Minnesota Department of Corrections

Policy Number:	**202.100**
Title:	**Classification System**
Effective Date:	**8/21/18**

PURPOSE: To provide guidelines for assigning custody classification levels to offenders based on objective criteria, and ensuring that offenders are assigned to the lowest custody level consistent with that objective assessment.

APPLICABILITY: All adult facilities

DEFINITIONS:
Classification level – the degree of supervision required for each offender as determined by the department's classification system. Classification levels are divided into levels two through five and are used to determine whether an offender should be placed in minimum, medium, close, or maximum custody. Classification level assignments do not, however, grant an offender the right to be housed in or remain at a particular facility.

Classification rating process – the department uses a computerized application within the Correctional Operations Management System (COMS) to assign classification levels based on objective criteria, which includes factors such as the security and programming needs of the offender, the safety of staff and other offenders, and public risk. An overview of the rating process is described in the COMS Classification System Overview (attached).

Classification steering committee – a committee comprised of representatives from all adult facilities that is responsible for adopting policies and procedures relating to classification levels, deciding offender appeals of classification levels, and monitoring the department's classification system.

Commencement date – the date on which an offender is committed to the department to begin serving a criminal sentence.

Documented criminal behaviors – criminal behaviors documented in court records, criminal complaints, pre-sentence investigation reports, or information provided by an offender during caseworker interviews. Juvenile criminal activity resulting in adjudication that would have been deemed a felony had the juvenile been an adult is calculated as part of documented criminal behaviors.

Release violator – an offender who returns to an adult facility for violating the conditions of his/her release.

PROCEDURES:
A. Initial Classification
   1. The facility records department notifies a caseworker of a newly committed offender assigned to their caseload.

   2. The caseworker enters data for a projected classification level and assigns a classification level within 60 days of the offender's commencement date. New caseworkers calculate projected classification levels for at least the first three months and until their supervisor,

in consultation with the classification officer, deems them proficient. In the meantime, the supervisor reviews the projected classification level and completes the classification.

3. The classification rating process is based on:
   a) Behavioral characteristics of the current offense;
   b) History of documented criminal behaviors within ten years of the offender's commencement date;
   c) Custodial behavior during prior periods of incarceration that occurred within five years of the offender's commencement date;
   d) Escape behaviors within five years of the offender's commencement date, counted from the date of apprehension;
   e) Custody level during the offender's most recent incarceration;
   f) Age;
   g) System blocks as described in the COMS Classification System Overview;
   h) The needs of the offender and the department.

4. The caseworker or classification officer enters assigned classification data into COMS.

5. The offender receives a copy of the classification notice.

6. Quality Assurance
   a) Caseworker supervisors review five percent of initial classifications monthly.
   b) The classification steering committee conducts quality assurance reviews by reviewing 10 random cases at each quarterly meeting.

B. Review and Reclassification of Custody Levels

1. The caseworker or classification officer reassesses and reassigns a classification level as follows:
   a) At six-month intervals when an offender has not been disciplined with segregation, extended incarceration, or other qualifying sanctions as specified in the Classification Discipline Outline (attached);
   b) Upon discovery of new information about prior criminal behavior, pending criminal charges, or other matters relevant to classification;
   c) When an offender is disciplined with segregation, extended incarceration, or other qualifying sanctions specified in the Classification Discipline Outline for a rule violation;
   d) When administrative reclassification is initiated; and
   e) When a release violator returns to prison.

2. Regular reclassifications occur every six months from the commencement date when the offender has not been disciplined with segregation, extended incarceration, or other qualifying sanctions as specified in the Classification Discipline Outline.
   a) The caseworker queries the COMS classification subscription for a list of offenders scheduled for a regular reclassification.
   b) The caseworker reviews the reclassification data and approves it.
   c) The offender receives a copy of the classification only if the score changes or the offender requests it.
   d) When an offender receives a disciplinary sanction specified in the Classification Discipline Outline, the next regular reclassification occurs six months from the end of the sanction.

3. The warden, program review team, classification officer, or the commissioner's review panel may initiate an administrative reclassification of an offender's custody level at any time.
    a) The classification officer reviews, modifies, and enters the administrative reclassification data into COMS.
    b) The caseworker forwards a copy of the classification notice to the offender.

4. Reclassification occurs whenever the caseworker receives new information about past criminal behaviors, pending criminal charges, or other matters that impact the offender's current classification level.
    a) The caseworker must forward the new information to the classification officer.
    b) The classification officer reviews, modifies, and enters the new data into COMS.
    c) The caseworker forwards a copy of the classification notice to the offender.

5. Discipline reclassification occurs whenever an offender is disciplined with segregation, extended incarceration, or other qualifying sanctions as specified in the Classification Discipline Outline for committing a rule violation.
    a) A qualifying discipline sanction under the Classification Discipline Outline results in a block on score reduction while the sanction is active and for six months following its conclusion.
    b) If the offender successfully appeals the discipline, the discipline classification data entry staff forward this information to the offender's caseworker, who makes any necessary classification changes.

6. A release violator's classification level is reassessed when the offender returns to a department facility.
    a) The facility records department notifies the caseworker that a release violator has been admitted to the facility.
    b) The classification officer reviews, modifies, and approves the reclassification data.
    c) The offender only receives a copy of the classification notice upon request.

C. Classification Level Appeals. An offender may appeal an assigned classification level as follows:
1. The offender must notify the caseworker of his/her disagreement with the classification level, and the caseworker forwards a copy of the Classification Appeal Report (attached) to the offender.

2. The offender has six months to file an appeal from the most recent classification action.

3. The offender must complete the top portion of the form and return it to the classification officer.

4. The classification officer reviews the form, makes a recommendation to deny or approve the appeal, and forwards the form to the classification steering committee for a final decision.

5. The classification steering committee approves or denies the appeal and returns the results to the classification officer.

6. The classification officer enters the appeal results in the Appeals section of COMS Classification.

7. The classification officer forwards copies of the appeal report to the offender and the caseworker.

8. Records are retained in the Classification iShare site and COMS Classification.

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

A. Caseworker supervisors review five percent of initial classifications monthly.

B. New caseworkers calculate projected classification levels for at least the first three months and until their supervisor, in consultation with the classification officer, deems them proficient. In the meantime, the supervisor reviews the projected classification level and completes the classification.

C. The classification steering committee conducts quality assurance reviews by reviewing 10 random cases at each quarterly meeting.

ACA STANDARDS: 4-4295, 4-4296, 4-4298, 4-4300, 4-4301, and 4-4303

REFERENCES: Minn. Stat. §§ 241.01, subd. 3a, and 609.105, subd. 2

REPLACES: Policy 202.100, "Classification System," 8/18/15. All facility policies, memos, or other communications, whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means, regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS: COMS Classification System Overview (202.100A)
Classification Discipline Outline (202.100B)
Classification Appeal Report (202.100C)
Classification System Chart (202.100D)

APPROVALS:

Deputy Commissioner, Community Services
Deputy Commissioner, Facility Services
Assistant Commissioner, Facility Services
Assistant Commissioner, Operations Support