



Objective Jail Classification Systems: A Guide for Jail Administrators

National Institute of Corrections

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February 1998

This document was developed under technical assistance #97-J2303 funded by the National Institute of Corrections, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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FOREWORD

This document provides an overview of objective jail classification, which is one of the most important new management tools available to jail administrators. Objective jail classification follows in the path of direct supervision and new facility planning as a significant jail management initiative that shows a positive impact on jail operations.

A properly implemented objective jail classification system can be expected to identify the level of risk presented by newly admitted inmates, based on the use of valid and reliable information. Appropriate housing and program assignments can then be made based on the inmate's potential risk to staff, other inmates, and him or herself. Jails experiencing crowding especially need objective classification, as it will enable the identification and separation of predators and potential victims and allow for appropriate staffing when crowded conditions require the mixing of inmates. An objective jail classification system will also provide jail administrators and staff with invaluable data to better carry out their daily responsibilities and project future needs.

Over the past eight years, officials from more than 200 county jails have been trained on objective jail classification by the NIC Jails Division. Hundreds of other jail officials have been introduced to objective classification through NIC workshops at conferences of the American Jail Association, the National Sheriffs' Association, and the American Correctional Association. NIC is currently adjusting its strategy to offer capacity-building assistance to states whose state sheriffs' association, state jail inspectors, or jail administrators association adopts the implementation of objective jail classification as a goal for county jails within the state. At this time, seven states have adopted the concept or are working toward doing so.

This document introduces the basic elements of objective jail classification and discusses implementation, automation, and evaluation. It provides jail administrators, and criminal justice officials who are not involved in daily jail operations, with an understanding of the benefits of valid risk assessment and the value objective jail classification can offer not only to jail operations and staff and inmate safety, but also to local criminal justice planning. Readers interested in services available from NIC in the area of objective jail classification should contact the NIC Jails Division (800-995-6429).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This publication was funded by the National Institute of Corrections. The author would like to thank the NIC Jails Division staff for their unwavering support—in particular Michael O'Toole and Jim T. Barbee. Tim Brennan and Mary Ellen Sheppard also provided materials and guidance in the development of this report.

The author would also like to recognize the invaluable input of many jail administrators and staff who participated in the NIC objective jail classification implementation program since 1986. Hopefully, this document will help their colleagues further the implementation of effective and humane classification policies and practices in the nation's jails.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Jails are the most widespread component of this nation's criminal justice system. More people experience jail than any other form of correctional supervision. These people include individuals who are detained on criminal charges, who have been sentenced to jail, who are in violation of their conditions of parole or probation, or who are awaiting transfer to another confinement facility. They are characterized by wide-ranging risks and needs, creating complex and demanding requirements for jail managers. These conditions pose a particular challenge for inmate classification, a vital component of effective management but one that has often been neglected due to the high volume of admissions and rapid turnover in jail populations.

Considerable attention has been afforded classification of prison inmates in the last decade, and several objective prison classification systems have been designed and widely implemented.¹ This was largely the direct result of changes in prison utilization. Increasingly prisons have become crowded, dangerous institutions, in which the perceived public demand for harsh sentences is being met while attempting to comply with court rulings that confinement conditions not be so inadequate that they violate constitutional rights to just and humane punishment.

Jail systems now seem to be following in the wake of their prison counterparts. Inmate populations are burgeoning beyond facility capacity.² Jails are housing, at least for short periods, more violent inmates. Litigation against jails is increasing. These factors have begun to create among jail administrators (as previously occurred with prison officials) a clear recognition of the need to allocate limited physical, program, and financial resources in a manner that best protects staff and inmates while meeting the primary correctional goal of public protection. In this environment, classification has come to be viewed as both a management tool and a means for enhancing consistency and equity in decisionmaking.

At the forefront of classification today is "objective classification." Objective classification relies on a narrow set of well-defined legal factors (e.g., severity of offense, prior convictions, prior incarcerations) and personal characteristics (e.g., age, residence, employment) to guide decisionmaking. These items are incorporated into a standardized form or checklist that is used by staff to assess every inmate's custody and program needs.

In light of all these developments, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) funded a project in 1986 to devise an objective jail classification (OJC) system that would meet the unique

¹See, for example, the Security Designation/Custody Classification System developed by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the Custody Determination Model developed by the National Institute of Corrections, and the Correctional Classification Profile developed by Correctional Services Group, Inc.

²As reported by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the national jail inmate population rose from 256,515 in 1985 to 567,079 in 1997.

needs of jails and be readily adaptable to jails of all sizes. The project resulted in the successful field testing of an additive-point system approach to OJC at several jails. The test, or implementation, process entailed ongoing monitoring of the classification system and assessment of its effectiveness. Based on field-test results, the instruments were fine-tuned to meet specific jail needs.

As the additive-point system was being developed, NIC provided technical assistance to support the evaluation and refinement of another, privately funded objective jail classification system that was being tested in jails of various sizes. This decision-tree system requires no mathematical computations to determine risk levels. Both the decision-tree system and the additive-point system show similar levels of statistical validity and predictive values. They are equally adaptable to automation and offer local officials a choice based on their perceptions of ease of use.

Since 1990, NIC has sponsored a technical assistance program to help jail administrators understand the key components of objective jail classification and how to implement an OJC system in their own jurisdictions. To date, several hundred jail systems have participated in the NIC OJC technical assistance program. Despite its efforts to assist jails with the design and implementation of objective jail classification, NIC recognizes that many jails will not be able to participate in the technical assistance program. Consequently, this document was developed to provide jail administrators and classification staff with an overview of the OJC approach.

Included here are non-technical descriptions of the key components of an OJC system, how to implement an OJC system, and automation and evaluation issues. The information in this document should be sufficient for a jail administrator to determine whether the jail's current classification system conforms to the attributes of objective jail classification. Further, the jail administrator and staff will be able to better understand the steps they must complete to implement and monitor an OJC system should they believe that such a system would be beneficial.

CHAPTER 2

OVERVIEW OF JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

The history of inmate classification in the United States closely parallels the evolution of the nation's correctional philosophy. Prior to 1870, when corrections focused on retribution and punishment, classification was based primarily on type of offense. Inmates were classified for the purpose of determining the "appropriate" form of punishment. There was no need to extend the process further since all inmates were housed in comparable settings and occupied their time in a similar manner.

In the latter part of the 19th century, however, corrections changed direction, introducing reform and rehabilitation as important goals. As these goals gained prominence and acceptance, classification began to ground itself in clinical diagnostic and treatment categories that stressed the "personal pathologies" of offenders. Inmates, by virtue of their arrest and conviction, were assumed to be deficient in personal growth and survival skills. The task of classification was to identify such deficiencies so they could be corrected.

Use of this medical model of classification proliferated during the 20th century as the psychological and sociological causes of crime were explored and methods for assessing offenders grew more sophisticated. This trend continued into the early 1970s. It started to lose favor due to public frustration with rising crime rates, gratuitous violence, and perceived failure of treatment-oriented programs.

The Trend Toward Objective Classification Systems

Today, correctional philosophy in many jurisdictions is increasingly based on a retributive (punishment) or "just deserts" view of handling offenders. Previous assumptions regarding the efficacy of rehabilitation have been increasingly challenged. There has also been more litigation regarding inappropriate use of criteria for determining how inmates are housed and when and whether they are permitted to participate in correctional programs. Both of these developments, along with the well-publicized national prison and jail crowding crisis, have affected traditional classification strategies governing the management of inmates.

Specifically, correctional classification systems have moved away from so-called "subjective" models to "objective" systems. Subjective models tend to rely on informal criteria that often lead to inconsistency and error in staff decisionmaking. Conversely, objective systems depend on a narrow set of well-defined legal factors (e.g., severity of current offense, prior convictions, etc.) and personal characteristics (e.g., age, marital status, etc.). These items are weighted and assigned differential values within a well-defined instrument that is then used to assess an inmate's level of risk or program needs. Objective systems place greater emphasis on fairness, consistency, and openness in the decisionmaking process.

Guidelines for Inmate Classification

As long ago as 1973, the National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals outlined standards pertaining to inmate classification. As a result of the increasing emphasis on classification as a management tool and the growing pressure to improve classification, considerable attention began to focus on the process of classification in the 1980s. Many individuals and organizations provided guidance in structuring effective procedures. Among the most widely accepted guidelines are the 14 principles developed by NIC:

- There must be a clear definition of goals and objectives of the total correctional system.
- There must be detailed written procedures and policies governing the classification process.
- The classification process must provide for the collection of complete, high-quality, verified, standardized data.
- Measurement and testing instruments used in the classification decisionmaking process must be valid, reliable, and objective.
- There must be explicit policy statements structuring and checking the discretionary decisionmaking powers of classification team staff.
- There must be provision for screening and further evaluating prisoners who are management problems and those who have special needs.
- There must be provisions to match offenders with programs; these provisions must be consistent with custody classification.
- There must be provisions to classify prisoners at the least-restrictive custody level.
- There must be provisions to involve prisoners in the classification process.
- There must be provisions for systematic, periodic reclassification hearings.
- The classification process must be efficient and economically sound.
- There must be provisions to continuously evaluate and improve the classification process.
- Classification procedures must be consistent with constitutional requisites.
- There must be an opportunity to gain input from administration and line staff when undertaking development of a classification system.

Unique Nature of Jail Operations

The delay in implementing classification in jails is primarily a result of their unique functions and associated constraints. Unlike prisons, which confine only sentenced offenders, jails are responsible for detaining a diverse population: suspects under investigation and awaiting charge, persons charged with an offense and awaiting trial, persons convicted of a crime and

awaiting sentence, persons sentenced to jail terms of less than one year and a day, offenders believed to have violated their probation or parole conditions, individuals with detainers in another jurisdiction but no charges in the holding county or city, sentenced offenders awaiting transfer to overcrowded state prisons, and juveniles awaiting transfer to juvenile correctional facilities.

Classification of such a varied population is further complicated by the short length of stay for many people. Frequently, inmates are released within 72 hours of their arrival, making it difficult, if not impossible, for staff to obtain the information necessary to determine the appropriate custody level and housing assignment. In most instances, staff must make decisions based on minimal data: inmates' charges, bond amounts, and self-reported medical histories. The lack of adequate verifiable information precludes staff from separating inmates into categories that would enhance their management.

Larger jail systems, moreover, must contend with a high volume of admissions. High annual admission rates, which greatly exceed average daily populations, tax existing resources, create work overloads for staff, and decrease the time available to assess individual inmates. Rapid turnover in the population also necessitates quick decisionmaking, a condition that tends to constrain the classification process.

In addition, jail classification is hampered by the physical design of the facilities themselves. The large majority of jails were designed with maximum-security cells, making it sometimes futile to categorize inmates by varying custody requirements. Older facilities, in particular, lack sufficient capacity and/or capability to physically separate inmates who have been classified differently.

In addition to such operational constraints, jail classification has been limited by a sort of benign neglect. Unlike prison administrators, jail administrators traditionally have not accorded classification a central management role. This lesser role, in part, is a consequence of the constraints discussed above. Additionally, many jail administrators simply do not view classification as an important component in detention operations. Others have been forced to shortchange classification due to inadequate staff resources.

The lack of staff to accomplish classification functions stems from a variety of factors, including:

- Overall shortages of jail personnel.
- Lack of appreciation for the role and benefits of the detention operation to larger departments.
- Insufficient numbers of staff trained to perform classification activities.
- Staff apathy with regard to classification assignments.
- General constraints associated with budgetary allocations.

Daily operating factors like these have slowed the evolution of jail classification.

Currently, most jail classification systems are at a point similar to where prison classification was nearly 100 years ago: separation of males and females, adults and juveniles, and sentenced and unsentenced. However, a variety of other factors, including overcrowding, the recognized need to improve resource allocation, and intervention by the courts, have generated countervailing pressures directed toward enhancing the jail classification process. Among jail administrators, there is a growing awareness of—and support for—the benefits that can be derived from valid and reliable classification systems.

Overview of the Jail Classification Process

The process of jail classification varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, depending on such factors as the characteristics of the inmate population and the philosophy and style of jail management. Nevertheless, an overview of the classification process is useful in understanding why various decisions are made, points where problems may arise, and procedures that could be enhanced.

Intake and Booking

Typically, jail classification begins at the intake stage, which occurs following arrest. New arrivals are placed in a holding area, ranging in size from one or several cells to a “tank,” where they may spend anywhere from a few hours to a few days awaiting pre-trial release and arraignment. (In larger jail systems where separate holding facilities are available, formal classification is initiated after arraignment.) While in this holding area, arrestees are searched, relieved of personal property, photographed, and fingerprinted. During this time, intake staff, who are usually uniformed staff (occasionally classification personnel), often run a records search to obtain information pertaining to the arrestee’s criminal history and any outstanding warrants or detainers. In addition, specially trained personnel may conduct a psychological and/or medical screening to detect serious problems that require immediate attention.

Initial Custody Assessment (Classification)

Initial classification is initiated, in almost all cases, after the decision is made to hold the arrestee for arraignment. It is not done for those who are quickly released through the bail process, on their own recognizance, pending further investigation, or without being charged. Most of these releases occur within 4 to 8 hours after booking, making it impractical and unnecessary to conduct a formal custody assessment. Once it becomes evident that a person will be detained for a substantial period of time, staff begin the classification process using information obtained from the arrest report, intake screening, and records search. Frequently, classification activities are conducted by intake staff. However, in recent years, many jail systems, particularly large ones, have established classification units to perform these functions.

Due to the diversity of the population, inmates are generally separated into broad categories. Most jurisdictions, for example, distinguish between pre-trial and sentenced inmates, adults and juveniles, and males and females. Many also categorize inmates by the amount of their bond if it is set by statute. Numerous jails attempt to separate the violent from the non-violent or those charged with felonies from those charged with misdemeanors. In addition, some

jurisdictions try to identify special management inmates (protective custody, suicide risk, etc.).

In making such separation decisions, staff often rely heavily on inmate interviews. These interviews are conducted to obtain basic information about the inmate that is not available through a records search. Several days may be required to verify self-report information and, by that time, the inmate may have been released. In many cases, information cannot be verified at all. This dependence on self-report data lessens the effectiveness of classification decisionmaking because the information obtained may not be accurate.

Based on the separation categories, inmates are then given a housing assignment. Jurisdictions attempt to house “incompatible” groups (e.g., adults and juveniles, pre-trial and sentenced) separately. Within these broad groupings, many larger systems also try to ensure that inmates are not housed by such characteristics as age and race. Larger jail systems can easily accommodate such separations, particularly if they operate several facilities. But smaller jails may lack the capability to make any but the most fundamental separations. Housing assignment is generally under the purview of the classification and intake staff, while cell assignment is the responsibility of the housing supervisor, who is more likely to know where appropriate bed space is available.

Decisions concerning program assignments may also be made during initial classification. These, too, are based on the limited information obtained from record checks, medical and psychological screenings, and inmate interviews. However, in many jurisdictions, program assignments are postponed until it is known whether the inmate will be released prior to trial. Due to rapid population turnover, some jails reserve programming primarily for sentenced inmates.

Typically, the entire intake/classification process takes from 2 to 6 hours. Larger jail systems generally conduct intake and classification on a round-the-clock basis, seven days a week. Smaller jails may restrict these activities to 8 to 12 hours a day, Monday through Friday or Saturday, and keep newly booked inmates in holding areas at other times.

Custody Reassessment (or Review) for Reclassification

Reclassification is a vital component of the classification process. Unlike initial classification, which uses items describing the inmate’s demographics, offense, and criminal history to determine custody level, reclassification criteria are principally dominated by measures of in-custody behavior. The premise of reclassification is that “errors” may be made at the initial classification stage and they should be corrected based on the inmate’s current behavior. It is especially important for sentenced inmates who face lengthy incarceration terms and for defendants likely to spend several months awaiting a court disposition.

In practice, reclassification of jail inmates tends to be a function of four factors:

- Change in inmate status from pre-trial to sentenced,
- The inmate’s conduct while incarcerated,
- Length of confinement,

- Filing of additional charges.

The first factor automatically initiates a reclassification action. Satisfactory conduct may lead to reclassification so an inmate can qualify for a trusty position, work release, or other job placement; misconduct may result in reclassification, a disciplinary hearing, or both. Reclassification may be requested by classification staff, shift commanders, or inmates.

Some agencies also have policies requiring a reclassification review for sentenced inmates at set intervals. Thus, inmates who remain in jail for a lengthy period may be reclassified several times. Many sentenced inmates, however, may never be reclassified since their sentences may consist of only a few weeks or weekends in jail.

Advantages of an Objective Jail Classification System

Regardless of a jail's size and complexity, its primary responsibility is to safely and securely detain all persons placed in its custody. Classification is an essential management tool for performing this function. By definition, classification is the process of placing things or people into groups according to some rational idea or plan. A good system of classifying inmates will reduce escapes and escape attempts, suicides and suicide attempts, inmate-on-inmate assaults, and the unnecessary incarceration of non-threatening persons. These outcomes conserve valuable resources by reducing expenditures for legal fees and court costs, overtime pay, and medical care.

Moreover, inmate classification can lead to more effective jail operations and more consistent decisionmaking regarding the assignment of inmates to appropriate custody levels. An effective classification system is one that meets its identified goals and objectives while adhering to the fundamental principles of inmate management. A consistent classification system is one that facilitates the same classification and screening conclusions among all classification staff and assures fair and equitable processing of inmates.

Effective objective classification systems will save money by placing inmates inappropriately held in highly secure, costly jails in less secure, less expensive settings. Consistent classification allows for the redistribution of personnel according to the custody requirements of inmates, which permits better daily administration and crisis management. However, it is not reasonable to expect classification, by itself, to reduce the level of staffing needed in jail facilities.

The advantages of an objective system go beyond those associated with cost savings and improved management. An effective classification system will also provide:

- Standardized inmate custody profile information and other inmate-specific data, which can be used in ongoing management, planning, and policy development;
- Improved security and control of inmates by identifying and providing appropriate surveillance for each group and by assisting the corrections staff in knowing what "kind" of inmates are where;

- Assistance in effectively deploying personnel, based on an understanding of inmates' different program and custody needs;
- Information for monitoring and evaluating program goals;
- Assistance in population management by identifying those groups of inmates who may be eligible for various release programs and by helping decisionmakers project the level of security required for future bed space.

In summary, an OJC system will contribute to efficient jail operations. Information about the inmate is collected and a program is developed based on custodial requirements and the inmate's needs. An orderly method is established for assessing the varied needs and requirements of each inmate from commitment to release. Most importantly, objective jail classification will help improve the level of safety for staff and inmates.

CHAPTER 3

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN OBJECTIVE JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

An objective jail classification system has six essential components, including:

1. Classification instruments (forms) that use reliable and valid criteria,
2. Appropriate use of overrides,
3. Sufficient staff trained and dedicated to classification functions,
4. A housing plan consistent with the classification system,
5. Automation of the OJC system,
6. Periodic formal evaluations of the OJC system.

Each of these essential components is described on the following pages. After reading this chapter, a jail manager can conduct a self-evaluation to determine the extent to which his/her jail's classification system includes each of the key components.

Classification Instruments (Forms) That Use Reliable and Valid Criteria

An OJC system must have several printed forms to help staff determine the proper custody level of inmates. Custody refers to the level of supervision and security an inmate requires. Security refers to the physical design of the facility or housing unit. The goal is to place inmates in a secure housing unit or facility that matches their custody level.

Reaching such a goal requires the use of standardized instruments—or decisionmaking aids. These instruments, in turn, must be grounded in a structured format that meets the following four criteria:

Validity: The system must be capable of assigning a custody level that reflects the inmate's true risk for disruptive and violent behavior within the facility.

Reliability: The system must promote similar classification decisions for comparable inmates.

Equity: The system must use decisionmaking items that are non-discriminatory and are consistent with commonly accepted societal values.

Utility: The system must be efficient, simple to use, and easy to understand.

Objective jail classification systems may have as many as four forms (see Exhibit 1), which typically include those for:

1. Screening an inmate after booking;
2. Assessing an inmate's initial custody level;

3. Reassessing, or reviewing, an inmate's custody level during confinement for possible reclassification;
4. Initially assessing an inmate's needs and reassessing them during confinement.

The two most common formats for these forms are additive-point and decision-tree. The forms used in the additive-point system are given in Appendix A, and those used in the decision-tree system are given in Appendix B.

It must be emphasized that these forms should not be adopted for use as is without a careful review as to whether the criteria support the agency's goals for risk classification. Each agency may want to adapt the system it chooses to its unique needs and resources. Revisions may simply entail fine tuning the classification forms and instructions. Or, they may involve greater modification. The extent to which an agency modifies an existing system for its own use should parallel the degree to which the system fails to consider local idiosyncracies while balancing the need to maintain the validity, objectivity, and reliability of the instruments. If significant changes are made to the instruments, a re-validation study is needed to ensure the revisions are appropriate. The most common instruments (forms) used in a classification system are described next.

Inmate Screening

The form used to initially screen inmates should recognize that limited information is typically available on inmates during their first hours in custody. Thus, the ultimate goal of any type of screening form should be to identify any emergency needs and make the appropriate initial treatment referrals and housing and supervision decisions.

The screening form should contain, at a minimum, information that identifies the inmate and his/her substance abuse needs, suicide risk, mental health needs, and medical health needs. At this point, only simple yes/no responses are needed. Qualified staff will complete in-depth assessments of persons identified as presenting these types of needs/risks. Agencies may wish to incorporate time frames into the assessment criteria.

Initial Custody Assessment (Classification)

Each jail should determine the factors to be used to establish an inmate's most appropriate custody level, or classification. The most common factors used are:

- Severity of current charges/convictions;
- Serious offense history;
- Escape history;
- Institutional disciplinary history;
- Prior felony convictions;
- Alcohol/drug abuse;
- Stability factors (e.g., age, employment, length of residence).

EXHIBIT 1

TYPES OF FORMS USED IN AN OJC SYSTEM

1. *Inmate Screening*: Completed after booking, usually by booking or intake officers. This form is used to determine whether an inmate needs to be separated from the general population due to extreme mental health, medical, management, or other special factors.
2. *Initial Custody Assessment*: Usually completed within 48 hours of booking, and only for inmates who will be housed in the general population. This form is used to assign each inmate a custody level (minimum, medium, maximum).
3. *Custody Reassessment*: Completed after an inmate has been in custody for some specified time period (usually 60 to 90 days) to determine if reclassification is warranted. It places more emphasis on the inmate's in-custody behavior as opposed to the inmate's characteristics at the time of booking.
4. *Needs Assessment and Reassessment**: Completed as part of initial classification and reclassification review to determine the types of programs appropriate for each inmate. It is not an essential part of an OJC system, as many jails do not keep inmates long enough for program participation to be meaningful.

*The decision-tree system does not use a form for these functions, but relies on classification and program staff's recommendations.

If modifying an established initial custody assessment form, the agency should give special consideration to:

- Eliminating some of the factors, adding others, and increasing or decreasing the importance attached to the factors.
- Selecting time frames for the factors that reflect the agency's correctional philosophy and policies.
- Allowing for overrides.

Custody Reassessment (or Review) for Reclassification

A custody reassessment or review is necessary to allow for changes over time in inmates' legal status, appeal, or other circumstances. It is also needed to take into account the behavior exhibited by inmates during confinement. (This review is particularly valuable in re-evaluating inmates for lower custody assignments.) Some reassessment instruments decrease the importance of or eliminate some of the variables used during the initial custody assessment process. In this way, the reassessment process provides inmates with an incentive for good behavior through a structured system of rewards and punishments.

As with initial custody assessment, the form used for custody reassessment should be examined with consideration given to:

- Eliminating some of the factors, adding others, and increasing or decreasing the importance attached to the factors.
- Selecting time frames for the factors that reflect the agency's correctional philosophy and policies.
- Allowing for overrides.

Inmate Needs Assessment (Initial and Reassessment)

Typically, inmate needs assessment addresses at least six general areas of need:

- Health,
- Emotional stability,
- Education,
- Vocational skill,
- Substance abuse,
- Mental ability.

The assessment should also include a mechanism for entering program and service recommendations to meet these needs. As with custody classification, inmates must be reassessed periodically to identify their changing needs.

Use of Overrides

No classification system will always assign all inmates to the most appropriate custody level. Consequently, an OJC system must allow for staff to assign a custody level other than the one designated by the scored custody and needs assessments, based on their professional judgement and factors that are not captured by the classification forms. These are called overrides and should be part of an OJC system.

Overrides should be separated into non-discretionary and discretionary. Non-discretionary overrides are those set by formal policy and tend to prohibit the placement of certain inmates from minimum custody. Examples of non-discretionary overrides follow.

1. No inmate charged with or convicted of homicide or rape shall be assigned to minimum custody.
2. No sentenced inmate with more than 6 months to serve shall be assigned to minimum custody.
3. No inmate with a felony or Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) detainer shall be assigned to minimum custody.

Discretionary overrides reflect the professional judgement of the classification staff and are based on information regarding the inmate's crime, prior record, or institutional adjustment. In general, discretionary overrides should occur in approximately 5% to 15% of all cases classified. Examples of discretionary overrides follow.

1. The nature of the crime warrants a higher custody level.
2. The inmate's prior positive institutional adjustment warrants a lower custody level.
3. The inmate's current gang involvement warrants a higher custody level.

Sufficient Staff Trained and Dedicated to Classification Functions

An OJC system requires a core staff trained in objective jail classification and responsible for ensuring that all inmates are both properly classified and housed. For this to occur, the jail administrator must establish a centralized classification unit and grant it the authority to make all classification and housing decisions. Even in small jails with limited staff, the jail administrator must indicate which staff have classification responsibilities along with other duties. If an insufficient number of staff are assigned to classification or if classification staff are not granted the authority to make classification and housing decisions, the OJC system will not be properly implemented.

A Housing Plan Consistent with the Classification System

Each jail must ensure that it has a written housing plan for each housing unit. The function of a housing plan is to establish sufficient space at each custody level to accommodate housing the number of inmates assigned to each level. For example, minimum-custody inmates

should be housed in a minimum-security unit (typically dorm type units). Medium-custody inmates should be housed in double cells or secure dorm units, and maximum-custody inmates should be housed in single-cell units. Sufficient space should also be designated for the initial intake and classification process and special populations, such as administrative segregation, protective custody, mental health, and medical.

Automation of the Classification System

The OJC system must be completely automated. This means that all of the information recorded on the screening, initial custody assessment, and custody reassessment forms should be entered into the jail's management information system (MIS). In so doing, errors in classification scoring and inmate housing decisions can be minimized and monitored. Furthermore, automated classification data will greatly help jail administrators monitor overall jail operations and project the types of facilities, staff, and programs required in the future. A more detailed discussion of automation is presented in Chapter 5.

Periodic Formal Evaluations of the Classification System

An OJC system must be audited and evaluated on a regular basis. At the most basic level, classification staff should verify that inmates are being classified properly and housed according to the jail's housing plan. After the OJC system has been in use for several years, the jail should conduct a major evaluation of the system to determine if the classification criteria and format should be adjusted. A more detailed discussion of evaluations is presented in Chapter 6.

Summary

An objective jail classification system is a comprehensive approach to inmate assessment, addressing inmates' needs from admission through release. Application of the system is simple enough that agency staff can learn to use it properly with only a few hours of training. Equally important, objective jail classification is sufficiently flexible that it can be used in jails of varying sizes and missions.

As shown in Exhibit 2, each of the instruments used in an OJC system is expected to have a positive effect on the jail with respect to safety, cost efficiency, rehabilitation, and litigation.

EXHIBIT 2

OJC PRINCIPLES AND CLASSIFICATION INSTRUMENTS

<u>Goals</u>	<u>OJC Principles</u>	<u>Instruments</u>
Safety	Valid Risk Assessment All Inmates Properly Housed	Inmate Screening Initial Custody Assessment Custody Reassessment
Cost Efficiency	Least-Restrictive Custody All Inmates Properly Housed	Inmate Screening Initial Custody Assessment Custody Reassessment
Rehabilitation	Programs Based on Needs	Needs Assessment
Reduced Litigation	Valid and Reliable Classifications	Inmate Screening Initial Custody Assessment Custody Reassessment Needs Assessment Policies and Procedures

CHAPTER 4

IMPLEMENTING AN OBJECTIVE JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Most jail classification systems may be categorized as either subjective or objective. When using the subjective approach, decisions are reached based on the agency's correctional philosophy, the jail's physical design, and the inmate's characteristics. The assumption underlying such systems is that experienced staff "know" inmates and will make the most appropriate decisions. Problems arise because not all staff are experienced and they do not all possess equal ability to make classification decisions in a consistent or valid manner.

Objective systems employ standardized screening and assessment instruments (forms) to determine inmates' custody and/or program needs. Completion of the forms leads to recommendations for custody designation and programming. The role of staff expertise and judgement is confined to agreement or disagreement with these recommendations.

Objective classification systems are characterized by the following elements:

- Using classification instruments that have been validated for inmate populations,
- Using the same instruments and decision criteria with all inmates,
- Fostering similar decisions among classification staff on comparable cases,
- Assigning inmates to custody levels consistent with their backgrounds,
- Structuring classification decisionmaking authority while minimizing overrides,
- Limiting discretionary decisionmaking to ensure uniformity in agency operations and minimize the potential for unfavorable litigation.

Generally, the approach an agency takes in developing and implementing a new classification system is as important, or more important, than the objective system selected. A study of jails instituting objective systems found that many approached the change process in different ways—with varying results. It was also found that the most successful strategies shared common elements. These commonalities are likely to improve the effectiveness of any effort to develop and institute a new classification system and are summarized in the following 12 steps. These steps can help agencies develop or adapt an objective jail classification system that will meet their local needs and resources.

Step 1: Decision to Adopt an Objective Jail Classification System

Several factors can prompt jurisdictions to adopt objective systems for classifying inmates. For example, the courts have frequently mandated a process that is uniformly applied to all inmates. In other cases, overcrowding has created pressure to implement more efficient and cost-effective policies and procedures for classifying inmates. With objective systems, most decisions can be made relatively quickly by line staff who have been trained to complete the

forms and who have sufficient experience to identify cases requiring special handling. Moreover, use of a valid, equitable classification system can reduce overclassification³, thereby decreasing costs associated with unnecessary incarceration or excessive security. Finally, the desire to receive accreditation has led many correctional administrators to adopt objective classification systems.

While complete objectivity in classifying inmates is not possible, supporters of objective systems contend that this approach:

- Controls discretion by permitting overrides of the classification process only within explicitly stated parameters;
- Assures everyone is aware of decisionmaking criteria, including the inmate, by stipulating guidelines;
- Improves data gathering by promoting the accurate, consistent, and comprehensive accumulation of information;
- Promotes consistency by requiring decisionmakers to use standardized criteria and apply them in the same manner each time;
- Provides for easier evaluation and monitoring by using standardized criteria and procedures that facilitate review and assessment.

Before adopting a new classification system, it is helpful for agencies to review the following questions:

- What short- and long-term purposes are to be served by the classification system?
- How much will it cost to adapt, implement, and then operate a new system?
- To what extent will the new system reduce costs associated with overbuilding, overcrowding, escapes, etc.?
- Do top management staff and others responsible for overseeing the system's development understand the magnitude of the effort they will be undertaking?
- Are qualified and experienced staff available to adapt the new classification system to local needs and implement it successfully?
- Does the agency have a real need for a new classification system, and is this need recognized by most staff and key officials outside the agency?
- Is there a clear understanding of the consequences if an objective system is not implemented?
- How long will the implementation of an OJC system take?

³Overclassification refers to classifying an inmate to a higher custody level than required.

- Can an organizational climate be developed to support successful completion of the implementation project?

It is not necessary that an agency answer all these questions immediately or to everyone's satisfaction. The primary reason for asking these questions is to identify potential problems and pitfalls the agency may face as early in the process as possible. Strategies may be planned that will embody alternative methods for problem resolution.

Few agencies develop new classification systems "from scratch." Agencies usually adapt an existing system to local needs. In rare cases, a local jurisdiction will borrow elements of several systems and merge them into an approach unique to that agency. Reasons an agency may adopt a classification system from another jurisdiction include:

- The apparent success of the system in improving classification decisionmaking;
- The time, effort, and cost of evaluating the current classification process;
- Correctional administrators' lack of expertise and understanding relative to the intricacies of an effective classification system;
- The belief that other agencies possess knowledge and experience above and beyond that of the agency considering a new classification approach.

Step 2: Commitment of Top Agency Personnel

Strong commitment from the sheriff, police chief, or agency director is critical to the success of a new classification system. Obtaining a high level of commitment from top agency personnel and maintaining it can usually be accomplished by identifying for them the benefits the agency will receive from the new classification system, ensuring that they receive informal and formal communication describing the progress of the project on a regular basis, ensuring that they have a role in developing and implementing the project, and ensuring that they are credited with the successful project.

The commitment of top agency personnel will help reduce or eliminate numerous problems that can hinder the progress of the project. These include:

- Insufficient staff time,
- Insufficient funding,
- Insufficient staff expertise,
- Changes in administration,
- Lack of staff support,
- Insufficient commitment by the agency,
- Minimal understanding of the potential applications and benefits of the system.

Step 3: Selection of Classification Staff

In cases where agencies had problems developing and implementing new classification systems, one reason was inexperienced staff. Staff who are currently knowledgeable about objective approaches and their developmental processes or who possess the skills to acquire such knowledge through training, document review, and/or examination of other objective classification systems make everyone's job easier. It is particularly helpful if the agency has staff who are familiar with the problems and job realities of developing a classification system for an inmate population. If the agency's staff have to acquire this knowledge as they go along, it can impact the effectiveness of the classification system.

Sometimes an agency finds that it does not have staff with the appropriate qualifications, or, if it does, it is unable to commit them full time to the project. In either event, the agency may wish to retain a consultant(s) who is qualified to help with the process.

Step 4: Identification of the Role of System Planners

The role of the planning staff in adapting a new classification system for agency use is very important. They will determine the extent to which the OJC system is adjusted to local factors before it is implemented. For example, the criteria used for decisionmaking by any classification system selected for adoption need to be weighted by the adoptive agency. In weighting the classification factors, the planning staff should solicit staff opinions on the relative seriousness of each factor with respect to the others and revise the classification instruments and instructions accordingly. This type of staff involvement can substantially increase the acceptance of the new system. It must be noted that modifications to existing classification formats and/or criteria require a re-validation study conducted by researchers with experience with such studies.

Step 5: Development of Goals and Objectives for the OJC System

Answering the questions below is useful when selecting goals and objectives for the new classification system.

- Why is the objective classification system being implemented?
- What are the desired short- and long-term impacts on the facility's operations?
- What are the concerns of other key actors or constituencies, i.e., the public, county planners or commissioners, the courts, etc.?
- How might the system be implemented to reach its maximum potential regarding inmate management, public safety, efficient use of limited space, and future planning and policy development?
- What classification system goals and objectives fit best with the agency's overall goals?
- What goals and objectives will be most difficult to achieve?
- What goals and objectives are the most feasible?

With the answers to these questions as guidelines, the agency can develop a Statement

of Purpose summarizing in a few sentences the overall aim of the classification system and the general impact it is expected to have on jail operations. The Statement of Purpose then outlines goals and objectives. “Goals” specify the major areas that the classification system will address, such as protection of the public, principle of least-restrictive confinement consistent with the inmate’s risk, etc. “Objectives” explicitly describe the results to be achieved, such as a 40% reduction in serious incidents during the next fiscal year, a 25% reduction in the number of disciplinary referrals, etc. To illustrate, an objective related to the goal of reducing major disciplinary violations could be:

“Within 12 months, 45% of all inmates with two or more violations will be reviewed monthly by the classification unit to reassess their custody levels.”

Staff can develop two types of classification system objectives. Those addressing the system are called end-result objectives. End-result objectives are important to evaluation efforts, as they specify the impact of the system on inmate behaviors and jail operations. For example, end-result objectives for a classification system could be to:

- Specify the outcomes of the system,
- Specify the tasks and responsibilities of staff,
- Provide consistency and integration among the diverse elements of the system,
- Establish a basis for evaluation.

Objectives describing the process for accomplishing end-result objectives are called process objectives. Process objectives are important in ensuring that the system runs smoothly, as they describe the implementation activities of agency staff. For example, process objectives could include:

- All inmates will be classified within 48 hours of admission to the jail.
- The override rate will not exceed 15%.

Step 6: Appointment of Advisory Group

Most successful classification systems are the product of input from not only staff responsible for the system but also from an advisory group. The advisory group is often formed to augment the expertise and skills of classification staff. Advisory group members typically include staff representing administration, programs, security, services, planning, and information systems. The advisory group may also include officials from other criminal justice agencies who will influence the development and eventual implementation of the classification system.

Advisory groups can serve many useful functions in developing and implementing an objective jail classification system. For instance, the group can help develop goals for the new system, review the proposed criteria, help determine the importance of classification variables, examine the classification instruments, and develop policies and procedures for the new system. They also may be able to provide information that improves the performance of the system while enhancing its acceptance by persons both inside and outside the agency.

By arranging regular advisory group meetings and calling special meetings if necessary, an agency can clarify the planning and implementation process and give staff a feeling of being part of the process. Wise use of the advisory group can also increase support for the completed system.

Step 7: Identification of Legal Issues

Litigation pertaining to inmate classification has become increasingly common in recent years. The judicial system has not only been carefully scrutinizing classification policies and procedures, but has also been directly involved in shaping classification practices.

In light of this judicial interest, jails should develop written policies and procedures governing the application of their classification system. These policies and procedures should include procedural safeguards to ensure that due process, equal protection, and other legal requirements are met. This proactive approach will extend to inmates those rights guaranteed by the constitution. It should also limit litigation pertaining to classification following the implementation of the system.

Step 8: Preparation of an Implementation Plan

To minimize the effects of limited time, money, or staff, it is helpful to prepare a comprehensive implementation plan that includes the following components:

- Pilot testing of classification instruments,
- Development of classification system policies and procedures,
- Training of staff,
- System evaluation and review.

To be useful, the implementation plan should specify the tasks that must be completed, a reasonable time frame for their completion, the products that will result (if any), and who is responsible for seeing that each task is performed adequately and on time. It is important that every effort be made to avoid delay between system development and implementation phases since a long delay can dampen staff enthusiasm.

Step 9: Pilot Testing of the Classification System

It is important for an agency to pre-test, or pilot test, the instruments and the new classification system, including the implementation procedures, to determine their appropriateness. The instruments should be evaluated with particular attention to the validity of the resulting screening and custody decisions. The procedures should be evaluated for appropriateness relative to staff responsibilities, timeliness, data requirements, and overall staff acceptance.

Pilot testing may be either the last task in the adaption of the objective jail classification system or the first task in the implementation phase. The testing may include both a “paper” test of the process using available data and a formal pilot test of the system by jail staff. The intent is

to determine how well the instruments perform using a sample of the inmate population and what modifications may be necessary prior to full implementation.

During the pilot test, the anticipated number of maximum, medium, and minimum security beds needed to match the new custody levels of the population will likely need some modifications. The pilot phase will also assist in confirming that the classification system will likely achieve some of its goals and objectives, particularly short-term internal management objectives. Pilot testing can help the agency avoid making piecemeal modifications to correct problems. Minor modifications, however, especially in procedures, are likely to occur as the system becomes incorporated into the standard operations of the facility.

In pilot testing, the agency will want to measure the objective classification instruments and procedures against the goals and objectives established for the system. It is important to note here that while pilot testing is important, several of the systemic goals and objectives can only be evaluated over time. Consequently, the level of confidence in the newly adopted system is important in countering the potential tendency to modify the system prematurely. With premature modification, systems tend to revert to prior practices. The agency should not be afraid to let the system work and find its own level in making inmate management decisions. Again, the initial level of confidence in the system and instruments selected is critical.

After an initial confidence level has been established with the classification/screening instruments, a pilot test of the instruments and policies must be conducted on a representative sample of inmates. Care must be taken in conducting this pilot test as its results will help inform the jail as to how its inmate population will be classified if the designed system were to be fully implemented. The pilot test will also help determine if the system has been properly designed. Procedural issues will likely need the closest scrutiny at this point. For example, do all agency staff understand their roles? Are the coordination and communication between inmate processing functions working as planned? Are the data received by classification staff for completion of the classification/screening instruments adequate and timely? Is the number of resultant custody designations matching up to the anticipated number of beds needed at each security level? (It is of interest to note here that, in most cases to date, the implementation of an objective classification system resulted in a significant decrease in the previously perceived custody levels of the population. In particular, it has generally demonstrated a significant increase in the number of minimum-custody inmates and a decline in the number of inmates classified as maximum custody.) Additional issues to be assessed during the pilot phase may be based on the initial feedback from classification staff, line staff, and administration.

Review of all classification and screening instruments during the pilot period is recommended. This is to ensure that all instruments are being completed accurately and thoroughly. Statistical analysis of decision criteria and outcomes can also assist in assessing the adequacy of the selected decision variables. Analyses of how inmates will be classified according to the new system are also helpful in providing staff with an understanding of the impact of the system on inmate custody levels.

In addition, the frequency of use of the override option should be monitored to determine both the adequacy of the principal classification system and the extent to which classification

staff are using their professional judgement. Adhering to classification “by the book” results in too few overrides. Conversely, overuse of the override option may occur because staff are too subjective and do not trust the instrument to objectively drive the custody decision. The acceptable frequency of overrides will vary from system to system, but, if the instrument is meeting its objectives, an override rate of roughly 10% should be expected. If the override rate, excluding department policy overrides (e.g., writs from prison), exceeds approximately 20%, an addition to the decision variables or an increase in priority of certain variables should be considered.

Step 10: Development of Classification Policies and Procedures

Written policies and procedures are necessary to effectively introduce a new classification system. Written direction helps to ensure that staff will not deviate from the structure of the system to the detriment of the general public, other staff, and the inmate population.

Policies are necessary for the agency to adequately convey its philosophy and objectives to all personnel. At a minimum, they should include general direction for interpreting the purpose, goals, and objectives of the new classification system. Policy statements should communicate what the agency intends to do and explain why the system does what it does.

In addition, written procedures should provide specific steps for carrying out the new classification system. They must state who will be responsible, what must be done, where the activity will occur, and in what time frame the task should be completed. Policies must also be formulated that describe how the classification system will be monitored and how information from the system will be used.

Policies and procedures should be incorporated into a comprehensive manual that prescribes initial classification, reclassification, and administrative review requirements for the system. The manual should be updated periodically to include all revisions in policies and procedures. The classification manual should be completed prior to training staff in system use. Additionally, serious consideration should be given to using the classification manual to orient inmates to the system.

Step 11: Training of Staff

Agencies implementing new classification systems must provide adequate staff training. Training for all correctional staff is an important factor in gaining staff support of the system on a day-to-day basis. Specialized training should be provided to those personnel identified as classification staff. Training typically covers such topics as instrument use, information management, resource allocation, and program development decisions. It should also include, at least in the initial training sessions, an overview of how the system was developed so that staff who were not involved will be acquainted with its background.

In addition to this initial orientation and implementation training, ongoing in-service training should occur. Ongoing training will assist in problem solving, evaluating the system,

facilitating staff feedback, reenforcing the system's objectives, and enhancing its management application potential.

Methods for presenting the material will vary according to the nature of the information to be learned and the role of staff in the learning process. Subject matter may be taught through one-way presentations (lectures, symposiums, films, panels, debates) or participatory methods (discussion and problem-solving groups, brainstorming sessions, role playing). In the former method, staff assume a relatively inactive role, listening, watching, and taking notes. This type of presentation is prepared in detail prior to delivery and is not affected much by the audience. In the latter method, staff are dynamically involved. They introduce examples from their detention and corrections experience, and the group identifies problems and finds solutions collectively. With this type of training, it is useful to involve staff in hands-on application of scoring instruments, using case files with identifiers removed. This activity would be followed by discussions to enhance inter-rater reliability. The interests and concerns of staff relative to the classification system and its eventual implementation should direct the course of the participatory approach.

Another important component of the training program is the selection of the instructional staff. Instructors should be chosen based on their expertise and teaching ability. Involvement in developing the classification system, while helpful, does not necessarily mean that someone can translate that knowledge to agency staff. Instructors may be drawn from within the agency, such as the proposed classification staff or administrative personnel, and from professional fields outside the agency. Each has advantages and limitations. An instructor from the agency's staff will be familiar with the participants; however, fulfilling the role of both co-learner and instructor is difficult. The planners of the classification system run the risk of being unable to break out of their role as system developers, who are seen by other staff as having a vested interest in the successful implementation of the classification system. Outside instructors can play the role of experts more easily, but they may be out of touch with both the classification system and the realities of the workplace. Clear lesson plans, personal contacts with staff, and last-minute briefings will help minimize these potential problems.

Step 12: Ongoing Evaluation and Review of the Classification System

The use of an objective jail classification system is a dynamic process. As the preceding discussion of system implementation makes clear, it is necessary to view revision as an ongoing process to accommodate changes in factors such as agency philosophy, legislative requirements, legal decisions, classification standards, and the composition of the inmate population. System monitoring procedures will determine the need for revision. A systematic review of monitoring reports should be conducted regularly, and revisions should be planned as soon as the need is documented.

Modifications to an OJC system can be made in any number of ways to meet changing needs. Necessary modifications may involve procedural changes or changes in the instruments. Decision or screening criteria and time frames may be modified, added, or deleted, and the importance or priority of the variables may be modified. It is important, however, to be careful that the validity and objectivity of the system do not suffer as a result of such modifications.

Final Considerations

If given due consideration, the following recommendations should expedite adaption and implementation of an objective jail classification system.

- Staff charged with developing the new classification system should emphasize to other jail staff that the objective system takes a common-sense approach to classification. It therefore will be easier for personnel to recognize that it incorporates, in a restructured version, their own professional experience.
- The criteria incorporated into the objective system should be generally comparable to those factors previously used by jail staff in classifying inmates.
- The OJC system should attempt to mesh staff judgement and perspective with information and data used in classification decisionmaking.
- Careful consideration should be given to developing the classification reassessment/ review instruments with some criteria independent of the initial classification criteria. Studies have shown that some initial classification items, particularly those relating to current offense, are relatively weak predictors of behavior. Only age consistently appears to have even a moderate predictive capacity. Reclassification, consequently, should rely heavily on measures of in-custody conduct that promote a “just deserts” orientation to decisionmaking.
- To ensure the effective operation of the objective system, the groundwork for monitoring and evaluation efforts should be laid during system adaption. If the system is to achieve maximum usefulness, it is critical that the system design specify a means for obtaining the quantifiable information needed to assess classification decisionmaking.
- Classification and other agency staff must accept that the objective decision instruments incorporated by the system are to be used as tools or guides to help them achieve effective classification. Classification officers should understand that their experience and opinions are valuable additions to the process by which classification decisions are reached. This understanding of the proper role of classification instruments helps assure the responsible participation of staff in the classification process.
- In both the additive-point and decision-tree approaches discussed, the quantitative and logical character of objective classification treats risk as an interaction of factors along a continuum. These approaches permit the agency to conduct statistical analyses of consistency, analyze trends, and simulate the results of proposed modifications.

In conclusion, the adaption and implementation of an objective jail classification system is a complex process that depends on:

- The commitment of staff and resources;
- The support of key people outside the agency;

- The allocation of sufficient time to accomplish the agency's goals and objectives;
- Most important, a well-conceived plan to guide the system's development and implementation.

The preceding guidelines, while not inclusive, were prepared to help agencies anticipate problems that may arise during system development, adaption, and implementation, or revision, and to suggest strategies for addressing these issues before they become problematic.

CHAPTER 5

AUTOMATION AND MONITORING OF AN OBJECTIVE JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

One of the most perplexing and frustrating areas for correctional administrators and classification staff is how to maximize the use of data stored in their computer systems. A frequent complaint is that it is very difficult to retrieve information from the computer and use it for monitoring the classification system and other aspects of the jail's operation. This chapter responds to this issue in two ways.

First, it provides a listing of the types of data that need to be recorded accurately and in a timely manner. This list will help jail administrators ensure that their management information systems (MIS) are properly designed in terms of capturing the basic information a jail system will require to be properly monitored and managed.

Second, the chapter includes the "top ten" questions that a jail's MIS should answer in a convenient way and on a regular basis. A sample MIS report is provided that answers each question posed. These sample reports can be given to a computer programmer or analyst to illustrate how the management reports should be designed.

Essential Data Elements

All computer systems have structured data bases that allow certain types of information to be entered and stored. A jail can have both too much and too little data being entered into its computer system. It is important that all jails review their current MIS systems to eliminate data elements that are not useful and add those that are. The basic data elements that are essential for well-functioning classification and MIS systems are listed below.

Identifying Data

Inmate's Name
 Identification Number
 Date of Birth
 Gender
 Race
 Ethnicity
 Jail Admission Date and Time

Charge/Offense Data

Current Charge(s) or Offense(s)
Legal Status (pre-trial, sentenced, other)
Warrants/Detainers
Bail Amount
If in Sentence Status, Sentence Length
If in Sentence Status, Projected Release Date

Classification Data (Initial and Reclassification)

All Classification Scoring Items (e.g., severity of offense score, prior convictions score, etc.)
Total Classification Score
Scored Classification Level
All Overrides
Final Classification Level
Date Classification Record was Completed
Person Completing the Classification Record

Housing Data

Facility Location
Housing Unit
Cell Assignment
Date of Transfer to Current Location

Disciplinary Data

Date and Time of Infraction or Incident
Location of Incident
Type of Infraction or Incident
Disposition
Officer Reporting the Incident

Ten Questions That Should Be Answered by Your Jail's Computer System

This section illustrates how the following ten questions can be answered by your computer system based on the data listed above. For each question, a sample table based on a hypothetical jail of 500 inmates shows how the report should look. These tables can be easily produced by any jail MIS system.

#1: How are my inmates classified today?

On a very fundamental level, jail managers must know each day how the entire jail population is classified. The MIS report should list the number of inmates who are in the general population and are classified accordingly. However, the report should also list the number of inmates in the special management populations, such as administrative segregation, disciplinary segregation, protective custody, medical/infirmarary units, and mental health units, as well as those who are unclassified. Table 1 answers this question.

#2: Are newly admitted inmates being classified in a timely manner?

Classification staff need to verify that inmates are being classified in a timely manner according to the agency's policies and procedures. For most jails, this means that all newly admitted inmates are classified within 48 hours of booking. To monitor this process, a management report is needed that lists the number of inmates who have not been classified according to the jail's time frames. A sample report is given in Table 2.

#3: Have inmates who have been in custody for 60 to 90 days been reviewed for reclassification?

Classification staff must also ensure that the process of reviewing inmates for reclassification is occurring as intended. Generally, inmates should be reviewed every 60 to 90 days. Without a management report, inmates may get "lost in the system" and not be reassessed in a timely or comprehensive manner. Table 3 shows a sample report to monitor the number of inmates whose custody levels have not been reviewed.

#4: Which inmates are due for initial classification or a reclassification review and where are they?

Classification managers need to locate inmates, on a daily basis, who have not been classified or are due for a reclassification review. A report is needed that lists these inmates, their location in the jail, and how long they have been in custody. As shown in Table 4, the report should indicate inmates who are overdue for either initial classification or a reclassification review.

#5: How many classifications are being overridden by staff?

Objective jail classification systems require that overrides be used at an acceptable level. Specifically, the rate should not be below 5% or exceed 20%. Table 5 summarizes the number of overrides and whether the overrides are upward or downward. Upward means that staff have placed an inmate in a higher custody level than indicated by the classification instrument, while downward means an inmate has been assigned a lower custody level. Ideally, the direction of the overrides should be balanced, meaning that about half should be higher and half lower than the scored classifications.

#6: What are the reasons for the overrides?

Classification managers also need to know the reasons for overrides. It is especially useful to know if a particular override reason is being used too often and to verify that staff are documenting the override reasons. Table 6 illustrates how the reasons for overrides could be presented to verify that they are properly documented and that no one reason is dominating the override process.

#7: Are inmates being housed according to the classification system?

It is essential that inmates be housed according to the jail's housing plan. In particular, there must be assurances that the jail has not mixed maximum-custody inmates with minimum-custody

inmates and that no special management inmates are in general population units. To accomplish this, the computer system must be organized so that the housing units are labeled according to the custody levels of the classification system. Table 7 illustrates how such a report would look for inmates who are in the general population or are unclassified. Special management inmates are not shown since they are housed in special units.

#8: Is the classification system classifying inmates by misconduct rates?

Classification systems should demonstrate that inmates are classified according to their misconduct or disciplinary behavior. This can only be done if the jail's MIS system is storing all of the major misconduct reports issued by staff. If it is, it is possible to see if minimum-custody inmates do indeed have lower misconduct rates than higher-custody inmates. Table 8 illustrates how such a report would look.

#9: Which inmates should be considered for release to control jail crowding?

Frequently, jail administrators must take emergency actions to reduce the jail population. The classification system can help the administrator determine which inmates are best suited for release from custody via pre-trial release or other release mechanisms. The jail administrator should select those inmates who pose the least risk to public safety and will be released in the near future. Table 9 is a sample report of inmates who are in jail for non-violent crimes, have no outstanding warrants, have no major misconducts while in custody, have no history of violence, are within 7 days of their release dates, and are in minimum custody. Such a list can be produced as needed and can have different criteria applied.

#10: Which staff are doing the most classifications, and how many overrides are they using?

This final question is an example of how the MIS system can be used to monitor staff performance. It is useful to have an overview of which staff are doing most of the work. It may also be useful to see which staff are using overrides the most or least. Staff who are using the override too much or not at all should be reviewed to make sure they are applying it properly. Table 10 illustrates how such a report would look.

TABLE 1**HOW ARE MY INMATES CLASSIFIED TODAY?**

Custody Level	Number of Inmates	Percent
Total Inmate Population	500	100.0%
General Population	400	80.0%
Minimum	225	45.0%
Medium	136	27.2%
Maximum	39	7.8%
Special Populations	63	12.6%
Administrative Segregation	5	1.0%
Disciplinary Segregation	10	2.0%
Protective Custody	15	3.0%
Medical	15	3.0%
Mental Health	18	3.6%
Unclassified	37	7.4%

TABLE 2**HAVE NEWLY ADMITTED INMATES BEEN CLASSIFIED WITHIN 48 HOURS?**

Classification Status	Number of Inmates	Percent
TOTAL INMATES IN CUSTODY TODAY	500	100.0%
Classified (initial or reclassification)	463	92.6%
Unclassified—in custody less than 24 hours	20	4.0%
Unclassified—in custody 24-48 hours	12	2.4%
Unclassified—in custody 49-72 hours	5	1.0%
Unclassified—in custody more than 72 hours	0	0.0%

TABLE 3**HAVE INMATES BEEN REVIEWED FOR RECLASSIFICATION WITHIN 60 TO 90 DAYS?**

Classification Status	Number of Inmates	Percent
TOTAL INMATES IN CUSTODY TODAY	500	100.0%
IN CUSTODY FOR 60 DAYS OR MORE	249	49.8%
Reclassification Review Completed	220	88.4%
Reclassification Review Missing—in custody 61-90 days	27	10.8%
Reclassification Review Missing—in custody 91+ days	2	0.8%

TABLE 4**WHO NEEDS TO BE CLASSIFIED TODAY AND WHERE ARE THEY?**

Name	ID#	Location	Custody Time
J. Doe	97-1678	H-107	4 days
M. Smith	97-1594	A-278	4 days
J. Brown	97-1633	H-112	5 days
T. Moore	97-1601	H-117	10 days
M. Evans	97-1507	H-118	15 days
F. Hoffman	97-1104	B-111	64 days
W. Johnson	97-1078	B-103	67 days
S. Jones	97-1067	C- 208	70 days
T. Cook	97-1045	C-207	72 days
A. Watson	97-1007	C-123	76 days
W. Williams	97-996	D-002	81 days
H. Gonzalez	97-983	D-005	81 days
D. Miller	97-977	D-018	83 days
M. Johnston	97-974	D-019	83 days
J. Greene	97-969	D-025	85 days
G. Wilson	97-900	D-065	86 days
T. Jackson	97-879	D-066	86 days
E. Grant	97-874	D-071	88 days
P. Walker	97-873	D-072	88 days

TABLE 5

HOW MANY CLASSIFICATIONS ARE BEING OVERRIDDEN?

Final Custody Level	Scored Custody Level			
	Minimum	Medium	Maximum	Totals
Minimum	215	8	2	225
Medium	20	110	6	136
Maximum	10	10	19	39
Totals	245	128	27	400

OVERRIDE RATE SUMMARY

Overall Override Rate = 56 cases or 14%

Upward Overrides: cases overridden to a higher custody level = 40 cases or 10%

Downward Overrides: cases overridden to a lower custody level = 16 cases or 4%

Note: In this sample table, we see the overall override rate is acceptable, at 14%. However, unless this jail experiences an atypical inmate population, it appears that upward overrides are being used disproportionately. Generally, upward and downward overrides should be about equal.

TABLE 6
WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR OVERRIDES?

Override Reason	Number of Inmates	Percent
Total Overrides	56	100.0%
Overrides Resulting in a Higher Custody Level	40	71.4%
1. Prior Escape History	5	8.9%
2. Excessive History of Institutional Violence	10	17.9%
3. Active Gang Activities	5	8.9%
4. Crime More Serious than Indicated by Charge	3	5.4%
5. Other Reasons Not Documented	17	30.4%
Overrides Resulting in a Lower Custody Level	16	28.6%
1. Excellent Prior Institutional Conduct	4	7.1%
2. Crime Less Serious than Indicated by Charge	3	5.4%
3. Excellent Current Institutional Conduct	2	3.6%
4. Prior Criminal Record Less Serious Than Score Indicates	1	1.8%
5. Other Reasons Not Documented	6	10.7%

Note: In this sample table, we see that too many override reasons are not being documented. Moreover, the majority of overrides result in a higher custody level. Generally, upward and downward overrides should be about equal.

TABLE 7

**ARE GENERAL POPULATION INMATES HOUSED
ACCORDING TO THE CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM?**

Housing Unit	Custody Level				Total
	Maximum	Medium	Minimum	Unclassified	
Total	39	136	225	37	437
Intake Unit	0	0	0	35	35
General Population Units					
A- Maximum Security	30	23	0	2	55
B- Medium Security	9	62	28	0	99
C- Medium Security	0	23	21	0	44
D- Minimum Security	0	14	80	0	94
E- Minimum Security	0	14	96	0	110

Note: In this sample table, we see that maximum- and minimum-custody inmates are housed together in Unit B and that two unclassified inmates are in Unit A. Neither of these situations should occur with a properly implemented classification system.

TABLE 8**ARE INMATES BEING CLASSIFIED BY MISCONDUCT RATES?**

Custody Level	Inmates	Average No. of Reports	Percent With No Reports
Maximum Custody	39	4.6	26.5%
Medium Custody	136	2.1	54.9%
Minimum Custody	225	0.3	78.3%
HOUSING UNIT			
A- Maximum Security	53	4.2	31.2%
B- Medium Security	99	2.3	44.4%
C- Medium Security	44	1.9	57.0%
D- Minimum Security	94	0.5	75.4%
E- Minimum Security	110	0.5	74.1%

TABLE 9**WHICH INMATES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED FOR RELEASE
TO CONTROL JAIL CROWDING?**

Inmate Name	ID#	Crime	Status	Custody Level	Time Left
J. Doe	97-1678	Theft	Pre	Min	NA
M. Smith	97-1594	DWI	Pre	Min	NA
J. Brown	97-1633	PCS	Pre	Min	NA
T. Moore	97-1601	PCS	Pre	Min	NA
M. Evans	97-1507	DWI	Pre	Min	NA
F. Hoffman	97-1104	FTA	Pre	Min	NA
W. Johnson	97-1078	Prost	Sent	Min	1 day
S. Jones	97-1067	Tresp	Sent	Min	1 day
T. Cook	97-1045	Theft	Sent	Min	2 days
A. Watson	97-1007	DWI	Sent	Min	2 days
W. Williams	97-996	PCS	Sent	Min	3 days
H. Gonzalez	97-983	PCS	Sent	Min	3 days
D. Miller	97-977	Theft	Sent	Min	4 days
M. Johnston	97-974	Theft	Sent	Min	4 days
J. Greene	97-969	Theft	Sent	Min	4 days
G. Wilson	97-900	DWI	Sent	Min	5 days
T. Jackson	97-879	PCS	Sent	Min	5 days
E. Grant	97-874	PCS	Sent	Min	6 days
P. Walker	97-873	PCS	Sent	Min	7 days

TABLE 10

**WHICH STAFF ARE DOING THE MOST CLASSIFICATIONS,
AND HOW MANY OVERRIDES ARE THEY USING?**

Staff Name	Classifications Completed (1997)	Overrides	Upward	Downward
M. Davis	1,493	231	100	131
F. Moore	3,291	1,235	1,123	112
J. Ford	2,992	174	85	89
J. Harris	3,379	389	167	222
W. Walsh	3,972	211	99	112
Total	15,127	2,240	1,574	666

Note: In this sample table, we see that Classification Specialist Moore appears to be using the override option excessively. Moreover, he is disproportionately overriding classification outcomes to higher custody levels.

CHAPTER 6

EVALUATION OF AN OBJECTIVE JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM

Evaluation of an OJC system requires two levels of analysis: process and impact. A process analysis is the most elementary form of evaluation as it determines how the system is used on a daily or operational basis. Specifically, the following research questions are to be answered by this phase of the evaluation:

1. What are the characteristics of inmates entering jail with respect to special management needs, sociodemographics, and criminal history?
2. What factors are used for making custody and program placements?
3. What factors are most influential in determining an inmate's custody level or program needs?
4. To what extent are overrides used?
5. To what extent do staff actually follow the designated scores or recommendations of the screening and custody assessment instruments?
6. To what extent do staff accept and follow the new classification system policies and procedures?

In addition to examining these process questions, a limited impact analysis is conducted. Here, the focus is on determining what impact the new system has on the jail's operations and safety. Specific impact questions include:

1. To what extent do items used for custody designation have an empirical relationship with inmate behavior?
2. What impact does the jail classification system have on the overall custody levels of the inmate population?

Traditional program evaluations are designed to assess the impact of a treatment variable on individual behavior, attitudes, or values. For example, drug treatment programs are evaluated according to the capacity of the program to affect drug use among a targeted user population. In such situations, the evaluation is designed to respond to three types of questions:

1. Can the treatment be delivered?
2. Is the treatment being delivered?
3. Is the treatment effective?

In the case of implementing a new inmate classification system in a jail, the so-called "treatment" or intervening variable is the new classification system. This new system is expected to have a number of effects on inmates, staff, and the jail organization as a whole.

To respond to whether the classification system can be properly delivered, three issues of facility operation must be considered:

1. Whether the facility has adequate housing space to allow for inmate separation in accordance with the various custody levels,
2. Whether classification staff have the skills to consistently apply the objective scoring instruments,
3. Whether the policies of the facility are inherently contradictory to the classification principles. (To determine whether administrative jail policies are contradictory to the principles of the classification system, the policies must be examined and compared to the objectives of the new system. For example, a jail policy that allows inmates to be housed without a formal custody assessment would be inconsistent with a classification system objective of housing inmates by custody level. Any policies that would hinder implementation efforts or render the new system inoperable need to be identified and changed.)

To determine whether the “treatment” is being delivered, several factors need to be assessed:

1. Whether inmates are being housed according to the classification system;
2. Whether time frames are being followed (e.g., length of time between initial custody assessment and custody reassessment);
3. Whether housing areas vary according to specified security and custody requirements (e.g., does medium differ from minimum and maximum?);
4. Whether custody reassessments are being conducted according to system guidelines;
5. Whether overrides are being used at an appropriate level.

To determine whether an OJC system is effective, the following questions need to be addressed:

1. Does the objective classification system improve management of the inmate population?
2. Does objective classification reduce the incidence of violence (e.g., assaults, fighting)?
3. Does objective classification reduce the expense of housing inmates?
4. Is the objective classification system more effective than a subjective classification system or no system at all?

Quantitative Measures Used for the Evaluation

Typically two methods are used to collect information on inmates who have been classified:

1. Extracting the data from a computerized MIS inmate data base,
2. Manually extracting the data from the forms used to determine custody levels.

The first method is faster and requires less staff time than the second. Unfortunately, the current state of jail information systems requires that most evaluations rely on the tedious task of manually collecting all of the necessary data, even for a modest evaluation.

Five broad categories of information are collected as part of the “quantitative data” used to evaluate the objective jail classification system:

1. Intake/booking screening data,
2. Initial custody classification data,
3. Reclassification data,
4. Institutional behavior and disciplinary data,
5. Discharge/release data.

Qualitative Measures Used for the Evaluation

“Qualitative data” usually refers to information gathered from interviews and observations of a program once in place. For example, qualitative data might include observations of classification staff as they conduct interviews with inmates as part of the initial classification or reclassification review process. These observations might provide clues as to why certain staff are not using overrides as frequently as others. Interviews with staff and inmates can also provide clues on how well understood the classification system is by non-classification staff or why inmates are not being housed according to the classification system. These data are important in that they supplement, verify, and help interpret the quantitative information that is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the objective classification system.

Factors That Drive the Initial Classification Instrument

For a classification system to have credibility with staff, it must have some level of face validity. In other words, the factors used and their weights must be logical from the perspective of classification and administrative staff.

One measure of face validity is to evaluate how the items used for scoring purposes sort inmates. The initial custody items—severity of current charge, serious offense history, escape history, institutional disciplinary history, prior felony convictions, and chemical dependency—are all positively related to the custody rating, as was intended by the design of the instruments. In other words, inmates scoring higher on these are more likely to be classified for medium or maximum custody. The stability factors are also significantly related to the custody rating, but a higher stability score increases the likelihood of a lower custody designation.

CHAPTER 7

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Objective jail classification systems have been developed and implemented in numerous jurisdictions of varying sizes with qualitatively different inmate types. Although these classification systems had distinct origins and were implemented in diverse jail settings, a number of common findings have emerged from evaluations of the two most common objective jail classification formats—the additive-point and decision-tree systems. These findings are listed next.

1. There is no universal, standard objective jail classification system with respect to assessment criteria and instrument formats.

The additive-point and decision-tree systems each has its own strengths and weaknesses in terms of ease of use, reliability, and validity. But no particular system should be viewed as superior to other objective approaches. Consequently, jail administrators and classification staff must exercise judgement in determining which system and formats will work best for their jail.

2. Objective jail classification systems use the same structure and scoring processes for continuously assessing an inmate's proper custody and housing level.

An OJC system has several essential elements. First, it must have a screening process to assess all newly admitted inmates' medical, mental health, suicide, substance abuse, and protective custody needs. Screening is then followed by an initial classification or custody assessment to determine the appropriate housing area for inmates expected to stay beyond the first few hours of detention. Finally, each system has a custody reassessment process to review an inmate's custody level. These reviews generally occur every 60 to 90 days.

3. Although objective jail classification systems vary in format and structure, each system uses similar items for scoring an inmate's custody level.

Each system consistently uses the following items for scoring an inmate's custody level at initial classification and/or reclassification review:

- Offense/charge severity;
- Prior felony/misdemeanor convictions;
- Prior disciplinary history;
- Prior escape history;
- Current detainer;
- Substance abuse (alcohol included) history;
- Age;
- Measures of community stability (education, employment, residence).

These variables emphasize legal and policy factors rather than factors believed to predict in-custody behavior. The reclassification instruments are similar to the initial classification instruments although they place a greater emphasis on the inmate's in-custody behavior.

4. Objective jail classification systems tend to increase the number of inmates assigned to minimum and medium custody.

Evaluation results showed that most of the jails using objective systems placed large proportions of their admissions in minimum custody. Only a very small percentage of inmates were classified for maximum or close custody. If a jail fully implemented and followed an objective system, these figures would have profound implications for new jail construction and renovation projects. Specifically, less secure and therefore less expensive jail space would be required for lower custody inmates.

5. Despite the perceived and realized benefits of these systems, jails often experience difficulties in fully implementing the objective systems.

Implementation of new classification systems proved to be a time consuming and tedious process. In an NIC field test of jail classification systems, only one of three sites realized full implementation although the other two sites will fully implement once they open new facilities and acquire additional staff. System implementation proceeded differently at each site due to several conditions, including:

- Inability to separate inmates according to custody level due to facility design and crowded conditions.
- Unwillingness by staff at all levels to fully adopt the system due to an impending move into a new direct-supervision facility.
- Insufficient classification staff to screen and perform an initial custody assessment on all inmates booked into the facility.
- Unwillingness to change agency policies in a systematic manner that would allow total integration of the classification system.
- Limited in-house staff training on classification issues.
- Limited effort to ensure that classification forms were accurately filled out and monitored.

Necessary Conditions for OJC Implementation

Based on the lessons learned in evaluating OJC system implementation, it is possible to list the conditions necessary for success.

1. The administration must clearly define missions and goals of the detention facility.
2. The reasons for adopting an objective classification system should be understood and agreed upon by all staff, at all levels.

3. The various custody levels (minimum, medium, maximum) should be clearly defined and linked to commensurate security settings within the facility.
4. The administration must be willing to revise existing classification policies and procedures to enable effective integration of the objective system.
5. Sufficient resources and staff should be available to provide in-house training of all staff on the operation of the classification system.
6. Classification staff should have direct access to accurate and timely inmate information sources to support an objective classification system.
7. The jail must have adequate numbers of classification staff with the necessary skills and aptitude to perform a wide variety of classification-related tasks.

Finally, to ensure proper integration of an objective classification system, the administration's level of understanding of classification systems should be sophisticated enough to allow educated choices concerning the type of system chosen and procedures used during implementation. Ultimately, the jail administration must demonstrate a high level of commitment to classification by allocating sufficient resources and authority to staff responsible for classification.

Appendix A

Additive-Point OJC System Instruments

INMATE SCREENING FORM

I. IDENTIFICATION

II. RISK AND NEEDS SCREENING

1. SUBSTANCE ABUSE			4. MEDICAL HEALTH		
Signs of Being Under the Influence of Alcohol/Drugs	YES	NO	Current Treatment for Medical Problems	YES	NO
Signs of Alcohol/Drug Withdrawal	YES	NO	What:		
Type(s) of drug/alcohol used:			Use of Prescription Medication	YES	NO
Amount consumed/taken:			Type: Frequency: Amount:		
Time consumed/taken:			Special Prescribed Diet	YES	NO
Comments:			Recent Hospitalization	YES	NO
			Why: Where:		
			Recent Head Injury	YES	NO
2. SUICIDE RISK			Recent Blackouts/Fainting	YES	NO
Suicidal Threats	YES	NO	Unconscious	YES	NO
Previous Stress Experiences	YES	NO	Obvious Pain	YES	NO
Extreme Shame/Embarrassment	YES	NO	Chronic Cough	YES	NO
Extreme Nervousness/Restlessness	YES	NO	Chronic Diarrhea	YES	NO
Extreme Depression	YES	NO	Current Itching/Skin Rash	YES	NO
Withdrawn/Non-communicative	YES	NO	Bleeding/Draining Wounds	YES	NO
Comments:			Heart Condition	YES	NO
			Diabetes	YES	NO
			Epilepsy/Seizures	YES	NO
			Asthma	YES	NO
3. MENTAL HEALTH			History of Ulcers	YES	NO
Past Treatment for Mental Health Problems	YES	NO	History of/Exposure to Tuberculosis	YES	NO
Use of Psychotropic Medication	YES	NO	History of/Exposure to Venereal Disease	YES	NO
Type:			History of Hepatitis/Jaundice	YES	NO
Frequency:			AIDS/HIV	YES	NO
Amount:			Allergies	YES	NO
Abnormal Behavior	YES	NO	Current Pregnancy	YES	NO
Comments:			Use of Birth Control Pills	YES	NO
			Dental Problems	YES	NO
			Eye Glasses/Contact Lenses	YES	NO
			Physical Handicap	YES	NO
			Restricted Mobility	YES	NO
			Vermin	YES	NO
			Lesions/Bruises/Other Signs of Injury	YES	NO
			Fever/Swollen Lymph Nodes/Other Infectious Signs	YES	NO
		Comments:			

I understand that this screening interview has been conducted in my own best interest. I have answered all questions truthfully.

Inmate's Signature _____ Interviewer's Signature _____

INITIAL CUSTODY ASSESSMENT SCALE

I. IDENTIFICATION

Inmate Name (Last, First, MI)

Inmate ID #

Assessment Date

Classification Specialist

II. CUSTODY EVALUATION

1. **SEVERITY OF CURRENT CHARGES/CONVICTIONS** (Use the Severity of Offense Scale: Rate the most serious charge/conviction, including any detainers/warrants.) _____
Score (1)
- Low _____ 0
Moderate _____ 2
High _____ 5
Highest _____ 7
2. **SERIOUS OFFENSE HISTORY** (Use the Severity of Offense Scale: Rate the most serious prior conviction.) _____
Score (2)
- None or Low _____ 0
Moderate _____ 1
High _____ 4
Highest _____ 7
3. **ESCAPE HISTORY** (Excluding current charges.) _____
Score (3)
- No escape or attempts _____ 0
Walkaway or attempted escape from minimum security facility or failure to return from authorized absence _____ 3
Escape or attempted escape from medium or maximum security setting _____ 7
- MAXIMUM CUSTODY SCORE** (Add items 1, 2, and 3.) _____
With a score of 7 or higher, assign to maximum custody. (Always complete the remaining items, but do not total score if the inmate has already been assigned to maximum custody.) _____
Score (1-3)
4. **INSTITUTIONAL DISCIPLINARY HISTORY** _____
Score (4)
- None or minor with no segregation time _____ 0
One or more major disciplinary reports and/or time in segregation _____ 3
5. **PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS** (Excluding current charges.) _____
Score (5)
- None _____ 0
One _____ 2
Two or more _____ 4
6. **ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE** _____
Score (6)
- No social, economic, or legal problems related to abuse _____ 0
Abuse resulting in social, economic, or legal problems _____ 1
Abuse resulting in assaultive behavior _____ 3
7. **STABILITY FACTORS** (Deduct indicated points.) _____
Score (7)
- Age 26 or over _____ -1
Employed or attending school for 6 months prior to arrest _____ -1
Lived at same address for 12 or more months prior to arrest _____ -1

COMPREHENSIVE CUSTODY SCORE (Items 1-7) _____

Total Score (1-7)

III. SCALE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. **CUSTODY LEVEL INDICATED BY SCALE** Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Custody Classification Scale

7 or more points on items 1 - 3	Maximum
5 or fewer points on items 1 - 7	Minimum
5 or fewer points on items 1 - 7, with detainer/warrant	Medium
6 to 10 points on items 1 - 7	Medium
11 or more points on items 1 - 7	Maximum

B. **SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES** (Check all that apply to this inmate.)

<input type="checkbox"/> Protective custody	<input type="checkbox"/> Known management problem
<input type="checkbox"/> Psychological impairment	<input type="checkbox"/> Suspected drug trafficker
<input type="checkbox"/> Mental deficiency	<input type="checkbox"/> Suicide risk
<input type="checkbox"/> Escape threat	<input type="checkbox"/> Medical problem
<input type="checkbox"/> Serious violence threat	<input type="checkbox"/> Physical impairment
<input type="checkbox"/> Known gang affiliation	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse problem	

C. **OVERRIDE OF SCALE CUSTODY LEVEL IS RECOMMENDED** Code
1 = Yes 2 = No

If yes, give rationale (required): _____

D. **RECOMMENDED CUSTODY LEVEL** Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Specialist Signature _____ Date _____

IV. SUPERVISOR APPROVAL OF OVERRIDE

A. **RECOMMENDED CUSTODY LEVEL** Code
1 = Approved 2 = Disapproved (Complete B.)

B. **FINAL CUSTODY LEVEL** (if override disapproved) Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Rationale (required if different from recommendation): _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

V. RECOMMENDED HOUSING ASSIGNMENT: _____

CUSTODY REASSESSMENT SCALE

I. IDENTIFICATION

Inmate Name (Last, First, MI) _____	Inmate ID # _____	Reassessment Reason
Reassessment Date _____	Classification Specialist _____	1 = Routine
		2 = Disciplinary
		3 = Other

II. CUSTODY EVALUATION

1. **SEVERITY OF CURRENT CHARGES/CONVICTIONS** (Use the Severity of Offense Scale: Rate the most serious charge/conviction, including any detainers/warrants.) _____ **Score (1)**

Low _____ 0
Moderate _____ 1
High _____ 4
Highest _____ 6

2. **SERIOUS OFFENSE HISTORY** (Use the Severity of Offense Scale: Rate the most serious prior conviction.) _____ **Score (2)**

None or Low _____ 0
Moderate _____ 1
High _____ 3
Highest _____ 6

3. **ESCAPE HISTORY** (Excluding current charges.) _____ **Score (3)**

No escape or attempts _____ 0
Walkaway or attempted escape from minimum security facility or failure to return from authorized absence _____ 2
Escape or attempted escape from medium or maximum security setting _____ 6

MAXIMUM CUSTODY SCORE (Add items 1, 2, and 3.) _____ **Score (1-3)**

With a score of 7 or higher, assign to maximum custody. (Always complete the remaining items, but do not total score if the inmate has already been assigned to maximum custody.)

4. **NUMBER OF DISCIPLINARY CONVICTIONS** (Since last classification) _____ **Score (4)**

None _____ 0
One _____ 2
Two _____ 4
Three or more _____ 6

5. **MOST SERIOUS DISCIPLINARY CONVICTION** (Use the Disciplinary Severity Scale: Rate during this period of confinement.) _____ **Score (5)**

None _____ 0
Low _____ 1
Moderate _____ 2
High _____ 5
Highest _____ 7

6. **PRIOR FELONY CONVICTIONS** (Excluding current charges.) _____ **Score (6)**

None _____ 0
One _____ 1
Two or more _____ 2

7. **ALCOHOL/DRUG ABUSE** _____ **Score (7)**

No social, economic, or legal problems related to abuse _____ 0
Abuse resulting in social, economic, or legal problems _____ 1
Abuse resulting in assaultive behavior _____ 2

COMPREHENSIVE CUSTODY SCORE (Items 1-7) _____ **Total Score (1-7)**

III. SCALE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. **CUSTODY LEVEL INDICATED BY SCALE** Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Custody Classification Scale

7 or more points on items 1 - 3 Maximum
5 or fewer points on items 1 - 7 Minimum
5 or fewer points on items 1 - 7, with detainer/warrant Medium
6 to 10 points on items 1 - 7 Medium
11 or more points on items 1 - 7 Maximum

B. **SPECIAL MANAGEMENT ISSUES** (Check all that apply to this inmate.)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Protective custody | <input type="checkbox"/> Known management problem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Psychological impairment | <input type="checkbox"/> Suspected drug trafficker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mental deficiency | <input type="checkbox"/> Suicide risk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Escape threat | <input type="checkbox"/> Medical problem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serious violence threat | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical impairment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Known gang affiliation | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify): _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Substance abuse problem | |

C. **OVERRIDE OF SCALE CUSTODY LEVEL IS RECOMMENDED** Code
1 = Yes 2 = No

If yes, give rationale (required): _____

D. **RECOMMENDED CUSTODY LEVEL** Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Specialist Signature _____ Date _____

IV. SUPERVISOR APPROVAL OF OVERRIDE

A. **RECOMMENDED CUSTODY LEVEL** Code
1 = Approved 2 = Disapproved (Complete B.)

B. **FINAL CUSTODY LEVEL** (if override disapproved) Code
1 = Minimum 2 = Medium 3 = Maximum

Rationale (required if different from recommendation): _____

Supervisor Signature _____ Date _____

V. RECOMMENDED HOUSING ASSIGNMENT: _____

SEVERITY OF OFFENSE SCALE
(Sample)

HIGHEST: Aiding Escape
Aggravated Battery with Deadly Weapon
Armed Robbery (multiple, with injury)
Burglary with Assault
Escape (secure facility)
Inciting Riot
Kidnapping
Murder (1st°, 2nd°)
Sexual Battery (with violence, upon minor)

HIGH: Aggravated Assault
Aggravated Battery
Aggravated Child Abuse
Arson
Battery Law Enforcement Officer
Burglary (armed)
Extortion
False Imprisonment
False Report of Bombings
Controlled Substances (importation, trafficking)
Introduction of Contraband into Detention Facility
Manufacture of Explosives
Robbery (armed, strong armed)
Sexual Battery (other than capital or life felony)

MODERATE: Armed Trespass
Burglary
Carrying Concealed Firearm
Forgery
Grand Theft
Manslaughter
Sale, Delivery, Possession of Controlled Substance
Tampering with Witness
Worthless Checks (felony)
Welfare Fraud (felony)
Escape (non-secure facility)

LOW: Driving Under the Influence
Leaving the Scene of Accident
Battery
Carrying Concealed Weapon
Disorderly Conduct
Gambling
Offering to Commit Prostitution
Possession Marijuana (misdemeanor)
Possession Drug Paraphernalia
Petit Theft
Trespass
Worthless Check (misdemeanor)

DISCIPLINARY SEVERITY SCALE

(Sample)

HIGHEST:	Assaulting Any Person Fighting with Another Person Threatening Another with Bodily Harm, or Any Offense Against His Person or Property Extortion, Blackmail, Protection, Demanding or Receiving Money or Anything of Value in Return for Protection Engaging in Sexual Acts with Others Making Sexual Propositions or Threats to Another Escape Attempting or Planning Escape Setting a Fire Tampering With or Blocking Any Locking Device Adulteration of Any Food or Drink Possession or Introduction of Any Explosive or Ammunition Possession of Contraband Rioting Encouraging Others to Riot Engaging in, or Encouraging, a Group Demonstration Giving or Offering Any Official or Staff Member a Bribe or Anything of Value
HIGH:	Giving Money or Anything of Value to, or Accepting Money or Anything of Value from, a Prisoner, a Member of His Family, or His Friend Destroying, Altering, or Damaging Government Property or the Property of Another Stealing Misuse of Authorized Medication Loaning of Property or Anything of Value for Profit or Increased Return Possession of Anything Not Authorized for Retention or Receipt through Regular Institutional Channels Encouraging Others to Refuse to Work or to Participate in Work Stoppage Refusing to Obey an Order of Any Staff Member Insolence Toward a Staff Member Lying or Providing False Statement to a Staff Member Conduct that Disrupts or Interferes with the Security or Orderly Running of the Institution Counterfeiting, Forging, or Unauthorized Reproduction of Any Document, Article, Identification, Money, Security, or Official Paper Participating in Unauthorized Meeting or Gathering Failure to Stand Count Interfering with Taking of Count Making Intoxicants or Being Intoxicated

Tattooing or Self-Mutilation

DISCIPLINARY SEVERITY SCALE (continued)
(Sample)

- MODERATE:** Indecent Exposure
Mutilating or Altering Issued Clothing
Refusing to Work
Unexcused Absence from Work or Any Assignment
Malingering or Feigning Illness
Failure to Perform Work as Instructed by Supervisor
Being in an Unauthorized Area
Using Abusive or Obscene Language
Unauthorized Use of Mail or Telephone
Unauthorized Contacts with the Public
Correspondence or Conduct with a Visitor in Violation of Posted Regulations
- LOW:** Wearing a Disguise or Mask
Failure to Follow Safety or Sanitation Guidelines
Using Any Equipment or Machinery Contrary to Instructions or Posted Safety Standards
Smoking Where Prohibited
Gambling, Preparing or Conducting a Gambling Pool, Possession of Gambling Paraphernalia
Being Unsanitary or Untidy, Failure to Keep One's Person and Quarters in Accordance with Posted Standards

INITIAL INMATE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

REASSESSMENT

Inmate Name (Last, First, MI)

Inmate ID #

Reassessment Date

Assessment Date

Classification Specialist

Classification Specialist

Health

1 Limited physical capacity, acute illness; needs hospitalization or outpatient treatment	2 Mild disability or illness; outpatient treatment required; non-strenuous work	3 No problems that limit housing or work assignments	Code		Code
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Emotional Stability

1 Severe impairment; danger to self, others; needs hospital environment	2 Moderate impairment; requires monitoring, individual or group therapy	3 Emotionally stable; no indications of mental illness	Code		Code
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Education

1 5 th grade or below reading, math skills; needs remedial or special education classes	2 No high school diploma; needs adult education or GED program	3 High school diploma, GED, or equivalent	Code		Code
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Vocational Skills

1 No discernible skill; needs training	2 Limited skills; ability to hold semi-skilled position; needs training	3 Possesses marketable skill or trade	Code		Code
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Substance Abuse

1 Frequent abuse resulting in social, economic, or legal problems; needs treatment	2 Occasional abuse causing disruption of functioning	3 No disruption of functioning or legal difficulties	Code		Code
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Mental Ability

1 Serious disability limiting ability to function; needs sheltered living, work situations	2 Mild disability limiting educational, vocational potential	3 No discernible disability	Code		Code
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Other: (1) describe _____ Code _____

Initial Program Recommendations

	Program Code*	Priority Code*	Adjustment Code* (to programs at left)
1. _____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____

New Program Recommendations

	Program Code*	Priority Code*
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____

*See Program, Priority, and Adjustment Codes on back of form.

PROGRAM, PRIORITY, AND ADJUSTMENT CODES

Program Codes

This section would list and code all of the programs offered by the jail, such as GED, drug treatment, Alcoholics Anonymous, or computer science classes.

Priority Codes

- 1 = Urgent, immediate need
- 2 = Problem directly related to criminal behavior; high priority
- 3 = Problem resolution would enhance ability to succeed in community

Adjustment Codes

- 1 = Completed program satisfactorily
- 2 = Completed program unsatisfactorily
- 3 = Currently enrolled; satisfactory participation
- 4 = Currently enrolled; adjustment problems noted
- 5 = Inmate dropped from program; lack of interest, progress
- 6 = Inmate refused participation
- 7 = Program or program space not available

Appendix B

Decision-Tree OJC System Instruments

These forms and instructions are not available in an electronic format. Interested parties may e-mail Northpointe Institute for Public Management, Inc., at *www.northpointeinc.com*.