

Where Do Homeless People Get Their Mail?

<https://homelessadvice.com/where-do-homeless-people-get-their-mail-html/>

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Living as a homeless person can be difficult enough, but without resources to help them get back on their feet, it can become a very hopeless situation. One of the main resources that homeless people need in order to overcome their situation is the ability to receive mail. This is very important because they will usually need to supply a mailing address on their job applications or resumes, not to mention the fact that they need somewhere to receive letters related to welfare and other social aid.

When I was homeless, I was without a driver's license and needed a proper ID to apply for food stamps. So I needed to receive mail, both from the DMV and from the social services department. It wasn't that difficult to find a place where I could pick up my mail, because word of mouth between homeless people is a very efficient way to find out how to do certain things. I just asked around and other people told me what to do, and I noticed lots of people had different places they received their mail. So if you're homeless, know someone who is, or just curious, below are some of the main places where homeless people get their mail.

Churches

In my case, it was a local church that I went to every day to check if I had any mail. It was a very large church and majority of the people I knew on the streets when there for their mail as well. They would let people pick it up at 2pm on most days, and there would usually already be a line of about 15 to 20 people by the time I got there each day. They would also hand out sandwiches at the same window that they handed out mail, so a lot of people may have just been there to get the sandwiches. What I did was I had my mail forwarded from my old home address to the church. The only problem with this, is that when I got back on my feet finally and wanted to forward my mail from the church to my new home, the USPS wouldn't allow me to.

On the form to forward mail, they blocked me from forwarding my mail away from the church, because they had the church listed as a business. In order to get mail forwarded away from a business, the owner of the business would have to forward it. This was in 2012 that I attempted to forward my mail to my new address, so even in today's modern age, the USPS hasn't fixed this problem and realized that sometimes individuals use business addresses as their mailing addresses and then move.

So just a warning, if you yourself plan to be picking up mail at a church, just keep in mind that you may not be able to get it forwarded until your last forwarded mail term expires (usually about 6 months), and if you do forward your mail, you should put the church down only as a temporary forward and not a permanent one.

Shelters

Most shelters won't handle mail for their residents, even though they offer many other services like beds and food. But there are a few places that still do have a mail receiving service for those who need it. When receiving mail at a shelter, there will usually be a certain time or day to pick it up and you'll usually need to be a regular or long-term resident to do so. Some places specifically offer a mail service for their guests, but for others, you may have to ask whoever is in charge if it would be alright.

Some shelters won't mind receiving a few letters that are addressed to a person every month, but most of them won't do it because they will worry that if they receive mail for one person they'll have to receive it for everyone. This can be overwhelming for many shelters since they are already handling more important services like serving meals and having beds for homeless people to sleep in. So it's still somewhat rare to find any shelter that's willing to accept mail, but the vast majority of them can still offer advice and refer you to organizations that will allow you to pick your mail up with them.

Businesses

Sometimes local business owners will even be willing to accept a homeless person's mail for them, either just to be kind or to profit. When homeless, you could always try to befriend some of the managers or business owners in your area, such as donut shops or cafes, and see if they will be willing to accept mail for you each month. If you keep it to a minimum, there's plenty of caring people in the world that may be willing to help you with this. You could have your mail sent to the business, where they would set it aside until you return, then you could just stop in there once a week or so to pick it up.

You can also offer to pay them a few dollars every so often to provide the service to you, the same way that the post office charges people to rent their mailboxes. If you're a regular paying customer, they might even feel that they need to do it in order to keep you as a customer. Some homeless people do have money and buy coffees or other things every day from different companies and shops. There's also those who receive food stamps, and many of those people spend upwards of \$200 per month at some food stores or other companies.

Most business owners, particularly the small business owners, would not want to lose \$200 a month in profits because they refused to accept a few pieces of mail each month. Just remember that if you go this route and decide to ask someone to hold your mail for you, don't get angry if they refuse. There may be other things they're worried about when it comes to receiving someone's mail, depending on the person, and it may have nothing to do with you as a person or how much they care about people.

Family or Friends

Majority of homeless people do not have many family or friends, or have at least become estranged from them over the years for whatever reasons. Because of this, picking up your mail at your family's or friend's house is probably not possible in most cases. There's also arguments and problems that can arise from visiting certain people that you may have problems with or who may not be comfortable with you stopping by every now and then. Let's face it, most people who are homeless would not be in that situation if they had other people they could depend on to help them out and provide a roof over their head. Also, some of the other options I've mentioned may be better and easier to access since the homes of your friends or family members may be too far to access on foot and too expensive to buy bus tickets. But if you are on good terms with them and it's doable for you, then this is probably the best option to pick up your mail since you may be able to trust them better than strangers who work at shelters or businesses.

PO Box (see also USPS Homeless Mail below)

Then of course there's Post Office boxes (P.O. Boxes). Depending on how busy or small your local post office is, you can always just pay to keep a PO Box open for a certain amount of time and pick your mail up there. Most homeless people do have some form of money or income coming in, though it may not be much. So this is only an option for those who can afford it, though it's usually not too expensive for a small box. A small PO Box (3 Inches X 5.5 Inches) is usually around \$18 for 3 months or \$30 for 6 months.

So if you're paying \$30 to have it for 6 months, it actually works out to about \$5 per month. Majority of people on the streets can afford this, though they may not have the full \$30 to pay it (you can't just pay per month and the \$30 would have to be paid in advance before the box is opened). The main problem that I encountered when I tried to open a box in my area was that they were all taken at the nearest post office.

If I wanted to rent a box in my city, I would have to travel to the other side of town, which would cost me bus money and take up a lot of time out of my day each month when I could be using it more efficiently to get back on my feet. In big cities, there may be so many people that all the boxes may be rented out already, and you'll either have to wait until someone else closes theirs or just go to another location that does have available ones.

USPS Homeless Mail – Post Offices Offering Mail Service to Homeless

A homeless person can access a dedicated PO box to get his packages and letters. To avail this service, the person needs to submit a written application to the local post office. This application will mention that he wants to use the P.O Box service. After that, the USPS homeless mail service or other postal agency's mail service will provide that person with the Post Box.

There are some rules or conditions to avail this free PO box. Only if the homeless person fulfills these conditions, then the postmaster of the U.S Postal Service will accept the application from him/her. The conditions are:

1. The postmaster or the window clerk knows the homeless applicant.
2. But if the applicant is unknown, he will have to provide a valid ID.
3. The applicant needs to give a valid point of contact to the post office. The applicant can give the contact of his place of employment or charitable institution or shelter or any social services office.

So, these were the three conditions which the homeless applicant must fulfill to get a post office box service. However, if an applicant cannot fulfill these three conditions, then he can go for USPS General Delivery service for an indefinite time. But to avail the indefinite USPS General Delivery Service, he will have to seek an approval of the postmaster.

This is all about USPS homeless mail. Anyone who doesn't have any home can request for this mail service. If he/she fulfills all the conditions given above, then the post office will provide him/her the P.O. Box. To know some more information about this service, you can get in touch with your local post office.