NEW MEXICO ASSOCIATION OF COUNTIES
SAMPLE INMATE SEARCH POLICY

I. REFERENCES:

(4-ALDF-2A-20, 4-ALDF-2C-01, 4-ALDF-2C-03-4, 4-ALDF-2C-06, SJ-090, and SJ-091) (NMAC Adult Detention Professional Standards: SC-22, SC-23, SC-24, and SC-25)

II. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for determining when searches are legally permissible and to establish procedures for conducting permissible searches.

III. JUSTIFICATION:

The County conducts searches of arrestees and inmates in order to prevent the introduction of weapons, drugs, and other contraband into the Detention Center, to protect the health safety and welfare of inmates, staff, and visitors, and to further the safe, secure, and orderly running of the Detention Center.

IV. DEFINITIONS:

A. Pat Search: A Pat search is a search in which the individual’s clothing is not removed and the officer makes physical contact with the inmate being searched.

B. Clothing Search: A clothing search is the search of an individual’s clothing where they are required to disrobe, one item of clothing at a time, and pass the clothing to the officer for inspection. There is no physical contact between the officer and the individual and the individual is not required to remove their undergarments.

C. Strip Search: A strip search is the visual examination of an individual’s naked body for weapons, drugs or other contraband. A strip search requires removal of all clothing. However, any search that requires the subject to remove or arrange some or all of their clothing to permit a visual inspection of their breasts, buttocks, or genitalia shall be treated as a strip search and subject to the limitations described in this policy.

D. Body Cavity Search: A body cavity search is a search of an individual’s body cavity, (e.g., anus, vagina, nose etc.) that involves touching or probing with hands or an instrument.

E. Physically Disabled Person: A person who requires an assistive device for mobility, including, but not limited to, a wheelchair, brace, crutch or artificial limb.
V. SEARCH OF INMATES:

A. On Initial Intake

1. Pat Search

All individuals booked into the Detention Center shall be subject to a thorough pat search in order to retrieve contraband prior to being accepted from the arresting law enforcement agency.

2. Clothing Search

All individuals who are dressed out into a Detention Center uniform shall be subject to a clothing search at the time of the clothing exchange.

3. Strip Search

Strip searches of arrestees on intake must be authorized in writing by [insert ranks/titles of individuals who have authority to authorize strip search]. Strip searches may only be conducted when there is reasonable suspicion to believe the arrestee may be in possession of weapons, drugs, or other contraband under the limited circumstances described below. All strip searches must be documented.

Circumstances warranting strip search of arrestees on intake:

a. There is reasonable suspicion to believe the arrestee is carrying or concealing contraband because one or more of the charge(s) for which the arrestee is being booked involve possession or distribution of controlled substances, or the arrestee’s use of physical violence or weapons.

b. Even though the arrestee’s charges do not involve drugs, weapons or violence there is reasonable suspicion to believe the arrestee is carrying or concealing contraband because:

1) The arrestee has a criminal record that includes convictions for crimes involving drugs, weapons or physical violence (so long as the convictions are sufficiently serious and recent to create a reasonable suspicion that the individual is carrying or concealing contraband);

2) The arrestee used or concealed contraband or attempted escape during a prior incarceration;

3) The arrestee’s appearance and demeanor, or actions suggest they are carrying or concealing contraband

4) The circumstances surrounding the arrest suggest they are carrying or concealing contraband;
5) The facility has learned from a credible third party that the arrestee may possess weapons, drugs or contraband; or
6) The officer conducting the pat search discovered evidence of a suspicious object beneath the arrestee’s clothing.

Other circumstances which may contribute to a determination of reasonable suspicion (but which are insufficient standing alone):

a. Whether the arrestee will be intermingled with the general population; and
b. Whether the arrestee has a known gang affiliation.

B. After Intake

Inmates residing at the facility are also subject to searches after booking under the following circumstances.

1. Pat Search

A pat search is the most often search type used in the Detention Center. Pat searches should be conducted by officers whenever an inmate departs from or returns to a secure area.

2. Strip Search

Strip searches are utilized when there is reasonable suspicion to believe the inmate is in possession of contraband that cannot be detected by a pat search and under the circumstances described below.

Circumstances requiring strip search of inmates:

a. The inmate is returning to the secure area of the facility from outside activities, such as, supervised leave, work release, work detail, court, medical furloughs, etc.;

b. Before and after every contact visit.

Circumstances justifying strip search of inmates but which require supervisor approval:

a. The inmate participated in an activity where they had an opportunity to mingle with outside groups, particularly where there were large numbers of people under minimal supervision;

b. The inmate is being admitted/discharged from maximum security or the Mental Health Unit;

c. The inmate is being placed on suicide watch;

d. When information is learned that the inmate possesses contraband;
e. When an officer discovers evidence of a suspicious object beneath the inmate’s clothing.

C. Search Procedures

Searches may only be conducted by staff trained in techniques that protect both inmates and staff from bodily harm and civil liability. The least invasive form of search indicated (given the type of contraband and suspected method of introduction) shall be conducted. The subject should not be touched anymore than is necessary to conduct a comprehensive search of their person.

If the search of a physically disabled person requires the removal of an assistive device or involves a person lacking sensation in some portion of his or her body, the search shall be conducted with extreme care not to injury the inmate. It is recommended that whenever possible such searches shall be performed by staff that has been trained in handling physically disabled persons.

SEARCHES SHALL NEVER BE USED TO DEGRADE, HARASS, EMBARRASS OR PUNISH

1. Pat Search:

Pat searches are conducted by an officer that is the same gender as the individual being searched. Pat searches should be performed prior to departure from any secure area and when there is reasonable suspicion to believe an inmate is in possession of contraband. Always have a new arrestee remove all of their personal property from their pockets and ask them if they have any weapons of any kind in their possession and where they are located before attempting to search. Pat searches shall be conducted as follows:

a. Stand behind the inmate;

b. Have inmate removed hat, unbutton coat or jacket, and empty all personal articles from pockets;

c. Put on gloves;

d. Run hands under shirt collar and down upper part of each arm to wrist. Bring back hands along underside of arms and armpits, sweeping hands down shirt front to belt from front to back. Run hands down front and back of legs to shoe tops and back up sides of legs, sweeping hands down the back from collar to belt. If an object is detected, try to identify it by gently squeezing it before attempting to remove it;

e. Have inmate remove shoes and socks;

f. Examine hat, shoes, socks and other articles;

g. When searching large groups of inmates, such as work details, line up all inmates with hats off, coats unbuttoned and pockets emptied;
h. Do not allow inmates to intermingle during searches. Inmates that have not been searched, shall not be allowed to mingle with those who have; and

i. After search is completed, check the area for contraband dropped or discarded by inmates.

2. **Clothing Search:**

   Clothing searches are conducted as part of the inventory of the detainee’s belongings when the individual is dressed into their detention uniform. Clothing searches are conducted by an officer that is the same gender as the individual being searched.

   Clothing searches shall be conducted as follows:

   a. Conduct the search in an area that assures privacy.

   b. Prior to beginning the clothing search, conduct a pat-search of the individual.

   c. Instruct the individual to face you and remove one item of clothing at a time.

   d. Manually check each clothing item for weapons, drugs, or other contraband.

   e. Allow the individual to retain their undergarments or the last item of clothing necessary to cover the individual’s breasts, genitalia and buttocks. If the individual is not wearing underpants have them empty all pockets and run your thumbs around the inside of the waist band and thoroughly check the hems and seams of the clothing.

   f. Do not require the individual to remain unclothed for longer than the minimum time necessary to inspect each article of clothing.

   g. Provide the individual with a detention uniform and secure their personal belongings.

3. **Strip Search:**

   Strip searches shall only be conducted by detention staff who is the same gender as the subject and who have been trained to perform strip searches. When possible, two detention staff of the same gender as the subject will be present during strip searches. No non-essential personnel may witness a strip search.
Strip searches shall be conducted as follows:

a. Isolate the subject pending approval for the search.

b. Conduct the search in an area that assures privacy.

c. Conduct the search in a tactful, professional manner.

d. During a strip search, do not touch the subject except as required to control them.

e. Have the subject remove their clothing.

Physically examine the following areas:

a. All clothing;

b. Run fingers over lining, seams, collars, cuffs, waistbands, and fly;

c. Shoes, inside soles and heels;

d. Socks, turning them inside out;

e. False teeth, artificial limbs, plaster casts;

f. If applicable, under bandages and dressings;

g. Have the subject run their fingers through their hair. Check for wigs and hairpieces;

Visually examine the following areas:

a. The inside and outside of the subject’s ears;

b. The subject’s nostrils and mouth (above and below tongue);

c. Under the subject’s breast area and fatty rolls (when necessary, have the subject lift their breasts or separate fatty rolls);

d. The subject’s hands, torso, and back;

e. The subject’s genital area

1) To obtain a clear view of the groin area, have the subject lift their penis and testicles;

2) Have subjects with thick pubic hair part their pubic hair;

3) To obtain a clear view of the rectum/vaginal area, have the subject to bend over and spread the rectum;
4) Have the subject squat and instruct them to cough 3-5 times then re-inspect the rectum/vaginal area;

f. Between the toes and the soles of the subject’s feet.

g. Immediately after completing the search, have subject robe in appropriate attire.

4. **Body Cavity Search:**

   The Detention Center does not conduct body cavity searches. Should strip examination and/or other information lead an officer to believe that an individual is concealing contraband, a weapon, or evidence within a body cavity, the officer shall consult with [*insert rank like jail administrator or shift commander*] to determine whether sufficient justification exists for a body cavity search. Body cavity searches shall only be performed by healthcare personnel under conditions that give due regard to hygiene and the subject’s privacy.

D. **Search Documentation**

1. **On Initial Intake**

   An Intake Search Form must be completed for every individual who is booked into the facility. This form will record which searches were performed and the results. The Intake Search Form is also used to document all justifications for strip searches performed on intake and the name of the approving supervisor. Any time a strip search is performed on initial intake a copy of the Intake Search Form must be submitted through the on-duty supervisor to the detention administrator.

2. **After Intake:**

   An Inmate Search Form must be completed any time contraband is found on an inmate.

3. **Document Retention**

   Completed search forms shall be maintained in the inmate’s arrest file and shall be retained in accordance with the State of New Mexico records retention standards and guidelines.

VI. **DISPOSITION OF CONTRABAND:**

A. All contraband found during searches will be confiscated. Illegal contraband will be turned over to the Chief of Security, along with the Chain of Custody Form and handled as evidence. Confiscated contraband shall be stored in a secure cabinet within the Chief of Security office, or placed with law enforcement personnel, for prosecution.
B. Officers identifying inmates possessing contraband will complete a disciplinary report and Chain of Custody Form.

VII. OTHER:

A. Employees shall have appropriate training prior to conducting any type of inmate search.

B. Violations of this policy may subject the employee to disciplinary up to and including termination.

NOTE TO DETENTION ADMINISTRATORS:

“VI. Other” the provisions regarding training and consequences for violation of policy can be included in this policy or addressed in separate freestanding training and discipline policies.

Attachments: Intake Search Form, Inmate Search Form

THIS SAMPLE POLICY IS BEING PROVIDED TO ASSIST YOU WITH DEVELOPING YOUR FACILITY POLICY. IT IS NOT LEGAL ADVICE. YOU ARE ADVISED TO HAVE YOUR COUNTY ATTORNEY REVIEW AND APPROVE YOUR STRIP SEARCH POLICY BEFORE IT IS IMPLEMENTED.
INTAKE SEARCH FORM
Complete this form for every Booking/Intake.

Date: ___________________________ Time (Military Time): ___________________________

Officer(s) conducting Search: _______________________________________________________

Supervisor approving Strip Search: ___________________________________________________

Subject’s Name: ___________________________ Subject’s Number: _______________________

- Male ☐ - Female ☐ - Age: ______ - Occupation: _________________________________

- Known gang member ☐ - Prior Criminal Record ☐ - Felony charge ☐ - Mis charge ☐

- Parole Violation ☐ - Probation Violation ☐ - Sentenced ☐ - Petty Mis charge ☐

Current Charges (most serious):

- Drug(s) ☐ - Ignition Source(s) ☐ - Money ☐ - Tobacco ☐ - Weapon ☐ - Other ☐

Reason(s) for STRIP search: (Check all that apply)

Current Charges: ☐ Drugs ☐ Weapon(s) ☐ Violence

Prior Criminal Conviction(s): ☐ Drug(s) ☐ Weapon(s) ☐ Violence ☐ None

Incarceration (institutional) Record: ☐ Contraband ☐ Escape/attempt ☐ Violence

Describe: ________________________________________________________________

Information learned from 3rd party that subject possesses weapons, drugs, or other contraband (explain):

Pat/frisk search revealed presence of object concealed beneath the clothing?

Circumstances of arrest (explain):

Subject’s appearance/demeanor (explain):

Other (explain):

Completed by: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Supervisor Approval: ___________________________ Date: _________________________
INMATE SEARCH FORM
This form must be completed any time contraband is located on an inmate.

Date: ___________________________  Time (Military Time): ___________________________
Officer(s) conducting Search: ______________________________________________________
Supervisor approving Strip Search: ___________________________________________________

Inmate’s Name: ___________________________  Inmate’s Number: ___________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Search Type(s) Performed:</th>
<th>(Check all that apply)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clothing</td>
<td>Pat/Frisk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strip</td>
<td>Body Cavity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>

Which search type revealed contraband?

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<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Pat/Frisk</th>
<th>Strip</th>
<th>Body Cavity</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Contraband Type:

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<th>Drug(s)</th>
<th>Ignition Source(s)</th>
<th>Money</th>
<th>Tobacco</th>
<th>Weapon</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Describe Contraband: ___________________________
Contraband Location:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>In Clothes</th>
<th>In Orifice</th>
<th>On Body</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Describe Location: ___________________________

STRIP SEARCH JUSTIFICATION
Reason(s) for STRIP search: (Check all that apply)

- Information learned from 3rd party that inmate possesses weapons, drugs, or other contraband (explain):

Contact with public:

- Work Release
- Furlough
- Court
- Porter/Work Detail
- Contact Visit
- Other: (specify) ___________________________

Pat/frisk search revealed presence of object concealed beneath the clothing? (explain):

Inmate’s appearance/demeanor (explain):

Inmate placed on suicide watch

Contraband is located in inmate’s living area

Inmate involved in violent incident (explain):

Other (explain):

Completed by: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________
Supervisor Approval: ___________________________  Date: ___________________________