



**pennsylvania**

OFFICE OF VICTIM ADVOCATE

*Giving Crime Victims a Voice*

*Courage • Strength • Resilience*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

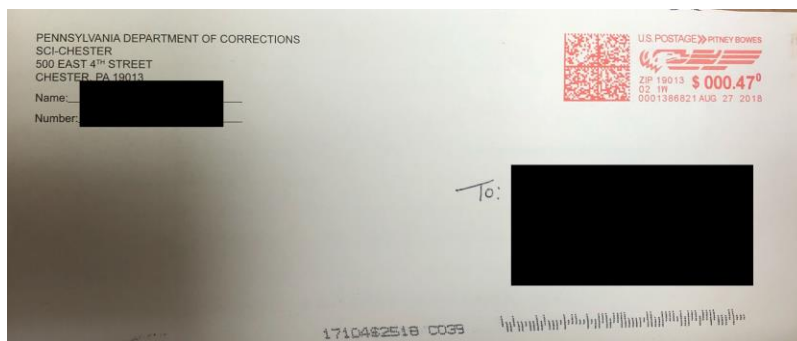
**August 31, 2018**

## **When Receiving Inmate Mail**

**Harrisburg, PA** – The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) [experienced several incidents](#) this month in which staff and inmates incurred adverse effects from illicit substances. The DOC is actively planning and researching ways to implement safe mail handling procedures that seek to shield all members of the public, including victims, from being exposed to any illicit substances.

As they continue to develop their ongoing procedures, the Office of Victim Advocate reminds victims to be aware of unusual circumstances that follow the opening of any mail received from inmates. We recognize that not all No Contact Orders or Protections from Abuse are observed and upheld. Please review the following information for your awareness.

Inmate mail arrives with a return address from the Department of Corrections and an inmate name and number in the upper left corner. (See below example.)



During an overdose, opioids overwhelm certain receptors in the brain, interrupting a key part of the body's impulse to breathe. Breathing slows dangerously or stops. This can occur immediately after coming in contact with (touching or smelling) certain illicit substances or minutes later. Additional signs of an opioid overdose include:

- slow or weakened breathing
- gradual increase in breathing followed by a decrease in breathing and airflow

- trouble breathing or not breathing
- deep snoring or gurgling noises
- dizziness, confusion, extreme drowsiness
- passing out or collapsing
- slow or no heartbeat
- cold, pale, clammy skin
- very small pupils

It is advised that, should you believe you may be receiving inmate mail or come in contact with illicit substances, you obtain the medication Naloxone from your physician.

**Please remember that you are under no obligation to open mail from your offender. If you are unsure about opening mail, we advise that you dispose of it immediately.**

Any mail that has been sent to you from our office has already been screened and approved.

If you proceed with opening mail from your offender that has not come from our office, we advise that you have a support person with you who can call 911 for emergency assistance should you come in contact with an illicit substance.

This message may bring up feelings of fear and anxiety for you. You are not alone. If you need to speak with someone, please call our office at 800.563.6399.

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**MEDIA CONTACT:**

To reach Jennifer Storm, Commonwealth Victim Advocate, directly, call 717.756.9741 or email [jstorm@pa.gov](mailto:jstorm@pa.gov).

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