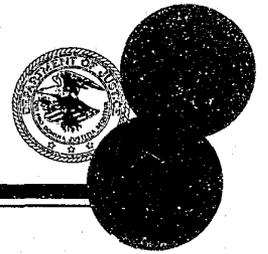


U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Corrections



# Classification of Women Offenders in State Correctional Facilities: A Handbook for Practitioners

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**CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN OFFENDERS  
IN STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES:**

**A HANDBOOK FOR PRACTITIONERS**

by

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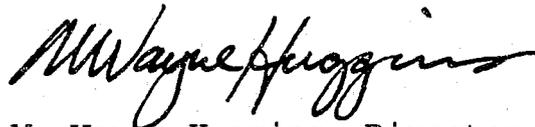
We would also like to remember the women who reside in our nation's correctional institutions. Their numbers are growing as their needs are changing. We hope that this document will be one step in recognizing more clearly their presence and the challenge they represent.

Peggy B. Burke  
Linda Adams

## FOREWORD

As the decade of the 1990s progresses and correctional systems are confronting ever-growing populations, increasing attention has been focused on women offenders. Women are a rapidly growing segment of the incarcerated population. Their numbers are increasing at a rate that far exceeds even the staggering growth of male populations. Even beyond their growth in numbers, however, women offenders have been claiming the attention of correctional administrators as a result of aggressive and successful litigation on the issue of parity of services and as a result of the advocacy on behalf of women offenders emerging within correctional agencies.

In response to this growing focus on the incarcerated woman, the National Institute of Corrections sponsored a review of current classification practices as they affect women and the design of a "developmental model" to provide guidance to agencies interested in reviewing their classification practices for women. We hope that this handbook will be helpful as systems work to revise or refine the methodology through which women offenders are classified.



M. Wayne Huggins, Director  
National Institute of Corrections  
March 1991

## PREFACE

The decade of the 1980s brought significant change to the management of programs and services in the nation's correctional systems. Much of this change was a direct response to unprecedented growth in the numbers of inmates.

For women inmates change has come not only as a result of growing populations, but also as a result of inmate lawsuits and federal court mandates regarding parity and conditions of confinement for women offenders.

At the present time approximately 44,000 women are incarcerated in state and federal institutions, comprising 5.7 percent of the total incarcerated population in this country. The issues presented by their increasing numbers continue to affect correctional agencies throughout the United States. The use of objective classification systems is one of the most important tools available to correctional agencies in the management of prisoners. In considering the unique characteristics and needs of women in prison, classification emerges as a central issue.

We would like to take this opportunity to applaud the foresight of the National Institute of Corrections for sponsoring the development of a comprehensive working document that addresses the current classification practices in use by agencies, the unique requirements of such systems, and their impact on the management of facilities and programs for offenders. The resulting product is a significant contribution to the information and knowledge available to agencies in their continuing struggle to serve increasing numbers of women offenders, often with limited or decreasing resources.

The three of us who have served as the advisory board to this project have career commitments toward improving resources, facilities, and programs for women offenders. Each of us as individuals has worked hard within our respective states to improve conditions for women offenders. We were honored to represent so many other professionals throughout the country who share these concerns. Our hope is that you will find this handbook to be educational, thoughtful, and, most importantly, useful in your ongoing efforts to improve the responses we make to women offenders. We are encouraged by this effort and know that it will serve all who are concerned about these issues well.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In recent years, increasing attention has been focused on women offenders within our correctional institutions. This interest has emerged out of a concern that this rapidly growing population has too long received little attention in the corrections community. Indeed, many administrators, practitioners, and the courts are now speaking out clearly about the need for assuring parity for women offenders as correctional resources are deployed.

Similar concern has been voiced over the classification of women offenders. There has been a concern that classification systems simply do not work for women offenders. What is meant by that general expression of dissatisfaction has not been clearly articulated. For some this has meant a concern over too few services for women. For others this has meant a concern over women housed at unnecessarily long distances from their families. For still others this has meant a concern for women for whom security/custody designations seem inappropriately high.

The research upon which this document is based has begun to answer questions about classification of women offenders and to suggest directions for refining our policies and practice of classification. The document is meant as a reference for policymakers and a resource for practitioners who work with women offenders and who design and utilize classification systems. It is based upon a review of current practice across the nation, and especially upon practice in four jurisdictions which offered a wide range of experience with women in prison.

The review of current practice found that, for the most part, states utilize identical classification systems for men and women. In some jurisdictions, modifications have been made to the system to accommodate perceived differences between men and women offenders. The most common modification is the more frequent than usual use of overrides in making classification designations of women. A second accommodation is the use of within-institution approaches to classification that co-exist with statewide classification systems. A third accommodation is the use of separate instruments for assessing risk of men and women offenders.

The analytic phase of this project has surfaced two primary reasons why practitioners have felt that classification systems do not work well for women offenders. The first is that risk assessment tools used as a basis for many of these systems are poorly designed, which causes problems for the classification of both men and women. The tools are often without empirical base. Even where there is an empirical base, it may not adequately reflect the woman

offender. These are problems that can be addressed by the use of more technically sound approaches to the development of such tools.

There is a second and more important reason why practitioners feel that classification systems do not work well for women offenders. It is because most classification systems are not designed to serve the purposes that most institutions have found to be primary for women offenders. Statewide prison classification systems are built primarily to keep order and to ensure safety within institutions. Most women's institutions are able to focus more upon habilitation concerns because of the proportionately lower incidence of violence and predatory behavior among their inmates. While security is still a concern, staff supervision, rules, and physical environment appear to be adequate to meet that concern. If most women's institutions are directing the majority of their activities toward habilitation, and their classification system does not address habilitation, it is no surprise that such classification systems are perceived as being less than helpful or meaningful to women offenders.

Three important and overarching conclusions have emerged from the research. The first is that there is no single model for prison classification that can be successfully used nationwide, whether for men or women. Classification is an activity so central to each agency's objectives, population, and resources that each should undertake the development of its own approach to classification for both women and men offenders.

The second conclusion is that within an individual jurisdiction, classification should be gender-neutral, both on its surface and in its effect. Gender should not be used as a classifying principle, largely because of parity issues and the danger of legal challenge. On the other hand, classification systems should be designed to achieve the objectives held for offenders at various levels within the system. Statewide, where a major focus is upon security and safety, risk-based classification systems may well be appropriate. However, within institutions where the profile of the population allows for a heavier focus upon habilitation concerns, classification systems that support such a focus are appropriate. This will be the case in many women's institutions, as has been observed in this research. However, there are many men's institutions where there is probably also a need for such habilitation-oriented classification. What is suggested, then, is not a gender-based approach to classification, but an approach to classification that will support institution-specific objectives with offenders. Women offenders will be the beneficiaries of such an approach. Men in similar institutions will also benefit.

What, then, does this suggest to the administrators and practitioners within a state correctional system? First, it suggests that risk-based classification must meet certain technical standards if it is to be used for women offenders. The population upon

which your instrument is based must include women and men in sufficient numbers and proportion to insure its relevance to both women and men offenders. The research underlying your instrument must be sound, and the instrument must be validated. If your current instrument does not meet these standards, then your technical agenda is clear. Unless you take steps to correct these problems, your instrument will not be helpful in making decisions, and you may face legal challenge.

The third conclusion is that the practitioner should ask whether and to what extent the state classification system supports the objectives held for women offenders. If, for instance, your statewide system is primarily concerned with security, and your women's institutions are focusing upon habilitation, then you should explore developing new approaches to classification within the statewide structure that will support habilitation concerns. Of course these new approaches to classification should be used in any institution--male or female--where the profile of the population allows a significant focus on habilitation.

Part II of this handbook includes specific guidance for the practitioner as he or she undertakes the work of assessing current classification practice with respect to the woman offender and of targeting and implementing changes to improve that practice.

PART I:

A REVIEW OF CURRENT PRACTICE AND EMERGING ISSUES

## INTRODUCTION

Women are an increasingly visible segment of the population confined in America's prisons. Their numbers are growing at a rate that far outstrips even the remarkable rate of growth among incarcerated men. As a result they are becoming a factor in state level budget deliberations and capital expansion programs. An aggressive agenda of litigation brought by women on parity issues has become difficult to ignore. Indeed, the courts have upheld the standard that there must be parity in access to services, and that the number of women in the system and cost issues are not sufficient justification for neglecting their needs. These factors, combined with the upward movement of women on the staffs of many state correctional agencies, have resulted in a greater recognition of issues affecting women in prison.

Not only are the numbers of women in prison growing dramatically, but the complexion of this population is also changing. Greater drug involvement, more significant problems with respect to employability and parenting skills, and continuing responsibilities for primary care of children characterize today's women inmates. There remains a strong sense among those who work with women offenders that correctional systems have not dealt with them as well as they might, at least partially because the systems are geared so heavily toward men. Classification is a significant part of this picture.

Classification is a major dimension of any correctional system. It is the process by which offenders are assessed and grouped with other "like" offenders for purposes of security and custody designations that affect housing, access to programs, location, levels of privilege, and degree of deprivation of liberty. The courts have recognized classification as an essential tool in the responsible management of prisons. Are classification systems serving as effective tools for managing women offenders within state correctional facilities? If not, what are the problems and how might they be addressed? Where classification appears to be serving well in the management of women offenders, what are its characteristics and what can be learned from the experience?

This handbook presents the results of a review of current classification practice with respect to women, and defines the issues and problems inherent in current practice. The second part of the handbook contains specific guidance about how a correctional agency can assess its own classification practices as they affect women and take steps necessary to refine and improve them.

## **PURPOSES**

This handbook has two major purposes. First, the handbook provides information to administrators regarding the current state of classification practice as it affects women offenders. It describes the kinds of classification systems that are in place and the manner in which some jurisdictions have modified those systems in order to respond to perceived needs of women offenders. The handbook also articulates the issues emerging from such practice and lessons to be gleaned from it.

The second major purpose of the handbook is to provide guidance to administrators and practitioners as they review and assess their own classification practices. This guidance, structured as a "developmental model," suggests specific steps to be taken in order to assess and improve classification practice with respect to women offenders.

## **AUDIENCE**

This handbook has been prepared primarily for administrators at the state and institutional level who have responsibilities for the design and operation of classification systems for both men and women. Those involved in the development and implementation of programs for women offenders, researchers, and others interested in decisionmaking in the criminal justice system will also find it to be of interest. Because classification of women offenders is one example of the practical issues involved in criminal justice decisionmaking generally, the handbook also has applicability for a broader audience, including both practitioners and researchers who are concerned with the design and implementation of responsible decisionmaking structures throughout the system.

## **FORMAT**

Part I of the handbook presents a review of current practice in women's classification and identifies new definitions and issues which are emerging. It provides a context for the rest of the handbook and includes references. Part II is the more practical part of the document, outlining specific steps to be taken in reviewing and refining classification practice in the reader's own jurisdiction. Appendices present vignettes on the four states visited in the course of the handbook's development, a listing of contact persons in state agencies providing information for the handbook, and a list of references.

## STATE OF PRACTICE

### CLASSIFICATION DEFINED

Classification is a much-used but ill-defined term. As the work of assembling this handbook began and the team began conversations with the staff of correctional agencies and facilities, it became clear that classification had many meanings. Those meanings vary depending upon the jurisdiction and upon the perspective of the individual.

At the state department of corrections level, classification's most critical meaning may be the movement of offenders around the state to different correctional institutions in order to assure that beds at various security levels are utilized. At the diagnostic and reception center, its primary meaning may be the process of assessing offenders using various procedures and instruments to generate an offender designation. Once intake processing has been completed, classification may equate to a housing assignment, eligibility for work or privilege, or various degrees of freedom of movement.

At the very narrow extreme, classification may be equated with a set of forms that need to be filled out for offenders that generate some sort of designation. This designation may have minimal impact upon what happens to the offender or how the system interacts with the individual. At the other extreme, classification may encompass virtually all of the systematic assessments of and responses to offenders. In short, it can shape how the system will deal with an individual inmate. It can be, in essence, the major organizing principle for the work of the institution as it interacts with inmates.

We found many dimensions to classification which begin to define its centrality to corrections and its potential as a tool. Classification has organizational, timing, staffing, technical, resource, policy, and management dimensions.

Classification activity can occur at several levels in a corrections agency. Security/custody classification is often a statewide function, designating the institution in which an offender will reside, or in which part of an institution (with that security/custody designation) an offender will reside.

Classification occurs over time. Usually at admission to the system, some sort of classification process takes place which assesses the offender along various dimensions and yields a security/custody designation. Other needs for medical resources, particularly, are typically handled at this time. Over time, however, reclassification will occur, either at designated intervals or

precipitated by various events (disciplinary infractions, request of the inmate, request of staff, etc.).

Classification also has a staff dimension. There may be a classification office at the state level charged with approving classification decisions and planning for and executing the movement of offenders within the system to utilize bed space at designated security levels. That staff or other staff may also be charged with continually assessing and refining the classification system. Within the institution there may be a classification staff or committee charged with initial and periodic assessment of offenders either to classify, re-classify, or to recommend classification actions to a higher level in the organization.

At a technical level, classification may be seen narrowly as the mechanics or instruments or techniques used to assess inmates and to generate recommendations about what to do with those inmates. At a resource level, classification affects the allocation of resources--bed space, jobs, or programs. At a policy level, classification may be shaped by or shape policy regarding those characteristics of offenders that are worthy of note. Are we interested in an offender's offense or prior record, educational/vocational deficits, parental obligations, likelihood of violence, substance abuse history, and/or medical needs? The factors included in a classification system imply their importance to its correctional objectives. For women offenders, classification systems that are heavily laden with offense and prior record information suggest a discontinuity with the policy concerns of women's institutions that focus heavily upon some of the other items mentioned here. This discontinuity will be examined in later sections of the handbook.

From a management perspective, classification offers tools to organize resources to achieve correctional objectives. The degree to which classification will be successful in this way depends upon the degree to which correctional administrators view and utilize classification in a comprehensive fashion.

For the reader, it is important to understand the complexities underlying the term classification. First, it is impossible to understand current practice around the country without appreciating the potential complexity that exists. Although not all of these dimensions are found in every state correctional system's classification practice, they are found in many jurisdictions. Second, as the reader proceeds to examine his or her own agency's approach to classification, it will be important to view it from all of these potential dimensions. Only in this way can practice be improved to the point where classification reaches its full potential as a management tool for achieving correctional objectives with women and men offenders.

## CONTEXT

One of the dilemmas inherent in examining classification of women offenders is deciding whether to look in detail at the entire classification system (a daunting task as the above discussion implies) including both women and men offenders, or to look only at that practice affecting women. Classification of women offenders in state correctional facilities is an activity that is embedded in statewide classification practices. Clearly, this handbook was not intended to be an authoritative and exhaustive work on prison classification. On the other hand, since most systems classify women inmates using the same policies, procedures, and tools as for men, it is difficult either conceptually or practically to separate the two topics.

As practice was reviewed--through the telephone inventory and through the intensive site analysis--an attempt was made to understand the overall classification system in the state. Using a general understanding of the classification system, the analysis then proceeded to focus on how the system specifically affected women. In some instances, however, where serious issues relating to the soundness of the entire system arose, the handbook also comments on classification as it affects both women and men offenders.

## DATA GATHERED BY TELEPHONE INVENTORY

In order to begin building an understanding of classification practice nationwide, and also to create an information base so that intensive sites could be selected, a telephone inventory was completed. State correctional agencies were contacted by telephone and discussions were conducted with one or more staff persons in order to gather information about classification practices. In most states individuals at both the state level and at the state's major institution for women were contacted. (A listing of the individuals providing information can be found in Appendix II of this document.) Written information and documentation were also requested from each jurisdiction to supplement the information obtained through telephone discussions. This information included copies of policies and procedures, classification instruments, sample forms, and other material as necessary.

A total of 48 states participated in the telephone inventory. Of these, more than half (30) provided various documents (policies, procedures, forms, research reports) to expand the information provided by telephone. Exhibit I describes characteristics, as self-reported, from the states participating in the inventory. Most have only one institution for female offenders (35, two of which house their women offenders in facilities that also house men). About half of the states (22) have developed or modified

EXHIBIT I. SUMMARY OF TELEPHONE INVENTORY

48 states participated in the telephone inventory

Size of state by women offender population

- 23 small (less than 300 women offenders)
- 18 medium (between 301 and 999 women offenders)
- 7 large (more than 1,000 women offenders)

Number of women's facilities

- 35 states have one women's facility (2 of which house both men and women)
- 13 states have more than one women's facility

Length of time current classification system has been in place

- 22 states have established systems (pre 1985)
- 22 states have young systems (1985 to 1989)
- 3 states have systems recently implemented (1989)
- 1 unknown

Types of classification systems

- 40 report the same systems for men and women
- 4 report significant differences in classification for women and men
- 4 reported that their systems were adapted or used differently for women, or that policies and procedures were different for men and women

their classification systems within the last four years and an additional three states recently implemented a new classification system for their offender population. Virtually all of the states (44) indicated that they used the same classification system for men and women. Three (Illinois, New York, and Wyoming) reported that they had significantly different approaches to classification for men and women, and one (South Carolina) reported that it was moving in that direction. Another four reported that there were some accommodations in their systems for women offenders (Delaware, Michigan, Minnesota, and Utah).

A few clear patterns emerged from the telephone inventory almost immediately. Despite the fact that classification is almost

a universal term and activity among correctional agencies, practice is extremely varied. Even where similar models are in use, it appears that the models have different levels of impact on actual practice. Some utilize classification as a basic resource management tool, continually moving offenders through various levels and institutions in order to keep population pressures under control. For others, classification is used primarily for individual decisions about inmates' access to privileges, programs, etc. Some systems remain almost completely subjective. Others incorporate instruments and scales that give the appearance of objectivity, but still require much subjective judgment to complete. Some systems are quite complex, others are straightforward. Although many of the same factors are used in classification from one jurisdiction to the other (prior history, current offense and length of sentence, prior escapes, etc.), their specific definitions vary greatly, as does the relative weight given to them by various systems.

Clearly, objective and structured approaches to classification have become widely embraced among state correctional agencies. Of the 48 states responding to the telephone inventory, 43 indicated that they used some type of quantitative or objective scaling in the classification process. It is also clear that there are a few classification models that have, over the last decade, come into relatively widespread use among correctional agencies. For instance, seven of the 43 states using objective scaling indicated (either through the telephone inventory or in submitted materials) that they were using the NIC prison classification model. These were Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin. Seven others likewise indicated that they were using the Correctional Classification Profile (CCP) model. These were Arizona, Connecticut, Missouri, New Hampshire, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. One (Utah) reported using the Adult Inmate Management System (AIMS), but indicated that it was not in use for women. It may be that others are using these models as well, but simply did not identify them as such in our conversations and did not submit materials that would have indicated such to the research team.

It is against this backdrop that classification of women offenders must be viewed. Classification of women offenders has at least as much variety, complexity, and challenge as classification generally. But it faces the added challenge of serving a segment of the prison population that may have quite a different profile when it comes to the level of risk it presents or needs that it may experience.

When queried about their concerns regarding classification of women offenders, most respondents identified three areas. First, there was a concern that access to certain programs and resources was affected by an inmate's classification. To the extent that women offenders may tend to be over-classified--and there is some

feeling that this is the case--classification may represent a barrier to needed resources. This over-classification is felt to be the result of classification systems that do not recognize the different levels of risk that women typically present. While women offenders may look like male offenders when viewed through the lens of a classification instrument, the real risk (particularly of violence) they pose is believed to be significantly less.

Others were concerned because of changes in female populations--more drug involvement, younger offenders, shorter lengths of stay. Some felt that classification decisions regarding women often involved exceptions or overrides of classification systems because they seemed to fit women so poorly.

A concern about whether classification was adequately addressing women offenders was fairly common. There was almost no interest expressed, however, in advocating separate classification systems for women. Staff of correctional agencies seemed very cognizant of the possibility of legal challenge that such an approach might generate, particularly given the frequency of litigation on parity issues over the last decade.

#### **INTENSIVE SITE ANALYSIS**

Not only did the telephone inventory begin to outline current practice and emerging issues, it also provided information with which to select jurisdictions where on-site data collection could be conducted. Project resources allowed travel to four jurisdictions to conduct extensive interviews with staff who designed, managed, and utilize classification systems. The four were selected from among those jurisdictions expressing a willingness to participate and in order to explore the widest possible variety of characteristics of interest. An attempt was made to include jurisdictions of different size and geographic location, with different types of classification systems and experience with similar and different approaches to the classification of men and women. Georgia, Illinois, New York, and Wyoming were selected.

In each instance, interviews were conducted at the state department of corrections (DOC) level and in at least one institution where women inmates were housed. (In Wyoming, the Board of Charities and Reform oversaw correctional facilities at the time of the study; there was no state DOC.) A team of two or three individuals spent two to three days on-site interviewing as many as 20 staff involved in classification. Interviews were also conducted with women inmates in each state. The research team also reviewed policies, procedures, working papers, and instruments. What follows are very brief descriptions of the four jurisdictions. More detailed descriptions of each may be found in Appendix I.

## Georgia

Georgia has a mid-size, growing correctional system (22,000 inmates, 1,100 of them women) that is expanding its capacity for women by adding units adjacent to its one traditional facility and adding other secure and transitional facilities around the state. Georgia is an example of a state with an objective classification system based on staff consensus. The classification instrument is heavily weighted by offense of conviction and length of sentence and is identical for men and women.

## New York

New York is an example of one of the largest correctional systems in the country (54,700 inmates, 2,400 of them women) and has had multiple facilities for women for some years. It uses the same classification system for men as for women, but with a separate instrument (empirically based) which assesses the risk women would present to the community if they were to be released or escape.

## Illinois

Illinois, likewise, uses the same classification system for men as for women, but with separate empirically based instruments designed to assess the risk of rule breaking behavior on the part of inmates. It also incorporates a violence assessment and a risk of escape, although the latter is not empirically based.

## Wyoming

Wyoming has quite a small state correctional system with fewer than 1,000 inmates, 70 of whom are women (with an additional 13 women offenders from Colorado). Its classification system moves women gradually through descending levels of security/custody based upon their performance in attaining specific goals related to habilitation concerns. Rather than predicting future behavior, the system rewards demonstrated behavior. Because the women's facility in Wyoming was independent of men's facilities in the state, its classification system was also developed independently and is quite different from that used for men.

The intensive site analysis yielded a fairly detailed understanding of classification and its impact on women in these four jurisdictions. It also enriched and deepened our understanding of the issues and problems faced by correctional administrators as they seek to improve their classification of women offenders. The telephone inventory and intensive site analysis form the basis for the following sections of the handbook.

## HIGHLIGHTS

### Classification of Women Offenders

One assumption of this study had been that some jurisdictions had actually developed classification systems specifically for women offenders. However, it is probably more accurate to say that classification systems in a few states have been adapted or modified in some of their elements in order to deal more directly with women offenders than to say that any state yet examined has developed a separate classification system for women. (An exception to this is Wyoming where no statewide system exists because there was no department of corrections, and each institution developed its own approach to classification--the Wyoming Women's Center being one of those institutions.) No indications were found that any state, within the context of a statewide agency, had developed a separate classification system for women. Indeed, many of those interviewed, despite concerns about whether existing systems were adequately serving women offenders, specifically stated that they would not want to see separate systems developed for men and women. Their feelings were that such an approach might raise parity issues and other problems.

Modifications or accommodations take several forms. In some instances, women are subject to identical policies and procedures regarding classification, but different instruments have been developed (Illinois, New York, California) that have been based on research with male and female populations. In these instances, the correctional agencies recognized that the risk assessment tools developed for male or predominately male populations were most likely invalid for women offenders. To address this problem, these agencies developed instruments specifically for a female population in order to assure their validity.

Another way in which the classification needs of women are being met is through the development of institutional level classification procedures that have evolved specifically for women. An example of this approach can be found in Minnesota, where women are classified using the departmental security classification system at intake. Then, within the institution, they are classified according to "levels" through which they move depending upon time served and their own performance.

Yet another accommodation that was more difficult to document, but which was related anecdotally, is the frequent use of overrides of the existing system in order to classify women offenders in ways that staff feel are more appropriate to their level of risk.

Some interest has been expressed in the application of AIMS to women offenders. This system, developed by Herbert Quay, offers a method of classifying and grouping offenders within a single institution. Because many states house all women within one insti-

tution, this system has generated increasing interest for women offenders. AIMS was developed on and for male populations, however, so its usefulness for women is a question to be examined. Recent work in South Carolina has been directed at validating this system for a female population. Utah uses AIMS for its male offenders and has expressed some interest in validating its use for women, as has the correctional agency in Missouri. The outcomes of this study and interest were unknown at the time of the writing of this handbook.

### Other Trends

General trends in classification include the movement toward more centralized and system-wide classification systems. This raises issues for women's institutions since they will be expected to accommodate such centralized systems, even though they may have enjoyed great autonomy in the past.

There is a growing interest in empirically based risk assessment instruments. This raises a number of difficult questions regarding women. If such instruments are developed without specifically ensuring their validity for women, they may exacerbate problems regarding classification of women even further. Even if the instruments are well constructed and valid for a male population, they may be inappropriate for women. Secondly, constructing empirical instruments that are valid for women is certainly possible, but only if there are enough women in the universe to be analyzed to allow statistical methods to be meaningful. A minimum of 1,000 women offenders in a data base is required for meaningful analysis. Secondly, the potential legal problems of developing separate instruments for men and women--even if each is technically sound--may be significant enough to discourage an agency from proceeding along this path. Hence, the question of how to utilize the growing technology of risk assessment for a female population is still an open one.

### General Approaches to Classification of Women Offenders

Out of the inventory and intensive site visits, several "general approaches" to classification emerged. They will be explicated here to give practitioners a framework within which to view, and begin to critique, their own systems.

Risk-based systems are most common. Whether explicitly stated or not, a major concern is assuring the safety and security of inmates and staff within an institution. There are two types of systems within this overall category.

First is the type of system that is based upon policy-makers' consensus about risk factors. Initial assessment is based upon some objective scoring instrument that is intended to sort offenders into groups with differential expected rates of some future

behavior (rule breaking, escape, violence within the institution, violence in the community if escaped). These instruments are based heavily upon experience with men, have little or no statistical foundation, and are used to assign a "security designation." If there is only one institution, however, that designation has little effect on housing or programming. This approach seems to serve primarily to sort men among institutions. Since women go to only one or a very few institutions, its utility for women is unclear.

The second type of system is one that utilizes research-based risk assessment instruments. This operates in much the same way as the first. The major difference is that the first relies upon the "clinical" judgment of those involved in developing the assessment tools. The second relies upon more or less precise statistical analysis to surface those factors and their weights that are correlated with various types of behavior (rule breaking, violence, escape, etc.) that are being predicted. In most of these systems, the empirical analysis did not take adequate account of women offenders, so the results may not be useful for a female population. In some instances, empirical analysis of women's behavior in the institution has been conducted and a different rating scale has been adopted for women. Once within the women's institution, the security designation may place women within a particular cottage or unit but, even so, the units may differ only slightly.

Performance-based systems are organized around the concept of the individual offender earning his or her way through successively less restrictive classification levels. This approach relies upon the actual performance of offenders, rather than upon a prediction of future performance (whether that is rule breaking, violence, escape, etc.). The "performance" of interest may include the simple avoidance of "tickets" or may include positive behavior goal achievement. This approach requires frequent re-assessment, is individually-based, and may require that everyone start at the same place and work through the levels. Movement may also be affected by length of time to release, in addition to performance.

## EMERGING ISSUES

During the information-gathering portions of this project a set of issues emerged that are useful in helping those working with women offenders define a context for that work. What problems are others having, what problems do they anticipate, what issues must we put on the agenda for further study? This section presents the issues as they were reported to us by those working in the field and as we observed them during our analysis.

### ARE WOMEN OFFENDERS BEING CLASSIFIED CORRECTLY?

Many practitioners who work with women offenders voice concern that current classification systems are basically mis-classifying them, sorting them disproportionately into higher levels of security or custody than is required. The implication of these comments is that, whatever instrument is being used to sort offenders into security/custody levels, the result for women is not as acceptable as the result for men.

One might speculate that where the tools are based on the collective judgment of staff, there is simply more experience and knowledge of male offenders than of women offenders. One might also speculate that because so many systems are heavily weighted by severity of offense--and even where serious offenses are involved, women tend not to be as violent or predatory as men--that they over-classify women.

In the case of research-based tools, we might also speculate that the research did not include women, or if it did, did not take adequate technical steps to ensure the tool's validity for women as well as for men. Whether this is the case or not is difficult to determine, as the evidence is primarily anecdotal. It would be possible, of course, in each jurisdiction, for the question to be researched and to determine the degree to which risk assessment tools "work" for the given population of women and men. In fact, in many jurisdictions no research has been conducted on the effectiveness of classification tools generally, and so it is difficult to know if they are really doing a good job of classifying men, let alone women.

Perhaps the central conclusion emerging from this study is that in the past we have been asking the wrong questions about women's classification. We have been focussing primarily on how to do better risk classification. Do we need separate tools, do we need more precise tools, can you import a classification tool from another jurisdiction, how do you get around the problem of having too few women in your population to do adequate statistical analysis?

These are all pertinent questions if the major issue is how to do better risk-based classification of women offenders. And if you are, in fact, going to do risk classification for women, they must be answered. However, the central issue is whether current "mainstream" classification systems provide adequate tools for the management of women offenders. The answer to that question is no, but not because we need better risk assessment tools for women. It is because we need different approaches to classification for women generally, or for any groups of offenders whose profile allows correctional institutions to focus the bulk of their resources and energy on non-security issues such as habilitation, programming, and preparation for release.

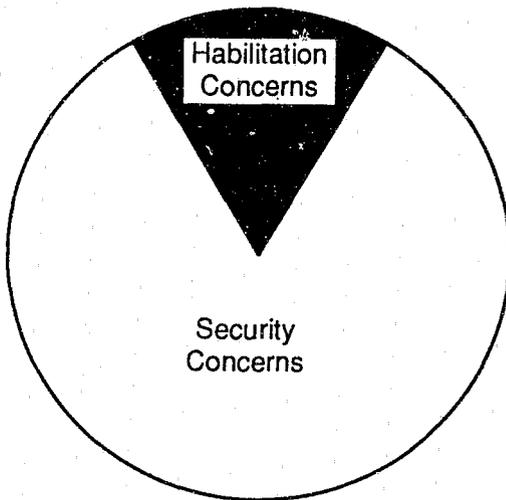
Within any correctional institution, there are at least two major interests. They are security and habilitation. Security includes the safety of inmates, the safety of staff, the safety of the facility itself, and the safety of the community. The other broad area of concern is the habilitation of offenders. The term habilitation has been chosen in recognition of the fact that many offenders have deficits in education, employability, parenting, decisionmaking, and general competence at life that they have not lost, but rather never had. Hence the term habilitation.

Any institution has both security and habilitation concerns. Physical design, procedures, supervision, and regimentation are evidence of the former. Counseling, drug abuse services, educational programs, vocational services, and so forth are evidence of the latter. However, every institution assigns a different weight to each of these concerns. Where the population is large, violent, predatory, disorderly, and dangerous, an institution focuses most of its resources on security concerns. It is not that habilitation is not a concern, but rather that the institution has to set priorities, and there is more of an emphasis on security. Where the population is less violent, dangerous, and predatory, an institution can focus more of its resources on habilitation concerns. There are still physical restraints, procedures, and supervision, but the emphasis is different.

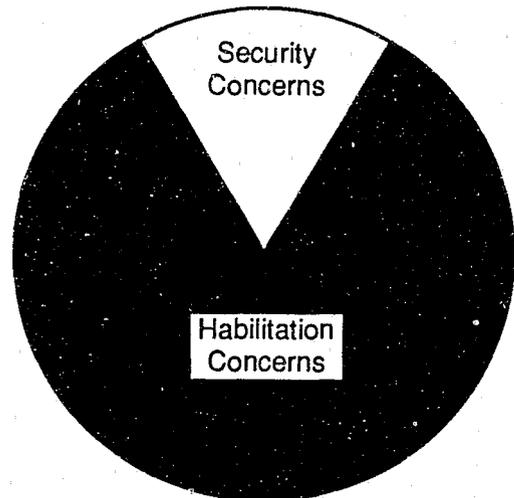
Exhibit II presents in graphic form the difference between two institutions where security and habilitation have different emphases. The figure to the left indicates a traditional distribution of emphasis toward security, as is found in most men's institutions. The figure to the right indicates the emphasis toward habilitation that is found in most women's institutions. Although the precise proportions will vary from place to place, the major thrust of the exhibit is to highlight the differences in emphasis that may be found between institutions housing low and high risk populations.

EXHIBIT II. WHY CURRENT CLASSIFICATION PRACTICE  
DOES NOT WORK FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS

A classification system designed to support the type of institution depicted on the left will not serve well the type of institution depicted on the right.



Relative Emphasis on  
Security and Habilitation  
in Institutions with High  
Risk Populations  
(Many men's institutions  
fall in this group.)



Relative Emphasis on  
Security and Habilitation  
in Institutions with Low  
Risk Populations  
(Many women's institutions  
fall in this group.)

The major problem with classification of women offenders is that virtually all statewide classification systems are designed to support the type of emphasis depicted on the left, yet they are being used for offenders housed in institutions with the type of emphasis depicted on the right.

One of the ways in which the emphasis within a correctional institution is supported is through classification. Inmates are separated into security/custody levels to assure safety. Where the major emphasis is on security, a risk-based classification makes a great deal of sense. Yet there are institutions within our correctional systems where the profile of the population allows a greater emphasis upon habilitation concerns. This is the case in many women's institutions. It is probably the case in many men's institutions as well, where the profile of offenders permits it. Unfortunately, in most women's institutions, the classification system in place is one that has been explicitly designed to support an emphasis on security, not habilitation. It seems, then, that the general thrust of improvement in women's classification is not in the development of better, more specifically women-oriented risk classification tools, but in an approach to classification that supports an emphasis on habilitation.

#### DESIGN ISSUES

A major role of classification systems--in some jurisdictions the major role--is the assignment of offenders to specific institutions which match a certain security level. In the vast majority of cases, women are housed in only one institution. The question, then, is how a classification system designed primarily to sort offenders among institutions can be helpful to the task of managing offenders of all security levels within a single institution?

In large systems, there is some evidence that the management of offenders within institutions is not very highly standardized and that a department of corrections may well leave the administration of standards to the discretion of individual superintendents. Such is the case in Illinois. Hence, the particular character of an institution grows out of the staff and inmate population. At Dwight Correctional Center, the major institution housing women in Illinois, that character is heavily based upon an interest in the individual and in working with that individual toward release and toward changes in that individual's life skills. Very simply, other than the assignment of offenders to specific cottages with slightly different strictures on movement (primarily the time of lock up at night), the classification system of the Department has very little influence on life within the walls. The elaborate assignment to security level, dangerousness assessment, and escape risk has fewer operational implications within the institution than one might expect.

This is the case in Georgia as well where most offenders are housed at the Georgia Women's Correctional Institution at Hardwick. Once an offender receives a security designation (except in the case of close security, which involves very few women), her housing assignments, job assignments within the walls, programming, etc. are little affected.

A frequent refrain from those we interviewed goes something like this: "A medium security woman is not the same as a medium security man." Even though the criteria sort into a medium level, the feeling among individuals who work with women is that they are not as violent, they are not as dangerous, they are not as prone to escape--except in a completely open setting--and they do not require the same physical security as do men of the same security rating. This may be due at least partially to the fact that most classification systems are heavily influenced by the crime of conviction. When there is a serious crime, the security designation is likely to be high. However, there is also a feeling that women involved in serious crimes are often involved as a result of a relationship with a man--either as an accomplice or instigator, or with the man as the victim of isolated violence following an abusive relationship. The question becomes, then, how to acknowledge this difference and shape the system accordingly to assure a "least restrictive" setting for women without creating an environment that could be accused of being discriminatory.

For many years, women have been housed in a single institution in many states. One issue that is emerging is that now decisions have to be made about assigning women among institutions. Since the assignment or classification is usually done by the women's "parent" institution, a new mind-set has to be developed to decide what criteria will be used for the sorting. Can it be only by inmate preference? Should women all be cycled through the former "single" women's facility and gradually moved out to the others? More and more states will face these questions as new housing facilities for women are added to their systems.

The current high interest in empirically based risk prediction instruments seems a bit out of place in the arena of classification of women offenders. Women are less risky--in terms of violence within institutions and in terms of violence potential if they should escape or walk away. The incidence of this behavior is so low as to make the task of predicting it with empirically-based instruments both difficult and not very helpful. Prediction of rule-breaking behavior may be more useful, but in fact such predictive efforts have not been undertaken with great frequency. With frequent reclassifications, it becomes possible to move women to different designations based upon their own behavior, rather than upon the prediction of it through the use of instruments.

## IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

### The Effect of Crowding

Given the incredible crowding being experienced by state correctional systems, the classification process has been reduced in some instances to a movement system--transferring inmates as quickly as possible to fill beds that are available at designated security levels. In Illinois, the part of the Department responsible for classification is entitled "Office of Inmate Transfer." The pressure of sheer numbers has had a major impact upon classification for both men and women.

### Access to Trained Diagnostic Staff

There is a need for a classification system that can be administered by individuals who can be easily trained and equipped to conduct the diagnosis and perform classification and reclassification. The location of women's prisons in relatively isolated areas in many states makes the identification of qualified staff difficult--particularly when the workload might only require classification staff on a part-time or consulting basis. (Wyoming is a good example.)

### Access to Services

In a number of jurisdictions, a security designation may determine the jobs and housing settings to which inmates have access. This is, of course, an issue for men as well as women.

### Explicit Policy

In some states, we found that there were a number of considerations in making a security designation that did not appear anywhere in policy or on the instrument in use. For instance, these include the need to separate inmates from enemies and to keep inmates from being assigned to a facility in their home counties since former friends, family, lovers, or enemies might be on the staff of the institution. Hence, in the press of implementation, factors relevant to classification and movement issues often come into play without their being included in explicit policy.

### Context

The reality of life is that women's institutions must operate within a statewide correctional system. However practitioners may want to adapt to the needs of women offenders, this must be done in the context of a real-life system that is heavily concerned with the other 95 percent of its inmates. Any efforts undertaken to modify classification practices should proceed with this understanding.

## LEGAL ANALYSIS

by

Susan Carey Nicholas and Annabelle Loeb

The purpose of this chapter is to outline in broad strokes some of the major legal issues likely to arise as a state corrections department develops or implements a prisoner classification system. While we cannot detail every legal consideration, the following analysis can provide a framework for building a classification system which will serve institutional needs within the constitutional framework of the rights of inmates.

With a few important exceptions, prison administrators enjoy fairly wide latitude to develop and implement inmate classification systems which meet the needs of their departments and institutions. This chapter will begin with a brief history and description of prisoners' rights law generally. It will then analyze in somewhat more detail two areas, due process rights and gender equity, where federal and state constitutional law must be carefully considered in the classification process in order to protect against constitutional challenge.

### BACKGROUND ON PRISON LITIGATION

During the early 1970's, the Supreme Court announced a series of landmark decisions which dramatically expanded the constitutional basis of prisoners' rights. In Wolff v. McDonnell, 418 U.S. 539 (1974), the Court first articulated the notion that "there is no iron curtain drawn between the Constitution and the prisons of this country." Id. at 555-556. Later that year, the Court indicated that federal courts would carefully scrutinize cases where prisoners' constitutionally protected interests were infringed. Procunier v. Martinez, 416 U.S. 396 (1974). These cases and others encouraged an era of intensive litigation on behalf of prisoners, including massive challenges to conditions of confinement within prisons and throughout whole prison systems; attempts to establish procedural due process rights; and demands for greater access to legal services, mail, visits, printed materials, the press, and programmatic opportunities. Some of these lawsuits resulted in detailed court orders and consent decrees, which in turn led to extensive court intervention in the running of prisons.

By the late 1970's, however, the Supreme Court began to step back from its expansive interpretation of prisoners' rights. See, e.g., Bell v. Woolfish, 441 U.S. 520 (1979) and Rhodes v. Chapman, 452 U.S. 337 (1981). In 1987, the Court articulated a greatly relaxed standard of review of prisoners' constitutional claims, noting that "subjecting the day-to-day judgments of prison officials to an inflexible strict scrutiny standard would seriously hamper their ability to anticipate security problems and to adopt innovative solutions to intractable problems of prison adminis-

tration." Turner v. Safley, 482 U.S. 78, 79, 107 S.Ct. 2254, 96 L.Ed.2d 64 (1987).

## DUE PROCESS RIGHTS

In the classification context, prisoners have often claimed that some form of procedural due process (notice and a hearing or other form of review) must precede classification decisions which adversely affect them. In response to these challenges, the U.S. Supreme Court has evolved a doctrine of "liberty interests": if the classification or transfer decision impinges upon a "liberty interest" of the prisoner, some form of procedural due process must be granted. These liberty interests may arise from two sources--the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the laws of the states.

Under this doctrine, prison inmates have only a limited range of protected liberty interests. Inmates have no liberty interest, for example, in parole or in good time credit. In fact, only a change in prison status beyond the normal range of conditions incident to incarceration has been found to violate a prisoner's liberty interest.

For example, in several cases the Court held that transferring an inmate to another prison, either to the same or to a different security level, does not implicate any liberty interest of the prisoner. Montanye v. Haynes, 427 U.S. 236 (1976), Meachum v. Fano, 427 U.S. 215 (1976), and Olim v. Wakinekona, 461 U.S. 238 (1982). The Court found that "confinement within any of the State's institutions is within the normal limits or range of custody which the conviction has authorized the state to impose," Meachum, id. at 224-225--in other words, even a transfer to a very distant location, which results in a major loss to the prisoner, raises no due process requirements. See Olim, id., where the transfer in question was from Hawaii to the mainland.

By contrast, in 1980 the Court found that transfer of an inmate from a prison to a mental hospital did implicate a liberty interest, and, therefore, required some form of procedural safeguard. This kind of transfer was "not within the range of conditions of confinement to which a prison sentence subjects an individual," because it brought about a "consequence...qualitatively different from the punishment characteristically suffered by a person convicted of a crime." Vitek v. Jones, 445 U.S. 480 (1980) at 493. In this case, the required procedural protections included written notice and an adversarial hearing which allowed the prisoner to present witnesses and to confront and cross examine witnesses called by the state.

Although most classification decisions probably do not implicate a liberty interest such as that found in Vitek, some aspects

of prison classification could conceivably be so arbitrary as to invoke the due process clause. For example, in 1982 a federal district court upheld a due process challenge to an internal disciplinary system which allocated all institutional privileges to women inmates on the basis of behavior and seniority. The court found that this "level system" was operated in an arbitrary and punitive manner, and likened it to the kind of mandatory transfer to a behavior modification program which triggered due process safeguards in Vitek. Canterino v. Wilson, 546 F.Supp. 1174 (W.D. KY 1982), aff'd in part, 875 F.2d 862 (6th Cir. 1989), vacated in part, 869 F.2d 948 (6th Cir. 1989).

In some situations a state may create a liberty interest by placing mandatory limitations on official discretion through state laws, rules, regulations, or practices. In Hewitt v. Helms, 459 U.S. 460, 471-472, 103 S.Ct. 864, 74 L.Ed.2d 675 (1983), the Court held that given the mandatory nature of a Pennsylvania statute setting forth procedures for confining inmates to administrative segregation, combined with the specified reasons for confinement set out in the statute, an inmate acquired a protected liberty interest in remaining in the general prison population to which due process attached. The Court held that, in this case, the inmate's due process rights were limited to the receipt of some notice of the charges against him and an opportunity to present his views to the prison officials charged with making the decision.

#### **GENDER EQUITY ISSUES**

Women offenders constitute a very small minority of prison inmates. In state corrections systems stressed by overcrowding or budget shortfalls, all too often the needs of women inmates are shortchanged, and the prisons that house them are overloaded. In addition, the history of women's prisons as institutions within predominantly male departments and stereotyped views about the needs and capabilities of women can combine to perpetuate sex discrimination.

In recent years, women offenders have begun to mount successful challenges to many different aspects of prison life in which they allege that they are being treated differently, and less favorably, than their male counterparts.

#### **SEX DISCRIMINATION LAW IN THE PRISON CONTEXT**

Many lower federal courts have found that different treatment of the sexes in prison violates the constitutionally protected right to equal protection of the laws under the Fourteenth Amendment. None of these cases has reached the Supreme Court. In each case, the court held that the equal protection clause is violated when women inmates are offered substantially fewer program-

matic opportunities than men. Glover v. Johnson, 478 F.Supp. 1075 (E.D. Mich. 1979), McMurry v. Phelps, 533 F.Supp. 742 (W.D. La. 1982), Mitchell v. Untreiner, 421 F.Supp. 886 (N.D. Fla. 1976), and Canterino v. Wilson, 546 F.Supp. 174 (W.D. KY 1982) aff'd in part, 875 F.2d 862 (1989), vacated in part, 869 F.2d 948 (1989). These cases successfully challenged the dearth of vocational training and work release programs, the lack of opportunity to participate in minimum security facilities or camps, and other differences in opportunities relative to men's institutions. All resulted in holdings that women inmates have the right to a range and quality of programming substantially equivalent to that offered to men. In Canterino, the disciplinary system used to classify only women inmates was also found to deny equal protection to women prisoners.

One appellate court decision, however, seems to take a more lenient view of at least one form of different treatment. In 1989, the D.C. Court of Appeals held that a challenge by women prisoners who were incarcerated at a greater distance from the District than their male counterparts failed to implicate the equal protection clause even though women were unduly burdened by the greater distance they had to travel. Pitts v. Thornburgh, 866 F.2d 1450 (D.C.Cir. 1989). In contrast to the cases cited above, the Pitts court allowed issues of overcrowding and cost to be used by the defendants as a rationale to avoid the constitutional responsibility to provide treatment.

Despite the lack of uniformity in court decisions, the lesson of these cases--which is consistent with general equal protection law--is that prison systems may face lawsuits from inmates if they handle one sex differently than the other. This problem could arise in the prison classification context in a number of ways: unequal programmatic opportunities; different classification systems; and, potentially, challenges to separate sex institutions.

In framing remedies, no court to date has ordered that disadvantages to women prisoners be alleviated by placing women in male institutions. Instead, courts have ordered that men's and women's facilities offer comparable programs.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>In no reported case that we found did an inmate of either sex seek the integration of single-sex institutions. Thus no federal court that we know of has directly confronted the difficult issue of the constitutionality of incarcerating inmates in separate institutions based on their sex.

Such a challenge might be successful if the plaintiff could show that the male and female prisons were not "comparable." See Vorchheimer v. School Dist. of Phila., 430 U.S. 703 (1977), in which an evenly divided Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision which permitted separate-sex public schools where the educational facilities were "comparable." But see Newberg v. Board of Education, 9 Phila. 556 (1983), which held that the exclusion of

In addition to the federal equal protection clause which applies to every prison system, many states may have statutes or constitutional provisions which prohibit classification based on sex. For example, 16 states have equal rights amendments added to their constitutions.<sup>2</sup> Of these, several have articulated a legal theory of equality different from, and more stringent than, that of federal equal protection decisions. In Pennsylvania, for example, the courts have leaned toward an "absolute standard" of equality. In Henderson v. Henderson, 458 Pa. 97 (1974), the Pennsylvania Supreme Court held that "the thrust of the Equal Rights Amendment is to...eliminate sex as a basis for distinction." In a case invalidating a statute which required no minimum sentences for women while requiring such sentences for men, the Supreme Court stated that "in this Commonwealth, sex may no longer be accepted as an exclusive classifying tool."

ERA states which have followed the Pennsylvania interpretation would appear to provide a strong legal basis for prison inmates seeking to challenge any form of different treatment based on sex. As an example, the female inmates' challenge in Pitts, supra, would possibly be successful in an ERA state with a stricter standard of review.

While an analysis of every state constitution is beyond the scope of this chapter, administrators should be aware that prison classification systems that result in different treatment of men and women inmates may be subject to stricter scrutiny under either the equal protection or equal rights provisions of their state constitutions than they would be under federal constitutional law.

Furthermore, a sex-based classification system may raise legal issues under various state statutes. For example, equal pay acts or other anti-discrimination statutes relating to employment or education might be implicated, depending on whether under those statutes inmate workers were included within the statutory definition of "employee."

In addition, receipt of federal financial assistance by a state prison system could mean that the prison must offer equal educational opportunity to men and women inmates in accordance with

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girls from the same high school violated the equal protection clause and the state Equal Rights Amendment because the boys' school provided superior facilities and education. Under state equal rights provisions, a challenge to separate-sex institutions would be even more difficult to defend.

<sup>2</sup>These states are Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Montana, Colorado, Washington, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Illinois, Alaska, Connecticut, Hawaii, Texas, Virginia, Utah, and Wyoming.

the federal statute. At least one federal court has held that to the extent opportunities were available to men under federally-funded educational and employment programs within the scope of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and several other federal statutes, the prison authorities "must offer equivalent programs in form as well as in substance to similarly situated women..." Canterino, 546 F.Supp. at 210. Presumably, this requires something more than the sort of rough parity the courts are content with under an equal protection analysis.

The discussion above has focused on the legal implications of prison programs or policies that explicitly treat men and women differently--known in legal parlance as "disparate treatment." However, prison officials should know that sex discrimination can also occur as a result of laws, policies, or practices which are neutral in form but result in a discriminatory impact. For example, in the employment law context, it has long been established that tests given to job applicants to measure skills required for jobs must be designed in a way that does not unfairly disadvantage either sex.

A corrections department which uses a single risk assessment instrument for males and females therefore runs a risk of liability based on the "disparate impact" this instrument may have on women inmates. In current practice, many risk assessment instruments have been validated exclusively, if at all, on male prison populations. In such cases, these tests may inaccurately classify women inmates.

Such facially neutral classifications could be subject to constitutional challenge under various state constitutional provisions. For example, under the ERA and the equal protection clauses of the Massachusetts constitution, statutes that are not discriminatory according to their terms may still be found to deny equality under the law if they are applied in a discriminatory fashion. Buchanan v. Dir. of Div. of Emp. Sec., 393 Mass. 329, 471 N.E.2d 345, 349 (1984) citing School Committee of Braintree v. Massachusetts Comm'n Against Discrimination, 377 Mass. 424, 431-432, 386 N.E.2d 1251 (1979); School Comm. of Springfield v. Board of Education, 366 Mass. 315, 327, 319 N.E.2d 427 (1974) cert. denied, 421 U.S. 947, 95 S.Ct. 1677, 44 L.Ed.2d 101 (1975). And, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court has similarly suggested that "facially neutral...policies which have the practical effect of perpetuating...discriminatory practices" constitute discrimination by sex. Snider v. Thornburgh, 496 Pa. 159, 436 A.2d 593, 601 (1981), citing General Electric Corporation v. Human Relations Commission, 469 Pa. 292, 309, 365 A.2d 649 (1976).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the information gathered during the review of current practice and emerging issues, several directions seem clear for those involved in the classification of women offenders in state correctional institutions.

First, classification of women must be designed by an individual system and its institutions. It cannot simply be imported from another state or institution. The developmental model outlined in Part II of this document provides a guide for that work.

Second, certain technical standards must be met in the development of risk-based classification tools for women offenders. These standards are outlined and practical guidance is offered in Part II.

Third, a different emphasis on classification for women may be in order, an emphasis that grows out of habilitation concerns rather than risk concerns.

Fourth, it is important that any developmental work undertaken to improve classification for women offenders be gender neutral both on its surface and in its effect on offenders. This argues for both gender-neutral risk classification tools and the development of new classification approaches based on habilitation concerns. These approaches could be utilized for both women and men offenders in settings where the profile of the population allows it.

PART II:

A DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL FOR CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN OFFENDERS  
IN STATE CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

## INTRODUCTION

This section of the handbook provides a set of practical suggestions and tools that can be used to guide a jurisdiction through a review of its current classification practice for women offenders. The suggestions and tools will also be helpful in refining classification practices in light of a jurisdiction's own goals, resources, and practical constraints. These suggestions and tools, comprising what is termed a "developmental model," address:

- An assessment of the existing classification system and current practice.
- Definition of desired modifications of that practice based on both clear objectives and practical constraints. These have been identified as "targets for change."
- Issues to be addressed in the development of an implementation agenda with suggestions on managing an effective change strategy.

## ASSUMPTIONS

This developmental model is based on a few critical assumptions. First, and most importantly, the model proceeds on the assumption that there is no single model for classification of the woman offender (or the male offender) that can simply be promulgated and then adopted nationwide. No single model could address the various concerns and problems that have been identified across jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction must design its own classification system shaped by its own purposes, resources, and organizational environment. Therefore, rather than suggest a single "model" classification system, this handbook suggests a developmental process that may be followed by any jurisdiction in assessing and improving its practice of classification. By following this process, an individual jurisdiction will examine its own purposes, environment, constraints, and resources that will begin to shape an appropriate classification strategy. Guided by certain principles of classification and certain technical requirements, practitioners will be supported in their efforts to assess and improve practice.

A second important assumption of this document--based on the project's data gathering effort--is that every prison system is already engaged in some type of classification activity. Some aspects of this system may be operating quite well; others may give rise to concern. As one thinks about developing classification, it is as important to assess current practice as it is to generate "new" schemes. Thus, the first part of this developmental model concentrates on assessment and review of current classification

practice in order to identify needed targets for change and development.

A third assumption is that change in classification practice will most likely occur in an incremental fashion. Rarely is it possible (or advisable) to completely renovate an entire classification system in one stroke. Given limited resources, time, and organizational energy, it is often more practical to identify manageable pieces of a change strategy and to move forward in a more measured way. In order to support this incremental process, the developmental model is organized into relatively discrete development activities, though they are all conceptually part of a whole.

The final sections of the developmental model address implementation and change strategies. These sections grow out of another critical assumption--that good assessment and design work can be completely ineffectual if they are not supported with a sound implementation and change management strategy. The success of any planned change depends on direct attention to process--who is involved when, how is open discussion encouraged, how clear is communication, are there provisions for consensus-building, does the process foster a sense of ownership? All of these issues must be addressed if a desired change in practice is to be effectively implemented.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Beyond the assumptions listed above, this handbook and its suggested developmental model are shaped significantly by several principles or values that should be articulated before moving on to the more practical aspects of this section. Those principles include gender neutrality, the least restrictive doctrine, and the importance of clarity of objectives in designing classification systems.

### Gender Neutrality

Although significant problems have been identified for women offenders as a result of classification systems designed for an all male population, the solution does not lie in the development of a classification system specifically for women. Because of potential legal challenges and the real dangers of continued inequities for women offenders, it is important that gender not be utilized as a classifying principle. Rather, this study suggests that any statewide system of classification be gender neutral in the same way that any system should be racially neutral, both on its surface and in its effect on offenders. This assumption is based on the fact that the legal and constitutional issues raised by a gender-specific classification system would be unacceptable, even where there may be technical benefits. Where a system works

hardships on either men or women, policy solutions should be developed which are, in themselves, gender neutral.

This handbook does suggest, however, that within specific institutions, classification activities be geared to furthering the purposes of those institutions and the populations they serve. In the case of women's institutions, there seems to be more focus on habilitation concerns than on security concerns. However, nothing prevents such habilitation orientation in male or co-correctional institutions that house populations with lower incidences of violence and disruptive behavior.

### Least Restrictive Doctrine

This handbook strongly encourages clear thinking about objectives and is based on the assumption that each jurisdiction should select its own objectives for its correctional systems, including classification. It is also based on an acceptance of the doctrine of "least restrictive" custody. This doctrine, which has been accepted and promulgated by the American Correctional Association and is considered squarely in the mainstream of correctional practice, holds that individuals incarcerated as a result of a criminal conviction should be held in the least restrictive custody commensurate with their own safety and the safety of other inmates, staff, and community.

### Clarity of Objectives

Throughout this document the reader will note a continuing focus upon clarifying objectives at many levels. It is important for correctional agencies to focus on what their goals and objectives are and how classification as a tool can further those objectives. It is also important to clarify the more circumscribed objectives of classification systems themselves. This concern stems not from some desire for philosophical neatness, but from the very practical need to measure performance. How will you know if your classification system is working unless you know what you want it to do? How can you know whether improvement is needed or even what that improvement might be? Whenever the reader comes upon the topic of clarifying objectives--in the text or in the accompanying worksheets--he or she should be reminded of the reason for this emphasis.

### **HOW TO USE THE DEVELOPMENTAL MODEL**

This handbook and its developmental model focus on those aspects of prison classification that have emerged as important to women offenders. Numerous resource materials are available on prison classification generally, and many of them are included among the references at the end of this document. The reader is directed to those resources for guidance on the complex task of

designing, implementing, and monitoring a prison classification system. This document is not intended to replace such resources. On the contrary, it highlights those issues surrounding women offenders that have emerged in the course of our study.

The reader moving through the steps of this developmental model will find corresponding worksheets in Appendix IV to assist in gathering information and completing various assessments and activities. These worksheets should be considered as aids to the developmental process. They are designed to stimulate thinking and to reinforce the importance of a developmental approach to dealing with classification. They are not intended to be exhaustive, nor is it likely that every practitioner will find every worksheet necessary or helpful. The entire process is important, but you may wish to use only some of the worksheets or some more than others.

## ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT CLASSIFICATION PRACTICE AND ISSUES

### SYSTEM SCANNING

The first element of an assessment of classification practice is a quick scanning of the system to identify areas for further investigation and to get a preliminary sense of what problems may be worthy of special focus. System scanning includes identifying any particular "flags" of the problem. Depending upon how much interest and attention have been focused on classification of women offenders, the flags may be very obvious, or it may take quite a bit of thought to uncover the issues. Some potential sources are suggested here. They include: any recent studies of classification, either generally for women or men, within the corrections agency or outside it; committees or task forces within the agency or outside it that have focused on women offenders or on classification issues; recent, current, or prospective litigation; and legislative interest in the form of special study commissions, hearings, or proposed legislation.

The next step in system scanning is an issue identification with key actors. First, identify individuals within the agency and outside it with an interest in women's issues and classification specifically. Those individuals should be interviewed to determine what they view to be particular areas of interest or problems associated with classification. Worksheet A-1 provides a format to list publications, legislation, studies, committees, and activities at interest. Worksheet A-2 displays a format for arraying individuals to be contacted and interviewed regarding classification of women offenders. Worksheet A-3 lists some of the topics that should be covered in interviews with key actors.

### DOCUMENTING CURRENT PRACTICE

After gaining a broad overview of issues through a system scanning, the next element of the developmental model is careful documentation of current practice. This will develop a clear profile of women offenders in the system, the variety of policies and procedures that comprise classification practice, and the underlying purposes and logic to this broad set of activities. It is important to remember at this point that the broadest definition of classification should be employed here. Practice will be examined across four dimensions: population profile, case flow, policies and procedures, and classification purposes.

Though these steps are listed separately, they can be initiated simultaneously and not necessarily in the same order.

## Assemble Existing Documentation

Assemble and review all written material on your classification system (at the central office/departmental level and at the women's institutional level) including: relevant statutory provisions, policy and procedure manuals and regulations, offender assessment instruments, initial classification forms, progress report formats, re-classification decision forms, forms for transmittal of information to central office, information system classification screens or file structures, and data elements. Organize these materials into a comprehensive notebook or file with labels so that you can access them easily as you complete a flow chart of your classification process. Worksheet A-4 provides a format to catalog relevant policies, procedures, etc. which should serve as a table of contents for this notebook or file.

## Women Offender Population Profile

Build a detailed profile of the women offender population in your prison system. Use aggregate data from the most recent past year (compare to previous three years, if available) to compile a statistical profile to include:

- Number of admissions (broken out by month) which are new commitments, which are parole revocation/returns; compare to previous years;
- Admissions by major (most serious) offense categories; compare to previous years;
- Admissions by average sentences imposed for major offense categories; compare to previous years;
- Average length of stay in prison (in pre-release, in work release, or halfway house) prior to discharge or release on parole or post-prison supervision by major offense categories; compare to previous years;
- Profile of current population (take most recent available information) -- average daily population in different facilities for women including pre-release, camps, work release centers, and halfway houses; compare to average daily population for previous years;
- Current population by major offense categories; compare to previous years.

Worksheet A-5 provides a format for collecting this information.

## Documenting and Flow Charting the Classification Process

Assemble a complete listing of the various events that take place in the classification process. Worksheet A-6 provides a format for assembling this information. Then construct a detailed flow chart of the classification process from intake to release from prison custody. See Worksheet A-7 for an example and suggestions. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight the activities, timing, critical decision points, staff involvement, tools in use, and policy guidance that shape the process. Take special care to include each decision point. For each decision point, note the number/percentage of women falling into each potential outcome category. At each step describe the activities/procedures and indicate any policies or regulations that guide the procedures. Also document which staff participate in each activity and classification decision.

Staff who work on a daily basis with some aspect of classification will be your best source of detailed description of procedures and policy--intake officers, intake counselors, staff serving on classification committees/program committees, housing and work placement officers, unit supervisors, etc. See Worksheet A-8 for sample questions to help prepare the flow chart.

## Clarifying Criminal Justice Sanctioning Purposes

Part of understanding exactly how and how well classification is operating is to understand what its purposes are, because the purposes of classification within institutions do not exist in a vacuum. They are related to the overall criminal sentencing structure in the state, the mission of the agency, and the mission of the specific institutions.

To help you prepare to investigate sanctioning purposes in your jurisdiction, Worksheet A-9 summarizes the major sanctioning philosophies/purposes that are usually included in any discussion of criminal sanctioning. The reader is referred for further information to a monograph by M. Kay Harris, Purposes of Community Sanctions, which clarifies in more detail the various sanctioning orientations. It is important to recognize that this is not a theoretical exercise. Sanctioning purposes vary greatly from state to state, and it is important to understand the framework in your state to determine whether and how the classification system can be as supportive as possible of that orientation.

At the outset, it is helpful to understand that there is often great confusion, even among experienced practitioners, regarding sanctioning purposes. Though some progress is being made in developing a common language to discuss sanctioning purposes, we often do not use common definitions. Worksheet A-9 is intended as a "pocket guide" which categorizes the types of overarching sanctioning purposes and other goals/concerns that serve as a foundation

to setting the organizational mission and eventually the classification objectives.

The following steps are suggested as a way to assess your jurisdiction's operating sanctioning purposes and other criminal justice goals:

- Assemble, cite, and review your statutes in terms of directives for goals/purposes. Often they are vaguely worded but will provide some clue as to what was intended as the underlying purpose of the criminal code, criminal sentences, and correctional options. See Worksheet A-10.
- Assemble, cite, and review any organizational mission statements for the prison system.

### Specific Objectives of Prison Classification System

A prison classification system is a management tool; it is a means to an end. If sanctioning purposes and other goals/concerns are the "end" a prison system is trying to achieve, then classification is a vehicle for management to achieve those stated purposes. Having completed a review of the overarching sanctioning purposes, the next step in assessment is reviewing the specific objectives of your classification system--both statewide and specifically as they relate to women. See Worksheet A-11 for guidance on assessing prison classification objectives.

### Distinguishing Classification Objectives from Other Interests

Usually other management "subsystems" besides classification are operating in the prison system. For example, it is nearly universal to see institutional disciplinary systems. It is not uncommon, especially in women's prisons, to see some type of responsibility/privilege reward system. Frequently, the objectives, policies, and procedures of these different management tools overlap or become co-mingled. Worksheet A-12 helps distinguish what is part of prison classification and what structures in the prison environment serve another interest.

### Components of Classification

Specify the primary dimensions on which you "classify" offenders. For example, all jurisdictions do some type of medical screening at initial classification. Depending on the type and level of medical treatment required, this screening or assessment might result in a prescription for medication, restriction on physical activity, or the issuance of optical lenses. In some jurisdictions, it might result in placement at a particular facility or special unit within the women's prison for special medical treatment. Medical assessment, then, is one component of

classification--one of the dimensions used to sort women into different categories.

Worksheet A-13 provides a checklist for the various components of classification.

### Risk Component of Classification

Offender risk assessment and some type of "custody/security" designation is the component of prison classification that has the greatest visibility within correctional systems and is often the primary basis for making institutional or housing assignments for both women and men offenders. To some extent, custody/security classification is often used synonymously with "classification," as if custody/security were the only basis for sorting offenders in a prison system. As has been discussed at length in this document, other dimensions of classification are also of interest with respect to all offenders, including women.

Understanding that custody/security classification--hinging to a great extent upon some sort of risk assessment--is only part of the classification picture, it is also important to recognize that considerable attention and resources are typically directed toward this type of classification within institutions. Hence, it deserves careful consideration in this discussion.

There has been much progress on the risk assessment front in corrections in recent years. There is a greater recognition of the value of objective and research-based tools to assess risk, and a trend away from the purely subjective risk assessment practices of the past. General principles and technical standards are emerging that allow jurisdictions to examine their own practices to identify areas for refinement and improvement. Because security issues are such an influential aspect of classification and because the "state of the art" has advanced, the topic warrants an in-depth assessment. Worksheet A-14 is a guide for examining your current policies and practices in security/custody classification.

### Offender/System Classification Profile

In an earlier part of this section, the reader was asked to compile statistical information about women offenders in the system. Now that the classification system has been examined, the next step is to use it as an overlay to re-examine the women's population. What is the distribution of women by classification category? What percentage of the population falls into the general classification categories (minimum, medium, maximum, close, etc.)? What is the breakout of population among those categories by institution? Are there any other categories (special needs, mental health, medical status, etc.) for which data on the population should be assembled? The purpose of this step is to understand just how your current classification system "organizes" women

offenders in terms of numbers, location, housing, jobs, needs, etc. This will lay the groundwork to examine whether this organization of offenders supports your system and institutional objectives.

Worksheet A-15 arrays the questions you will need to answer in order to compile an overview of both your offenders and resources as they are organized by the classification system. You need respond only to those questions that are relevant and useful to your own system.

## ASSESSING AND SELECTING TARGETS FOR CHANGE

The crux of work to be done in this part of the developmental model is to identify the match or mismatch between current practice and desired goals. If there is a close match, the classification system is probably functioning well as a management tool. However, mismatches between goals and actual functioning flag areas for improvement that can be addressed in an implementation phase of the developmental model.

Also in this task, your current practice will be examined to see if it matches technical standards, particularly in the development of empirically based risk assessment tools. Where no such tools exist, you will examine whether the jurisdiction has the need for and the necessary prerequisites to undertake the development of such tools.

### LIKELY TARGETS FOR CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT

#### A Different Emphasis--Security vs. Habilitation

For women offenders, a common mismatch between goals and classification practice was identified in a number of jurisdictions. Typically, statewide classification systems are geared toward security and safety concerns. At the same time, the profile of women offenders is often a low-security one with a significantly lesser incidence of violence and predatory behavior than among men. With greater emphasis on habilitative concerns, women's institutions may not find statewide security classification systems very helpful in organizing resources within their institutions. One potential target for improvement would be the development of institutional-level classification approaches geared specifically to the goals of women's institutions.

#### Risk Assessment--Technical Weaknesses

The assessment of risk--or estimating future behavior--is implicit in most security classification systems. Unfortunately, many of the classification instruments in use within correctional systems (both within institutions and within community corrections agencies) do not meet minimum technical standards. The most obvious limitation is that many of the instruments in use were not developed on, nor have they been validated for, the populations for which they are being used. Because of women offenders' relatively small numbers in the correctional population, even those instruments that do have some empirical base may not have been designed in such a way as to ensure their validity for women as well as men. In other instances, separate instruments have been developed for men and women in an attempt to assure predictive validity. Unfortunately, while this approach avoids some technical problems, it

raises potential legal questions of gender discrimination and equal protection that could give rise to inequities and/or litigation.

To assure both technical soundness and gender equity, any empirically based instrument must be designed to be gender neutral in every regard. However, this does not mean that gender as a variable should be eliminated from the data base. Gender must be included in the analysis with provisions made to eliminate items that discriminate on the basis of gender. Provision must also be made for over-sampling women offenders in order to assure the instrument will be valid for both men and women.

It is important to emphasize, however, that despite the relatively small number of women within correctional populations, it is possible to design and validate risk assessment instruments that have predictive validity for both men and women inmates. It is possible to remove from a scale items that discriminate on the basis of gender (as is the case with race as well) without sacrificing the predictive power of the instrument.

Following is a series of steps to be taken in conducting a critical analysis of women's classification.

#### **UNDERSTAND THE IMPETUS FOR CHANGE**

Who in the organization is initiating the assessment of classification? Are all the people largely responsible for prison classification willing to support and participate in this assessment?

What is the impetus for making changes to the current system? Is there dissatisfaction with how things are currently operating? What examples can be cited? Be specific.

See Worksheet B-1. Interview key officials to orient them, elicit their support, and seek their ideas about what kind of changes in classification may be needed.

In thinking about targets for change, re-look at the literature assembled as part of your assessment of current practice.

#### **ANALYSIS OF ASSESSMENT RESULTS**

Now that the information gathering regarding classification is complete, a comprehensive and valuable information base has been assembled. The next step is an analytic one--while reviewing all the descriptive information about how the current prison classification system for women offenders now operates, ask: "How well is it operating? Where are the gaps and shortfalls?"

At least two dimensions will be of interest. First, is the system designed to achieve the objectives identified? A system may be technically sound, but aimed at achieving some objective other than the one or ones wanted. This is the case where a system is designed primarily around security concerns when the overriding concerns for women offenders are habilitative ones. On the other hand, the system may be designed to achieve the desired objectives, but have technical flaws. One may be interested in predicting rule breaking among women offenders, but have an instrument that does not predict rule breaking very well because the data it is based on did not include women offenders. These are two very different kinds of problems and would suggest different implementation strategies as remedies.

In this section, the developmental model's guidance will be somewhat general. As each jurisdiction moves along to assess its own performance, the specific issues and actions will grow out of the individual situation. See Worksheet B-2 for assistance in completing an analysis of the various aspects of the design and operation of a women offender prison classification system.

#### **IDENTIFYING AND DEFINING CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT CHANGE**

After completing a descriptive assessment and analysis, you should have a clear picture of how your system works and an initial notion of where any problems areas are. Because of limited resources, time constraints, and other competing demands, it may not be feasible to do all that could or need be done in terms of improving the existing system or designing new elements of the system. Worksheet B-3 helps to array the various targets of change and to assess how feasible it will be to undertake system revisions. This worksheet will walk you through the process of anticipating what will be required to undertake a specific change, barriers and facilitating factors, timing, relationships to other activities, and so forth.

## PRACTICAL GUIDES FOR SELECTED CHANGE

As each jurisdiction completes an assessment of its own classification practice and identifies targets for change, it will begin developing an agenda for change. It is not possible for the authors of this document to anticipate how that agenda will unfold in each case. However, based upon a review of practice nationwide, it is possible to identify a number of common problems that practitioners may wish to address as they develop their own agenda for change. These include:

- Understanding the process of developing a classification system;
- Clarifying the purposes of criminal sanctions;
- Clarifying the purposes of classification of women offenders;
- Developing or refining an empirically-based risk assessment tool; and
- Understanding the policy context of classification.

This section provides some practical guidance and suggestions about how to perform each of these tasks.

### UNDERSTANDING THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING A CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

It is unlikely that any jurisdiction would find it feasible or even prudent to abandon current classification practices entirely because of difficulties they generate for women offenders. However, in this section of the developmental model, such a process is described, not because anyone will actually follow it, but because it is helpful to view it as a whole, selecting those elements that are relevant to an individual jurisdiction. Worksheet C-1 outlines such a process.

### CLARIFICATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SANCTIONING PURPOSES AND OTHER GOALS/CONCERNS

In an earlier section of the model, worksheets were included to assist the reader in identifying current sanctioning purposes. It may be that during the course of identifying current sanctioning purposes, a certain lack of clarity about purposes emerged. This is a very common situation, and one of the most helpful activities that can be undertaken to lay the groundwork for greater clarity about classification is to focus on clarifying sanctioning purposes.

Because this activity is so critical to classification design, it is recommended that key executive-level staff be involved in the process of considering and clarifying sanctioning purposes. At least one full day or two half-day workshops should be scheduled where the entire agenda is devoted to a consideration of sanctioning purposes and other criminal justice goals.

The agenda items for such a workshop might include: a) establishing common terminology, b) reviewing major theories, c) assessing sanctioning purposes throughout the jurisdiction's criminal justice process, d) considering existing prison correctional mission statements, e) drawing consensus about sanctioning purposes and priorities in the prison system, f) producing a document that articulates the consensus reached by the group, and g) developing a work plan that describes how to disseminate the work of the group (in the context of the entire criminal justice system).

The information collected during the assessment of current practices should support the discussion at this workshop. The worksheets on definitions and on sanctioning purposes should be particularly helpful. A publication referenced earlier, The Goals of Community Sanctions by M. Kay Harris, has been used extensively in training seminars and workshops as a basic primer regarding sanctioning purposes/philosophies. This material is currently undergoing revision, but copies of the original edition are available on a limited basis through the NIC Information Center.

#### **CLARIFYING THE OBJECTIVES OF PRISON CLASSIFICATION FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS**

Once the broader sanctioning purposes have been examined for the criminal justice system as a whole, and more specifically for the prison system in general, objectives for classification of women offenders can be clarified. This exercise is particularly critical where women's institutions are part of a larger state correctional system that may have classification objectives for the population at large which are different from those relevant to individual institutions.

In recent years a great deal of effort has been invested in creating standards for correctional systems based upon the important concepts of fairness, evenhandedness, and accountability. In at least some of the states visited in the course of this study, concentrated effort has been placed on developing standard security/custody designations for institutions. Standardization is important for ensuring the safety and fair treatment of offenders, and many of those interviewed voiced the position that they would not be in favor of different standards of classification for men and women offenders. The authors of this document agree with that position and are not advocating such a dual-track system.

It is clear, however, that within specific institutions the profile of offenders differs. It may be because of physical structure, location, access to services, size, or simply history, but populations within institutions vary. Women's institutions typically have populations that as a whole are less prone to violence and less predatory than many institutions housing men. This handbook is suggesting that classification within institutions be designed to accommodate those differences and to serve the objectives paramount within that institution. For women's facilities and for some men's facilities, this may well mean a greater emphasis upon habilitation.

In this task, each jurisdiction should revisit the data arrayed on Worksheets A-5 and A-15 that provide information on classification objectives and the profile of its offenders. Revisit the reasons for classifying women and the broad objectives of the classification system. If there is a mismatch, begin to explore why and what other approach might be available that would bring the two into closer agreement. You will want to know the "profile" along all dimensions you intend to classify (risk, medical, mental health, programming/treatment) and the performance of populations being served.

For example, with regard to risk (for this purpose we shall define risk as the potential of being violent/assaultive in the prison environment), you may find that you do have women offenders who fall in a high risk category, but that they represent only a small percentage of the population. Clearly this is a dimension you wish to include in the classification design, but you probably do not want to divert all of your staff resources into risk control activities because the extent of the potential for this risk is limited.

Bring together key administrators, managers, and staff in a workshop setting to consider information about women offender population profiles and performance regarding the various dimensions of interest in structuring prison classification. If you are concerned about risk, be sure you are clear about which risk --rule breaking, violence, escape, etc. If you are interested in habilitation concerns, explore what types of information would be helpful about offenders, and how that information might be used to sort offenders to better utilize program and other resources on this dimension.

#### **DEFINE THE ROLE OF JUST DESERTS OR RETRIBUTIVE INTERESTS IN PRISON SENTENCES FOR WOMEN OFFENDERS**

A common issue that clouds thinking about classification in the prison context is the role of a desert or retributive interest. One finds an indication of these interests whenever factors such

as severity of offense, length of sentence, or anticipated time to release are found as elements in a classification system.

It is possible that these factors are included partially to assist in resource allocation. With scarce program and other resources, it may make sense to ration resources on the basis of time to serve, so that offenders with longer anticipated stays in the institution delay participation or access until they are closer to the time of release. In some instances, severity of offense, length of sentence, or time to serve are included as an element of risk assessment. The assumption here is that more serious offenders are risky in terms of violence, escape, or rule breaking. Unless this is empirically tested, however, it is impossible to know whether this assumption is accurate for a particular jurisdiction or population. Much research on risk prediction indicates that severity of offense is not highly correlated with risk of violence, escape, or rule breaking. In fact, escape is such a relatively rare event that even the jurisdictions in our study which had researched the topic of escape risk were unable to develop an empirical tool that was helpful in predicting escape.

Beyond these two examples of the use of offense severity, sentence length, or time to serve, there are two common ways in which the desert interest is embedded into the prison classification design.

The most common evidence of a desert interest in custody/security classification is the practice of including current offense seriousness as an item on a scaling device (apart from its role in an empirically based risk instrument). Usually this results in a higher classification for the more serious offender. Another way that the desert interest is acknowledged in prison classification is with certain policy directives--either an override that excludes offenders with certain offenses (or sentence lengths) from designated classification categories, or a policy directive to require offenders to spend a certain amount of time in higher custody categories depending on the varying prison terms.

Another way, albeit less directly, that the desert interest overlays prison classification, is in the time limits that are placed on access to certain programs, placements, and classification levels. An example would be the case of an offender who is not eligible for pre-release until she or he has served XX amount of time or is within XX months of release.

The reason it is so important to assess and deliberately define the relationship between desert and the other purposes which undergird the classification design is because of the potential for the desert interest to interfere with other interests. Using offense seriousness as a standard risk classification factor (apart from whatever predictive value you can establish through empirical testing) can obviate the value of the risk information and commonly

results in over-classifying some offenders. The practice of requiring an offender to spend larger amounts of time in a higher risk classification based on desert interest jeopardizes the integrity of the risk component. See Worksheet C-2 for a suggested guide for considering the relationship of desert to prison classification design.

## RISK COMPONENT DEVELOPMENT

Probably the most common component of prison classification across jurisdictions is what has been labeled as the "risk component" (security/custody classification as it is sometime called). This risk component is at once a challenging, promising, and problematic component of classification. It is challenging because the development and validation of a sound risk scale is technically complex. It is promising because, with advances in data processing and statistical techniques, these instruments can increase the ability of decisionmakers to predict future behavior of groups of offenders. It is problematic because many instruments now in use are neither technically sound nor supported with clear thinking about purpose or an adequate policy context.

This is one component of classification that has engendered many questions with regard to differences between classification designs for women and men prisoners. In the following paragraphs, these questions will be addressed.

Can a risk instrument developed for a population of men offenders be used effectively for a population of women offenders? The answer to this question is that it is impossible to know whether any empirically-based risk assessment instrument is valid for use on any population (other than the one for which it was developed and originally validated) without testing it. You simply do not know if an instrument is valid for a population of women offenders if it was not developed based on a comparable population. Therefore, jurisdictions using such an instrument for women cannot be sure it is sorting effectively on the basis of risk. There is no assurance that such an instrument is providing decisionmakers with the desired information, and it is certainly possible that such an instrument is grouping women into categories that do not have the expected levels and differences in anticipated risk.

Should separate risk instruments be developed for men and women offender populations? From a technical point of view, separate risk assessment instruments for men and women, provided that they meet all technical standards for such tools, could provide decisionmakers with valid and reliable predictions about the anticipated failure rates of groups of women and men offenders. If the empirical base for women offenders has adequate sample size, separate instruments could be technically superior to a single instrument developed solely on data about men and used on both men and

women. The same could be said, however, of separate risk assessment instruments developed for different racial or ethnic groups; or groups from various parts of a state; or different age groups. However, the use of status variables (race, gender, ethnicity, etc.) for purposes of classification raises legal and ethical issues. A more preferable strategy is to use a risk assessment instrument that has been developed on an offender population including both men and women where adequate design steps have been taken to ensure validity for both without sacrificing predictive power. And in this case, the potential legal and equity issues of basing a classification instrument on gender can be avoided.

Can an empirically based risk assessment instrument developed in one jurisdiction be successfully "exported" for use in another jurisdiction (i.e., retaining its validity)? The answer to this question is much the same as to the first. It is impossible to know whether the imported instrument will work for your population unless you test your assumption. You must do the empirical research in order to validate such an instrument. If you are going to the effort and expense of conducting your own research, you might not want to limit yourself to testing only the variables already included in the imported instrument, but also include additional potentially predictive variables designed to reflect specific aspects of your jurisdiction.

Because of these concerns, this handbook recommends strongly against adopting an instrument from another jurisdiction without adequate efforts to validate the instrument for your own population.

This guidance may seem counter-intuitive. One might ask just how different offenses or offenders can be from one jurisdiction to the next. In fact, they can be quite different. Patterns of offenses, urban/rural mix, and the levels of heterogeneity or homogeneity in the population are only a few of the factors that may cause wide variations from one state to the next among both offenses and offenders. However, another dimension that is often overlooked in this picture is the differences in the criminal justice system itself. Criminal codes, definitions of offenses, sentencing patterns, standards for revocation of community supervision, practices regarding juvenile records, and record keeping systems generally are a few of the differences that can make transferability from one jurisdiction to the next virtually impossible. Despite the fact that a harried correctional administrator may find it sensible to simply borrow an instrument developed elsewhere, current standards governing the development and use of such instruments would argue strongly against such a practice.

How important is the development of an empirically based risk assessment tool for classification of women offenders? To answer this question, you must first answer the question of how important

risk assessment is in your overall classification strategy for women offenders. If it is important, given your objectives for women offenders, to have a valid assessment of risk, then it is important to develop an instrument that will assist you in doing that. Adopting an unvalidated instrument, or one that has been developed for men, will not help you do good risk assessment for women.

At the same time, if your major concern in classifying women offenders has to do with habilitation, then the development of a valid risk assessment instrument may not be a high priority, provided that what risk assessment is done for women offenders is appropriately qualified.

How large a population of women offenders is needed to develop an empirically based risk assessment device? A sample of at least 1,000 cases is required in order to do the kind of analysis required. Those 1,000 cases may be collected over a period of time, although the time period should not be longer than five years. (Refer to Worksheet C-3 for more specificity and detail on designing an instrument.) Any jurisdiction without a sufficient population of women offenders to allow data collection on at least 1,000 women over a five-year period will find it technically infeasible to develop a risk assessment instrument for its total population that will be valid for both women and men.

A final word about risk assessment is warranted. The dilemma surrounding classification of women offenders is very often articulated as a need for better, more valid, and more women-oriented risk assessment instruments. It is true that there is a dearth of risk assessment instruments that are valid for women that do not raise equity or legal issues. The problem, however, is not how to do better risk assessment. We already know that the women offender population is in general less risky than its male counterpart. What is needed is an approach to classification that will assist women's institutions in better carrying out their habilitative missions, and will do so within the framework of state prison systems where the profile of the overwhelmingly male population renders concerns for security and safety paramount.

## **THE POLICY CONTEXT OF CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS**

Classification systems are key management tools within correctional institutions. However, they do not and cannot reflect all management concerns. A good example of such an issue is overcrowding. Indeed, in the press of day to day operations of correctional systems visited in the course of this research, overcrowding was a force that seemed to work at cross purposes with classification, and in some instances almost to subsume it. In one jurisdiction, the organizational unit responsible for classification was titled "Office of Inmate Transfer" because the major

responsibility of the office was moving inmates quickly enough to take advantage of bed space as it opened in institutions at various security levels.

Other overarching policy concerns are also relevant to classification. These include population management, such as the separation of gang members, co-defendants, and family members, etc. Where these issues are relevant and used to override classification, it is important that overrides be (a) guided by explicit policy, and (b) documented in an objective and consistent manner so as not to undermine the clarity of classification. In this way it will be possible to track and monitor such overrides so that any modifications required in the system itself can be identified. Also, overrides may indicate the need for bed space at different security levels, program resources for particular types of inmate needs, etc.

## **IMPLEMENTATION AND THE MANAGEMENT OF CHANGE**

Based on this developmental model, it is hoped that each jurisdiction will evolve its own approach to understanding and improving its classification of women offenders. Whatever change is anticipated will require attention to the practical issues of implementation and managing change. Through this effort and other studies of classification for corrections, a number of general principles emerged that will facilitate implementation.

Whether managers are planning new facilities, moving toward automated information systems, or--as in this case--refining classification practices, they are in the business of bringing about change. Even as the process of assessing classification practice begins, steps can be taken to prepare for change in a number of ways.

### **ANTICIPATING AND MINIMIZING RESISTANCE TO CHANGE**

As an assessment of current practice is begun, the individuals and organizational elements involved in classification will be clearly identified. These are the individuals and organizational units that should be brought into the process early. As the analysis unfolds and target areas for change emerge, these individuals will understand the issues and hopefully begin to take ownership of both the need for and the emerging approaches to change.

### **BUILDING SUPPORT FOR CHANGE**

It is critical that the staff to be affected by change understand and be involved in its design. Early in the process of assessment and developing new approaches to classification, staff who will be affected should be involved and informed. The need for building support does not end at the time that decisions are made to move forward with implementation. Training of key staff in the need for and the use of new approaches to classification will also be critical.

### **EARLY PAY-OFFS**

Change in organizations is often a painful and disruptive process. However, there are usually benefits to be gained. One of the most effective ways of garnering support for change is to identify those aspects of change that will provide visible benefits to staff and move quickly to those aspects of implementation. For instance, if new approaches to classification are going to eliminate some paperwork for staff, shorten processing time, provide a tool for staff that clarifies their responsibilities, etc., plan

to move that aspect of change into place as quickly as possible. This will help to avoid some resistance to change.

### **IDENTIFYING AND MOBILIZING CHANGE AGENTS**

Leadership, human resources, and technical competence are the three major agents of change within any organization. Top management of the agency must clearly accept and support change. It is important to involve this level of agency leadership in the process of identifying the need for change and supporting the change strategy that emerges. What may be less clear, however, is the importance of involving middle management in the implementation of change. These are the individuals to whom line staff will look for guidance and support. Individuals at the middle management level must understand the need for change and be included in any training strategy to help in implementation. In the classification process, this clearly means the managers of those individuals who will complete classification instruments, conduct classification interviews, and be involved in preparing information for any aspect of the process.

Human resources refers to the need to identify individuals who will be involved in the developmental process from beginning to end. Development of a new approach to women's classification should not be the sole province of a research staff or a central office staff. The effort should be undertaken by a team of individuals who can stay with the effort from beginning to end and who represent all aspects of classification and management of women offenders.

Technical competence is, of course, key in any endeavor. In the area of classification, however, we have discussed the development of empirically-based risk assessment tools at great length. It is important, if an agency chooses to undertake such development, that it secure the services of an experienced and qualified individual to design the data collection effort, conduct the analysis, and fashion a scale that will be helpful in the classification process. Rely for references upon the experiences of your peers in other jurisdictions who have had positive experiences with outside consultants if you do not have the in-house expertise. Remember that over half of the choices to be made in the development of such a tool are non-technical. They require policy judgments that only policy makers can engage. This suggests that you must have a close working relationship with the technicians assisting in the development of the instrument.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS**

In this day of prison crowding and fiscal retrenchment, no corrections department exists in a vacuum. Public opinion, legis-

lative scrutiny, and media attention can all have an impact on how corrections agencies operate. These factors can be sources of support or hindrances to change. One important element of an implementation strategy will be the identification of elements in the external environment that might be tapped to encourage change. Legislatures are becoming more and more interested in the growing population of women offenders and approaches to programming or perhaps even to classification that might have desired fiscal benefits. A classification system that is geared toward recognizing the importance of lower security and community related settings for women offenders might be of great interest to legislative funding bodies. All of these issues should be considered in the implementation of change.

## **TIMING**

As agency administrators undertake implementation of changes in classification, it is important to be aware of two timing issues. First, change in organizations is a slow process. Sufficient time should be allowed for an implementation process to take hold. Your implementation plan should include detailed steps to be followed, along with realistic estimates of how much time each will take. Do not forget to include time at critical decision junctions to schedule meetings--remembering that calendars do not always coincide and meetings may take some time to occur. Allow review and approval time where they are required, and prepare for unanticipated delays.

Second, the timing of a new "special project" such as refining a classification system should be scheduled so as not to compete with other change efforts. It is generally accepted that any organization can withstand only so much change at any one time. Change takes energy, time, attention from management, and patience from those affected. The decision about when to undertake this developmental process will be a critical element of its success.

## **IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING**

To institute change in an organization requires thorough preparation. An implementation plan should be as complete and well thought out as possible. Some components of an implementation plan that you should consider including are: (a) a list of the actual changes by major categories that are to be implemented; (b) the specific tasks which must be completed to achieve each change; (c) realistic and coordinated due dates for each item; (d) individual(s) responsible for implementation of each task; (e) other individuals who are critical to each task--giving approval, providing information, etc.; and (f) any special circumstances that may affect your ability to begin work on any individual task (waiting for funding, legislative approval, etc.)

Be sure to involve front line staff in planning and implementing the change. They will understand what it takes to make a change work. Also, by involving more people, you will be assuring a greater level of "buy in" from those who will eventually make the change a reality.

Make provisions for monitoring and updating the plan. For it to be a useful tool it should be treated as a "working" tool. You will have to change course, make adjustments, and gather more information as you go along.

Your implementation plan should include attention to resources. What people, dollars, time, and authority will you need to complete your tasks? Because most budget approval processes (even emergency funds or budget modifications) involve lengthy lead time, it will be important to anticipate funds that may not be needed for several months or even until the next year.

Do not forget to include training as a specific plan component. As changes are implemented, staff involved will need to be informed and prepared to use new policies, procedures, and tools.

See Worksheet D-1 for assistance in formulating a work plan for the specified developments/change you have decided to engage.

**APPENDIX I**

**INTENSIVE SITE VIGNETTES**

**GEORGIA**

**ILLINOIS**

**NEW YORK**

**WYOMING**

## The Classification of Women Offenders in Georgia: A Vignette

### Context

The Georgia Board of Corrections, composed of 15 members appointed by the Governor, is responsible for the state correctional system and sets policies regarding both probation and corrections functions for the state. The Department of Corrections (DOC) is headed by a Commissioner, who also serves as the executive officer of Georgia Correctional Industries. The Commissioner oversees six major divisions: Facilities, Probation, Programs and Compliance, Human Services, Administration, and Industry. Responsibility for the development and monitoring of classification rests with the Facilities Division.

The mission of the Georgia DOC is to protect the public; provide a safe working environment for staff; and provide secure living conditions, supervision, and program resources to its more than 22,000 inmates. This is done through the 25 correctional facilities, 27 county correctional facilities, 5 transitional centers, and 19 diversion centers located throughout the state.

### Women in the System

As is the case in many other states, the Georgia DOC has experienced tremendous growth in inmate population in recent years, roughly a 60 percent increase from 1980 to 1989 (from 13,011 to 20,840). During approximately the same time period, female prison admissions more than doubled (from 737 in 1982 to 1847 in 1990). At the current rate of growth, the DOC projects that by the year 2000 the prison population will exceed 59,900 and that female offenders will comprise more than 4,500 or 7.5 percent of this total.

### Facilities

Female offenders are housed at two facilities: the Georgia Women's Correctional Institution (GWCI) in Hardwick and the Milan Women's Center. As of February 1990, 922 women were housed at GWCI, with a backlog of 215 women in county jails. Milan housed 45 women. In addition, another 190 women were housed at two transitional community centers--Macon (64) and Metro (147). The GWCI complex is divided into three separate facilities. The main facility is the original women's institution for the state, which serves as an intake and diagnostic facility. It is the only facility in Georgia geared to maximum and close security inmates, although it does house medium and minimum inmates as well. Colony Farm, a medium security facility adjacent to GWCI and included in its administration, houses women in what were intended to be temporary trailer-like units. In addition, a new "fast track" unit is also

part of GWCI. (The term fast track reflects the speed at which this new facility was constructed rather than the movement of offenders through it.) It houses medium, minimum, and a few close security inmates in four dormitory units, each accommodating 50 women. Its physical security is quite extensive, and while new and well-maintained, no area is provided for programming. Women from the fast track unit are bused to GWCI for program and work assignments.

To accommodate the rapidly growing female population, the DOC plans to construct additional fast track facilities and was planning to open the New Horizon Transitional Center to house 120 women. Fast track facilities are also planned for male offenders.

### Classification

At admission, each woman receives a complete physical, meets with a diagnostic counselor for orientation, receives a parole interview to set a tentative parole month, has a formal group orientation, and goes through a battery of psychological, academic, mental ability, and vocational testing. A personality inventory is completed on inmates whose sentences are five years or more.

Security classification is part of this process. This process, which has been in place in the Department for a number of years, incorporates an objective offender assessment instrument that was developed in 1982 based upon the input of staff involved in classification. Revisions to the instrument were made in 1986 based on recommendations from institutional diagnostic and central office staff. The classification instrument in use today was adopted in 1987. The reclassification instrument was developed in a similar manner, using the input and recommendations from Deputy Wardens as well as central office staff.

Classification is used for placement within a particular institution and for security purposes within that institution. Both male and female inmates receive a security designation through the use of a standard Security Classification Form. Inmates are classified into five security designations: trusty, minimum, medium, close, and maximum. This designation drives institutional placement as well as housing assignments for male inmates. For women, however, since most inmates are placed at GWCI, security designation has little effect in terms of assignment to an institution. At Colony Farm, the fast track unit, Milan, and at the transitional facilities, inmates must have the appropriate designation to be placed. However, within the main facility at GWCI--with the exception of new admissions, those designated as maximum security, and those who will go off the grounds on their work details--women are housed, assigned to programs, and placed in jobs without regard to security classification.

The initial security classification considers pending charge, severity of offense, projected length of incarceration, prior commitments, history of escapes, and history of violence. The first four of these six items are directly related to the nature of the current and past offenses. As a result, the heaviest weight in establishing security classification is determined by offense, rather than by violence and escape potential. In addition, at classification medical needs, notoriety of the offense, sex offenses, psychiatric needs, assaultive tendencies, institutional adjustment, homosexual tendencies, and multiple escapes are considered and noted, although they do not contribute to the security point total.

Inmates are also classified using a Correctional Classification Profile which focuses on the needs of the offender. The eight areas included in this profile are: medical needs, public risk, institutional risk as both a victim and a predator, treatment needs, educational needs, vocational needs, work needs, and drug/alcohol problems and needs. It is noteworthy that exceptions can be made to the Initial Security Classification instrument when warranted, both to increase and decrease the security rating.

### Reclassification

A reclassification committee meets weekly and is responsible for the scheduled reclassification of all offenders and for reclassification done on an as-needed basis. By Departmental policy, security reclassification occurs after 12 months for inmates classified as close; after 6 months for inmates classified as medium; and after 6 months with an optional 3 month reclassification for inmates classified as minimum. Inmates are also reclassified each time there is movement between buildings or facilities.

### Issues

The classification system used by the Georgia DOC is a good illustration of a full-blown, objective classification process. It seeks to address desert, risk, and need concerns through objective instrumentation in an established set of procedures. The same process and instruments are applied, without exception, to men and women inmates.

The system raises a number of issues:

- While the instruments used to assess risk are objective, they are based upon the collective judgment of experienced staff rather than on empirical research. This raises the question of whether such a research-based approach might increase the classification system's ability to identify groups of offenders with demonstrably different rates of rule breaking or violence. This question is equally applicable to men and women inmates.

- The Superintendent of GWCI notes that with regard to the management of institutional behavior, there are major differences between women and men offenders that he feels may not be accommodated within the present classification system. One example has to do with access to work assignments. Only those in lower security classifications are permitted to go off the institution's grounds for work assignments. In the judgment of the Superintendent, there are women who do not pose significant risks for escape or violence, but, because of their formal classification designation, are ineligible for such work assignments.
- Once within the walls of GWCI, the current classification system has little impact upon a woman's day to day routine --job assignment, housing assignment, involvement in programs. One may ask whether the current classification system--with its clear emphasis upon security concerns--is adequately meeting the system's needs to classify and design differential responses to women offenders.

The Department is planning an evaluation of its classification system which will address such issues as distinguishing among sub-groups within the offender population. A Classification Committee will also focus on the issue of public risk and how it differs from institutional risk for female offenders.

## The Classification of Women Offenders in Illinois: A Vignette

### Context

The Illinois Department of Corrections (DOC) houses more than 27,400 adult offenders and supervises more than 14,200 parolees through 21 institutions, 6 work camps, and 11 community corrections centers located throughout the state. The prison population in Illinois, as in many other states, has been rapidly increasing in recent years. Between the beginning of fiscal year 1978 and November 1990, the prison population had grown by almost 16,500 inmates. The Department is projecting that there will be some 8,939 more inmates than its ideal capacity by fiscal year 1993, even given extensive construction plans currently in place.

### Women in the System

In 1990, approximately 1,182 women were under the DOC jurisdiction on any given day. That number has been growing dramatically in recent years, even more dramatically than the male population. In fact, the population of women offenders has tripled since 1978. During 1990, admissions of women appear to have leveled off somewhat, although the reasons for this change are as yet unclear. The increase in the women's population has prompted the Department to adjust and expand the housing assigned to women offenders. Double celling is now common practice, housing units at two formerly all-male institutions have been converted for the use of women offenders, and community placement options have been expanded for women. In addition, the Department plans to purchase and renovate an existing site for a 250-bed minimum security facility for women by the end of fiscal year 1992.

### Facilities

Women offenders are currently housed in three correctional facilities in Illinois: Dwight Correctional Center, Logan Correctional Center, and Dixon Correctional Center. Dwight opened in 1930 as the first female institution in Illinois, and in 1981 became the first female correctional facility in the nation to be accredited. Since Dwight was for many years the only facility to which women offenders were assigned, it has developed a full range of services and functions. It serves as the women's reception and classification center and includes housing units designated as maximum, medium, and minimum custody, as well as an honor cottage. It also has the capacity to handle offenders with special physical and mental health needs and includes a residential drug treatment program. Its current population is 705 inmates.

Logan Correctional Facility opened in 1978 as a medium security men's facility. In 1987, two living units were converted for

the use of women offenders and Logan now houses 901 men and 89 women. Dixon Correctional Facility, originally opened in 1983 as a men's minimum and medium security facility, has also recently been converted to house some of the growing population of women offenders. In 1990, Dixon housed 1,090 inmates, 250 of them women.

### Classification

Classification in the Illinois DOC occurs at two levels--both statewide and within individual institutions--and serves a variety of purposes. Initial and reclassification are conducted at the various reception centers and institutions using standardized procedures. Once the classification recommendation has been made at the institutional level, however, the Transfer Coordinator at the departmental level reviews the designation, considers other factors (availability of beds, recent escape history, gang membership, length of time to release, etc.), and makes a final security designation and institutional placement. Once in an institution, the institutional procedures regarding supervision level, program placement, and job assignment come into play.

Statewide, initial and reclassification of both women and men offenders is conducted using a set of scales to determine an adjustment score, a dangerousness score, and an escape risk. The first two of these are empirically based and have been validated/revalidated over the years they have been in use. The third scale, escape risk, is constructed with factors based upon the judgment of practitioners regarding indicators of escape risk. The three assessment scales together yield a security classification--maximum, medium, or minimum. This initial classification, and subsequent reclassification, is used to determine housing assignment. For men, this equates to assignment to a particular institution, as each institution has its security designation. For women, this classification has traditionally determined which cottage they will be assigned to within Dwight. However, with the opening of medium and minimum housing units at Logan and Dixon, security classification alone does not dictate a housing assignment for women. The Department currently assigns women to Logan or Dixon from lists of volunteers at the appropriate security level. However, when sufficient numbers of volunteers are unavailable, the Director of Program Services must determine by other means which inmates will be transferred. In addition to housing status, classification may result in the requirement to wear a certain color badge identifying the inmate as a high escape risk individual.

Also operating state wide is a system of "Grades." All inmates begin at a Grade A level and are eligible for all institutional privileges. Inmates may be demoted to Grade B or C if they are found guilty of certain types of disciplinary infractions. Upon grade demotion, offenders lose eligibility for privileges: transfer to community facilities and amenities such as attendance at special events, telephone privileges, etc. Inmates are automat-

ically promoted back up to the next higher level after a specific period of time.

The Department also has directed each institution to develop a supervision classification system to determine what level of staff supervision is warranted within the confines of a single institution. Levels indicated by the Department include: staff escort, close, intermediate, limited, and external. The actual administration of that system and the criteria used to assign offenders to different levels are, at this point, left to the discretion of the institution itself.

Basically the same classification system is utilized for both men and women inmates in Illinois. However, different instruments to assess adjustment and dangerousness have been developed for male and female populations. In fact, the Illinois DOC completed some of the earliest developmental work in the nation of gender-specific risk assessment. In 1981 the Department performed its first empirical work to develop risk assessment instruments for both women and men offenders. As a result, separate objective scoring instruments were designed and validated for these offender populations. In 1988, further work was done to revalidate classification instruments for men. The Department is in the process of revalidating the male reclassification instrument and is currently conducting research on the female initial classification instrument. Essentially the same classification process is employed for men and women, the same levels are designated, and the same involvement of the Office of Inmate Transfer takes place. The classification differences are primarily in the form of different instruments.

### Issues

The classification system currently in use within the Illinois DOC is an example of an objective classification approach which has been adapted to identify differences in risk of rule violations between men and women inmates through the development of separate risk assessment instruments. While the classification system itself is the same, the specific instruments have been tailored for men and women. The instruments are research-based, and considerable effort has been devoted to ensuring their continuing validity through periodic research.

The system raises a number of issues:

- Population growth and crowding is perhaps the preeminent issue now facing the Illinois DOC. Because of this growth, all of its resources and systems are being taxed to their limits, including the classification system. Under these conditions, the ability of a classification system to identify and facilitate the transfer of offenders in order to utilize bed space most efficiently takes on great importance, perhaps at the expense of other functions.

- As the Illinois system has grown it has become necessary to make decisions about assigning women to more than one facility. Department staff are raising the issue of whether the current classification system is geared to assist in that kind of decision.
  
- A major focus of activity within the women's facility at Dwight is the preparation of women for their release and an attempt to address the factors that brought them to be incarcerated. The statewide classification system, with its heavy emphasis upon security and risk assessment, is geared to security concerns and was never intended to assist in assignment to programs or in developing a plan for a woman while she is incarcerated. This raises the question of whether classification could be conceived as more directly supportive of the programmatic orientations found within some institutions--whether those institutions house women or men.

# The Classification of Women Offenders in New York: A Vignette

## Context

The New York State Department of Correctional Services (DOCS) is responsible for the secure confinement of offenders in the state's more than 60 institutions. The mission of the Department is to make habilitation services available to offenders, maintain security, address the mental health and medical needs of the inmates, and prepare inmates for reintegration into the community upon release. The DOCS Commissioner oversees the operation of the agency and its almost \$2 billion annual budget.

Approximately 23,000 inmates were admitted to the Department in 1989. At its then current growth rate, it was anticipated that the prison population in New York State would reach 54,700 by March 1990. From 1987 to 1989, the male inmate population grew at a rate of almost 24 percent. At the same time, the female inmate population increased at a rate of almost 65 percent. This dramatic growth is attributed in large part to the increase in drug related arrests and parole violations. In addition, recent revisions to the Penal Law make it mandatory for judges to sentence second time felons to state institutions, regardless of the severity of the crime or any other circumstance surrounding the incident. To accommodate this growth, the state was planning to make 3,400 new beds available at the time of this study.

## Women in the System

As in other states, new commitments of women have grown in recent years. Between 1976 and 1987 the number of new commitments of women almost tripled--from 283 to 802. A study performed by the DOCS Division of Program Planning, Research and Evaluation in 1988 showed that the average age at first admission for women rose from 28.3 in 1976 to 30.1 in 1987. In 1987, an average of 42 percent of the female commitments had no previous criminal convictions. While there was a decline in the percentage of admissions for violent felonies among female offenders from 1976 to 1987, commitments for drug offenses rose substantially during that same time period, accounting for 26 percent of the admissions in 1985, 29 percent in 1986, and 42 percent in 1987.

## Facilities

In New York, the DOCS currently administers eight institutions with approximately 2,909 beds for women prisoners. These institutions are: Bayview, which houses 191 minimum security and 75 temporary release inmates; Groveland, a medium (303 beds) and minimum (156) security facility; Albion, which houses 543 medium and minimum security inmates; Bedford Hills, a maximum, medium, and minimum

security facility with a capacity of 793; Taconic, which houses up to 416 minimum and medium security inmates; Camp Beacon, which houses 222 minimum security inmates; Parkside, a 60 bed temporary release facility; and Summit Shock, which houses 150 minimum security inmates.

### Classification

New York's long established prison classification system for women and men is conducted as a centralized function in DOCS as well as at the institutional level. Offenders are committed to DOCS by the courts and are received at designated reception facilities where orientation and initial classification recommendations are completed.

Women offenders are received at Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. The standard 5-7 day orientation period is, in emergencies, sometimes compressed to 3 days. Prison staff complete a standardized security classification and medical/mental health needs assessment. Inmates are classified for security, medical, and mental health. Prisons are classified by their security, medical, and mental health capabilities. When space opens, Central Office Classification and Movement notifies Bedford Hills Reception, and a computer program selects inmates who match the characteristics of the available space. In addition, much information is collected at Classification that is used when the inmate is placed in her general confinement facilities (for instance, educational and substance abuse testing and personal characteristics such as marital status and names and addresses of relatives). These cases are not reviewed by Central Office Classification and Movement. Central Office monitors the performance of Bedford Hills Classification through monitoring reports and case sampling. Certain inmates (mentally retarded, mentally ill, physically handicapped, victim-prone) are pulled out of the regular flow and given Extended Classification. A variety of special tests are used, a recommendation is made for placement in a specific prison, and the case is sent to Central Office Classification and Monitoring for review and final decision. Also, certain cases are identified as possible Central Monitoring Cases, then classified and forwarded to Central Office for review and final decision.

Informally, the classification process works in such a way that most women with lengthy sentences will spend a portion of their sentences in central or western facilities and "earn their way" into facilities closer to their homes. The majority of women committed to DOCS come from NYC and the few other larger urban counties. The facilities in closest geographic proximity to the larger urban areas are crowded.

The initial classification decisions that are forwarded to Central Office are derived from assessments conducted by institutional staff at the reception facilities. Staff utilize assess-

ment tools including interviews, tests, and narrative assessment reports to complete the security, medical, and mental health recommendations. One of the tools used to assign a security designation is a risk assessment instrument. The risk assessment instruments and accompanying security classification policy are different for women and men prisoners.

The risk instrument for women prisoners in New York has been in use since 1988. It was developed from research on a population of New York State women inmates. This research indicated that the incidence of escape and institutional violence among women inmates was so limited that the most effective policy was to predict that all female inmates would adjust well. Thus, the decision was made to assess the risk that women would engage in repeat criminal behavior in the community should the woman escape or be released. This contrasts with the risk assessment conducted on men offenders. In the case of men inmates, the risk of institutional violence and rule breaking behavior is assessed. In addition, there are a greater number of risk levels designated for men than for women. The risk assessment scale used for women has not yet been validated, nor is there yet a security reclassification instrument for women. However, the Central Office research staff has set women offender security/risk classification as a research and policy development priority for the near future.

For women offenders, classification activity extends beyond the initial reception classification and institutional assignment. Upon admission to her assigned institution, a woman inmate undergoes still further classification assessment and assignment. Though procedures and policy may vary somewhat from one women's facility to the next, generally this institutional level classification is directed at making program and housing designations. At each facility there is some type of program review committee which makes these initial assignments. Established policy and procedures require regular program and classification reviews. Such a periodic review may lead to changes in work, programs, or housing assignments within the institutions; changes in security designation; and/or recommendations for transfer to another facility.

In the women's facilities in New York there are no formal or standardized behavior modification system privileges (though each institution has broad discretion for structuring institutional life). The institutional conduct rules and penalties are independent of the classification process, though certain rule infractions can precipitate a re-evaluation of a woman's security classification designation.

### Issues

The classification system in use within the New York DOCS is an example of an objective system of classification for both men and women offenders. The instruments, as well as the levels to

which an offender may be designated, are different for women and men.

The system raises a central issue regarding the role that classification plays for women offenders. Once an initial security classification and placement decision is made, other interests take precedence for women offenders. Within an institution, security level has limited impact on day-to-day life except at the extremes of the scale. (Exceptions include the fact that an inmate must be on minimum security status to qualify for certain housing and work assignments. Likewise, certain provisions/restrictions may be imposed on the high-risk, maximum security designated women.) For the vast majority of women, security designation has little effect on the kinds of programs in which they are involved or where they will be housed within a facility. One might reasonably ask, then, how classification might be adapted to support more directly the programmatic efforts that clearly carry so much weight within institutions housing women in New York State.

## The Classification of Women Offenders in Wyoming: A Vignette

### Context

Historically, no centralized state level agency had been responsible for corrections in Wyoming. All state institutions--including those for the mentally retarded, juveniles, veterans, the elderly, etc.--were directly supervised by a Board of Charities and Reform at the time of this study. This Board is made up of the top five elected officials in the state, including the governor, and serves in a general oversight capacity with very little organizational infrastructure. At present, the Board has five staff members. Essentially, individual institutions operated independently under the direction of this Board. A proposal to form a Department of Adult Corrections was passed in the 1991 legislative session, creating a statewide agency.

There are four adult correctional institutions in Wyoming--the Wyoming State Penitentiary, with an average daily population in 1988 of 741 men; an Honor Farm for male inmates which houses about 100 minimum security inmates; the Wyoming Honor Conservation Camp that houses 60 men; and the Wyoming Women's Center (WWC), with a capacity of 90.

### Women in the System

The population of women offenders has traditionally been quite small. In 1977, the 7 women then under sentence were housed at the State Hospital. In recognition of growing populations, however, the state authorized funding and construction of the WWC which opened in 1984. At the time of the project team's visit, 83 women were housed at the Center, 13 of whom were from Colorado. The 1989 Annual Report of the Board of Charities and Reform indicates that the average yearly population of the Center stood at 65. Given the current population of 83, this would indicate a trend in population growth. The Warden of the Center reports that admissions are increasing, and construction of a new unit has been planned in anticipation of growing populations and a continued relationship with Colorado.

### Facility

The WWC is located in Lusk, a small town in the eastern part of the state. It is a modern facility with an infirmary, a maximum security/intake unit, medium and minimum units, program areas, gymnasium, visiting and library facilities, training/staff space, as well as an independent living unit with four apartments located just outside the perimeter of the facility. These units are for the use of pre-release inmates who are within a year of release or possible parole date. The inmates housed in the Pre-Release area

have a greater opportunity to interact with the local community. A portion of these inmates are in the Work Release program and have employment outside the facility.

### Classification

Because the WWC has developed as an independent institution, its classification system was also developed specifically for the Center and the offenders typically found there, all of whom are women. It would be somewhat misleading to report that Wyoming deliberately developed different classification systems for men and women. Rather, because men and women are housed in separate institutions, and those institutions operate autonomously, the result was the development of different approaches to classification.

All women who are admitted to the Center spend an initial period of time in the intake and diagnostic unit within the maximum security unit. However, women who are new admissions are kept separate from those who are classified at a maximum security level. Since many women are committed directly from the court and arrive at the Center with no information save the sentence, the choice has been made to house all incoming women in the most secure and isolated setting.

Housing units within the Center are designated as maximum, medium, and minimum security. Each woman "earns" her way from maximum to minimum levels based upon performance in programs, general adherence to the rules of the institution, and demonstration of personal responsibility. A program is designed for each woman to address particular needs so that program participation and successful achievement are closely linked to the movement through security levels.

The institution has four security/custody levels: maximum, close, medium, and minimum and pre-release. These levels are defined by the housing unit in which a woman may reside, the level of staff supervision, and access to or restrictions on movement outside the institution. Although the security/custody levels have been in place since the WWC opened in 1984, since April of 1989 a new system of objective reclassification has been introduced to move women systematically through the levels in such a way as to reinforce the behavior and program goals held for them by the management of the Center.

Movement through custody levels is based upon an extensive Behavioral Assessment Instrument, work reports, educational reports, progress in special programs, legal status (detainers, etc.), and institutional adjustment. The most distinctive element of the system is its Behavioral Assessment which relies upon rating of inmates by correctional officers. Ratings are conducted using an objective instrument which is applied on randomly selected days during the month. Inmates are not aware of which particular day

they may be rated, hence the system operates to encourage acceptable behavior at all times. The assessment includes control, attitude, social, and personal responsibility dimensions which are each scored on a five-point scale.

The staff of the Center has been fully involved in the development of the system and finds various aspects of it particularly helpful. This includes the fact that it does not require staff with advanced degrees to utilize the system, it integrates the correctional officer staff with counseling and administrative staff, and it is supported by a PC-based data capability. The system also encourages acceptable behavior and progress toward goals, is understandable and involves the inmates, lends itself to frequent reclassification, and potentially links all aspects of inmate management from admission to release.

Other elements of the classification system (work, education, special programs, etc.) are also rated on an objective scale. In order to reinforce positive inmate behavior, a woman is required to meet acceptable behavior performance at a custody/security level before she is approved to move to the next less restrictive/greater privilege level. At present the system operates primarily as a reclassification system, although development of an initial classification component is underway. Eventually the Center anticipates completing the system with a standard method of profiling offender needs as well as a release preparation component added to the intake and reclassification functions.

### Issues

Classification at the WWC is based on demonstrated offender behavior and individual progress. In this way, it is in stark contrast to much classification practice in the nation which seeks to anticipate or predict behavior based upon either clinical judgment or empirically derived risk assessment instruments. The WWC handles risk management through the physical environment which controls movement and assures close staff observation. Once within that environment, risk is managed by gradually granting greater levels of movement and independence with a carefully constructed set of incentives to encourage acceptable behavior. Violence is rare and the atmosphere within the facility is relaxed and supportive.

It is difficult to assess Wyoming's approach to classification of women offenders without considering the potential implications of its extremely small population. It may be that Wyoming holds lessons for other states with populations of similar size. At the same time, nothing about the classification approach per se would seem to limit its use to an extremely small institution. Hence, there may be lessons here for larger jurisdictions as well.

**APPENDIX II**

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### APPENDIX III

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**APPENDIX IV**

**WORKSHEETS**

## WORKSHEET A-1. SCANNING CLASSIFICATION PRACTICE

As a first step in addressing classification of women offenders, it is important to identify any analytic, policy development, legislative, litigative, programmatic, or advocacy activities or initiatives that would help to define the issues and identify areas for refinement in the practice of classification. Below list activities in any of these categories and assemble any written materials generated by them for review.

Activity	Organization Involved	Individual Contact	Dates
----------	--------------------------	-----------------------	-------

## WORKSHEET A-2. KEY ACTORS

Here list any individuals who have a responsibility or interest in the development or administration of classification systems for women or men in the state. List their organizational affiliation, title, and function, along with telephone and other identifying information. Suggested topics to cover in interviews follow.

Name/Title/Organization/Function

Telephone

## WORKSHEET A-3. TOPICS FOR KEY ACTOR INTERVIEWS

This sheet suggests topics to be covered in interviews with key actors in the classification process. It may also be used for note taking.

1. Does the current classification system raise any issues with respect to women offenders? Does it group women into groups that are useful for purposes of security/custody, program assignment, housing, etc.?
2. What problems do you see with the current classification system for women?
3. What changes do you think would be appropriate in the classification system for women?

WORKSHEET A-4. CATALOG OF DOCUMENTS RELATED TO  
CLASSIFICATION OF WOMEN OFFENDERS

Relevant Document Reference No. Date

Statutory Provisions

Policy Statements

Procedures

Offender Assessment Instruments

Initial Classification Forms

Progress Report Formats

Reclassification Decision Forms

Forms for Transmittal of Information to  
Central Office

Information System Classification Screens  
(or file structures/data elements)

Other Materials

## WORKSHEET A-5. WOMEN OFFENDER POPULATION PROFILE

This worksheet includes suggestions about the type of information regarding women offenders in the system as well as changes over time. The goal is to build a detailed profile of the women offender population in your prison system. Use aggregate data from the most recent past year (compare to previous three years, if available) to compile a statistical profile to include:

1. Number of admissions (broken out by month) which are new commitments and which are parole revocation/returns; compare to previous years.
2. Admissions by major (most serious) offense categories; compare to previous years.
3. Admissions by average sentences imposed for major offense categories; compare to previous years.
4. Average length of stay in the prison (in pre-release, in work release, or halfway house) prior to discharge or release on parole or post-prison supervision by major offense categories; compare to previous years.
5. Profile of current population (take most recent available information)-- average daily population in different facilities for women including pre-release, camps, work release centers, and halfway houses; compare to average daily population for previous years.
6. Current population by major offense categories as compared to previous years.

## WORKSHEET A-6. MAJOR CLASSIFICATION ACTIVITIES

This worksheet contains suggestions for tracking the movement of an individual offender through assessment and classification steps and their outcomes. An example is already entered which illustrates how this listing of activities should be completed. Please use as many sheets as necessary to capture all steps in the classification and reclassification process.

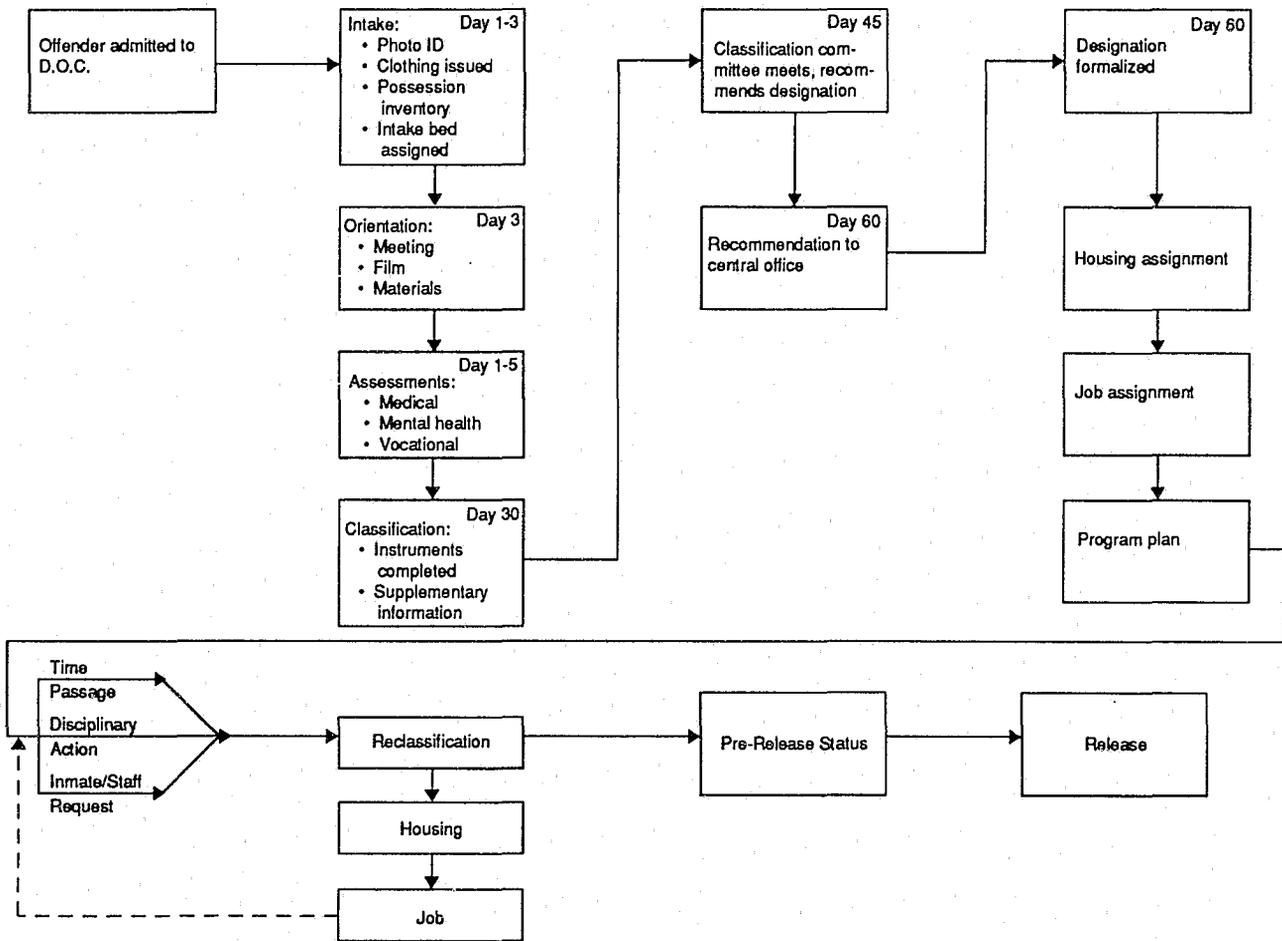
Activity	Timing	Potential Outcomes	Pertinent Instrument; Policy Directive
Medical Assessment	Within 24 hrs.	Placement in Medical Unit or General Diagnostic Population	DD #4 Forms 54 & 56

## WORKSHEET A-7. CLASSIFICATION PROCESS FLOW CHART

An abbreviated example of such a flow chart follows as an illustration of how you might chart your system. Use as many sheets as necessary to complete a detailed flow chart. Indicate to the degree possible how long (on the average) each activity takes. Refer to the narrative description of steps you have assembled on Worksheet A-6 preceding. Identify decision points and specify decision options. What policy guides these decisions? You will already have referenced written material and assembled forms, instruments, etc. Once you have completed these exercises you will be able to note any discrepancy between policy and practice. Are there key decisions typically made that are not guided by policy? Where is discretion being exercised? Is this guided by official policy? Who are the key decisionmakers? Does this process support your objectives with women offenders?

**WORKSHEET A-7. CLASSIFICATION PROCESS FLOW CHART  
(CONTINUED)**

**SAMPLE CLASSIFICATION PROCESS FLOW CHART**



**WORKSHEET A-8. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO SUPPORT  
"CHARTING" YOUR SYSTEM**

The following questions are offered as a guide for gathering information to inform the step-by-step flow chart and, in particular, the type of notes you might add to accompany the diagram itself. This list is not intended to be all inclusive but only to suggest the topics you will want to include.

1. Is a woman committed to the department of corrections or to an institution?
2. Is she admitted into a specially designated intake area? Is this separate from other inmates? How long will she reside here?
3. Where, when, how is the actual "classification" process initiated? Does it begin while she is in intake?
4. What kind of screening does she go through? Medical? Mental Health? Risk/custody screening? Needs assessment?
5. Are there any groups of women that are separated out for a different classification process--for example, parole violators, especially notorious inmates, offenders from another jurisdiction, or federal inmates?
6. Who prepares the initial classification assessment report? To whom is the report sent and who makes the final decision on custody designation?
7. How long does the initial classification take on the average? Do you modify this and if so, in what way, due to institutional crowding?
8. Who makes the final decision on institutional placement? Do you have more than one facility for women? If not, are there varying custody/security units in the single prison?
9. Once a woman has completed initial classification that designates security/classification level (how many levels are there?) and is assigned an institution or housing within a unit, is there further classification activity such as needs/program assessment and assignment? Are there any additional in-resident custody/movement levels or privilege levels she will be assigned? How are these designated and by whom?
10. In the prison environment, what distinguishes the daily functioning of a woman at one security/custody level from another? What are the operational distinctions between your security levels?
11. What can precipitate a re-classification or a transfer to another institution/housing unit (if housing is designated by security level)?

## WORKSHEET A-9. SANCTIONING PHILOSOPHIES, PURPOSES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES--A POCKET GUIDE

### SANCTIONING PHILOSOPHIES/PURPOSES

#### Just Deserts

Proponents of desert (or just deserts) as the appropriate purpose of criminal sanctions hold that punishment should be proportionate to the harm done by the crime and to the blameworthiness of the offender. The purpose of punishment is to right the imbalance or advantage which the criminal has seized by refusing to live by the laws of society. This orientation is rooted in the thinking of Immanuel Kant and his contemporaries of the 18th century Enlightenment. Radical for its time, this thinking was based on the concept that all individuals should be treated equally under the law without regard for rank or station. This thinking was a strong influence upon the drafters of our own United States constitution. Under such an orientation, information regarding the risk of future criminality, behavior while incarcerated, or plans for post-release activities are irrelevant to the choice of punishment. Desert was the philosophical orientation which gave rise to so much change and rethinking of criminal justice during the 1970s. Pure desert has been challenged by those who find it foolhardy to completely ignore issues of risk or individual circumstances in making sanctioning decisions.

#### General Deterrence

General deterrence is based upon the assumption that, in order to maintain respect for law, those who break the law must be punished as a warning to other potential criminals. It is not concerned with redressing the imbalance of past criminality, but looks to prevent criminality among others in the future. The ability of the criminal justice system to effect general deterrence is often questioned, however. As the system now operates, the likelihood of apprehension, conviction, and punishment for crime is so low that many question how realistic a goal of general deterrence can hope to be.

#### Incapacitation

Incapacitation as a goal for criminal sanctions seeks to "incapacitate" individuals for some period of time in order to prevent them from committing further criminal acts. It is forward-looking and would benefit greatly from reliable predictions about future criminality. Proponents of incapacitation are often challenged as to the fairness of punishing someone for crimes which might be committed in the future.

#### Rehabilitation

The goal of rehabilitation is a child of the great reform movement of the early 20th century and of a then-growing body of thought in the social sciences. It sees the causes of crime within the environment of the offender

## WORKSHEET A-9. SANCTIONING PHILOSOPHIES, PURPOSES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES--A POCKET GUIDE (CONTINUED)

and seeks to bring about changes in the individual which will render his or her future choices about behavior less criminal in nature. While it shares some of the objectives of incapacitation, it would strive for reduced criminal behavior through a changed mind-set of the offender rather than through external controls. Although rehabilitation lost much of its prominence in correctional thinking in the 1970s, it continues to be a concern of the public, those working in the correctional system, and researchers.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES/PRAGMATIC CONCERNS

Even within the context of certain sanctioning philosophies, correctional officials are operating with other constraining or guiding issues. They include our normative values, a need for accountability as stewards of the public trust, and a requirement to be efficient and effective in our use of public funds.

#### Normative Values

Whatever sanctioning philosophy we ascribe to, we are bound by certain constitutional and humanitarian values. These include fairness, humaneness, honesty, integrity, individual constitutional rights, and the least restrictive doctrine.

#### Accountability/Visibility

As corrections becomes a more visible public function and as resources become more constrained, it is particularly important that all correctional policies are developed with a sense of accountability to the executive branch authority under which they operate and to the public and funding bodies. Classification systems are only one element of corrections responsibilities that operate under this charter.

#### Best Use of Public Funds

Regardless, again, of sanctioning philosophy, we are charged with using public funds in cost-effective ways. Clearly, one element of classification that will come under scrutiny is the degree to which it assists administrators in achieving cost-effective use of resources. Given the relatively cost-intensive nature of higher custody settings, it will be important to examine how well a classification system helps in the management of women offenders who have traditionally presented a profile with lower risks of violence and predatory behavior than have male populations.

## WORKSHEET A-10. ASSESSING SANCTIONING PURPOSES/GOALS

The following questions are intended to guide you as you assess existing sanctioning purposes and other criminal justice goals/concerns in your jurisdictions. Refer to Worksheet A-9 and Goals of Community Sanctions for definitions and concepts to support this assessment. Because sanctioning purposes are so fundamental to the entire design and operation of our criminal justice system and corrections, we suggest that you seek the opinions of both high ranking officials (at policy making levels) as well as the individuals in your system who are responsible for policy implementation.

1. What is the language in your state constitution and/or your statutes which underwrites criminal codes and penalties? Does it use words like retribution, just deserts, or deserved punishments?
2. How clearly does it speak to public safety? Is it explicit about risk assessment and control/incapacitation?
3. Do words like reform, reintegration, rehabilitation, or even treatment appear in statutory language?
4. In general discussion in your jurisdiction (in the print media, during legislative debate, among correctional professionals, in educational settings), what do people talk about with regard to sanctioning purposes? Is the word rehabilitation out of favor now? How popular is the vernacular--risk management?
5. Do you have a determinate or indeterminate sentencing structure? Sentencing or release guidelines? Do these guidelines establish one sanctioning purpose over another as the basis for case decision making?
6. Overall in the criminal justice system, on a scale of 1-10, how clear do you think the purposes of sanctioning are in writing? In practice?
7. Is there a written mission statement for the prison system (department or division of corrections)? If so, what sanctioning purposes are stated? Is there a specific mission statement (different than that for the rest of the prison system) for the women's prison(s)? If so, what sanctioning purposes are stated? How do these differ from other departmental mission statements? How much clarity do you feel there is about the purpose/mission of corrections? Does this reach all levels of the organization?

**WORKSHEET A-10. ASSESSING SANCTIONING PURPOSES/GOALS  
(CONTINUED)**

8. When you go to the legislature with your budget or to get funding for a new prison program, on what basis do you approach the legislature and the public regarding what this program is supposed to accomplish?
9. In terms of what you present to the legislature/public, is there a difference between women's and men's prison populations? What is the nature of this difference?
10. In your prison system, to what extent are you experiencing crowding? If crowding is significant, what impact does this have on your sanctioning purposes? Do you feel you have to "sacrifice" other interests because of crowding? To what extent does this happen? Are there differences in the degree of crowding in men's and women's prisons in your state?

## WORKSHEET A-11. ASSESSING PRISON CLASSIFICATION OBJECTIVES

If one views classification as a management tool, it is important to clarify the objectives. What is classification specifically established to do? The following questions serve to guide a review of classification objectives and their relationship to sanctioning purposes/the departmental mission statement.

1. Do you have written objectives for your security/custody (prison) classification? If so, assemble and review them. Are these different for women than for men?
2. Please indicate if and how any or all of the following objectives may pertain to the woman offender prison classification system in your jurisdiction.

---

Does This Apply?  
(Y / N / Maybe)

Is the Objective  
Written or Unwritten?

---

- a. To sort women who are more dangerous from one another in order to place them in security levels (institutions/housing units) where they can be managed in a different way from others.
- b. To sort women who are likely to try to escape in order to restrict their movement to safeguard against escape.
- c. To sort older "hardened" offenders from young first-time offenders.
- d. To separate co-defendants.
- e. To separate gang members.

WORKSHEET A-11. ASSESSING PRISON CLASSIFICATION OBJECTIVES  
(CONTINUED)

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	Does This Apply? (Y / N / Maybe)	Is the Objective Written or Unwritten?
f.	To identify critical special needs in the medical area so offenders can be placed where they can receive those services.	
g.	To identify critical special needs in the mental health area so that women can be placed in a facility where those needs can be met.	
h.	To identify program needs so that each woman has a program plan.	
i.	To place a woman in an institution where she has no familial ties.	
j.	To fill empty bed space in an expedient and orderly fashion.	
k.	To identify those in need of protective custody and place them accordingly.	
l.	To facilitate the movement of a woman through the prison system.	
m.	To assure that women with longer prison sentences serve a larger percentage of their time at higher custody levels.	

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WORKSHEET A-11. ASSESSING PRISON CLASSIFICATION OBJECTIVES  
(CONTINUED)

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	Does This Apply? (Y / N / Maybe)	Is the Objective Written or Unwritten?
n.	To establish a basis for access to prison programs/ job assignments.	
o.	To provide a basis for allocating scarce security resources.	
p.	To establish a mechanism by which women can "earn" their way to greater privileges and higher levels of responsibility.	
q.	To establish a mechanism by which women can earn their way to prison placements closer to their homes.	
r.	To sort women by seriousness of offense.	

---

Please list and describe any other objectives of your classification for women.

3. How clearly do you feel the objectives of prison classification for women offenders are stated? How clearly are the objectives implemented in your current classification design?
4. Given current practice, how effectively do you feel classification objectives are met? Cite reasons/examples supporting your assessment.
5. Overall, do you feel the specific objectives for woman offender classification are suitable to your departmental mission?

## WORKSHEET A-12. DISTINGUISHING CLASSIFICATION FROM OTHER MANAGEMENT INTERESTS IN THE PRISON INFRASTRUCTURE

The following sets of questions are intended to guide the user through an assessment of other offender behavior management structures in women's prisons and show how they might be related to traditional prison classification design.

### Disciplinary

1. In the prisons where you house your women offenders, do you have a disciplinary conduct system? Does it establish a detailed set of rules for inmate conduct? Is there an established range of penalties for breaking these rules? Do you have administrative regulations that define and govern this entire activity? Are these departmental regulations? Or do they differ from one institution to the next? Are there differences between the women's and men's prisons regarding disciplinary conduct systems?
2. How do disciplinary violations affect a woman's classification status? Does an inmate violation automatically trigger a reclassification? How so?
3. Do you have a disciplinary action committee? Is this separate from your classification review committee? Program review committee?

### Privileges

4. Do you have some type of provision in your institutions for women to earn privileges (examples--additional canteen hours, visits, extended phone calls)? Describe how it works--the various privileges, how they are awarded, etc. What body has authority to grant and remove privileges? On what basis are these case decisions made? Are there departmental regulations to govern this activity? Are the policies and procedures the same for men and women?
5. Is the granting of privileges in any way connected to the classification level a woman holds? Describe. Do the levels that define classification categories (for example, minimum-medium-maximum) also define levels of privilege?

### Inmate Accountability Levels

6. In the institutions housing women offenders, do you structure the daily prison environment in such a way that a women "earns" her way through various levels of responsibility and rewards? This type of approach typically covers a wider range of aspects of inmate prison life to include assessment of her performance in housing, program participation, work responsibilities, increasing mobility and liberty, treatment, etc.

**WORKSHEET A-12. DISTINGUISHING CLASSIFICATION FROM OTHER  
MANAGEMENT INTERESTS IN THE PRISON INFRASTRUCTURE  
(CONTINUED)**

7. If you have such a structure, describe how it works. Do you have different levels? How is a woman first assigned to a level? Does every incoming woman start at the same level? How does movement through the levels relate to the length of her imposed prison term? How does movement through the levels relate to parole (or other types of release) consideration?
8. Is there a committee that reviews, monitors, and places inmates at different levels? Are there departmental administrative regulations that govern this process? Do you use assessment tools and performance rating scales to "rate" each offender? Who monitors her performance?
9. Does this inmate accountability performance system replace a custody classification designation? Are they one and the same process or do they operate independently?
10. If the accountability levels are one and the same with custody classification levels, are there distinctions between levels as to the degree of "risk control" imposed? For example, differences in mobility through the institutions, supervision level, time out of cell, access to certain assignments/programs?

**WORKSHEET A-13. ASSESSING THE COMPONENTS OF CLASSIFICATION**

Use the following worksheet to list the various components of classification and identify any assessment tools (checklists, scales, forms, reports) associated with each component (in both initial and reclassification activities).

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Component	Instrument/Forms/Etc. Yes/No	List of Instruments
Medical		
Mental Health		
Custody/Security (Risk)		
Escape Risk		
Program Participation		
Service Needs		
Vocational		
Educational		
Life Skills		
Family Support		
Parenting		
Other		

## WORKSHEET A-14. RISK COMPONENT ASSESSMENT

The following questions are offered as a guide for completing an in-depth assessment of the risk component of classification.

1. What do you call this component of classification? Is it referred to as security, custody, or classification designation?
2. Do you use any type of written assessment tool to do offender assessment?
3. If not, is there a list of factors that you commonly consider when trying to make a designation? What are they?
4. If you do use an assessment tool, are the factors contained on the form subjective (involves clinical judgment or definition) or objective (observable or measurable factor) or a combination?
5. Does this form serve as the entire classification summary or decision form or is it solely a risk assessment scale?
6. How were the factors developed? Staff opinion? Empirical research? Borrowed from another jurisdiction or national research?
7. What risk are you assessing? Risk of escape? Risk of rule breaking behavior? Risk of violence in the institution? Risk of repeat criminal behavior in the community?
8. If you have an empirically derived risk scale, who conducted the research? When? On what population? Is there a published report that describes the data base and the analysis? Since its initial development, has this scale been re-researched or validated?

**WORKSHEET A-14. RISK COMPONENT ASSESSMENT (CONTINUED)**

9. How were the cut-off scores for the various categories set? When and how are these scores and subsequent category designations changed?
10. Do you have provisions to "override" the security/risk classification score? The category? Or the placement decision? What is this rate? What are the override factors? Who has the authority to override (and which kind of override)?
11. Who fills out the risk assessment form (or portion of an instrument)? Do you have a mechanism for quality control?
12. Is there a monitoring mechanism in place to monitor the entire risk classification component? Has the data base on which research is conducted been updated? When?
13. Do you have provisions for a reclassification? Do you use an objective assessment tool to reclassify based on risk? How was it developed? Has it been researched? Validated?
14. Do any factors change on the reclassification risk assessment tool? How do you make provisions to take into account a woman's performance since initial classification with regard to "risk" behaviors (whatever it is you are defining as risk)?

## WORKSHEET A-15. OFFENDER/SYSTEM CLASSIFICATION PROFILE

Compile the following information about women offenders as it relates to classification--institutional assignment, custody/security designations, needs assessment, movement and transfer.

- Admissions and current population--program needs profile by basic need category (education, vocation, medical, mental health, drug dependency, alcohol dependency, etc.).
- Admissions and current population--risk (security/custody/escape, whatever that consists of) profile; number and percentage in the various categories.

Compile a "system" profile.

- List rated capacity of all women's facilities/housing units by security classification.
- List all women's facilities/units by medical/mental health (and any other service levels).
- List all programs and program capacities (number of slots available) by institutions/housing units for women.

Compare offender classification designation by facility or housing unit assignment. Do a cross tabulation between the offender classification designation and the facility/housing unit designation for risk/security, medical/mental health, and treatment/service level if applicable.

## WORKSHEET B-1. ASSESSING IMPETUS FOR CHANGE

Having interviewed key officials in the classification process during your assessment of current practice, you will now want to test the willingness of selected individuals to participate in the process of change. List the names of key individuals whose approval, cooperation, skills, information, and participation will be important. Seek support and willingness to participate from each identified official. Interview questions:

1. Given our assessment of current practice and targets for change, would you be willing to participate in an effort to improve classification practice for women offenders?
2. What would your level of involvement be?
3. If this person may be a working member of a task team, how much time or time of his/her staff could be made available?

NAME	RESPONSIBILITY RE: CLASSIFICATION	Q.1	Q.2	Q.3
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[Examples....]

Deputy Director of Corrections  
 for Classification?  
 for Treatment/Programs?  
 for Operations?

Other Central Office Staff  
 Classification Unit?  
 Transfer and Movement?  
 Research and Planning?

Women's Institutional Staff  
 Director of Intake?  
 Director of Classification?  
 Director of Treatment/Programs?  
 Classification Committee?  
 Chief of Security?  
 Housing Placement Officer?  
 Program Assignment Committee?  
 Classification Caseworkers/Counselors?

Women Offenders  
 In initial classification  
 After reclassification

## WORKSHEET B-2. ANALYSIS OF TARGETS FOR CHANGE

Upon reviewing your entire assessment looking for targets for change, use this code to rate each of the possible targets for change.

- 0 = no assessed need for change at this time
- 1 = needs modification, but not a priority
- 2 = requires development/change on priority basis

- Clarification of criminal justice sanctioning purposes.
- Clarification of correctional objectives at the facilities housing women prisoners.
- Clarification of prison classification objectives.
- Changes in medical screening, designations, and service delivery.
- Changes in mental health needs screening, designations, or service delivery.
- Redefining the components of classifications (on what basis are you sorting women offenders)?
- Development of an objective initial classification risk assessment scale.
- Development of a predictive tool for use in initial classification.
- Development of an objective reclassification risk assessment scale.
- Change in the practices utilizing the offender assessment security/custody tools (overrides).
- Change in the policy that governs how institutional and transfer assignments are made.
- Change in the security designation of different facilities or units within facilities for women.
- Redesign institution-based custody classification policy and practices.

**WORKSHEET B-2. ANALYSIS OF TARGETS FOR CHANGE  
(CONTINUED)**

- Redesign the institutional program delivery structure.
- Modify the mechanism by which initial classification is done.
- Modify the mechanism by which reclassification is done.
- Training for staff regarding use of the instruments.
- Improve information system support.
- Establish ongoing mechanism to do assessment/evaluation and development of women offender prison classification.

**WORKSHEET B-3. DETERMINING CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT  
EFFORTS: FEASIBILITY CONSIDERATIONS**

<u>Feasibility Questions</u>	<u>Candidate Development Efforts</u>		
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>
1. What level of effort will be required?			
2. What resources are needed to engage this work?			
3. Who will be involved? Available?			
4. Estimate major tasks and time frame.			
5. What resources will be required?			
6. Are there external forces for or against this activity?			
7. What are the greatest barriers to doing this work?			
8. Is this work connected technically to any other major development tasks?			

COMMENTS:

**WORKSHEET C-1. STEPS IN CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT  
PROCESS**

1. Clarify overall criminal justice sanctioning purposes and other goals/concerns.
2. Clarify women offender prison classification objectives. Clarify the relationship the women offender classification has to any overall departmental classification scheme. On a formal or informal basis, is there any refinement of a departmental classification at the local level (at women's facilities)?
3. Distinguish and define the role of just deserts (or retributive sanctioning interests) in a woman's term in prison. Does the desert purpose primarily establish the duration of the prison terms or is it in any way tied to the level of security, institutional assignment, or other restrictions/opportunities? Does the desert policy overlay prison classification purposes? Is this by statute or by administrative rule or informal practice?
4. Define the major components of initial classification and designate the level of authority at which these components are assessed and implemented (departmental and/or local/institutional).
5. Define other "overarching" system interests that may affect how classification is implemented. These are interests that go beyond the individual characteristics of women offenders and components of classification to interests that are generalized to the entire women offender prison population and/or total prison population.
6. FOR EACH COMPONENT, complete the following:
  - State the objectives specific to this component.
  - Formulate offender assessment tools (initial and reclassification) and protocol.
  - Specify the offender categories and document the method of determination. (Based upon the offender assessment, what type of categories do you sort offenders into? How were these categories determined?)
  - Specify the classification implementation (system response, population behavioral management)--both program and policy--which responds to each of the offender categories (within each component).

**WORKSHEET C-1. STEPS IN CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT  
PROCESS (CONTINUED)**

- Define the policies and procedures required to implement each component of prison classification, making certain to distinguish the levels of authority (departmental and local/institutional); information system support; and all forms and staff procedures.
- 7. Integrate all components into an overall (perhaps multi-layered) classification system. Complete an initial and reclassification decisionmaking instrument and protocol.
- 8. Define overall classification policy, procedures, and mechanisms by which offender classification is put into operation in the corrections department and in the institutions for women. Clarify how classification aligns with other prison management sub-systems. Complete a classification operations manual (departmental and/or local/institutional).
- 9. Explicate departmental system interests and how they shall "overlay" defined classification policy, procedures, and practices (for example, prison crowding).
- 10. Draft essential policy and procedural statements and take through administrative rules adoption process.
- 11. Complete an "inventory," assessment, and design of classification management program and policy responses (utilizing information from the broader current classification assessment).
- 12. Design and implement information system support for women offender prison classification. (This design should include the ability to monitor case decision making, offender classification profile, and a management support capability.)
- 13. Complete a training needs assessment. Develop an implementation training plan. Complete training curriculum and materials. Schedule and conduct training.
- 14. Complete a detailed phase-by-phase implementation plan for putting above design into operation.
- 15. Engage actual implementation, with monitoring and planning feedback.

## WORKSHEET C-2. JUST DESERTS AND PRISON CLASSIFICATION

The following questions may serve as a guide for a group discussion aimed at identifying, considering, and, eventually, defining the relationship of the desert sanctioning purpose in the prison environment and its relation to prison classification.

1. Is the current offense of commitment included as a factor in your initial or reclassification instrument? Are the offenses ranked into some type of seriousness scale? If yes, by what authority and by whom was this offense seriousness scaled established?
2. Do you use an objective risk factor scale to assess offender risk (and subsequent security/custody classification levels)? Is offense seriousness one of the factors in this scale? Was this scale empirically derived? If yes, what aspect of an offender's current offense seriousness has proven predictive value?
3. Do you have policy directives which require differential handling of a prisoner based solely on current offense seriousness? How does this affect the risk control measures you take (as a result of an offender's risk assessment)?
4. Does a prisoner's offense seriousness (in and of itself) limit her access to programs, privileges, any inmate honor status, work assignments, etc.?
5. If the answer to either Q.3 or Q.4 was yes, indicate whether the authority for such policy directives comes from statute or administrative authority?
6. If any of your desert-related policy directives are by way of administrative rather than statutory rule, what is the rationale or basis for imposing such administrative policy? What is such a policy intended to achieve? Do you feel you are indeed achieving that purpose? How much and in what ways do you feel such a desert-aimed policy may be interfering with your prison classification functions?
7. Are there other ways to implement either statutory or administrative desert-based policy without interfering with your prison classification function? Define and propose alternative desert objectives and/or methods for reaching those objectives.

### WORKSHEET C-3. RISK FACTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS

1. Defining risk. The first task in developing a risk instrument is to determine what behaviors you wish to predict. This is partially a policy choice--what do managers need/want to know--and partially a technical choice--what do you have or can you get information. You will want to ask yourself how and for what is this information to be used. In prison classification, common factors for predictive assessment are: (a) risk of escape; (b) risk of violent behavior in the institution (to others or self); and (c) risk of non-violent, but rule-breaking behavior.

There are two relevant dimensions in defining the risk behavior you are interested in as you design a risk instrument. First is the nature and severity of the risk to be predicted. Escape is a very serious risk, particularly if some harm to the community would result. On the other hand, minor rule violations may not be terribly serious in and of themselves. The other dimension is the likelihood of certain events happening. While escape may be a very serious event, the frequency of its occurrence may be so low as to temper your concern over it. On the other hand, rule violations may be very frequent and thus may have serious consequences for the overall atmosphere in the institution. Your risk assessment, then, must balance these two dimensions of risk--seriousness or stakes involved, along with predicted frequency. The choice of what you will attempt to assess or predict is a policy choice that policymakers must resolve with the assistance of technical staff regarding the feasibility of assessing such risk.

Not only must you select the behavior you wish to predict, but you must "operationalize" your definition. This means defining violent behavior, rule breaking, or escape in precise terms so that data can be collected and the incidence of that behavior can be studied. You may want to include some notes on your discussions on this topic here.

2. Selecting the independent variables for analysis. Once you have defined the offender risk you wish to predict (the dependent variable or outcome criterion), you will want to identify the factors you would like to study as possibly related to that risk (independent variables). They will probably include specific variables in criminal history (numbers, rates, and types from adult offense records, adult institutionalization records, juvenile offense records, juvenile institutionalization records), institutional behavior factors (disciplinary infractions major and minor, disciplinary housing/keep-lock history, transfers to higher security, escape/abscond history, prior probation/parole revocations), demographic factors (age, sex, employment, education, marital status/dependents, residence), psycho-social factors (scores on standard tests, IQ, clinical evaluations, drug/alcohol history, etc.). When examining potential variables for inclusion in the analysis you will want to consider

**WORKSHEET C-3. RISK FACTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS  
(CONTINUED)**

constraints on the use of certain factors (legal, data unavailability, cost). You will also need to determine specific definitions for each, from what time period you will collect the data, and the use of rates as well as totals for variables.

At this point you may well be considering borrowing an instrument from another jurisdiction and studying those variables and items included on that instrument. As you can see, by taking that course you limit yourself to testing only those variables which have proven relevant in another jurisdiction. If you are going to go to the expense and effort of research, it is strongly advised that you assemble data on all of the variables at interest to determine what combination of factors may prove most powerful in terms of predictive validity for your own population.

Note here the variables you are considering along with notations regarding availability, source, definitions, etc.

The actual list of independent variables will be much refined from this early "wish list" as you determine what information is available and reliable. Many questions apply. On what can I get information? What is currently collected? Is there data available on-line at the institutions (or centrally) or will this require a special data collection? What are sources for information? How long a history of data recording do these sources of information have? You may wish to construct a data worksheet on which you list for each proposed independent variable the following: (a) source of information; (b) how long a history of information is available; (c) quality of data; (d) extent of missing data; (e) consistency of data; and (f) can this variable change over time.

3. Specifying the sample. The following are some of the considerations in drawing a sample upon which to conduct your analysis and development of a risk assessment tool.

Sampling procedure--definition. You will want to select a sample of offenders representative of the population found in your correctional institutions. You will want to over-sample women in order to generate a population of at least 1,000. As you complete your analysis, you will have to adjust for the fact that this over-sampling has taken place.

Time periods. Over what time period shall you draw the sample? Selection of time frame should balance the need for ensuring a large enough sample for your analysis with the need to ensure some comparability in the data. If major changes have been put in place in how data is collected or how certain behaviors are defined and categorized,

WORKSHEET C-3. RISK FACTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS  
(CONTINUED)

then you will want to try to avoid a time frame that would require data from both time periods.

Sample size and stratified sampling. Sample size is framed by the specified time period (see directly above) and the numbers of data categories you are analyzing rather than a set percentage of the total universe of cases available. Risk factor development is a relatively high demand analysis. A sample size of 1,000 is workable with the number of categories that are commonly used in risk factor development. This type of analysis also suggests that stratified sampling is warranted. If you are planning a male-female sample, you will, no doubt, have to "over sample" women in order to bring their numbers in the sample up to what the analysis requires. Further, there may be other dimensions on which researchers will stratify (for example, institutional commitment/assignment or particular aspects of criminal offense) in order to examine all possible applications. This will not skew the results because in the analysis, researchers will "back out" the relative proportions.

Construction and validation samples. There are two major analytic efforts involved--one is to construct a risk assessment tool, the second is to validate that tool.

The sample of cases should be split into two groups with roughly two thirds of the cases in the construction sample and one third in the validation sample. The construction sample is to be used for most aspects of the risk factor analysis. It will also be used to do a trial verification and to make final adjustments to the risk factors. The validation sample should be set entirely aside and treated as an independent sample for the sole purpose of validation. See below for a more detailed reference on validation.

Here record notes or questions on the sample selection issue.

4. Data collection. Build in a pilot phase for data collection where you can test (on roughly 100 cases) how well your data collection instrument and procedures are working. Revise your data definitions and variables as needed. For some questionable variables, you may want to construct different methods of measurement. Also, revise your methods and procedures for data collection as necessary. Build in a mechanism for quality control on the data collection and data entry.
5. Analysis. There will be several analytic tasks researchers will engage. They are briefly outlined below to include:

**WORKSHEET C-3. RISK FACTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS  
(CONTINUED)**

Pruning the list of independent variables. Researchers will undertake analysis to assess the relationship of independent variables to dependent variables. They will also look at the inter-relationship of the independent variables. Techniques for conducting these kinds of analyses include bi-variate correlation analysis, cross-tabulation (chi-squared, etc.), trend analysis, and other techniques as deemed productive and possible. The actual techniques to be used will depend upon the characteristics of the data base as it is assembled.

Constructing risk factor models. The actual construction of the "optimal" set of risk factors involves analysis which goes well beyond the relatively straightforward techniques for "pruning" the independent variables. It is one thing to establish that a particular independent variable has a particular strength of association with a dependent variable, but it is a challenge of a higher level to construct a risk factor model which represents the strongest possible predictive value without bias or extraneous factors.

Methodological tools common to this risk factor model-building task include multiple regression (models in terms of linear equations), logistic regression (modifies regression to model risk probabilities between zero and one), Cox modeling (mathematical model of time to failure), discriminant analysis (clusters in terms of linear boundaries), recursive partitioning (builds a tree-structure), and Entropy Minimax (clusters in terms of simple decision rules).

In risk factor model building there are many considerations to make that should not be left to researchers alone. In trying to determine the "final" list of indicators to be incorporated into a risk factor model, policy makers and researchers will consider: (a) the trade off between the strength of a predictor versus its significance; (b) the "manipulability" of the factor; (c) the routine availability of each proposed factor and its completeness and quality, and what it will cost to get this information; (d) the desirability of having "back up" variables--construct variables in pairs so if one is not available you can add weight to the other; and (e) feasibility issues--legal, political, and practical impediments to implementation.

6. Validation. The validation sample is now used to conduct a study where the final proposed risk factor model (offender risk assessment tool) is applied. Does the assessment tool sort cases into categories that are meaningful? Do a cross-tabulation between instrument scores and risk behavior outcome. Did those who rated a higher risk score also engage in the defined risk behavior? How well does this set of predictive risk factors sort?

**WORKSHEET C-3. RISK FACTOR DEVELOPMENT AND ANALYSIS  
(CONTINUED)**

What constitutes a "good" sorting capability? It is a product of two factors--spread and distribution. The strongest sort is where as many cases as possible are spread into the top and bottom categories (rather than the middle) and with as high a percentage of the population as possible falling into those end categories. Only administrators/practitioners can judge what is an adequate and acceptable sorting capability of a risk assessment tool given the "costs" of developing and implementing it.

7. Using offender risk information and classification evaluation. Sorting offenders upon assessment into working risk categories is presumably done in order to take a differential response to managing the risk behavior that is assumed to exist. To complete the risk classification design, this policy (procedure and program) must be specified. An evaluation of the risk classification would include an examination not just of how well the assessment tool is working but also of how consistently the tool is used. Another important area for evaluation is the effectiveness of the differential response by the system to managing the identified risk behaviors in the prison.

**WORKSHEET D-1. CLASSIFICATION DEVELOPMENT: WORK PLAN  
FORMAT**

Describe and list specific tasks, time frame, and project directors/ staff.  
[To avoid confusion, date each edition of the work plan as you periodically update it.]

TASK/ ACTIVITY	DUE DATES	WHO INVOLVED	RESOURCES	ASSIGNMENT
List each major task, sub-tasks, and detail.				
	List due date for each item.			
		Indicate all persons/org. that you will involve.		
			What resources are required for each item?	
				Who is assigned responsibility for each item?

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