

REPORT NO. 12143

**STATE OF FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL**



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**PERFORMANCE AUDIT
OF THE
INMATE CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM
ADMINISTERED BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

JULY 6, 1993

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State of Florida
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL



CHARLES L. LESTER, C.P.A.
AUDITOR GENERAL

July 6, 1993

JIM CARPENTER
ASSISTANT AUDITOR GENERAL

NCJRS

DEC 2 1994

The President of the Senate, the Speaker of the
House of Representatives, and the
Legislative Auditing Committee

ACQUISITIONS

I have directed that a performance audit be made of the Inmate Classification Program administered by the Department of Corrections. The results of the audit are presented to you in this report. This audit was made as a part of an ongoing program of performance auditing by the Office of the Auditor General as mandated by Section 11.45(3)(a), Florida Statutes.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles L. Lester".

Charles L. Lester
Auditor General

Audit supervised by:

D. Byron Brown

Audit made by:

John D. Dew

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INMATE AND CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM

Purpose and Scope

In this audit, we evaluated the classification process at selected correctional institutions as administered by the Department of Corrections. We sought to determine whether the institutional classification process had been affected by changes in the correctional system since 1985, such as increased admissions, the early release of inmates, or shorter periods of incarceration. In addition, we sought to determine the status of implementation of the Computer Assisted Classification Program at those selected institutions.

Background

The Department of Corrections is responsible for the custody, control, care, and rehabilitation of inmates convicted of felonies and sentenced to terms of incarceration more than one year. As of June 30, 1992, there were a total of 43 correctional institutions in the state that housed 37,811 inmates.¹ The primary function of the inmate classification system, according to Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., is the maintenance of security and order for the protection of the general public, staff, and inmates.

Classification is the process of receiving and orienting inmates to the correctional institution, evaluating and assessing inmate's needs, and assigning inmates into correctional facilities, work and housing

¹ This number excludes inmates at the Department's reception centers, community based facilities, and contracted facilities.

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assignments, security levels, and treatment and training programs. The Department has articulated the goals of its classification system in Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., which integrates security considerations with the management of inmate programs and treatment needs. These goals include:

- Maintaining institutional security and order so that the general public, staff, and inmates are protected to the greatest extent possible;
- Promoting the security of the general public through the return of inmates to society with skills and behaviors that better enable them to function as responsible, productive law abiding citizens; and
- Regularly assessing and monitoring each inmate's progress toward treatment and training goals and placing the inmate in the proper custody level and institutional setting to ensure the safety of the general public, staff, and other inmates while maximizing training programs and treatment opportunities.

Institutional classification officers perform a variety of duties, including participating in the orientation of new inmates to the specific institution, assigning the inmate to work stations and/or rehabilitative programs, periodically reviewing the progress and custody status of each inmate, preparing the inmate's file for release or transfer to other institutions or facilities,

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and conducting hearings regarding alleged violations of Department rules by inmates.

According to the Department, a total of \$17,087,937, or 3% of the Department's expenditures for major institutions, was expended from general revenue for institutional classification during fiscal year 1991-92. Approximately 96% of the classification expenditures were for staff salaries, including 592 total authorized positions for classification functions at 43 major correctional institutions.²

An essential element of the classification system is the use of inmate progress reviews. The inmate progress review has two main components: a review of the inmate's participation in institutional programs and work assignments, and a review of the inmate's custody status. The Department has established rules requiring progress reviews to be conducted at six month intervals (the first review should be conducted within three months if the inmate's sentence is 18 months or less), and to be conducted by a classification team, consisting of the inmate's classification officer and other Department staff such as the inmate's work or program supervisor and a representative from the Department's security staff (for example, a correctional officer from the inmate's dormitory).

² These positions included classification supervisors, classification specialists, records staff, clerk typists, secretaries, and data entry operators. These figures exclude classification staff at Reception Centers and community facilities.

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To assist in the placement and monitoring of inmate participation in rehabilitative programs, the Department began implementation of the Computer Assisted Classification Program (CACP) on March 1, 1988.³ The CACP is to facilitate institutional and program placement decisions that are based on identified rehabilitative needs and available rehabilitative programs, such as substance abuse treatment or academic and vocational education programs. When space in recommended rehabilitative programs is not immediately available, the inmate is to be placed on a waiting list on the CACP and given a priority for placement. The CACP is also designed to provide data that can be used by Department staff to track the number of inmates that are recommended for, placed in, and successfully complete specific programs.

Results in Brief

The Department has not always followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews. Furthermore due to shorter periods of incarceration, not all inmates have received progress reviews prior to release from prison. As a result, the Department has not formally monitored the progress some inmates are making toward achieving goals established for them. Of the 270 files of recently released inmates that we reviewed, 111 (41%) did not

³ The CACP is a component of the Department's Offender Based Information System. Other components of the Offender Based Information System provide information on such areas as inmate health, job assignments, projected release dates, disciplinary reports, custody classification, and inmate bank accounts.

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receive a progress review prior to release from incarceration. Of the 159 inmates that did receive one or more progress reviews, 39 (25%) received at least one review 30 or more days after the date required by Department rules.

The Computer Assisted Classification Program (CACP) is substantially unused at the nine institutions we visited. Information on program recommendations and placements in the system is incorrect, rehabilitative assignments are not made based upon the CACP waiting lists, and the Department does not have statewide information available on identified rehabilitative needs and program participation.

As a result of the above cited deficiencies, the Department's ability to accomplish some of the goals of the inmate classification system as described in Department rules, has been affected. Absent timely progress reviews and accurate data regarding inmate participation in Department programs, the Department is limited in its ability to determine whether the Inmate Classification Program is effectively and efficiently accomplishing program goals.

Findings

The Department Has Not Always Conducted Timely Progress Reviews

Progress reviews can be viewed as an opportunity for the Department to work toward stated classification goals. Based on an assessment of the information we obtained, we found that the Department has not always

followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews, and many inmates are released from prison prior to having received a progress review. Furthermore, we identified three major factors that make it difficult for the Department to perform progress reviews as currently required, and which limit the usefulness of those requirements in monitoring progress toward goals established for the inmate.

**Many Inmates Do Not
Receive Progress
Reviews Prior to
Release From Prison**

Of the 270 files of recently released inmates that we reviewed, 111 (41%) inmates did not receive a progress review prior to release. Of these 111 inmates, 92 (83%) were released prior to the date the scheduled initial progress review would have been due. The remaining 19 inmates had been incarcerated long enough to have been scheduled for one or more progress reviews; however, the reviews had not been performed.

**Not All Progress
Reviews Are Timely**

Of the 159 inmates in our sample who received at least one required progress review, 39 inmates (25%) received a progress review in excess of 30 days after the date required by the Florida Administrative Code. For those 39 inmates, the delay in receiving a progress review averaged 110 days beyond the required due date.

By not conducting progress reviews, the Department is not monitoring its efforts to achieve goals established for inmates. If an inmate does not receive a progress review, then the Department has not taken advantage of the opportunity to determine whether the treatment and training goals that may have been associated with incarceration have been met. Furthermore, if progress reviews are not held in a timely manner, inmates may not be reassigned to more appropriate work or program assignments.

**Not All Progress
Reviews Include
Classification Team
Members as Required
by Rule**

Interviews with the classification supervisors at the nine institutions we visited revealed that seven of the institutions do not always use classification teams to conduct progress reviews. At three of the six institutions in which we observed progress reviews being conducted, team members were not present at the review. In the three institutions where other team members were not present, the classification officer was the only Department representative present for the progress review with the inmate.

**Factors Affecting
Progress Reviews
Includes: Shorter
Periods of
Incarceration,
Priority of
Classification
Functions, and
Limited Staff
Resources**

Our interviews with Department staff identified three factors that affect the Department's conduct of progress reviews, and may prevent the Department from achieving treatment and training goals. These factors include shorter periods of incarceration, the priority of other classification functions over inmate progress reviews, and limited staff resources.

By comparison with previous years, the number of inmates serving short periods of incarceration has increased. During the last half of 1982, only 8% of the inmates released by the Department had spent six months or less in prison; in 1992, approximately 55% of the inmates released had been incarcerated for six months or less.

The priority of maintaining order and security over other classification goals is the second factor affecting the Department's conduct of progress reviews. Department rules state that the goal of maintaining order and security takes priority over other classification goals. According to classification staff, increases in administrative tasks related to maintaining order and

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security, such as admissions, transfers and releases, have affected the amount of time available for tasks related to other classification goals, such as progress reviews. For example, between 1985-86 and 1991-92 fiscal years, we found that seven of the nine institutions we visited experienced increases in the number of admissions, transfers and releases ranging between 47% and 359%.⁴

Limited staff resources was the third factor identified by the Department affecting the conduct of progress reviews in accordance with rules. Some team members were unable to attend classification meetings because other staff were not available to fill in for them at their workstations during the meetings. For example, correctional officers may not be able to leave their dormitory areas, or teachers may not be able to leave classrooms, to attend the progress review meetings. To compensate for the lack of participation in progress review meetings, some classification officers said that they would occasionally solicit input from other team members by phone prior to the scheduled meeting with the inmate.

The Computer Assisted Classification Program Is Not Used and Often Contains Inaccurate Data

Our review of the status of implementation of the Computer Assisted Classification Program (CACP) disclosed that institutional classification staff were not routinely using the CACP to make decisions about inmates' placement in rehabilitative programs.

⁴ The Department experienced increases in the number of classification staff at these institutions during the same period ranging from 50% to 140%.

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Furthermore, we found that information regarding available institutional rehabilitative programs, inmate's rehabilitative needs, inmate's previous and current program involvement, and rehabilitative program waiting lists in the CACP was often inaccurate. Central Office staff also have not used the CACP to obtain information regarding inmate needs and program placement.

The lack of use of the CACP has had three adverse effects. First, by not using the system to keep information up to date, information on the progress review report regarding rehabilitative program recommendations and participation may be incorrect. Second, by not using the CACP, rehabilitative assignments are not based upon the priorities identified within the CACP's program waiting list. Third, the Department does not have statewide information on identified rehabilitative needs or program participation that can be used for planning and evaluation purposes.

Recommendations

Recommendations to the Department

The Department should consider revising its rules regarding progress reviews to provide a schedule related to the goals that are established for specific inmates. The schedule and content of these reviews should vary depending upon the specific circumstances for each inmate. Scheduling progress reviews based upon goals established for individual inmates should enable the department to better use progress reviews to monitor inmate progress toward those goals.

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The Department should revise its rules regarding the requirement for team participation in progress review meetings, and establish alternative procedures for obtaining and documenting information from other Department staff who can not be present for progress reviews. It may be more efficient to have classification staff solicit input from other Department staff without requiring their presence at all progress reviews. This would enable the Department to have the benefit of team input without the need for providing additional resources to substitute for staff to attend progress review meetings.

The Department should obtain input from institutional classification staff to determine their informational needs and determine if the Computer Assisted Classification Program (CACP) is capable of providing the information needed. If the Department determines that the CACP is the best way to provide needed information to classification staff, then the Department should;

- Establish procedures to assure that data regarding inmate rehabilitative program needs, participation, and completion is entered into the CACP on a timely basis and used to make program assignments; and
- Collect and report information regarding existing rehabilitative program participation and completion rates to better inform the Legislature as to the achievement of classification goals and the use and outcomes of rehabilitative programs.

Agency Response

The Secretary of the Department of Corrections, in his written response to our preliminary and tentative findings and recommendations, described specific actions taken or contemplated to address the deficiencies cited.

CHAPTER I

Introduction: Purpose and Scope, Methodology

Purpose and Scope

Performance audits are conducted by the Auditor General as a part of the Legislature's oversight responsibility for public programs. The primary objective of performance audits is to provide information the Legislature can use to improve programs and allocate limited public resources. This audit was conducted as part of the Auditor General's 10-year schedule of performance audits, as directed by Ch. 90-110, Laws of Florida.

In this audit, we evaluated the classification process at selected correctional institutions as administered by the Department of Corrections. We sought to determine whether the institutional classification process had been affected by changes in the correctional system since 1985, such as increased admissions, the early release of inmates, or shorter periods of incarceration. In addition, we sought to determine the status of implementation of the Computer Assisted Classification Program at those selected institutions.

Methodology

This audit was made in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and accordingly included appropriate performance auditing and evaluation methods. Audit fieldwork was conducted from July 1991 through November 1991. Subsequent follow-up fieldwork was conducted from July 1992 through November 1992.

To gain a general understanding of the role of institutional classification staff, we reviewed pertinent sections of the Florida Statutes, Florida Administrative Code, Department and institutional policies and procedures, the Department's Classification Manual, and job descriptions. We interviewed classification staff at the Department's Central Office and 9 of the Department's 43 major institutions, including Lancaster, Marion, Florida, Lantana, Dade, Glades, Apalachee East, Apalachee West, and Holmes Correctional Institutions.

To determine how institutional classification officers are carrying out their role, we interviewed classification supervisors and staff, and observed some of the activities carried out by classification staff, such as inmate custody reclassification, inmate progress reviews, and inmate disciplinary reviews. In order to determine if classification staff were conducting the required progress reviews, we reviewed 270 files of recently released inmates (30 at each of the nine institutions visited).

To identify changes in the correctional system, we reviewed Department data for all major institutions regarding increases in the number of inmate admissions, reclassifications, transfers, and releases that may have affected classification responsibilities during fiscal years 1985-86 through 1991-92. We further reviewed Department information on the average length of time inmates were incarcerated over the ten-year period of 1982 through 1992. In addition, we interviewed selected classification staff at each of the nine institutions we visited to determine the effect of these changes on the classification process.

We also interviewed classification staff at the nine selected institutions regarding the Computer Assisted Classification Program. To review the use of the system, and the accuracy and completeness of data in the program, we compared selected data contained in the computer system with data from other Department records.

CHAPTER II

Background: Program Design and Organization

The Department of Corrections is responsible for the custody, control, care and rehabilitation of inmates convicted of felonies and sentenced to terms of incarceration more than one year. As of June 30, 1992, there were a total of 43 correctional institutions in the state that housed 37,811 inmates.¹ The primary function of the inmate classification system, according to Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., is the maintenance of security and order for the protection of the general public, staff, and inmates.

Classification is defined as the organized process for receiving inmates into the custody of the Department of Corrections, evaluating and assessing inmate needs, and placing inmates into proper custody levels, facilities and programs to achieve specific goals. These goals include:

- Maintaining institutional security and order so that the general public, staff, and inmates are protected to the greatest extent possible;
- Promoting the security of the general public through the return of inmates to society with skills and behaviors that better enable them to function as responsible, productive law abiding citizens; and
- Regularly assessing and monitoring each inmate's progress toward treatment and training goals and placing the inmate in the proper custody level and institutional setting to ensure the safety of the general public, staff, and other inmates while maximizing training program and treatment opportunities.

Correctional institutions have a variety of types of staff members, including classification officers, correctional officers, work supervisors, educational instructors, and

¹ This number excludes inmates at the Department's reception centers, community based facilities, and contracted facilities.

medical staff. Institutional classification staff are responsible for determining the security level of each inmate in the facility and coordinating the placement of inmates into work and program slots. When inmates arrive at the institution, classification staff review each inmate's file. Staff then assign the inmate to meet the needs of the institution and/or the needs of the inmate. In addition, institutional classification staff are responsible for performing a variety of other duties such as coordinating inmate placement in work and other rehabilitative programs when vacancies occur; recommending and coordinating inmate transfers to other correctional facilities; calculating monthly inmate gain time awards; visiting inmates in administrative confinement; and participating in inmate disciplinary hearings. Classification staff also respond to inmate inquiries and requests and to communications from inmate family members or other parties (e.g., other state agencies, law enforcement officials, attorneys).

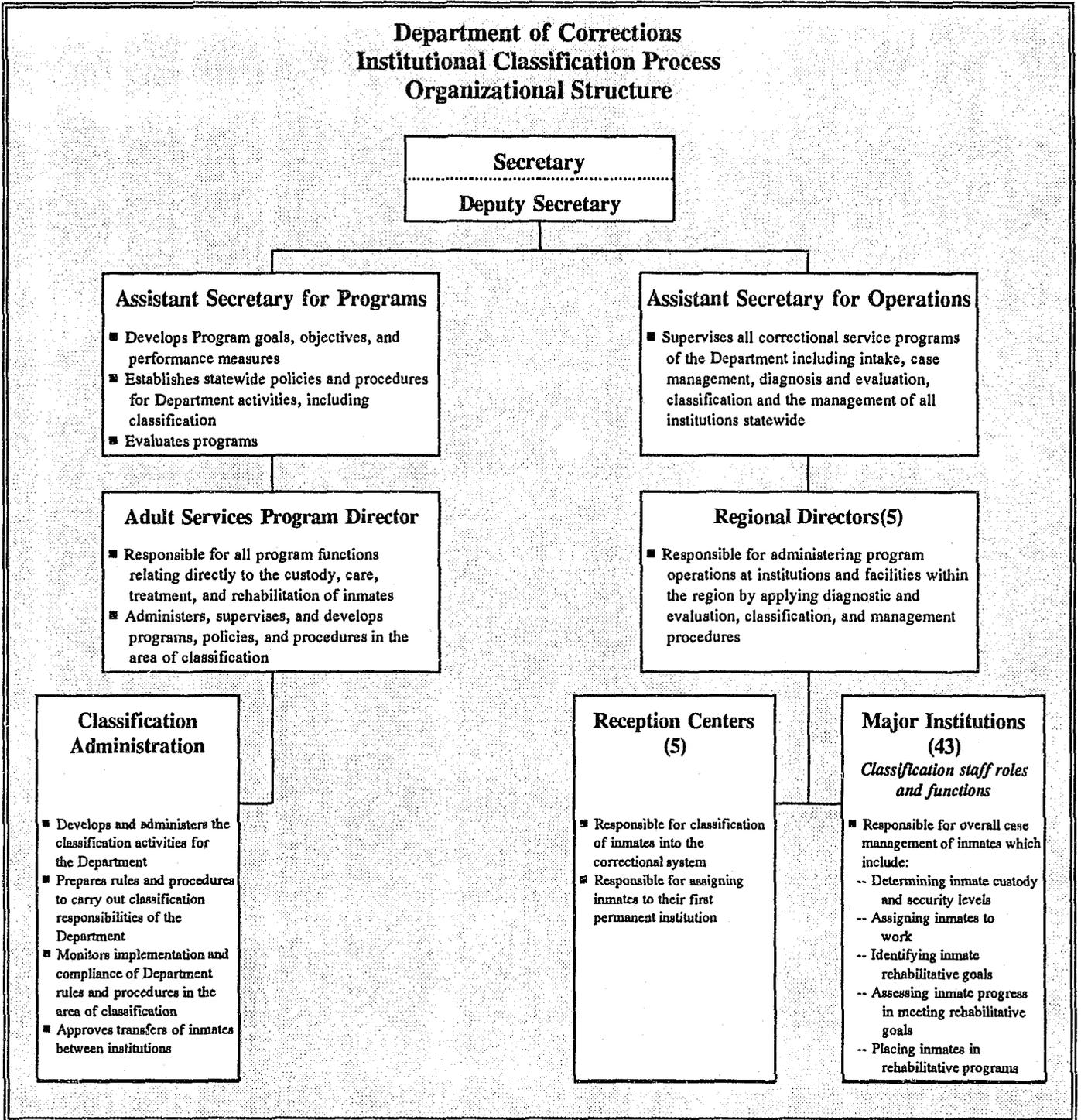
Program Organization

The chief administrator of the Department of Corrections is the Secretary, who is appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. Harry Singletary was appointed Secretary of the Department on April 12, 1991, and confirmed by the Senate on April 26, 1991.

The Assistant Secretary of Programs is responsible for program planning and development, developing policies and procedures, identifying inmate needs, monitoring operations, and assuring uniform program quality statewide. A Correctional Inmate Classification Administrator is responsible for preparing rules and procedures, and monitoring inmate classification functions within the Department. (See Exhibit 1, page 5.)

Exhibit 1

Department of Corrections
Institutional Classification Process
Organizational Structure



Source: Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code.

The Assistant Secretary for Operations is responsible for administering service programs in the Department, including the coordination and provision of classification services. There are a total of five regional directors in the state, who are responsible for departmental programs within the particular regions. Superintendents of correctional institutions, whose responsibilities include oversight of the classification process within the institution, report to the regional directors.

The classification activities at each institution are directed by a classification supervisor, who is responsible to the superintendent of the institution. Institutional classification officers perform a variety of duties, including participating in the orientation of new inmates to the specific institution, and assigning the inmate to work stations and/or rehabilitative programs. They also periodically review the progress and custody status of each inmate, prepare the inmate's file for release or transfer to other institutions or facilities, and conduct hearings regarding alleged violations of Department rules by inmates.

Program Resources

According to the Department, a total of \$17,087,937, or 3% of the Department's expenditures for major institutions, was expended from general revenue for institutional classification during the fiscal year 1991-92. Approximately 96% of the classification expenditures were for staff salaries, including 592 total authorized positions for classification functions at 43 major correctional institutions. These positions included classification supervisors, classification specialists, records staff, clerk typists, secretaries, and data entry operators. These figures exclude classification staff at Reception Centers and community facilities.

CHAPTER III

Findings and Recommendations

Background

Classification is the process of receiving and orienting inmates to the correctional institution, evaluating and assessing inmate's needs, and assigning inmates into correctional facilities, work and housing assignments, and treatment and training programs. The Department has articulated the goals of its classification system in Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., which integrates security considerations with the management of inmate program and treatment needs. These goals include:

- Maintaining institutional security and order so that the general public, staff, and inmates are protected to the greatest extent possible;
- Promoting the security of the general public through the return of inmates to society with skills and behaviors that better enable them to function as responsible, productive law abiding citizens; and
- Regularly assessing and monitoring each inmate's progress toward treatment and training goals and placing the inmate in the proper custody level and institutional setting to ensure the safety of the general public, staff, and other inmates while maximizing training program and treatment opportunities.

The primary function of the classification system, according to Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., is the maintenance of security and order for the protection of the general public, staff, and inmates.

To evaluate the institutional classification process, we interviewed classification and rehabilitative program staff at nine selected major institutions, reviewed a selected sample of 270 files of inmates recently released from prison, and observed progress

reviews at 6 of the 9 institutions. We obtained and reviewed data related to changes in the correctional system that have affected classification responsibilities, including receiving, transferring, and releasing of inmates, and the average length of incarceration. We also obtained information on the use of the Department's Computer Assisted Classification Program. Based on our review at nine selected institutions, we found that:

- The Department has not always followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews. Furthermore, due to shorter periods of incarceration, not all inmates have received progress reviews prior to release from prison. As a result, the Department has not formally monitored the progress some inmates are making toward achieving goals established for them; and
- The Department's Computer Assisted Classification Program is generally not used by classification staff to assist in the program placement of inmates at nine institutions due to data errors and incomplete information.

Finding 1.1

The Department has not always followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews. Furthermore, due to shorter periods of incarceration, not all inmates have received progress reviews prior to release from prison. As a result, the Department has not formally monitored the progress some inmates are making toward achieving goals established for them.

In managing the correctional system, the Department has developed a classification system to assess and place inmates into institutional rehabilitative programs, work assignments and security levels. The primary function of the classification system, according to Rule 33-6.0011, F.A.C., is the maintenance of security and order for the protection of the general public, staff, and inmates. Classification is defined as the organized process for receiving inmates into the custody of the Department of Corrections, evaluating and assessing inmate needs, and placing inmates into proper custody levels, facilities and programs to achieve specific goals.

An essential element of the classification system is the use of inmate progress reviews. The inmate progress review has two main components: a review of the inmate's participation in institutional programs and work assignments, and a review of the inmate's custody status. The Department has established rules related to the conduct of these progress reviews, including requirements as to the frequency of the reviews and who should conduct the reviews.

To determine the extent to which staff were carrying out these rules, we visited 9 of the Department's 43 major institutions. At each institution, we examined 30 files of inmates recently released and reviewed records of their progress reviews. We interviewed classification supervisors at all nine institutions. At six of the nine institutions, we observed Department staff conducting 21 inmate progress reviews.

Based on an assessment of the information we obtained, we found that the Department has not always followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews, and that many inmates are released from prison prior to receiving a progress review. We further identified at least three factors that make it difficult to perform inmate progress reviews as currently required, and limit the applicability of the current progress review requirements in monitoring inmate progress toward treatment and training goals during incarceration.

Inmate Progress Reviews

We identified three areas of concern relative to the Department's present practice of conducting progress reviews. These are:

- Many inmates are released prior to the time of their first scheduled progress review;
- Not all progress reviews are conducted within the time schedule required by Department rule; and

- Not all progress reviews are conducted by all of the team members as required by Department rule.

Many Inmates Are Released Prior to the Time of Their First Scheduled Progress Review. Of the 270 files of recently released inmates that we reviewed, 111 (41%) inmates did not receive a progress review prior to release from incarceration. Of the 111 inmates released without a progress review, 92 (83%) were released prior to the date the initial progress review would have been due.² Progress reviews were not required by Department rule for those 92 inmates.³ The remaining 19 inmates had been incarcerated long enough to have been scheduled for one or more progress reviews.

Not All Progress Reviews Are Timely. Rule 33-6.0045(4)(c), F.A.C., requires the Department to schedule and complete progress reviews on all inmates. For inmates sentenced to a term of 18 months or less, the initial progress review should be conducted during the third month after completion of the reception process. For all other inmates, the initial progress review should be conducted during the sixth month after completion of the reception process. Subsequent progress reviews for all inmates are to be made at six month intervals. Of the 159 inmates in our sample who received at least one progress review, 39 inmates (25%) received a progress review more than 30 days after the due date.⁴ For those 39 inmates, the delays receiving progress reviews averaged 110 days, or almost 4 months, beyond the due date. See Exhibit 2, page 11, for data regarding number of inmates receiving late progress reviews.

² Inmates can be released from prison having served only a portion of their sentences due to two primary factors: 1) Gain-time, a system of credits awarded to inmates as an incentive to good behavior in prison, and 2) Early release programs, such as Control Release, that provide for the release of selected inmates to make room for new admissions and thus avoid prison overcrowding.

³ Of these 92 inmates, 30 had sentences of 18 months or less and were released after an average stay of 94 days. The remaining 62 inmates, with sentences of more than 18 months, were released after an average stay of 148 days. These periods included time spent in reception centers during the reception process.

⁴ Because circumstances such as disciplinary confinement or the inmate's going out to court could prevent progress reviews from being done on the due date, Department officials said that progress reviews should be accomplished within 30 days of the due date.

Exhibit 2

**Progress Reviews Not Conducted Within 30 Days
After Scheduled Date for Review
For Inmates Released From July Through October 1991**

Institution	Total Files Reviewed	Number of Inmates That Received at Least One Review	Inmates Having Review More Than 30 Days Past Due	Percent of Inmates With Reviews More Than 30 Days Past Due	Average Number of Days Past
Lancaster	30	12	0	NA	NA
Marion	30	17	2	12%	42
Florida	30	18	3	17%	73
Lantana	30	3	1	33%	213
Dade	30	27	13	48%	138
Glades	30	25	8	32%	111
ACI West	30	24	3	13%	149
ACI East	30	14	3	21%	79
Holmes	30	19	6	32%	68
Total	<u>270</u>	<u>159</u>	<u>39</u>	<u>25%</u>	<u>110</u>

Source: Office of the Auditor General review of selected Department of Corrections files.

Not All Progress Reviews Involve All of the Team Members Required by Rule. Rule 33-6.0005, F.A.C., requires that progress reviews be made by a classification team that interviews the inmate and establishes goals and program recommendations. The Department's classification manual states that this team should include the inmate's classification officer and other Department staff, including representatives from the inmate's work or program assignments, and a representative from security, such as a correctional officer from the inmate's housing area. At three of the six institutions in which we observed progress reviews being conducted, the classification officer was the only Department representative present for the progress review with the inmate. Interviews with the classification supervisors at the nine institutions we visited revealed that seven of the institutions do not always use classification teams to conduct progress reviews.

Factors Affecting the Conduct of Progress Reviews

We identified three factors that make it difficult for the Department to conduct progress reviews as currently required by its rules. These factors are:

- Shorter periods of incarceration;
- The priority of other classification functions over inmate progress reviews; and
- Limited staff resources.

Shorter Periods of Incarceration. By comparison with previous years, a larger percentage of inmates are now spending less than 6 months in prison. During the last half of 1982, only 8% of the inmates released by the Department had spent six months or less in prison; in 1992, approximately 55% of the inmates released had been incarcerated for six months or less. The Department's rule regarding progress reviews attempts to accommodate shorter periods of incarceration by requiring the progress review during the third month after completion of the reception process for inmates sentenced to a term of 18 months or less. However, of the 48 inmates in our sample with sentences of 18 months or less, 38 (79%) were released prior to the scheduled date of the first progress review.

The current progress review schedule which relies on three and six month intervals misses many inmates who serve short periods of incarceration. Although progress reviews may not be useful for all inmates who are released after short periods of incarceration, some inmates could possibly benefit from further consultation with Department staff. For example, some inmates who are assigned to educational or drug treatment programs may benefit from a discussion of the educational, treatment, or social service opportunities that he should take advantage of upon release to the community.

Priority of Other Classification Functions. Department rules state that maintaining security and order is the primary function of the inmate classification system.

According to classification staff, increased administrative tasks related to admissions, transfers, and releases, which are essential to the maintenance of institutional order, have affected the amount of time available for tasks related to other classification goals, such as progress reviews. For example, between fiscal years 1985-86 and 1991-92, seven of the nine institutions we visited experienced increases in the number of inmate admissions, transfers, and releases ranging between 47% and 359%. During the same period, staffing increases at those institutions ranged between 50% and 140%. See Exhibit 3, for data showing increases in classification staffing levels, and the number of inmate admissions, transfers, and releases at the nine institutions we visited.

Exhibit 3

Comparative Changes Between Classification Staffing and Inmate Admissions, Transfers, and Releases From Fiscal Years 1985-86 Through 1991-92

Institution	Changes in the Number of Classification Staff	Percent Change of Classification Staff	Percent Change of Inmate Admissions/Transfers	Percent Change of Inmate Releases/Transfers
Dade	5 to 8	60 %	359 %	299 %
Florida	5 to 12	140 %	214 %	223 %
Marion	6 to 11	83 %	112 %	129 %
Lantana	2 to 3	50 %	103 %	85 %
Holmes ¹	6 to 7	17 %	-46 %	-6 %
Glades	6 to 10	67 %	93 %	119 %
ACI East and West ²	11 to 17	55 %	47 %	41 %
Lancaster ³	9 to 11	22 %	-6 %	-4 %

¹ Data for Holmes Correction Institution represents changes from fiscal year 1987-88 when it opened.

² ACI East and West are two separate institutions, but information related to staffing increases provided by the Department's central office was combined.

³ Lancaster was used as a youthful offender reception center until September 1991. Therefore, the number of admissions and transfers was higher during fiscal year 1985-86 compared to 1991-92.

Source: Office of the Auditor General analysis of Department data.

Additionally, after an escaped inmate murdered a citizen in 1990, changes in the scoring system for setting inmate custody required classification staff to perform an

increased number of custody reclassifications for all inmates. These changes in custody classifications initially led to an increase in the number of inmates designated as close custody, and a decrease in the number of inmates available for minimum custody work details. Shortages in the number of inmates available for these work details subsequently required classification staff to continually attempt to identify inmates who could safely be designated as minimum custody.

These other classification activities are important to meet the classification goal of maintaining the order and security of the institution. For example, in processing new inmates, classification staff are to assure that each inmate has an assignment and that adequate numbers of inmates have been assigned to key work details such as the kitchen. In setting inmate custody levels, classification staff attempt to identify the least restrictive custody level while ensuring that dangerous inmates or inmates likely to escape are not placed in assignments outside the perimeter of the institution. Because these classification activities are necessary in maintaining order and security in institutions, the time available for conducting inmate progress reviews may be limited.

Limited Staff Resources. Some supervisors said that team members were often unable to attend progress review meetings because other staff were not available to fill in for them at their workstations during the meetings. For example, correctional officers may not be able to leave their dormitory areas, or teachers may not be able to leave classrooms, to attend the progress review meetings. To compensate for the lack of participation in progress review meetings, some classification officers said that they would occasionally solicit input from other team members by phone prior to the scheduled meeting with the inmate.

Facilitating the participation of multiple Department staff in progress reviews may not be feasible due to limited resources. Because correctional officers and program staff frequently have responsibility for supervising and training inmates, they are not always available for progress review meetings.

Monitoring Inmate Progress Toward Achievement of Training and Treatment Goals

In Rule 33-6.0011(1), F.A.C., the Department has established goals for its system of inmate classification. Two goals related to inmate progress reviews are:

- Rule 33-6.0011(1)(b), F.A.C., which requires the Department to promote the security of the general public by returning inmates to society with skills and behaviors that better enable them to function as responsible, productive law abiding citizens; and
- Rule 33-6.0011(1)(c), F.A.C., which requires the Department to regularly assess and monitor each inmate's progress toward treatment and training goals and place the inmate in the proper custody level and institutional setting to ensure the safety of the general public, staff, and other inmates while maximizing training program and treatment opportunities.

Progress reviews can be viewed as an opportunity for the Department to monitor its efforts toward meeting these stated goals. By not conducting progress reviews, the Department is not monitoring its efforts to achieve some of its classification goals for inmates. If an inmate does not receive a progress review, then the Department has not taken advantage of the opportunity to determine whether the treatment and training goals for the inmate have been met. Furthermore, if progress reviews are not held in a timely manner, inmates may not be reassigned to more appropriate work or program assignments.

The participation in progress reviews of Department staff who observe the inmate in housing, work, classroom, or therapeutic situations can provide useful information on inmate behavior and attitudes, and reduces the likelihood that decisions made during progress reviews are based on the viewpoints of a single staff member. Therefore, team participation is one way to provide information that is useful in assessing the inmate's progress toward achieving established goals and to provide more information to the inmate.

Conclusions and Recommendations

To better accomplish the goals of the inmate classification system, we concluded that the Department needs to revise its use of inmate progress reviews to monitor inmate progress toward the achievement of treatment and training goals established for the inmate. Given current resources and correctional practices, we recommend that the Department consider revising its rules regarding progress reviews to provide a schedule of reviews that is related to the goals that are established for specific inmates. The schedule and content of these reviews should vary depending upon the specific circumstances for each inmate. Although short periods of incarceration present a special problem for scheduling progress reviews, the Department could establish specific criteria for determining when a progress review would be useful for a short term inmate. For example, youthful offenders or offenders participating in short term substance abuse or education activities could benefit from progress reviews scheduled at the completion of certain program segments.⁵

Regarding the use of classification teams, it may be more efficient to have classification staff solicit input from other Department staff without requiring their presence at all progress reviews. Therefore, we recommend the Department revise its rules regarding the requirement for team participation in progress review meetings, and establish alternative procedures for obtaining and documenting information from other Department staff who cannot be present for progress reviews. This would enable the Department to have the benefit of team input without the need for providing additional resources to substitute for staff to attend progress review meetings.

⁵ For example, the Correctional Education School Authority offers a 150 hour Mandatory Literacy Program, and the Department offers a 40 hour Tier 1 Drug Program. These abbreviated programs should enable Department staff to work with the inmate in determining whether additional educational or substance abuse programs should be recommended.

Finding 1.2

The Department's Computer Assisted Classification Program is generally not used by classification staff to assist in the program placement of inmates at nine institutions due to data errors and incomplete information.

Background

The Department began development of the Computer Assisted Classification Program (CACP) in 1987 to help decision makers, particularly classification staff, in the placement of inmates in Department rehabilitative programs, such as substance abuse treatment or academic and vocational education programs.⁶ The CACP is designed to facilitate institutional and program placement decisions that are based on identified rehabilitative needs and available rehabilitative programs. These activities support the Department's efforts to achieve the classification goal of maximizing training and treatment opportunities. Statewide implementation of the CACP began March 1, 1988.

Information on recommended program needs, if any, for each inmate is to be entered into the CACP by classification staff at one of the Department's five inmate reception centers. Classification staff at major institutions are then responsible for updating the CACP as inmates: are placed in programs; complete programs; or are recommended for additional programs. When recommended rehabilitative programs are full and not immediately available, the inmate's name is to be entered on a program waiting list on the CACP and assigned a priority for placement. When a program vacancy occurs, the program waiting list should be used to identify which inmate has the highest priority for assignment to the program.

The Department has indicated that the CACP will assist efforts to address previous audit findings. In our audit of the Department's Release Policies and Programs,

⁶ The CACP is a component of the Department's Offender Based Information System. Other components of the Offender Based Information System provide information on such areas as inmate health, job assignments, projected release dates, disciplinary reports, custody classification, and inmate bank accounts.

published December 5, 1988, we reported that the Department had not established policies to regulate assigning inmates with less than two year sentences to rehabilitative programs. The audit concluded that the rehabilitative goals of the Department could be better served if the rehabilitative programs that require over a year to complete were reserved for inmates who will be in prison long enough to complete those programs, and that short-term inmates would be placed in rehabilitative programs designed for them. The Department responded that the implementation of the new computer program would allow priorities to be set for rehabilitative assignments.

In addition to providing a method for the Department to assign priorities to inmate rehabilitative needs and to track the progress of inmates, the CACP is also designed to provide data that can be used by Department staff to determine whether inmates are being placed into recommended programs. For example, using the information in the CACP, Department staff should be able to track the number of inmates that are recommended for a program, the number that are placed in the program, and the number that successfully complete the program. Information regarding program completion is particularly important given the short lengths of incarceration described in Finding 1.1, page 8. If most inmates assigned to programs do not stay in prison long enough to complete the program, the Department needs to adjust the length of the program, change the selection of inmates assigned to the program, or discontinue the program. In addition, the CACP would provide data on the amount of time spent waiting for placement and the amount of time taken to complete the program. The CACP also provides information on recommended and completed rehabilitative programs that is printed on the form used by classification staff to complete progress review reports.

We reviewed classification staff's use of the computer system at selected institutions in carrying out rehabilitative program decisions. To evaluate the accuracy of the data in the system, we compared selected computer data with information from inmate files, class rosters, and program waiting lists. We found that:

- Institutional classification staff were not routinely using the CACP to make decisions about inmates' placement in rehabilitative programs; and
- Information regarding available institutional rehabilitative programs, inmate's rehabilitative needs, inmate's previous and current program involvement, and rehabilitative program waiting lists in the CACP was inaccurate.

Limited Use of the CACP

At the nine selected institutions we visited, classification staff were not routinely using the Computer Assisted Classification Program. Of the 19 institutional classification staff we interviewed, five said they had never used the system. The remaining 14 said their use of the CACP system was limited. For example, some classification staff said that they used the CACP to occasionally find information on the inmate's previous involvement in program activities. Institutional classification staff cited the inaccuracy of data in the system as a factor limiting their use of the system.

We also found that Central Office staff have not used the CACP to obtain information regarding inmate needs and program placement. According to staff this lack of use is at least partially due to the awareness that the data is inaccurate. These staff said maintaining accurate data in the CACP has not been a classification staff priority.

Computer Data Inaccuracy

We compared information contained in the CACP with Department documentation to assess the accuracy of information in the CACP. The system is designed to include data regarding available rehabilitative programs, inmate needs, inmate involvement in rehabilitative programs and lists of inmates waiting to be placed in certain programs. However, we found examples of incorrect, incomplete, or missing data as follows:

- Each of the nine institutions we visited had incorrect information about available rehabilitative programs. For example, information in the

CACP showed Marion Correctional Institution as offering a substance abuse program yet the program had been phased out several months earlier;

- The system did not contain rehabilitative recommendations made by reception center classification teams for forty-four (49%) of the 90 files we reviewed at three institutions;
- Incorrect information on current program involvement was detected at six of the nine institutions we visited. For example, only 16 of the 62 inmates in an education program at Dade Correctional Institution were included on the computer list; and
- The system's inmate waiting list at six institutions contained errors. For example, the CACP provided a list of 69 inmates waiting to be placed in the Glades Correctional Institution's Mandatory Literacy Education Program. The Education Program Manager at Glades said he was not aware of any such list and instead provided us with his own manual waiting list that contained the names of only four inmates, one of which was included on the computer list.

We found that the issue of data accuracy was interrelated with the limited use of the CACP. By not using the CACP regularly, staff did not keep the data up-to-date. When such data was not continually updated, the system contained errors and was not useful to staff.

Effect of Not Using the System

Over five years after the implementation of the Computer Assisted Classification Program that was intended to facilitate the placement of inmates in programs according to priorities, the program is substantially unused at the nine institutions we visited. This lack of use has three adverse effects. First, by not using the system to keep information up to date, information on the progress review report regarding rehabilitative program recommendations and participation may be incorrect. This requires classification staff to spend additional time verifying the information by reviewing the inmate's file or calling program staff. For example, we observed a progress review meeting in which the

classification officer had to call educational staff to determine whether an inmate's verbal statement asserting educational participation that was not listed on the report form was accurate.

Second, by not using the CACP, rehabilitative assignments are not based upon the priorities identified within the CACP's program waiting list. As a result, the Department is not assuring that available rehabilitative resources are appropriately used. Inmates with low priority rehabilitative needs may be assigned to available spaces in programs over inmates who have been waiting longer or who have been identified as having higher priority needs in the CACP.

Third, the Department does not have statewide information on identified rehabilitative needs or program participation that can be used for planning and evaluation purposes. Without such information the Department can not readily determine what portion of the identified needs is currently being served, how many additional programs are needed to accomplish classification goals, or whether some existing programs may be under-utilized.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Although the CACP was established to improve the Department's efforts to match limited rehabilitative resources with prioritized rehabilitative needs, we conclude that the Department has not used the CACP as designed. Despite the increased demand on classification time as a result of increased inmate movement, the Department has not made use of a tool developed to improve classification efforts. At the institutions we visited, the CACP had not been sufficiently used to determine whether it would improve classification efforts. In determining the CACP's usefulness to classification staff in conducting progress reviews or making rehabilitative assignments, we recommend that the Department obtain input from institutional classification staff to determine their informational needs and if the present system is capable of providing information needed. If the Department determines

that the system is capable of providing needed information to classification staff and for Departmental planning and evaluation purposes, we recommend that the Department;

- Establish procedures to assure that data regarding inmate rehabilitative program needs, participation, and completion is entered into the CACP on a timely basis and is used to make program assignments; and
- Collect and report information regarding existing rehabilitative program participation and completion rates to better inform the Legislature as to the achievement of classification goals and the use and outcomes of rehabilitative programs.

Appendices

Appendix

Page

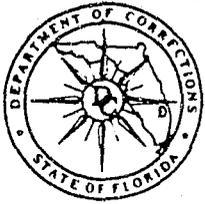
A. Response from the Department of Corrections 24

Appendix A

Response From the Department of Corrections

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.45(7)(d), F.S., a list of preliminary and tentative audit findings was submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Corrections for his review and response.

The Secretary's written response is reprinted herein beginning on page 25.



FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT of
CORRECTIONS

Governor
LAWTON CHILES

Secretary
HARRY K. SINGLETARY, JR.

2601 Blairstone Road • Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2500 • (904) 488-5021

June 24, 1993

The Honorable Charles L. Lester
Auditor General of the State of Florida
111 West Madison Street
Post Office Box 1735
Tallahassee, Florida 32302

Dear Mr. Lester:

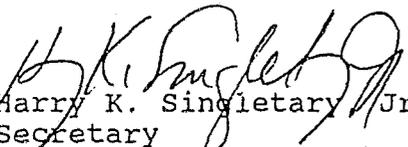
Pursuant to the requirements of Section 11.45(7) (d), Florida Statutes, enclosed is my response to the preliminary and tentative audit findings and recommendations related to:

Inmate Classification Program
Administered by the
Department of Corrections

This response reflects the specific action taken or contemplated to address the deficiencies cited.

Thank you for your continued cooperation and presentation of recommendations for the improvement of our operations.

Sincerely,


Harry K. Singletary, Jr.
Secretary

HKSJr/RLF/sc

Enclosure

cc: Bill Thurber, Deputy Secretary
Wilson Bell, Assistant Secretary for Programs
Ronald L. Ferguson, Chief Internal Auditor

State of Florida
Department of Corrections

**Response to the Preliminary and Tentative Audit
Findings: Inmate Classification Program**

June 24, 1993

The Preliminary and Tentative Audit Findings of the performance audit conducted on the Inmate Classification Program contains two findings:

Finding 1.1:

The department has not always followed its rules regarding the timeliness and staffing of inmate progress reviews. Furthermore, due to shorter periods of incarceration not all inmates have received progress reviews prior to release from prison. As a result the department has not formally monitored the progress some inmates are making towards achieving goals established for them.

Finding 1.2

The Department's Computer Assisted Classification Program is generally not used by classification staff to assist in the program placement of inmates at nine institutions due to data errors and incomplete information.

Following is the Departments response to the above findings and the plan of action being undertaken to resolve the issues raised in the performance audit.

Response to Finding 1.1:

The department acknowledges that inmate progress reviews are not always completed in a timely manner pursuant to rules of the department. As outlined in the audit findings the purpose of the progress review is to provide a formal evaluation process for the determination of a number of factors. Included in these factors is the review of the inmate's status, program participation, updating the file, conducting a formal custody evaluation report and providing the inmate with an opportunity to interact with his classification officer. As stated in the audit findings, the failure to conduct some formal progress reports is based upon the rapid growth of the inmate population, constant movement of inmates within the system to accommodate population balance and releases due to short sentences and the application of early release programs. These factors have increased the demands placed on classification staff to meet other specialized needs of the agency for work assignments, program assessment, discipline management, maintenance of public safety and transfer of inmates to more appropriate facilities. These demands have increased over the past several years and classification staff have come to realize that the formal scheduled progress review has not always been sufficiently timely to meet the needs of inmates or the Department. For these reasons many of the scheduled progress review decisions have been made by classification staff on an informal basis resulting in job reassignments, custody changes, transfers, and/or work release recommendations without benefit of the formal progress review.

Plan to Correct Finding 1.1

By November 1, 1993 the Department will complete the following steps to ensure that inmate progress reports are completed within the time limitations pursuant to the rules of the Department:

- a monthly review system requiring the classification supervisor to notify the superintendent of overdue reviews and the steps taken to eliminate them.
- revision of the rules applicable to inmate progress reviews as necessary to redefine what should be considered a formal review. In addition, address the interval and frequency of the progress report.

Additionally, the department has initiated a redesign of the progress review system to incorporate a more automated and flexible system to be implemented by early 1994. The tracking of time requirements for coordination of progress reports is currently entered into the database manually upon completion of the custody scoresheet. The recommended design being implemented for the "Automated Reporting System" will include the following features:

- an automatic report date tracking system for scheduled reports from the initial reception of the inmate until release from the department.

- all reports will now be linked into one reporting and tracking system under the automated reporting process and will fulfill the progress review reporting requirements.
- finally, as part of the Department's goal of establishing a series of management reports for use by classification administrators and supervisors, the "automated reporting system" will enhance the ability to track and identify reports that have not occurred in a timely basis due to inmate transfers, placement in confinement units, or other extraneous factors.

Response to Finding 1.2:

The Computer Assisted Classification Program was initially designed to provide an automated method of tracking program recommendations and participation for inmates. As reported in the audit findings, the quality of the information contained in the system and the reliance by classification staff has deteriorated over the last several years. Numerous factors have contributed to the limited use and accuracy of the CACP including the following.

- A dramatic increase in inmate admissions into the department and the subsequent increase in the identification of special program needs for the inmate population.
- A less than stringent process by which program recommendations obtained through the reception process were subsequently entered into the CACP database for use by permanent institutions.
- The rapid expansion in the number of correctional facilities and staff within the department resulting in training deficiencies in this particular area.
- A significant decrease in the number of available programs offered for

inmates and a significant increase in the need for transfer and utilization of inmates in other locations and assignments.

- The increase in early release programs for inmates resulting in an increased turnaround and readmission of the same inmates without a system to sanitize the original program data.

Plan to Correct Finding 1.2

In an on-going realization of the deficiencies of the CACP program, the Department has undertaken a further evaluation of the program and the processes that support the program.

Immediate Plan:

By November 1, 1993, the Department will evaluate and revise the current policies and rules pertaining to the Computer Assisted Classification Program to strengthen the procedures to support maintaining current and accurate information.

Upon revision of the policy and rules, the Department will implement the following:

- an enhanced training program to retrain classification staff on the C.A.C.P.
- a special project to update and set up a maintenance process for the C.A.C.P. data will be implemented by November 1, 1993.

Intermediate Plan:

The Department began work on a plan in 1991 to automate the reception process. In undertaking the development of the "Computer Assisted Reception Process", the Department recognized early on that the implementation of C.A.R.P. would provide an automatic linkage between the classification program evaluation process, the subsequent recommendation decision during the reception process and the Department's CACP database. This automatic linkage will ensure that any recommendations concurred with by classification and treatment staff at the reception centers will ultimately upload into the CACP database for use by institutional classification staff.

In acknowledging that the rapid release, turnover and subsequent return of inmates into the system has caused a deterioration in the quality of information contained in the CACP database, the Department included a programmatic enhancement of the

CACP system in conjunction the design of C.A.R.P. so that all prior recommendations made during previous periods of incarceration will have to be revalidated by reception center staff upon return of an inmate in the "Computer Assisted Reception Process". The C.A.R.P. system is anticipated to be fully on-line at the five reception centers by late 1994.

Long Range Plan:

Concurrent with the audit findings and the Department's own experience in the difficulty of inmate program placement with a limited number of programs, the department is undertaking a study to determine the feasibility of a priority ranking system for program participation for inmates. The need to complete this study is driven by several issues and includes the reality of limited availability of program resources, an enhanced process of providing special programs to special needs offenders and the Department's desire to utilize it's limited programming resources to the maximum benefit of those inmates for which the greatest benefit would be derived.

Additional audit checks will be designed into the "Automated Reporting System" previously described to ensure that a program validation process occurs at each scheduled progress review.

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