American Correctional Association

PUBLIC CORRECTIONAL POLICY ON CLASSIFICATION

1984-2

Introduction:
Proper classification of offenders promotes public, staff and offender safety. It is a continuing process basic to identifying and matching offender needs to correctional resources. Classification also serves as a tool for identifying gaps in correctional services. This continuing process involves all phases of correctional management.

Policy Statement:
Classification should balance the public's need for protection, the needs of offenders and the efficient and effective operation of the correctional system. In developing and administering its classification system, a correctional agency should:

A. Develop written classification policies that establish criteria specifying different levels of security, supervision and program involvement; establish procedures for documenting and reviewing all classification decisions and actions; describe the appeal process to be used by individuals subject to classification; and specify the time frames for monitoring and reclassifying cases;

B. Develop the appropriate range of resources and services to meet the identified risk and program needs of the population served;

C. Base classification decisions on a validated risk and needs assessment of objective information, including background material (criminal history, nature of offense, age, gender, social history, educational needs, medical/mental health needs, etc.), as well as information regarding the individual's current situation, adjustment and program achievement;

D. Train all personnel in the classification process and require specialized training for those directly involved in classification functions;

E. Use the classification process to assign individuals to different levels of control on the basis of valid criteria regarding risk (to self and others) and individual needs, matching these characteristics with appropriate security, level of supervision and program services;

F. Involve the offender directly in the classification process;

G. Assign appropriately trained staff to monitor individual classification plans for progress made and reclassification needs;
H. Objectively validate the classification process and instruments, assess on a planned basis the degree to which results meet written goals, and, as needed, refine the process and instruments; and

I. Provide for regular dissemination of classification information to all levels of correctional staff and ensure that all staff understands the nature and purpose of proper classification of offenders.

This Public Correctional Policy was unanimously ratified by the American Correctional Association Delegate Assembly at the Congress of Correction in San Antonio, TX, on Aug. 23, 1984. It was last reviewed, amended and reaffirmed at the 2019 ACA 149th Congress of Correction in Boston, MA on Aug. 3, 2019.