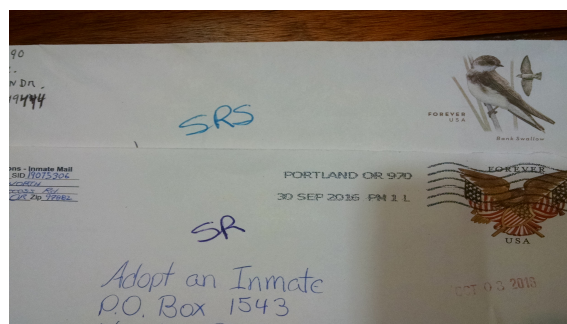
Mail Coding Guidance

Most items will be either survey requests (SR) or completed surveys (S). An S added at the end of any code indicates that a stamped envelope or stamp was included.

- SR/SRS: Any initial contact from a new prisoner who wants to participate in the program is coded as SR or SRS, and we respond by sending a survey.
- S/SS – A completed survey. An SS gets responded to with a Survey Letter.
- FU – Follow up to an earlier request.
- AFP/PFP/LFP – Items to consider for publishing on the blog.
- ROM – Letter is written as a dating profile (reply with post card).
- LEG - Requesting legal help and/or contains legal documents (reply with post card).
- PIC – Contains picture printed on photo paper (these get scanned and returned to sender as a courtesy).

4) Wrap it up

- Watch the video AI Mail Processing – Remote.
- Log all your training time.
- Contact your Volunteer Coordinator for next steps.