

# Polinsky Children's Center - Inspection and Contraband Procedures

(Created 06/14/24)

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## Related Policies

Additional information can be found in the following policies:

- Confiscating Property
- Children's Property
- Polinsky Children's Center - Continuum of Interventions
- Special Incident Reports (SIR)
- Critical Incident Protocol
- Communication with Attorneys

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## Forms

The following forms are referenced in this policy:

- 06-25 Contraband Disposal Slip
- 06-26 A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center -Special Incident Report Packet
- 04-51A Child Welfare Services Critical Incident Report

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## Background

To ensure the health, safety, and security of the children/youth, and staff at A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center (PCC), PCC staff will conduct inspections and searches, and confiscate contraband that endangers the safety and risk of children/youth and staff at PCC.

**NOTE:** For Field Workers, refer to Confiscating Property as this policy pertains only to PCC.

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## Policy

The safety of children/youth and staff at PCC is a top priority and commitment within the agency. In alignment with [Title 22, Division 6 Chapter 5 Group Homes Subchapter 1. Community Treatment Facilities](#) regulations, this policy is designed to prevent unreasonable searches. It asserts the fundamental right of a child/youth “to be free from unreasonable searches of personal belongings.”

PCC staff will conduct reasonable searches in a trauma informed way that safeguards the rights and dignity of the child/youth. The searches will be age- appropriate, reflecting a thoughtful and respectful approach. PCC staff are expected to approach searches with impartiality, fairness, and justified reasoning. Staff will use their training, work experience, best judgment, critical thought, and assess each situation individually prior to conducting a search.

All searches will be conducted in full view of and with the assistance of the child/youth. The child/youth is to be advised of searches and has the right to be present. A search will not be conducted without prior advisement. Common living areas are subject to inspection without advisement.

Children/youth reasonably suspected of having contraband, attempting to bring contraband, or hidden dangerous objects into the cottages, which could present a safety risk to themselves or others, will have their belongings searched. It is the responsibility of PCC staff to conduct a thorough search of a child/youth’s belongings when there is reasonable suspicion.

**Reasonable suspicion** means that it is objectively reasonable for a person to entertain a suspicion, based upon facts that could cause a reasonable person in a like position, drawing, when appropriate, on the person's training and experience, to suspect that there is contraband on the child/youth’s person or their belongings.

**Contraband** is considered as any item/object that can cause harm to the children/youth, staff and/or property damage at PCC to include, but not limited to spray paint, weapons, items that could be considered weapons, illegal substances, paraphernalia, alcohol, and/or prescription medications not prescribed to the child/youth etc.

**NOTE:** Medications prescribed to the child/youth, and in a bottle with their name, will be given to Rady Children’s Hospital Center staff at PCC.  
Staff should always be observant and aware of contraband in surrounding areas on campus.

Staff will always wear gloves when conducting searches at entry, other contraband searches and disposing of contraband. Staff will exercise best judgment when handling or disposing contraband. Should there be any concerns for the safety of staff and children/youth, staff will not handle contraband and will contact their supervisor for consultation on next steps.

**NOTE:** Noncontraband items that a child/youth considers valuable and does not wish to bring to the cottage can be stored in the PCC safe. Child/youth will be able to have access to their noncontraband items. PCC staff will encourage child/youth to keep valuables in the safe for safe keeping. All the child/youth’s belongings will be inventoried when they get/return to their cottage. Refer to the Children’s Property policy for returning items that are left at PCC.

**Procedures for  
Conducting  
Searches at Entry**

If there is **reasonable suspicion** that a child/youth has contraband on their person or in their belongings, a search will be conducted.

The table below outlines responsibilities for PCC staff when conducting searches of a child/youth when entering PCC. Refer to child refusal, should the child/youth refuse.

**NOTE:** For staff safety, staff will always wear gloves during searches.

Step	Who	Responsibilities
1	Clerical Staff	Direct all residents entering or returning to PCC to the Intake Lobby.
2	Intake Social Worker	<p>Searches will be conducted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Children 9 years old and under</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask child for any contraband</li> <li>○ Ask child to empty pockets</li> <li>○ Have child walk through the Metor 200 metal detector.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> If after completing the above, and there is still reasonable suspicion that the child has contraband; staff may use the security wand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Children/Youth 10 years old and over</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask child/youth for any contraband.</li> <li>○ Ask child/youth to empty pockets.</li> <li>○ Ask child/youth to remove shoes and socks.</li> <li>○ Have child/youth walk through the Metor 200 metal detector and use the security wand.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> For new intakes brought to PCC by Law Enforcement (LE), ask LE if they have completed or will conduct an inspection if contraband is suspected.</p> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Be aware of child/youth using bathrooms while in the intake area - notify Residential Care Worker Supervisor (RCWS), Duty Officer (DO), or cottage staff of anything that is of concern.</p>

**Procedures for  
Conducting  
Searches at Entry  
(cont.)**

Step	Who	Responsibilities
2 (cont.)	Intake Social Worker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there continues to be reasonable suspicion of contraband after the completing the above, inform the Residential Care Worker (RCW)/Cottage staff, and request the staff to bring additional clothing to Intake. If there is no further suspicion of contraband, <b>skip Step 3.</b></li> </ul>
3	RCW/ Cottage Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet child/youth at Intake with clothing to change into.</li> <li>• Ask child/youth to lift pant legs and shirt (up to waist level) and to remove their shoes so that staff can check them.</li> <li>• Prior to child/youth going into the restroom, check the restroom to ensure that contraband has not been hidden beforehand.</li> <li>• Ask child/youth to go into bathroom and change into the clothing provided.</li> <li>• Ask child/youth to step out of the bathroom once they have changed and give the staff their personal clothing.</li> <li>• Complete another search of the bathroom.</li> <li>• Conduct a thorough inspection of their personal clothing, ensuring to check pockets, inseams, etc.</li> <li>• Return their personal clothing. Ensure that child/youth is informed that an inventory of their belongings will also be conducted at the cottage to minimize property loss.</li> </ul>
4	Intake Worker	Document in the “Kids Information Database System” (KIDS), PCC’s child data entry system, that a search was conducted and note whether contraband was found or not.

If contraband is found and/or detected refer to Disposal of Contraband

**Contraband Searches**

If there is reasonable suspicion that a child/youth has contraband, staff will inform the child/youth of the search and their right to be present for room and personal belonging searches. Refer to child refusal, should the child/youth refuse.

Below are tips for conducting searches:

Type of Searches	Actions
Personal Item Searches	<p>Areas to search include, but are not limited to checking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Purses, Backpacks, Luggage, Etc.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ask child/youth to remove all items from the bag.</li> <li>○ Check lining and pockets.</li> <li>○ Check liquid items (perfume, water bottles, etc.), shake hard after opening and closing, check bottom of items, and ensure that the smell is consistent with the item.</li> <li>○ Look under mirrors and compact or make-up.</li> <li>○ Open all pockets in wallets, purses, backpacks, etc.</li> <li>○ Touch and feel all paper items to assure there is no contraband hidden in them.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Stuffed Animals</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Look for loose seams and/or unusual lumps.</li> <li>○ Notice if stuffed item feels heavier than usual</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Clothing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Check seams/cuffs on shirts</li> <li>○ Check pockets</li> <li>○ Unroll items</li> <li>○ Shake out socks</li> <li>○ Check inside shoes; remove insole if possible.</li> <li>○ Check inside of belts - some have zippered compartments.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Books</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Shake and Leaf through the pages of each book</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Room Searches	<p>When a room search is conducted, PCC Staff will document the search in the “Red Book” (the Red Book is located in the cottage office).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Areas to search include:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ all clothes in room – hems, pockets, and inside socks</li> <li>○ clothes that child/youth put in laundry bins</li> <li>○ inside shoes</li> <li>○ edging on rug or parts that may be lifted</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Contraband Searches (cont.)**

Type of Searches	Actions
Room Searches (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ curtain hems</li> <li>○ linen hems – including pillowcases</li> <li>○ mattress – take off sheets, look for small holes or torn seams</li> <li>○ between sheets</li> <li>○ under bed frame</li> <li>○ light (outlet and switch) plates are not loose.</li> <li>○ window ledges</li> <li>○ behind any posters or pictures on the wall</li> <li>○ vents in the room.</li> <li>○ any light fixtures</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> If there are any maintenance problems noted during the searches e.g., broken vents, broken light fixtures, broken outlets etc., staff must report any problems to the DO.</p>
Surrounding Areas Searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Staff should always be observant and aware of contraband in surrounding areas in the cottage.</li> <li>● Areas in the cottage to be observant include but are not limited to:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ outside of the rooms</li> <li>○ bathrooms</li> <li>○ bookshelves</li> <li>○ TV/Game areas</li> <li>○ couches</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> These areas will not include any belongings/rooms or items that belong to an individual child/youth. Searches of personal belongings and rooms will only be conducted if reasonable suspicion arises, and the child/youth has been advised of the right to be present.</p>
External Ground searches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The PCC Security Guard(s) will conduct external ground searches.</li> <li>● Children/youth may have attempted to leave contraband in the surrounding area of PCC. The PCC security guard conducts ground checks and will search the area for contraband a minimum of one (1) time per hour with no more than forty (40) minutes between rounds.</li> </ul>

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**Contraband Searches (cont.)**

Type of Searches	Actions
External Ground searches (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• PCC staff will be notified if there is any contraband found and will follow the Disposal of Contraband procedures; however, Staff will skip steps that include individual child/youth steps (i.e., Special Incident Report (SIR), putting 06-25 in a child's file) unless a child/youth is identified of having the contraband.</li></ul>

If contraband is found, refer to Disposal of Contraband.

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**Child Refusal**

On the rare occasion, that a child/youth refuses to have personal belongings inspected and there is reasonable suspicion of contraband on their person/in their belongings, staff will:

Location	Action Steps
Intake	Child/youth will be asked to remain in the Intake area or the Visitation area.
On Grounds/Cottage	Staff will consult with supervisor and will act on case-by-case basis to ensure the safety of all children/youth.

During this time, staff will **consistently and proactively engage** with the child /youth and ensure all their basic, medical, and mental health needs are met. Staff will make every effort to engage the child/youth using the Nurtured Heart Approach (NHA) techniques, utilize Polinsky Children's Center - Continuum of Interventions supportive services and/or contacting the assigned SW for support, to obtain compliance and expedite the return to the respective cottage.

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**Disposal of Contraband**

It is imperative that all contraband is disposed of in a secure and safe manner. For staff safety, staff will always wear gloves when disposing of contraband.

The DO will contact the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) non-emergency line when drugs or drug paraphernalia are found and/or when contraband or weapon gives reasonable suspicion of involvement in criminal activities.

**NOTE:** If there is evidence of distribution of sales of large quantities, a child/youth may become justice involved, cited and/or a court hearing may be set based on the circumstances.

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**Disposal of Contraband (cont.)**

The table below outlines responsibilities for PCC staff when contraband is found:

Step	Who	Action						
1	PCC Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify supervisor</li> <li>If safe to do so, remove contraband from child/youth's belongings</li> </ul>						
2	Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If there is a safety concern in handling the contraband, contact the DO to assess for next steps.</li> </ul> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>IF CONTRABAND IS...</th> <th>THEN...</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>drugs or drug paraphernalia and/or is contraband that gives reasonable suspicion that a crime was committed</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify the DO</li> <li>Go to <b>Step 3</b>.</li> </ul> </td> </tr> <tr> <td><u>not</u> drugs or drug paraphernalia nor contraband that gives reasonable suspicion that a crime was committed</td> <td> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify the DO</li> <li>Go to <b>Step 4</b></li> </ul> </td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	IF CONTRABAND IS...	THEN...	drugs or drug paraphernalia and/or is contraband that gives reasonable suspicion that a crime was committed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify the DO</li> <li>Go to <b>Step 3</b>.</li> </ul>	<u>not</u> drugs or drug paraphernalia nor contraband that gives reasonable suspicion that a crime was committed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Notify the DO</li> <li>Go to <b>Step 4</b></li> </ul>
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3	DO	<p>If contraband <u>is</u> drugs or drug paraphernalia and/or is contraband that gives reasonable suspicion that a crime was committed the DO will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Place the contraband in a "Property Envelope" and sign and date (Property Envelopes are located at intake area)</li> <li>Place the contraband in a PCC safe</li> <li>Contact SDPD non-emergency line</li> <li>Obtain an incident number</li> <li>If SDPD does not respond by the end of the business day, notify the DO on the next shift via email prior to leaving the shift.</li> <li>Ensure that an SDPD officer signs the 06-25, in the instances that SDPD is contacted.</li> <li>Go to <b>Step 5, once SDPD picks up contraband</b>, provide incident number to Supervisor submitting the 06-25.</li> </ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> DO must continue to contact the SDPD non-emergency line daily for an update until contraband is picked up.</p>						



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**Disposal of  
Contraband (cont.)**

Step	Who	Action
4	Supervisors (2 required)	Dispose of Contraband in the secured dumpster (DO can be considered as one of the supervisors present).
5	Supervisor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete the 06-25 and submit to DO.</li><li>• Complete an SIR. Refer to the Special Incident Reports policy for guidance on procedures. In addition, a Critical Incident Report, may also be needed, see Critical Incident Protocol for additional information.</li></ul> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Assigned SWs refer to the Communication with Attorneys policy for protocol on informing attorneys on incidents surrounding dependent child/youth when an SIR is received.</p>
6	DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review and sign the 06-25.</li><li>• Save the 06-25 in the S drive.</li><li>• Store a copy of the 06-25 in the contraband binder located at intake.</li><li>• Store a copy of the 06-25 in child/youth's file.</li></ul>

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**Alignment with SET**

This policy aligns with SET [Value 1](#), Relationships With Children, Youth And Families Are The Foundation. PCC staff will adopt guiding principles of SET Value 1 and have a clear understanding of safety and wellbeing in respect to conducting reasonable searches.

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