DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

Policy Number:	**301.088**
Title:	**Restrictive Housing Step-Down Management Program**
Effective Date:	**5/14/2025**

PURPOSE: To outline program procedures to ensure that incarcerated persons assigned to the Step-Down Management Program (SDMP) who present an increased risk to the safety, security, or orderly operation of the facility can gradually transition back to general population or the community.

APPLICABILITY: All adult facilities

DEFINITIONS:

Serious mental illness (SMI) – psychotic disorders, bipolar disorders, and major depressive disorder; and any other diagnosed mental disorder (excluding substance use disorders) currently associated with severe impairment in psychological, cognitive, or behavioral functioning that substantially interferes with the person's ability to meet the ordinary demands of living and requires an individualized treatment plan by a mental health professional.

The Step-Down Management Program (SDMP) - consists of four levels, which gives incarcerated persons an opportunity to enhance and demonstrate their readiness to return to general population or the community through successful participation in prescribed programming and by earning progressive privileges through advancement in the established program levels.

Step-down management program (SDMP) coordinator – a caseworker assigned to coordinate SDMP reviews, provide documentation as needed, and lead facilitates SDMP programming. The SDMP coordinator must ensure appropriate documentation occurs for each incarcerated person on the SDMP.

Step-down management program (SDMP) team – a multidisciplinary team established to review whether an incarcerated person in restrictive housing meets the criteria for the SDMP, make written recommendations for program placement and completion, and determine program progression or regression. At a minimum, the team includes the SDMP coordinator, the corrections program director/designee, the unit lieutenant or sergeant/officer in charge (OIC) from which the incarcerated person is housed, the incarcerated person's assigned caseworker, a mental health staff person, and a representative from facility administration such as the warden, associate warden of operations, or captain. other staff, such as medical personnel or discipline staff, must be part of the multidisciplinary team for incarcerated persons who have chronic care or other significant medical and/or security needs.

PROCEDURES:

A. Referral for Step-Down Management Program (SDMP)

1. An incarcerated person's assigned caseworker must complete an automatic referral when the incarcerated person is convicted of a severity level four or five rule violation. The caseworker must submit the SDMP referral form within ten business days of conviction.

B. Criteria for Discretionary Referral

1. If an incarcerated person is not eligible for an automatic referral but a staff member believes a referral to the program is appropriate, the staff member making the referral must demonstrate that the incarcerated person is not able to adjust to incarceration, as evidenced by repetitive misbehavior or seriously disruptive behavior detailed in the referral.

C. Mental Health Screening

1. Mental health staff must complete a mental health screening for the SDMP consideration form before reviewing an incarcerated person for placement in the SDMP

2. The screening must consider whether the incarcerated person has a serious mental illness (SMI), exhibits or has previously exhibited suicidal or self-injurious behaviors, and the potential risk of self-harm if the incarcerated person continues to reside in restrictive housing while in the program.

3. If mental health staff believe an incarcerated person's behavior may be more appropriately treated through alternative interventions or programming, or determine that the incarcerated person's actions were the result of mental illness, mental health staff must provide this information to the SDMP team for consideration.

4. Incarcerated persons with a SMI may not be placed in the program without the approval of mental health staff and the warden.

5. If, during the course of the SDMP, mental health staff deem the SDMP no longer appropriate for an incarcerated person, they must remove the incarcerated person from the SDMP and provide alternative interventions or programming to the incarcerated person.

D. Step-Down Management Program Team Review

1. The SDMP team must convene to consider, review, and provide a written recommendation regarding an incarcerated person's placement in the SDMP. An incarcerated person who has been found guilty of a severity level four or level five rule violation will be reviewed for placement in the SDMP by the SDMP team within 15 days of receiving the referral. Severity levels are outlined 303.010I, "Incarcerated Person Discipline Rules."
    a) The SDMP coordinator must arrange the attendance of or seek input from the office of special investigations, discipline, and health services staff as appropriate.

b) The SDMP team may require other staff members to attend, as necessary, to provide relevant information regarding the incarcerated person's possible placement in the program.

c) The incarcerated person must be encouraged and have the opportunity to attend the SDMP placement review and/or to present a written statement regarding placement in the program.

2 In deciding whether to recommend an incarcerated person for SDMP placement, the SDMP team should consider:

a) The safety and security of the incarcerated person, as well as any known threats they may poses to the safety of staff, incarcerated persons, or others. Each incarcerated person must be individually assessed to objectively evaluate the risk they pose to others;

b) The incarcerated person's mental health status and needs, based on information and recommendations provided by mental health staff;

c) The incarcerated person's behavioral history while incarcerated and the results of any past interventions or attempts to move them from a restrictive housing unit to the general population; and

d) The incarcerated person's programming needs.

3 If the incarcerated person is 180 days or less from release to the community, the team must consider a recommendation to modify or reduce the duration of program steps to provide the incarcerated person an opportunity to be released from the general population.

4 The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker must document the information discussed and the recommendation made by the SDMP team on the SDMP multidisciplinary placement staffing form (attached).

E. Step-Down Management Program Placement Decision

1. The SDMP coordinator must forward the SDMP team's written recommendation to the warden or designee within five business days, whenever possible.

2. The warden or designee reviews the recommendation and determines if adequate justification exists to place the incarcerated person in the SDMP. The decision to place an incarcerated person in the SDMP is final and not subject to further review by appeal or grievance.

3. The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker communicates the placement decision to the incarcerated person.

4. The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker must document the decision as a case review in the correctional operations management system (COMS), including:
   a) The basis for the decision; and

   b) Expectations for the incarcerated person's behavior and program participation

5. In the event that there is a disagreement between the SDMP team's recommendation and the warden or designee regarding SDMP placement, a consultation must be scheduled between the warden or designee and the commissioner or designee.

F. Step-Down Management Program Transfers

1. If there is a request to transfer an incarcerated person who is currently on the SDMP or who is currently pending placement in the program, a case consultation meeting must occur between facilities being considered for placement. Corrections program directors, SDMP coordinators, security, and other relevant staff must attend to share information and programming needs.

2. The case consultation information and decisions must be documented in COMS.

G. Step-Down Management Program Components

1. As soon as an incarcerated person is approved for placement in the SDMP, the assigned caseworker or other program/facility staff must meet with the incarcerated person at minimum once per month while in restrictive housing to address thought distortions and behaviors and provide opportunities to learn new skills using core correctional practices and other intervention tools. If an incarcerated person participates and progresses during these sessions, the SDMP team must consider Step 3 at the time discipline ends.

2. The SDMP consists of four levels:
   a) Step 1
      This step is reviewed every 30 days and occurs within a restrictive housing unit. Programming is provided at cell front or in one-on-one meetings in a secure location outside the cell. Exercise may be alone or with other incarcerated persons.

   b) Step 2
      This step is reviewed every 30 days and occurs within a restrictive housing unit. Programming is provided at cell front, or in one-on-one or small group meetings in a secure location outside the cell. The incarcerated person receives expanded phone, canteen, property, electronics, group recreation, and visiting privileges.

   c) Step 3

This step is reviewed every 30 days and occurs within a special housing unit or special housing cell. In MCF-SHK, this step may occur within the restrictive housing unit. Programming is provided in one-on-one or small group meetings in a secure or non-secure location outside the cell. The incarcerated person receives expanded phone, canteen, property, electronics, group recreation, and visiting privileges.

d) Step 4
This is the final step of the program. This step is reviewed every 30 days and occurs within a special housing unit or special housing cell. Programming is provided in one-on-one or small group meetings in a location outside the cell. The incarcerated person receives the same phone, canteen, property, electronics, and visiting privileges as those in general population. Recreation occurs within and outside the living unit.

3. Specific activities, privileges, and property associated with each level are identified on the SDMP Grid (attached).

4 Upon entering the SDMP, incarcerated persons will receive orientation to the program and an individualized case plan.

a) The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker must provide orientation materials and information to the incarcerated persons.

b) The incarcerated person's assigned caseworker must contribute to the incarcerated person's case plan with input from the incarcerated person, security, education, mental health, and health services staff. The incarcerated person's caseworker must document the case plan in COMS.

c) The case plan must document the incarcerated person's goals in the following areas:
(1) Compliance with the behavioral expectations of incarceration;
(2) Cognitive skills programming progress;
(3) Skills building demonstration progress;
(4) Additional programming in mental health or academic education as appropriate; and
(5) Pre-release programming, if applicable.

5 Step Movement – Regression, Retention, Progression

a) All incarcerated persons in the program receive a SDMP team review at least every 30 days. The incarcerated person will have the opportunity to be present and make a statement at the review every 90 days. The results of the review must be documented on the SDMP team review form (attached), and in a case review. The incarcerated persons case plan is also updated to reflect the outcome of the review.

b) Incarcerated persons may move up steps, down steps, or be retained at the current step based on progress within the program.

c) An incarcerated person may move between steps 1, and 2, within the restrictive housing unit and steps 3 and 4 within a special housing unit with majority approval from the SDMP team. In the event of a tie from the voting team, the associate warden of operations will determine the step. Movement between steps will generally occur following the review.

d) The SDMP team will use risk, need, and responsivity assessments available, program motivation, active participation in conversation and program work, completion of work to the best of each incarcerated person's ability, recommendations/feedback from facility staff, the incarcerated person's demonstration of skills learned, and other stakeholder's feedback to determine the outcome of the review.

e) The SDMP team decisions regarding program regression, retention, or progression are final and not subject to further review by appeal or grievance.

f) An incarcerated person who is sanctioned with disciplinary segregation while participating in the SDMP must complete the sanction before being eligible to advance steps. The SDMP team will meet prior to the end of the disciplinary segregation and determine what step the incarcerated person will return to within the SDMP programming services may continue while the incarcerated person is serving disciplinary segregation.

H. Step-Down Management Program Completion/Removal

1. The SDMP team reviews the incarcerated persons program to make recommendations regarding completion of the SDMP and return to the general population.

2. The SDMP coordinator and the incarcerated person's caseworker present information to the team regarding the incarcerated person's progress in the program.

3. The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker documents the team's recommendation on the SDMP team review form (attached) and forwards it to the appropriate authority within five business days, when possible.

4. For all incarcerated persons, removal from the program and return to the general population requires the approval of the warden or designee and commissioner or designee.

5. The decision of the warden or designee and commissioner or designee regarding program completion and return to general population is final and not subject to further review by appeal or grievance.

6. The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker must communicate the final decision regarding the completion of or retention on the SDMP to the incarcerated person, and retain a copy of the decision in the incarcerated person's electronic file.

7. In the event that there is a disagreement between the SDMP team's recommendation and the warden or designee regarding SDMP completion/removal, a consultation must be scheduled between the warden or designee and the commissioner or designee.

8. In the event an IP is removed from the Step-Down Management Program (SDMP) prior to successful completion (e.g., due to mental health concerns, release from incarceration, safety concerns, or lack of progress etc.), the Step-Down Management Program (SDMP) coordinator or the IP's caseworker documents the reason for the removal on the Step-Down Management Program Team Review –form and forwards it to the warden and assistant commissioner within five business days whenever possible.

9. The results of the review must be documented in a case review and the case plan must also be updated to reflect the outcome.

10. In the event that an incarcerated person is on the SDMP for 365 consecutive days and has not been removed from the program, a summary with a recommendation and/or plan must be prepared and referred to the director of health, recovery & programming or designee, and the deputy commissioner for client services & supports or designee for a biannual review. Biannual reviews will be conducted until the incarcerated person is removed from the SDMP.

INTERNAL CONTROLS:

A. All documents pertaining to SDMP incarcerated persons are maintained in the incarcerated person's electronic file, with the exception of the mental health screening for SDMP placement consideration form, which is maintained in the incarcerated person's electronic health record. The SDMP coordinator or the incarcerated person's caseworker are responsible for inputting and uploading all information.

REFERENCES: Minn. Stat. § 243.521, subds. 4 and 9
Policy 301.083 "Restrictive Housing Management"
Policy 301.085, "Administrative Segregation"
Policy 303.010 "Incarcerated Individual Discipline"
Policy 500.300, "Mental Health Observation"

REPLACES: Policy 301.088, "Restrictive Housing Step-Down Management Process," 9/17/19

All facility policies, memos, or other communications whether verbal, written, or transmitted by electronic means regarding this topic.

ATTACHMENTS:

Referral for Step-Down Management Program (301.088A)
Mental Health Screening for Step-Down Management Program Placement Consideration (301.088B)
Step-Down Management Program Grid (301.088C)
Step-Down Management Program Team Review (301.088D)
Step-Down Management Program Multidisciplinary Placement Staffing (301.088E)

APPROVALS:

Commissioner of Corrections