

## TDCJ Announces Revised Book Policy to Enhance Safety and Reduce Contraband

**Huntsville, TX** – The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) is implementing new measures to combat illegal narcotics entering its facilities. Effective April 1, all books mailed to inmates must be softback and in new condition. TDCJ will no longer accept hardback books or books in used condition.

“Across the nation, corrections agencies are fighting to stop contraband from entering facilities and prevent drug-related incidents, overdoses and homicides. TDCJ is no different,” TDCJ Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin said. “These changes are vital to keeping our staff and the inmate population safe.”

Over the years, TDCJ has witnessed a rise in contraband smuggled into correctional facilities through books. In many cases, contraband is found hidden inside hard covers and bindings, or pages are soaked in the substance. All of these are difficult for staff and technology to detect, posing serious safety risks to employees and incarcerated individuals.

“As a life-long reader, and, yes, a life-long reader of not just screens but actual books, including hardback textbooks, novels, and non-fiction, it truly pains me to think that we are being forced as a Board to put any restrictions on the ability of members of our populations in TDCJ to any type of reading material,” Texas Board of Criminal Justice Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols said. “But what pains me even more, and what frankly keeps me up more at night than anything else with the agency that we oversee as a Board, is the fact that there are illegal and dangerous drugs that are being introduced into our TDCJ facilities and that are causing overdoses and, yes, overdose deaths in our facilities.”

Additionally, Windham School District is partnering with TDCJ to manage book donations. Effective April 1, 2026, donated books should be sent to the Windham School District, who oversees all libraries across the agency and has a process in place to accept and distribute donations. For more information about this process, visit the [Windham website](#). Books that are donated by a volunteer organization to a specific individual can still be mailed to the unit, but must be softback and in new condition.

Looking forward, the agency is developing an online portal for senders to register and provide basic information about the book or magazine they are sending. Similar to the current visitation system, this portal will allow staff to verify senders, prepare for the incoming publications and streamline processing.

The agency has worked diligently over the past few years to implement numerous programs, policies and procedures to reduce substance use and contraband entering our facilities. Since 2023, the agency has made changes to inmate mail policy; expanded

programming to help those battling addiction; and launched unit-level rallies to promote a drug-free environment, inspire sobriety and provide helpful resources.

“We are exploring every avenue to reduce, and ultimately, halt illegal narcotics from entering our facilities,” Chief Programs Officer Jason Clark said. “These changes are designed to protect the health and safety of our population and staff, and create an environment where individuals have a real opportunity to focus on treatment, personal growth, and successful re-entry.”

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