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AUDIT REPORT

PRISONER SECURITY AND PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
January 1, 1985 through June 30, 1987



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Franklin C. Pinkelman, C.P.A.
Auditor General

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STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE AUDITOR GENERAL

333 SOUTH CAPITOL AVENUE-SUITE A
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48913
(517) 373-3773

FRANKLIN C. PINKELMAN, C.P.A.
AUDITOR GENERAL
CHARLES S. JONES, C.P.A.
DEPUTY

October 20, 1987

Michigan Corrections Commission
Stevens T. Mason Building
Lansing, Michigan

Dear Commissioners:

This is our report on the audit of Prisoner Security and Program Classification, Department of Corrections, for the period January 1, 1985 through June 30, 1987.

This report contains our executive digest, description of agency, audit objectives and scope of audit, and comments and recommendations.

Our comments and recommendations are organized by major programs or major topics.

We appreciate the courtesy and cooperation extended to our auditors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Franklin C. Pinkelman".

Franklin C. Pinkelman, C.P.A.
Auditor General

Executive Digest

We examined the Department of Corrections Prisoner Security and Program Classification programs. One purpose of our examination was to evaluate prisons' efforts to review and classify prisoners to security levels which are consistent with safety and protection of employees and the public. Another purpose of our examination was to evaluate prisons' efforts to review and classify prisoners to programs (school, work, etc.), and to monitor accomplishment of program goals.

The department developed policies for identifying prisoners' security levels. Because of the expansion of the prisoner population and lack of sufficient programs in recent years, the policies provide for waiver and departure from security levels. Based on our examination of five prisons and the camp program, 45% of the prisoners were assigned to less restrictive security. The State has an ongoing plan to construct additional prisons. Our examination also indicated a need to improve controls over approval of departures and waivers of established security levels.

Policies were developed several years ago for prisons to review and monitor prisoners' progress toward accomplishment of program goals and adjustment to incarceration. The policies are comprehensive enough to accomplish the monitoring task. However, the monitoring task has not been very successful for a number of reasons. Prisoners are often transferred because of lack of prison space. Compliance with policies which require monitoring has not been evaluated by the Bureau of Correctional Facilities. Commitment by the Bureau of Correctional Facilities and the prisons to reporting and monitoring prisoners' accomplishment of program goals has not been demonstrated.

An official response to our audit comments and recommendations is to be developed by the department and distributed in accordance with Section 18.1462 of the Compiled Laws and Department of Management and Budget Administrative Manual procedure 2-2-02.

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i

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PRISONER SECURITY AND PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

INTRODUCTION

	<u>Page</u>
Executive Digest	i
Report Letter	ii
Description of Agency	1
Audit Objectives and Scope of Audit	2

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Security Classification	3
1. Documenting Authorization for Departures and Waivers From Security Classification Levels	3
2. Unauthorized Assignment of Prisoners to Public Works Projects	4
3. Security Classification Screens Deficiencies	4
4. Input of Security Classification Data Into the Corrections Management Information System (CMIS)	6
5. Use of Security Classification Data and CMIS	7
Program Classification	7
6. Preparing Program Classification Reports	8
7. Annual Monitoring of Prisoner Progress	9
8. Obtaining Prisoner Progress Reports	10
9. Program Classification at the Camps	10
10. Program Activity Records	11
Risk Factors	12
11. Revision of Prisoner Risk Factors Because of Major Misconduct	12
Transfers	12
12. Prisoner Transfers Between Prisons	13
13. Control Over Camp Transfers	13

Description of Agency

Act 380, P.A. 1965 (Sections 16.375 - 16.379 of the Compiled Laws), established the Department of Corrections. The department is administered by a commission of five members appointed for four-year terms by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The commission appoints a director who serves as the executive head. The department is responsible for the incarceration, training, education, and treatment of adult offenders.

This audit covers our examination of the security and program classification functions.

Security Classification:

Prisoners are classified to a security level to designate the facility that they are to be housed in during incarceration. All offenders incarcerated are screened as to security needs during the reception center processing. A screening method is used to identify each prisoner's escape risk and level of restraint (security level) required to maintain order and protect other prisoners and staff from harm.

During the incarceration period, each prisoner's security classification screen is to be updated at least annually to determine eligibility for reduced security or need to increase the security level.

Program Classification:

Prisoners are classified as to program goals. The reception centers evaluate prisoners' program needs and, with the prisoners, develop program recommendations, such as academic and vocational education, work assignments, and counseling. The programs are designed to help prisoners adjust to incarceration and to prepare them for release to the community. The prisons, at least annually, are to review the prisoners' progress toward program goals and update program goals.

Audit Objectives and Scope of Audit

Our audit of Prisoner Security and Program Classification, Department of Corrections, had the following objectives:

1. To review significant administrative controls to determine the prisons' effectiveness in ensuring that:
 - a. Prisoners are assigned to security levels commensurate with designated safety and security criteria.
 - b. Prisoners are provided programs recommended by the reception centers and by prison staff with concurrence of the prisoners. Examples of programs include education, work, and counseling.
 - c. Prisoners' behavior and progress toward completion of programs are timely monitored.
2. To assess compliance with governing statutes, administrative rules, department policies, and operating procedures.

Our audit scope was to examine the prisoner security and program classification records maintained by the Department of Corrections for the period January 1, 1985 through June 30, 1987 at five prisons and the camp program. Our examination was made in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and, accordingly, included such tests of the records and such other auditing procedures as we considered necessary in the circumstances.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECURITY CLASSIFICATION

The department has provided that prisoners shall be placed in the least restrictive security level commensurate with public and employee protection and available capacity.

The department developed a screening method to identify prisoners' security levels and to classify prisoners for placement to a prison. The prisoner security levels are: community status, minimum, medium, close, maximum, and administrative segregation.

Policy directive DWA 30.02 allows for departures and waivers from the established security level. Departures may be allowed for good behavior. Waivers may be allowed for lack of bed space.

Many prisoners have been assigned to less restrictive security levels in variance with levels established by department policy. This has occurred because of the large increase in felons incarcerated over the last few years and the consequential lack of bed space.

We reviewed departmental EDP reports which itemized departures and waivers from security levels for the five prisons and the camp program included in our examination. At the date of our examination, we noted that the population of the five prisons and the camp program was 6,882. The number of prisoners assigned to less restrictive security than provided for by policy was 3,126.

Capital outlay funds have been appropriated to build additional prisons and thus help resolve prison crowding and related security classification waivers.

Documenting Authorization for Departures and Waivers From Security Classification Levels

1. We evaluated controls over security classification departures and waivers. Our examination was confined to five prisons and the camp program.

We examined documentation in support of 69 security classification departures and 110 waivers. Wardens or designees may authorize reduction of one security level. The prison must obtain approval from the Bureau of Correctional Facilities for reduction of two security levels. Our tests disclosed that 29 departures and 46 waivers were made without documented approval by the designated persons. Prison staff informed us that verbal approval was obtained but it was not followed up by documented approval.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities monitor controls over approval of departures and waivers of security classifications.

Unauthorized Assignment of Prisoners to Public Works Projects

2. The department developed a public works program to provide meaningful job assignments for prisoners and to provide government agencies with labor pools. The prisoners are under the supervision of prison staff. Policy directive BCF 34.01 provides that public works participants must qualify for minimum security.

We identified 161 prisoners at two camps and one prison who were working in the public works program. Thirty-six were classified to medium or higher security. The prisons and camps did not document departure from medium or higher security classification in accordance with instructions attached to policy directive DWA 30.02.

We recommend that camp control and prisons discontinue assigning prisoners to public works programs who have not been classified to minimum security level or document departure in accordance with instructions attached to policy directive DWA 32.02.

Security Classification Screens Deficiencies

3. Prisons are required to annually, or at date of transfer, evaluate prisoners' security levels by using the screening method prescribed by instructions attached to policy directive DWA 30.02.

Our review of the prisoner security classification screens disclosed the following examples of deficiencies:

- a. The prisons do not always document a reason for a departure or waiver from the security level established in accordance with predetermined criteria. Our review of prisoners' security classification screens disclosed that 44 of the 147 screens reviewed did not indicate a reason for the departures and/or waivers.

The department's security classification screens require prisons to document departure and waiver reasons. The reason provides information to the approving personnel to help ensure that the prisoner is housed at the appropriate prison.

We recommend that the prison document the reason for the departure and waiver from the security classification level established in performing security classification screens.

- b. Security classification screening methods include consideration for confinement and management concerns. Confinement refers to physical restraint needed to reduce escape risk. Management refers to restraint needed to maintain order and to protect prisoners and staff from harm.

The prisons do not always determine the prisoner's confinement and management levels correctly. Our review of security classification screens disclosed that the prisons made errors in determining 48 of 167 prisoner security levels. Controls were not in place to help prevent errors. The following are examples of reasons for errors:

- (1) Counselors did not include in their determinations all major misconduct tickets.
- (2) Counselors did not give prisoners six-month credit for being free from major misconduct and for satisfactory program progress.
- (3) Counselors did not disclose on screen forms that the prisoners had a major pending felony charge.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities revise policy directive DWA 30.02 to include provision for review of security classification screens for accuracy.

- c. The counselors do not always prepare the prisoners' security classification screens timely. Policy directive DWA 30.02 requires at a minimum that prisoners be rescreened every 12 months or before they are transferred.

Our review disclosed that the prisons did not annually rescreen 33 of 159 prisoners due for security classification screens. Also, the facilities did not rescreen 37 of 155 prisoners before they were transferred. Facilities should rescreen prisoners' security classifications timely to help ensure that prisoners are placed in the least restrictive security level commensurate with public and employee protection.

We recommend that the counselors prepare security classification screens timely per policy directive DWA 30.02.

Input of Security Classification Data Into the Corrections Management Information System (CMIS)

4. The department has not established procedures to ensure that prisons accurately enter data from security classification screen forms into the department's automated CMIS.

The prisons' records offices or housing offices periodically update security classification screens for each prisoner. Prisons can use CMIS data to select eligible prisoners for transfer to lower security and to determine when a prisoner security classification screen is due. Therefore, accurate and reliable data in CMIS is essential.

We obtained CMIS reports itemizing prisoner security level data and compared this data with security classification screen forms included in 166 prisoner files. The CMIS reports for 54 prisoners did not agree with the most current screen forms. The cause for some of the variances was failure to enter the most current screen form changes into CMIS.

We have discussed the lack of internal controls and reliability of CMIS in prior audits of prisons and of the Data Processing Division.

WE AGAIN RECOMMEND THAT THE DATA PROCESSING DIVISION AND THE BUREAU OF CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES ESTABLISH CONTROLS TO ENSURE THAT PRISONS ACCURATELY ENTER DATA INTO CMIS.

Use of Security Classification Data and CMIS

5. Several counselors located at prisons we visited maintain manual prisoner lists that indicate security classification information and the most current date of the security classification screen. This information is also provided on two CMIS reports: Security Classification Review Listing (CB-091) and Numeric Classification/Assignment Listing (CB-841). The CMIS reports provide information that the counselors can use to determine when prisoners are eligible to be transferred to a reduced custody level, and to schedule prisoners' security classification screens timely.

We determined that the classification offices at the prisons receive the CMIS reports; however, many of the counselors are not aware of the reports and are not provided copies of the reports because the reports are not printed in an efficient format.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities and the Data Processing Division review the format of CMIS reports CB-091 and CB-841 and make them more useful and available to prison counselors.

PROGRAM CLASSIFICATION

Felons sentenced to prison are processed at reception centers where data is collected and summarized to complete a transcase file. The transcase file includes recommendations for programs to be provided at the prisons. The programs are intended to help prisoners adjust to incarceration and prepare them for release. Programs include education, work assignments, mental and physical health services, substance abuse, and behavior counseling.

Policy directive BCF 40.01 states that the program classification objective is to help ensure that prisoners participate in programs which assist them during incarceration

and subsequent release and to provide a record of program accomplishment for decision making and research. Prisons are responsible for program classification.

Program classification actions take three forms: initial classification, reclassification, and program reviews. Initial classification is performed when the prisoner arrives at a prison. The classification director assigns programs based on transcase recommendations. Institutional requirements for workers and program availability are also considered. Reclassification is performed when a change in programs is warranted. Program reviews are performed to measure and document the prisoners' progress on completing programs. Program reviews should occur annually. Program assignments and progress should be documented on the program classification report (CSJ175).

Preparing Program Classification Reports

6. We reviewed prisoner files (maintained at the records offices and by counselors) for compliance with department policy on program classification. We observed deficiencies in preparing the program classification at all prisons visited:
 - a. Departmental operating procedure BCF 40.04 requires prisons to record reception center recommendations on the program classification report (form CSJ175) for the classification directors' use in making actual assignments. The prisons and the camp program did not record some reception center recommendations on the program classification reports in 45 of 167 files reviewed or document the reasons the recommendations were not recorded. For example, the prisons did not record if a program was not available at the prison or if a program was completed.

We recommend that the prisons designate reception center recommendations on the program classification report and document the reason that the prisoner was not assigned to the program.

- b. The prisons did not record progress toward completion of program recommendations on the program classification report in 95 of 167 files reviewed. Operating procedure BCF 40.04 requires prisons to document prisoners' progress on the program classification report. We noted that, in one case, a prisoner was assigned to the GED school program even though he had completed GED about 1½ years earlier. This was not disclosed in program classification reports.

Documenting progress is essential for identifying potential adjustment problems and assisting the prisoners in preparing for release.

We recommend that the prisons document progress on all program classification reports as required by operating procedure BCF 40.04.

- c. Some program classification reports which did include progress were not accurate. Errors can be attributed to classification directors recording progress based on verbal information from the prisoner rather than from supporting documentation. For example, one program classification report indicated that the prisoner completed GED. The file lacked a certificate and test scores. The school at the prison informed us that the prisoner took the GED test four times but never passed.

We recommend that the classification officers and counselors obtain documentation when recording progress toward completion of programs to support verbal information from prisoners and from other sources.

Annual Monitoring of Prisoner Progress

- 7. The counselors do not annually review prisoner progress toward completion of program goals. Our review of 156 prisoner files disclosed that 133 did not contain annual program classification reviews. In some instances, reviews had not been made for three to six years. The Bureau of Correctional Facilities has not established controls to verify that counselors complete annual classification reviews.

Operating procedure BCF 40.04 requires the counselor to perform a classification review when 12 months have passed since the last classification action. A classification review includes the preparation of a program classification report, including comments about prisoner progress on completing programs and a timetable for program involvement.

Our review disclosed that program reclassifications are being performed, but counselors rarely complete annual classification reviews and evaluate prisoner progress.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities develop controls to ensure that counselors perform annual classification reviews for all prisoners to guide and encourage prisoners in completing program goals.

Obtaining Prisoner Progress Reports

8. Program supervisors do not prepare program activity reports to document prisoner progress. Our review disclosed that 105 of 159 files did not contain sufficient program activity reports to determine the prisoners' progress during incarceration.

Policy directive BCF 40.02 requires that prisons report prisoner program performance on a systematic basis on form CSX363. However, the department did not define when program activity reports should be prepared.

The frequency should coincide with preparation of program and security classification reviews. For example, frequency for preparation of program activity reports could be related to when the prisoner completes or otherwise terminates a program, when the prisoner is transferred to another prison, or at a minimum of every six months.

We recommend that:

- a. The Bureau of Correctional Facilities revise policy directive BCF 40.02 to define when program activity reports should be prepared.
- b. Prison program supervisors prepare form CSX363 timely to coincide with preparation of program and security classification reviews.

Program Classification at the Camps

9. Individual camps do not prepare a program classification report (CSJ175) upon prisoner arrival. As a result, we could not determine whether prisoners were placed into reception center recommended programs, timeliness of program classification, and efforts to monitor prisoners' progress toward accomplishment of program goals.

Camp program classification is decentralized and program assignments are made by a counselor at each camp rather than by the classification director at camp

control. The classification director does not test and evaluate compliance with department policies on program classification.

We recommend that each camp prepare a program classification report on prisoner arrival as required by operating procedure BCF 40.04.

We also recommend that the classification officer coordinate prisoner placement into programs recommended by reception centers and prisons to ensure that prisoners participate in appropriate programs.

Program Activity Records

10. An automated program activity reporting (PAR) system was developed in 1979. The purpose of the automated system was to provide a historical record for monitoring prisoners' progress toward completion of programs recommended by reception centers and prisons with concurrence from the prisoners.

The PAR system was implemented but was discontinued because of various problems.

The current manual record system does not provide for a single historical record of programs recommended, started, and completed. According to policy and procedure, prison staff are required to document, on a program classification report (CSJ175), recommended programs, starts, and completions each time that a prisoner is transferred, classified to another program, and reviewed as part of the annual program classification reviews. This requirement is not fully complied with, which we discuss in preceding audit findings, and the repetition causes inefficient use of prison staff time.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities:

- a. Develop a single historical record to document programs recommended, started, and completed and, then, revise applicable policies and procedures accordingly.
- b. Request the Data Processing Division to re-evaluate the automated program activity reporting system for reactivation.

RISK FACTORS

The department established risk factors to classify incoming male prisoners according to the probability of their committing property and/or assaultive offenses. The prisoner risk factors are based on the prisoners' juvenile and adult criminal history and behavior while incarcerated. Risk factors are initially identified and documented by a reception center. Risk factors range from very low to very high. The risk factors are used to determine the prisoners' security classification level and to determine if and when the prisoners become eligible for community residential placement and temporary release from prison.

Revision of Prisoner Risk Factors Because of Major Misconduct

- II. Policy directive DWA 30.06 requires prisons to revise the risk factors for non-bondable major misconduct. Failure to revise risk factors could allow the inappropriate transfer of prisoners to reduced security levels, including the community residential program.

The prisons have not established controls to ensure that the risk factors are revised when the prisoner is found guilty of a non-bondable major misconduct. Non-bondable tickets are issued when the prisoner violates certain prison rules which pertain to assaultive behavior, such as fighting, sexual assault, incite to riot, and assault and battery.

We examined revision of risk factors at five prisons and the camp program for the period of our audit. Staff did not revise risk factors for 23 prisoners guilty of non-bondable major misconduct.

We recommend that the Bureau of Correctional Facilities establish controls to ensure that a guilty finding of a non-bondable major misconduct shall result in review of the prisoner's risk factors, and revision of the risk factors when appropriate.

TRANSFERS

Prisoners are transferred among prisons and security levels. Transfer to reduced security is initiated when a prisoner follows rules of appropriate behavior and has

served sufficient time to qualify. Transfer to increased security is initiated when a prisoner violates rules of behavior. Lateral security level transfers are made when a prisoner needs programs available at another prison or for protection purposes.

Transfers to increased security and lateral transfers generally require the approval of the Bureau of Correctional Facilities in addition to approval by authorized prison personnel. Security reduction transfers generally require only authorization by the prison.

Prisoner Transfers Between Prisons

12. Prisons transfer many prisoners each month to other prisons. Transfers between prisons should be authorized in accordance with policy directive BCF 34.01. To control unnecessary transfers and to provide the authorized signer with a basis to approve or disapprove the transfer, the reason for the transfer is to be stated on transfer form CSJ134. We reviewed 155 transfers at five prisons and the camp program and noted:

- a. Prison staff did not obtain proper approval before transferring some prisoners. The prisons obtained verbal approval for 54 transfers and did not follow up with written approval. Twenty-four transfers were either not signed or were not signed by authorized personnel.
- b. Prison staff did not document a reason or an appropriate reason for 31 transfers.

We recommend that prisons document proper approval and reason for transfers on form CSJ134.

Control Over Camp Transfers

13. Our analysis of prisoner classification files initially disclosed that the camps excessively transfer prisoners between camps. We requested a report of transfers from the CMIS data files. This report confirmed our initial analysis. For example, one prisoner was transferred 10 times in 15 months, one prisoner 10 times in 24 months, and one prisoner 11 times in 21 months. A camp administrator informed us that camp transfers may total 1,200 per month which is about 45% of the prisoners in the camps.

The classification director at camp control is to coordinate and approve transfers between camps. We could not determine the basis for approval because the reason usually was not documented on form CSJ175. Camp personnel informed us that some of the reasons were related to behavior problems and availability of programs and services.

Excessive transfers between camps create work for both security and administrative staff and cause interruption in prisoner participation in programs.

We recommend that camp control require:

- a. The camps to document the reason for prisoner transfer requests on form CSJ175.
- b. The classification director to closely monitor transfers.