



**STATE OF MONTANA  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS  
POLICY DIRECTIVE**

Policy No. DOC 4.2.1	Subject: <b>OFFENDER CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM</b>
Chapter 4: FACILITY/PROGRAM SERVICES	Page 1 of 5
Section 2: Classification	Effective Date: May 1, 1997
Signature: /s/ Mike Ferriter, Director	Revised: 02/22/12

## **I. POLICY**

The Department of Corrections will ensure that an objective classification system is used on admission and upon status review to manage offenders at the appropriate custody, security, and supervision levels.

## **II. APPLICABILITY**

All divisions, facilities, and programs Department-owned and contracted, as specified in contract.

## **III. DEFINITIONS**

Classification System – A method that uses an objective scoring system to appropriately recommend offender custody levels based on verifiable case information, facility security levels, degree of required supervision, and available program resources.

Facility/Program – Refers to any division, prison, secure care correctional facility, correctional or training program, or community-based program under Department jurisdiction or contract. This term includes the facility building or residence, including property and land owned or leased and operated by the Department.

Override – A management decision to place an offender at a different custody level than what is indicated by the objective classification system.

## **IV. DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES**

### **A. General Requirements**

1. Each facility/program will:
  - a. provide a written offender classification plan that specifies the plan's objectives, and methods to achieve them;
  - b. classify offenders based on an assessment of risks and needs;
  - c. classify offenders at the lowest custody level consistent with individual and facility safety and security;
  - d. ensure that custody assignments are imposed consistently, and never as a form of punishment;
  - e. design a system to provide an incentive to offenders to achieve personal, court-ordered, and recommended program goals;
  - f. involve facility program representatives and offenders in classification reviews;
  - g. establish a method for initially assessing and periodically revising offenders' security categories that are established in parallel with the security features of the system's facilities;

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- h. provide a method with sufficient latitude for staff to override system-generated classifications, based on specific, well-documented rationale;
    - i. provide a process for an ongoing review and validation of the system that ensures its reliability and objectivity; and
    - j. review offender classification plans at least annually and update as needed.
  2. Classification plans for youth will consider:
    - a. the level of risk presented;
    - b. the type of housing required;
    - c. participation in facility/community programs;
    - d. developmental and special needs, i.e., physical, mental, social, emotional stability, educational maturity, escape history, assaultive behavior, medical status, age, enemies of record; and
    - e. adequate program space to allow individual and group-oriented interactions and activities to meet physical, social, and emotional needs.
  3. Classification plans will specify that prior to a parole hearing, staff will issue an offender progress report to the paroling authority to include a current and complete history of the offender's activities during incarceration and a proposed parole plan.
  4. Except as may be required for the security and orderly operation of a facility, no offender will be denied access to any program or service, or assigned or not assigned to a job, housing unit, classification status, or program solely on the basis of race, national origin, gender, religion, creed, sexual orientation, physical disability, or political belief. Exceptions may apply to cases in which age, gender, medical condition, physical or mental disability may preclude participation in a particular correctional facility or program.

**B. Initial Classification**

1. At intake, the classification system will use, at a minimum, the following criteria as part of the risk-assessment instrument:
  - a. severity of current offense;
  - b. length of sentence;
  - c. type of prior commitments;
  - d. history of escapes and attempts;
  - e. history of violence;
  - f. victim impact; and
  - g. type of detainer.
2. To make detailed individual assessments, staff will solicit information from courts, social service agencies, pre-sentence investigation reports, and other resources to ensure the broadest possible range of information is available on which to make classification decisions.
3. Facility staff will develop treatment plans and housing assignments consistent with the assessment criteria and placement recommendations for adult and youth offenders.

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4. Initial classification procedures will ensure that both adult and youth offenders are screened within 24 hours of arrival at the facility for potential vulnerabilities or tendencies of acting out with sexually aggressive behavior and that housing assignments are made accordingly, in accordance with [DOC Policy 4.2.2, Special Needs Offenders](#).
5. Staff will complete initial classification of youth offenders, except in unusual circumstances, within two weeks of admission from court and within one week after transfer from another facility.
6. Receiving staff will assign each offender to a staff member or unit management team to provide personal contact with at least one employee for advice and assistance during the intake and classification process.
7. Because no classification system can correctly or unfailingly predict all needs and risks, each facility must include override capabilities that allow staff to exercise professional judgment in classification decisions. Because no judgment is infallible, staff must monitor these capabilities to prevent any abuse of overrides.

**C. Special Needs Management**

1. Classification procedures will include provisions to identify offenders who may be management problems or have special needs in accordance with [DOC 4.2.2, Special Needs Offenders](#). These may include the following categories:
  - a. potentially dangerous offenders, e.g., those with a history of assault or predatory behavior;
  - b. those who require protection and separation because they may be in danger from other offenders;
  - c. those who, by reason of their offense, criminal record, or institutional behavior, require particularly close supervision;
  - d. those who received unusual publicity because of the nature of their crime, arrest, or trial, or who are involved in criminal activity of a sophisticated nature, such as organized crime;
  - e. gang members; staff will identify these offenders at the earliest possible stage, to inform basic management decisions. Training and knowledge of gang behavior and symbolism is critical for staff supervision in accordance with [DOC Policy 3.1.24 Security Threat Group and Street Gant Identification and Management](#);
  - f. those with special needs, including those defined by age, infirmity, mental illness, developmental disabilities, addictive disorders, and medical problems;
  - g. criminally-convicted youth offenders who may require a specialized unit and case management plan; and
  - h. where appropriate, differences in management and security needs between female and male offenders.

**D. Offender Custody Levels**

1. Facility procedures will establish appropriate staff supervision for each custody classification; for example:
  - a. *community custody*: managing offenders in the community at the lowest level of risk and supervision;

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- b. *minimum custody*: managing offenders at a relatively low degree of risk under indirect supervision;
- c. *medium custody*: managing offenders with a moderate degree of supervision and control, including frequent, direct observation;
- d. *close custody*: managing offenders with a moderately high degree of supervision, including direct observation and restricting movement; and
- e. *maximum custody*: managing offenders with a high degree of supervision and control, under escorted movement, and using full restraints outside the facility.

**E. Classification Status Review**

1. Facilities will establish an offender status review or reclassification system that periodically reevaluates an offender's security needs, sentence progress, and other factors to include the following:
  - a. percentage of time served;
  - b. type and frequency of disciplinary reports incurred;
  - c. involvement with drugs, alcohol or other contraband;
  - d. mental and psychological stability;
  - e. staff assessment of level of personal responsibility;
  - f. family or community ties;
  - g. program participation; and
  - h. job and housing conduct.
2. The classification plan will specify criteria and procedures for determining and changing an offender's program status; the plan includes at least one level of appeal.
3. Unless precluded for security or other substantial reasons, all offenders will appear at their classification hearings and be given notice 48 hours prior to the hearing; such notice may be waived by the offender in writing.
4. Facility procedures will specify the conditions under which an offender can initiate a review of progress and program status.

**F. Facility Security Levels**

1. Each facility will establish security levels that include, at a minimum, a review of the following factors:
  - a. type of perimeter security;
  - b. existence and operation of towers;
  - c. use of external mobile patrols;
  - d. use of detection devices;
  - e. type of housing arrangements; and
  - f. nature of internal architectural features, e.g., reinforced concrete construction, security glazing, corridor grilles, control centers, and electronically controlled steel cell doors.
2. Facility classification procedures will include descriptions and criteria for categorizing facility security levels, i.e., minimum, medium, close, and maximum custody facility requirements and specifications.

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1. Each facility must establish a system by which offenders may appeal final classification decisions.

**H. Classification Records**

1. Staff will document all classification decisions on the appropriate forms and records for placement in the offender's case file.

**V. CLOSING**

Questions concerning this policy should be directed to the facility or program classification manager.

**VI. REFERENCES**

- A. 4-4295 through 4-4304; 4-4309 & 4-4310; *ACA Standards for Adult Correctional Institutions, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*
- B. 4-4281-2; *ACA Standards Supplement, 2008*
- C. 3-JTS-5B-01 through 3-JTS-5B-09; *ACA Standards for Juvenile Correctional Facilities, 2003*
- D. *ACA Guidelines for the Development of a Security Program, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*
- E. [DOC Policies 3.1.24 Security Threat Group and Street Gant Identification and Management;](#)  
and [4.2.2, Special Needs Offenders](#)

**VII. ATTACHMENTS**

None