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JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

DOCUMENT: SURVEY OF JAIL CLASSIFICATION

A PRACTICAL APPROACH

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SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

SURVEY OF JAIL CLASSIFICATION SYSTEMS

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SUMMARY

The National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and Correctional Services Group, Inc. (CSG), conducted a national survey of jails to determine current classification practices. This survey was conducted in the spring of 1987 as part of a comprehensive project initiated by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) to develop, implement and evaluate an objective classification system in selected jails. The survey was designed to provide information regarding classification factors that were common to a substantial number of jail systems. In addition to determining what information jails were currently using to classify inmates, the survey attempted to address the policies, procedures and management of the classification systems, including their relationship to facility design.

Sixty facilities representing 32 large jails (ADP 250 or more), 23 medium jails (ADP 50-249) and 5 small jails (ADP less than 50) responded to the survey. Unsuccessful efforts were made to improve the response rate from small facilities. During follow-up telephone contacts with several small jails that declined to participate in the survey, project staff were advised that state standards provided sufficient guidelines for jail operation and, given their limited bed space, the jails saw little value in an objective classification system.

The majority of the responding jails were administered by the county sheriff (46 out of 60). The mean number of prisoners booked into the large facilities during the previous year was 35,280. For

the medium jails, this figure was 5,876; an average of 824 prisoners were booked into the small jails. Twenty-four of the sixty jails indicated that at least 20 percent of their population had alcohol or drug problems. However, the majority of jails reported that the other management problems (i.e., medical, mental health, violence, suicide risk, protective custody needs or overt, aggressive homosexual behavior) were present in less than 10 percent of their population. Although these problems occur relatively infrequently, a high level of management and operational resources are required to address them.

Facilities identified their primary approach to classification as one of the following: assessment of experienced staff; checklist/questionnaire; score sheet; decision tree; or some other approach. Assessment by experienced staff was the most frequent approach (26 out of 58 jails responding). The remaining 32 jails referenced one of the other classification approaches, which tend to be more structured and generally more objective than sole reliance on staff assessment. There was some evidence that jails with newer classification systems were more likely to be using one of these more structured methods. Two thirds of the jails with classification systems that had been operational less than five years were using some approach other than assessment of experienced staff. This finding was reversed for jails having classification systems in place longer than five years: two thirds indicated staff assessment was their primary approach. From an architectural standpoint, two thirds of the jails describing facilities with a

linear/intermittent observation design utilized staff assessment as their primary approach, while only approximately one third of the facilities with a podular design were using staff assessments.

Regardless of the approach to classification, most systems (51 jails; 85%) reported they had some method of overriding the classification results. Forty-four of these jails indicated overrides required supervisory approval and thirty-six systems required written justification for an override. The most frequent reason for overrides was insufficient bed space at the designated custody level.

Items consistently included in jail classification systems related to the nature of the offense; warrants/detainer; adult prior records/ sentencing; history of violence; age; cooperativeness; and special medical, mental health, suicide risk or protective custody issues. Inmate program and service needs in the areas of intellectual problems, vocational or work skills were routinely assessed in only about one third of the jails. Educational factors were addressed in about one half of the jails.

Fifty-six jails (93%) identified staff and inmate safety as one of their top three classification goals. Additional goals listed as top three priorities by more than thirty-five percent of the jails were: public safety; standards compliance; placing inmates in the least restrictive custody; and providing consistent classification. Goals related to determining inmate needs and custody level changes were among the top three priorities for only eight jails. Four jails ranked enhanced utilization of jail

resources among their top three goals. Only two jails considered
facilitating the rehabilitation/reintegration of inmates as high
a priority for their classification system.

Facilities generally felt positive about the success of their
classification system, with few indicating their system was having
a negative impact on jail operation. The majority of respondents
judged the impact as positive in most areas or, in selected areas,
indicated classification was having no impact at all.
Interestingly, 62 and 67 percent of the jails reported
classification had a positive impact on staff and inmate morale,
respectively. Only three percent stated their classification
system had a negative impact in these areas. When evaluating the
impact of classification on "paperwork" requirements in their
facility, respondents provided no strong pattern. Thirty-three
percent of the jails indicated the impact on paperwork was
positive, twenty-five percent reported no impact, twenty percent
said the impact had been negative and twenty-two percent gave no
response.

INTRODUCTION

Under the auspices of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) and Correctional Services Group, Inc. (CSG), participated in a collaborative effort to develop an objective jail classification system. Together with the design of classification scales and forms, the project included implementation and evaluation in selected demonstration sites, a comprehensive review of the literature and a national survey to determine current approaches to classification. The survey was conducted during the spring of 1987, and the results are summarized in this report.

The history of jail classification is rather brief when compared to the more established prison classification systems. Only in the area of pretrial screening instruments, which began over thirty years ago with the Vera point system, have jails utilized objective instruments on a wide basis. While many current jail classification systems may not use structured classification scales, classification of some type occurs in all facilities. The survey was designed to provide information regarding those variables that were common to the jail systems. In addition to determining what information jails were currently using to classify inmates, the survey addressed the policies, procedures and management of the classification systems, including which staff completed the classification forms and the relationship of classification to facility design. This information was intended to serve as frame of reference for the entire project.

METHODOLOGY

Given the nature of the information desired and the number of agencies involved, the survey was designed as a mail rather than a telephone survey. The survey methodology discussed here addresses the areas of site selection, design and administration, and analysis.

Site Selection

Project staff sought to identify 45 to 60 jails representing large, medium and small facilities to participate in the survey. For purposes of site selection, a large jail was identified as one with an average daily population (ADP) in excess of 250 inmates, while the ADP in a medium facility ranged between 50 and 249. Jails were identified as small facilities when their ADP was less than 50. The list of possible jail sites was developed from facilities that NIC, NCCD and CSG had previously worked with and from the National Jail and Adult Detention Directory, published by the American Correctional Association.

Because the survey was considered critical to project development and because it was expected to be quite exhaustive, project staff targeted specific sites that, for various reasons, were expected to be interested in the project. To further assure an adequate response rate for the final survey, a preliminary letter was mailed to 215 jails in November of 1986 (Appendix A).

This letter explained the project and asked that an enclosed postcard be returned if the jail administrator would be willing to participate in the upcoming survey. The 215 facilities represented 57 large jails, 55 medium jails and 99 small jails, as well as four state-operated facilities. Positive responses to this letter were received from 48 large jails (84%); 34 medium jails (62%); 12 small jails (12%); and three state-operated facilities (75%). In an effort to determine why the preliminary response was so low from small facilities, telephone follow-up was conducted with six small jail administrators. Project staff were advised that these small jails found that state standards provided sufficient guidelines for their operation and, given their limited bed space, they saw little value in an objective classification system. Despite this feedback, project staff made another effort to increase small jail participation by sending 50 additional letters to small jails selected from a list of facilities participating in a previous NIC jail project. The response rate did not improve.

Survey Design and Administration

Project staff designed the survey to collect "check-off" information rather than longer narrative discussions. Where necessary, space was provided for explanations. The survey instrument was drafted by project staff and pilot tested in January 1987 in four county jails: Jackson County, Missouri; Wyandotte County, Kansas; Broward County, Florida; and Lane County, Oregon. Project staff from CSG provided on-site follow-up and discussion

with the Missouri and Kansas jails. CSG project staff completed follow-up with the remaining two facilities by telephone. Based on this pilot study input, the survey questionnaire was shortened, clarified and finalized as provided in Appendix B.

After obtaining survey approval from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget, survey questionnaires were mailed to the sites listed in Appendix C during April 1987. These participating sites consisted of those jails that responded positively to the preliminary letter (48 large, 34 medium, 12 small and 3 state-operated). Table 1 summarizes the responses to the preliminary letter and the survey. Of the 97 surveys mailed, 60* were returned and used in the analysis, for an overall response rate of 62 percent. As could be expected from the preliminary letter, of the small, medium and large facilities, the response rate was lowest for the small jails (42 percent; N=5). The response rate was comparable between the large and small facilities, with 31 of the large facilities (65%) and 23 of the medium facilities (68%) responding. Of the three state-operated facilities participating in the survey, only one returned a completed questionnaire. During the analysis this questionnaire was grouped with the large facilities.

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*Two additional surveys were received, but excluded from the analysis. One was received after analysis was in progress and the second had several pages missing.

	TABLE 1				

Jail Survey Participation and
Response Rate

Facility Size	Preliminary Letter			Survey	
	Mailed	Positive Responses		Mailed	Received
	N	N	(%)	N	N (%)
Large	57	48	(84)	48	31 (65)
Medium	55	34	(62)	14	23 (68)
Small	99	12	(12)	12	5 (42)
State	4	3	(75)	3	1 (33)
Total	215	97	(45)	97	60 (62)

Clearly from both the preliminary letter and survey responses, the greatest interest in structured classification processes was from facilities with average daily populations in excess of 50. The smaller facilities perceived less need for an objective classification system and, despite significant efforts on the part of project staff, significant representation from the small jail category was not obtained.

Data Analysis

Surveys received prior to July 1, 1987, were keyed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis included frequencies for survey items and cross tabulations of responses to selected items. The results of this analysis are summarized in the next section of this report.

RESULTS

This section presents the survey responses. Results are reported in a series of tables with a brief narrative. While the sample is focused primarily on large- and medium-sized facilities, it does represent the responses of 60 jails out of an original solicitation of 215, which had interest in issues related to classification.

Profile of Facility Operations

Table 2 summarizes the management responsibility for each of the facilities. All of the small jails and approximately three fourths of the large and medium jails were managed by the county sheriff. One medium and five large jails were managed by a county department of corrections. One large jail was managed by the state department of corrections, and seven jails (three large and four medium) did not respond to the question or designated the management structure as "other."

TABLE 2

Responsibility for Jail Management

| Management Responsibility | Facility Size | | | |
	Large	Medium	Small	Total
County Sheriff's Office	72%	78%	100%	77%
County Department of Corrections	16%	4%	--	10%
State Department of Corrections	3%	--	--	2%
Other/Unknown	9%	17%	--	12%
(N=60)				

The participating jails also reported whether or not they were under litigation, especially a court order or consent decree that involved inmate classification. Table 3 shows that ten large jails (31%), two medium jails (9%), and two small jails (40%) were under litigation.

TABLE 3

Current Litigation Status

	Facility Size			
Litigation Status	Large	Medium	Small	Total
Under litigation	31%	9%	40%	
Not under litigation	69%	91%	60%	
(N=60)				

The jail population includes a diverse range of offenders. Table 4 summarizes the average daily population (ADP) reported by all facilities, divided into several inmate categories. Pretrial inmates represented the highest ADP for all three facility sizes. The lowest ADP was reported for sentenced inmates awaiting transfer to prison.

TABLE 4

Average Daily Population of Inmates by Inmate Types

| | Facility Size | | | | | |
| | Large | | Medium | | Small | |
Inmate Type	Mean	(N)*	Mean	(N)	Mean	(N)
Pretrial	959	(31)	74	(21)	16	(5)
Sentenced-Locally	522	(30)	57	(21)	14	(5)
Sentenced-Awaiting Transfer State Prison	91	(28)	14	(16)	2	(1)
Held on Warrant/ Probable Cause	318	(11)	18	(12)	7	(2)
Held on Probation/ Parole Violation	101	(25)	10	(16)	4	(2)

*Not all facilities responded to each item. "N" indicates the number of facilities that reported data for each type of inmate.

Jails reported the number of individuals booked during the previous fiscal or calendar year. These results are summarized in Table 5, with the large facilities reporting a mean of 35,280 bookings; the medium facilities, 5,376; and the small facilities, 824.

TABLE 5

Inmates Booked During Previous Year

| | Facility Size | | |
Number Booked	Large	Medium	Small
Mean	35,281	5,376	824
Median	23,500	4,573	779
Minimum	3,700	1,450	500
Maximum	230,167	12,978	1,239

(N=58)

In combination with the number of admissions, the average length

of stay exerts the greatest influence on the ADP. Forty-one jails
reported the average length of stay for pretrial and sentenced
inmates. As indicated by Table 6, larger facilities had longer
length of stay, most likely because larger facilities have
resources and governing regulations that allow longer stays. In
each facility category, sentenced prisoners stayed longer than
pretrial.

TABLE 6

Average Length of Stay
(in days)

| | Facility Size | | |
Inmate Type	Large	Medium	Small
Pretrial			
Mean # days	59	48	21
Median # days	43	15	14
Minimum # days	3	2	3
Maximum # days	182	212	60
(N=42)			
Sentenced			
Mean # days	139	77	86
Median # days	120	45	18
Minimum # days	7	10	3
Maximum # days	850	182	303
(N=42)			

Excluding consecutive sentences, respondents were asked to
indicate the length of time an inmate could be sentenced to their
facility. As shown in Table 7, the majority of jails reported
their maximum length of stay was 12 months.

TABLE 7

Maximum Length of Sentence Allowed

	Facility Size		
Length of Stay	Large	Medium	Small
Less than 12 months	3%	--	--
Twelve months	69%	83%	60%
More than 12 months	19%	17%	40%
Unknown	9%	--	--
(N=60)			

Jails typically confine inmates who present a variety of management problems. While Table 8 reveals these problems are found in a relatively low proportion of the facility populations, the fact that special problems are present to any degree requires special jail management procedures and policies. Forty-seven percent of the jails reported that at least 20 percent of their population had alcohol problems while forty percent of the jails reported drug abuse as a problem for at least 20 percent of their population. In the remaining problem areas, most jails reported all management problems to be present in 5 percent or less of their population.

TABLE 8

Proportion of Jails Reporting Management Problems
in Current Population

Estimated Percentage of Current Population

Management Problems	0% -5%	6% -10%	11% -20%	Over 20%	Unknown
Serious medical needs	90%	8%	2%	--	--
Serious mental health needs	68%	13%	13%	5%	--
High escape risk	83%	12%	3%	--	2%
Extreme violence risk	78%	15%	3%	2%	2%
Suicide risk	78%	17%	3%	--	2%
Mental retardation	88%	5%	2%	--	5%
Protective custody	75%	18%	3%	2%	2%
Aggressive/overt homosexual	93%	5%	--	2%	--
Alcohol abuse	18%	8%	20%	47%	7%
Drug abuse	18%	15%	20%	40%	7%
Aged and infirm	85%	8%	--	--	7%
Other	7%	3%	--	--	90%

(N = 60)

Jail budgets and staff sizes understandably have a direct
positive relationship to facility size. Table 9 outlines the
average budgets for each facility size. Large jails reported a
mean budget of over $17,000,000, with budgets ranging from a low
of $2,571,954 to a high of $102,500,000. Budgets for medium jails
ranged from $600,000 to $5,400,000, with a mean of $2,077,092. The
small jails had an average budget of $388,573, with a range from
$107,884 to $732,000.

TABLE 9

Current Annual Budget for Correctional Operations

	Facility Size		
	Large	Medium	Small
Mean Budget	$17,550,736	2,077,092	388,573
Median Budget	11,814,933	1,984,462	347,981
Lowest Budget	2,571,954	600,000	107,884
Highest Budget	102,500,000	5,400,000	732,000
(N)	(28)	(22)	(5)

Table 10 summarizes the average number of personnel with security or classification designated as their main functions. The larger facilities have a greater number of people devoted to classification; however, the medium facilities reported the highest proportion of their security and classification staff providing classification as their main function (13%).

TABLE 10

Personnel Employed in Selected Functions

	Facility Size					
Main Function	Large		Medium		Small	
	N	(%)	N	(%)	N	(%)
Provide security	276	(96)	34	(87)	12	(92)
Classify inmates	12	(4)	5	(13)	1	(8)
Total Security/Classification Staff	288	(100)	39	(100)	13	(100)

(N=56)

Respondents were asked to indicate the best description of their facility's approach to supervision. Table 11 indicates that, excluding the five small jails, conduct of periodic rounds was the most frequent response, followed by face-to-face contact.

TABLE 11

Description of Supervision Approach

Supervision Approach	Facility Size		
	Large	Medium	Small
Periodic rounds	59%	78%	40%
Face-to-face contact	31%	9%	--
Secure Guard Station	6%	9%	60%
Other/unknown	3%	4%	--
(N=60)			

The jails were also asked to indicate which of three architectural designs best matched the layout of the inmate housing areas in their facility. Page 3 of the survey (Appendix B) describes the designs as: (a) linear/ intermittent; (b) podular direct; and (c) podular remote. As reported in Table 12, podular remote was the most frequent design, overall.

TABLE 12

Architectural Design

Architectural Design	Facility Size		
	Large	Medium	Small
Linear/intermittent	19%	46%	20%
Podular/direct	19%	9%	--
Podular/remote	62%	39%	80%
Unknown	--	4%	--
(N=60)			

Current Classification System

As a concept, jail classification has only recently evolved beyond providing a framework for separating certain inmate types, such as males from females, juveniles from adults, or sentenced from pretrial prisoners. As jail administrators face increasing

pressures to safely and efficiently manage their populations, objective classification based on specific risk factors can be expected to be developed further. Jails described their current systems of classification in three areas: general overview; operational management; and training, management and assessment. Responses in each of these areas are summarized below.

Overview of Current System

Survey respondents were asked to indicate the process that best described their jail's approach to classification. As shown in Table 13, the majority of large and medium jails reported that inmates were classified primarily according to the assessments of experienced staff, and slightly over one fourth indicated a checklist or questionnaire was the primary approach. Three of the five small jails reported a scoring sheet was their primary approach.

TABLE 13

Agency Approach to Classifying Inmates

| | Facility Size | | |
Primary Approach	Large	Medium	Small
Experienced staff assessment	41%	48%	40%
Checklist/questionnaire	28%	26%	--
Scoring sheet	13%	9%	60%
Decision-tree	6%	4%	--
Other/unknown	13%	13%	--
(N=60)			

Table 14 outlines the relationship between the facility design and the classification approach. No discernible patterns emerged

by comparing each classification approach outlined in Table 13 to facility design. When staff assessments were compared with all other approaches combined, approximately one third of the podular direct and remote facilities utilized a staff assessment approach, with two thirds using one of the more structured approaches. This proportion was reversed in the linear/ intermittent designs, where two thirds of the jails were using staff assessment as the primary approach.

TABLE 14

Relationship of Classification to Facility Design

Classification Approach	Design		
	Linear	Podular Direct	Podular Remote
Staff Assessment	67%	38%	34%
Other Approaches	33%	63%	66%
(N)*	18	8	32

*One facility did not identify facility design.

Jails also indicated whether formal policies or legislated standards required the separation of inmates by sex, age, sentencing status and offense type. Fifty-nine jails reported requirements to separate males from females and adults from juveniles. Fifty-eight of these facilities indicated they generally met these requirements.

In addition, respondents reported on requirements for separating pretrial and sentenced prisoners and misdemeanant and felony offenders. Fifty-eight of the sixty jails provided this

information. Thirty-one jails (53%) were required to separate pretrial and sentenced prisoners. Of these 31, 19 (61%) indicated this requirement was generally met. Twenty-two jails (38%) were required to separate misdemeanant and felony offenders, with only 13 jails (59%) reporting they met this requirement.

In general, larger facilities reported they had the design and/or capacity to separate inmates beyond the categories of sex, age, sentencing status and offense type. Seventy-eight percent of the large jails, fifty-six percent of the medium and twenty percent of the small jails reported that their facilities could provide for further separation.

Table 15 outlines the percentage of jails indicating that their classification system routinely included decision-making in the following areas: housing, work, work release/furlough, program assignment and custody level designation. Ninety-three percent of the jails reported that custody level designations were routinely included in their classification system for both pretrial and sentenced prisoners. In the remaining areas, higher percentages of the jails stated that sentenced prisoners were more affected by the classification decisions than were pretrial prisoners.

TABLE 15

Program Areas Influenced by Classification Decisions

Area	Pretrial	Sentenced
Housing assignment	62%	87%
Work assignment	15%	57%
Work release/furlough	58%	68%
Program assignment	30%	52%
Custody level designation	93%	93%
(N = 60)		

Respondents generally indicated their classification system was applied identically to both male and female inmates (large, 84%; medium, 74%; and small, 60%). When different applications were reported, it was generally due to housing constraints, which limited options for female prisoners.

In most jails, several different staff participated in the classification process. Table 16 summarizes staff involvement in inmate classification. Seventy-five percent of the jails indicated they have a designated classification officer(s); however, it was not clear from the survey what additional job responsibilities were assigned to this position.

TABLE 16

Position Routinely Responsible for Making
Classification Decisions

Position	Not Responsible	Position Non-Responsible	Existent	Unknown
Classification officer	75%	--	25%	--
Security officer	52%	40%	7%	2%
Program staff	43%	32%	23%	2%
Facility administrator	55%	43%	--	2%
Medical staff	65%	27%	3%	5%
Probation officer	2%	55%	38%	5%
Other	30%	2%	--	68%
(N = 60)				

Table 17 shows the number of jails that ranked each of several classification goals as their first, second or third priority, with the most important goal being ranked first. Overall, 56 jails ranked staff and inmate safety as one of their top three goals, followed by 29 jails emphasizing public safety and 27 facilities

concerned about meeting state standards. Use of classification to determine changes in custody status was ranked in the top three goals by eight jails, but only two facilities ranked it first or second.

TABLE 17

Ranking of Classification Goals

Goal	Ranking			
	First	Second	Third	Total
Staff and inmate safety	34	14	8	56
Public safety	8	11	10	29
Meet state standards	6	15	6	27
Least restrictive custody	9	6	9	24
Provide consistent classification	2	7	12	21
Determine needs	--	4	4	8
Determine changing custody	1	1	6	8
Enhance resources	--	1	3	4
Facilitate rehabilitation	--	1	1	2
Missing	--	--	1	1

(N = 60)

Table 18 reports the length of time respondents' current classification systems had been in operation. The majority of jails stated that their systems had been in operation more than three years.

TABLE 18

Length of Time Current Classification System
Has Been in Operation

Length of Time	Facility Size		
	Large	Medium	Small
Less than one year	3%	--	20%
1 to 2 years	16%	17%	--
3 to 5 years	22%	35%	60%
More than 5 years	56%	43%	20%
Unknown	3%	4%	--

(N=60)

Table 19 outlines the relationship between the length of time that the classification system has been operational and the process that staff selected as best describing their classification approach (Table 13). Due to the small number of jails reporting, checklists/questionnaires, score sheets, decision trees and "other" approaches were grouped together and collectively compared to assessments of experienced staff.

Of the jails with classification systems that were newer than five years, more than two thirds had chosen approaches other than sole reliance on the assessments of experienced staff. However, this situation was reversed for jails with classification systems that had been in operation more than five years. Approximately two thirds of these jails indicated assessments by experienced staff was their primary classification approach.

TABLE 19

Length of Classification Operation and Classification Approach

	Length of Operation			
Approach	Less than 1 year	1-2 yrs	3-5 yrs	5+ yrs
Staff Assessment		33%	28%	64%
Other Approaches*	100%	67%	72%	36%
(N)	2	9	18	28

*Two jails did not indicate the length of time their systems had been in operation.

Operation of Current System

The effectiveness of a classification system hinges on a number of administrative and organizational factors; however, access to

accurate and timely information is one of the most important. Jail staff are frequently required to make inmate assessments with incomplete information, and what information they do have is often of questionable accuracy. These problems are compounded by the brief stay of most inmates. Unlike prison classification systems, jail personnel cannot wait several days or weeks for verified information.

Survey respondents evaluated the degree of availability, accuracy and importance of ten types of background information, reported in Tables 20, 21 and 22. At initial classification, the most frequently available information was the booking report, which was always available, according to 97 percent of the respondents. The booking report was considered always or usually accurate by 90 percent and always or usually important to the classification process by 89 percent. Of the prior record reports (FBI, state police, local and NCIC data), the NCIC data were considered always or usually available by 77 percent of the responding jails, accurate by 83 percent and important by 66 percent. These relationships were similar to those reported for local police/sheriff records, but far above the degree of availability, accuracy and importance attributed to FBI and state police rap sheets. Medical and mental health reports were deemed important to the classification system about by 81 percent of the respondents, with medical reports perceived as always or usually available by 75 percent and mental health reports as always or usually available by 50 percent.

TABLE 20
Availability of Information for Initial Classification

	Degree of Availability			
			Sometimes/	
Information	Always	Usually	Rarely	Unknown
Booking Report	97%	--	3%	--
FBI "rap" sheet	15%	18%	63%	3%
State police "rap" sheet	20%	18%	57%	5%
Local police/sheriff records	55%	15%	27%	3%
NCIC data	57%	20%	22%	2%
Medical report	52%	23%	22%	3%
Mental health report	28%	22%	47%	3%
Arresting officer's version				
of crime	22%	22%	53%	3%
Prisoner interview data	73%	10%	13%	3%
Prior jail adjustment data	52%	12%	32%	5%
(N = 60)				

TABLE 21
Accuracy of Information for Initial Classification

	Degree of Accuracy			
		Sometimes/		
Information	Always	Usually	Rarely	Unknown
Booking Report	58%	32%	2%	8%
FBI "rap" sheet	35%	30%	20%	15%
State police "rap" sheet	28%	35%	20%	17%
Local police/sheriff records	42%	37%	10%	12%
NCIC data	45%	38%	8%	8%
Medical report	45%	37%	10%	8%
Mental health report	33%	40%	17%	10%
Arresting officer's version				
of crime	32%	33%	15%	20%
Prisoner interview data	25%	40%	27%	8%
Prior jail adjustment data	43%	32%	8%	17%
(N = 60)				

TABLE 22
Importance of Information for Initial Classification

	Degree of Importance			
		Sometimes/		
Information	Always	Usually	Rarely	Unknown
Booking Report	72%	17%	7%	5%
FBI "rap" sheet	25%	22%	43%	10%
State police "rap" sheet	25%	22%	42%	12%
Local police/sheriff records	38%	27%	25%	10%
NCIC data	38%	28%	27%	7%
Medical report	63%	18%	12%	7%
Mental health report	63%	18%	10%	8%
Arresting officer's version				
of crime	18%	30%	43%	8%
Prisoner interview data	55%	20%	18%	7%
Prior jail adjustment data	62%	15%	8%	15%
(N = 60)				

In Table 20, 83 percent of the jails reported that inmate interview information was always or usually available. This is consistent with a subsequent survey question to which 49 jails responded they routinely interview inmates as part of their initial classification process. Of these 49 jails, 28 (47%) spent less than an average of 20 minutes per interview; 24 (49%) spent an average of 20 to 40 minutes per interview; and 2 (4%) spent an average of 40 to 60 minutes per interview. About 40 percent of the jails reporting interviews of less than 20 minutes or interviews in the range of 20 to 40 minutes identified assessments of experienced staff as their primary classification approach.

The jails indicated if the factors listed in Table 23 were routinely included in their initial classification process. The factors were grouped into five general areas: current offense; prior criminal history; prior institution adjustment; social factors; and special issues. Within the current offense area, the arresting officer's version of the crime was included by only 22 percent of the jails. Specific adult arrest, conviction and prior jail/prison sentencing information and prior institutional adjustment information were likely to be included by over 80 percent of the jails. Age and inmate cooperativeness were the most likely social factors, used by 90 percent of the jails. All the special issues except physical structure were considered by more than 80 percent of the respondents. Factors such as health care needs, mental illness, protective custody needs and suicide risk are understandably of major significance and were part of the initial classification system in nearly all jails.

TABLE 23

Factors Routinely Included in the Initial Classification

Factor	Yes	No	Unknown
Current Offense(s)			
Nature of current offense(s)	100%	---	---
Arresting officer's version	22%	78%	---
Detainers	87%	13%	---
Outstanding warrants	90%	10%	---
Prior Criminal History			
Prior arrests	88%	12%	---
Age at first felony arrest	25%	75%	---
Prior failure on prob/parole	53%	47%	---
Prior felony convictions	82%	18%	---
Prior juvenile convictions	40%	60%	---
Prior prison sentences	82%	17%	2%
Prior jail sentences	82%	17%	2%
Prior juvenile commitments	33%	67%	---
History of criminal violence	97%	3%	---
Prior Institutional Adjustment			
Prior jail adjustment	83%	17%	---
History of institutional violence	90%	10%	---
Previous disciplinary reports	80%	20%	---
Prior escapes/attempted escapes	97%	3%	---
Social Factors			
Current age	90%	10%	---
Marital status	58%	42%	---
Employment status	65%	35%	---
Education level	60%	40%	---
Military record	40%	60%	---
Length of residence in county/city	53%	47%	---
Cooperativeness of inmate	90%	10%	---
Psychological test data	22%	75%	3%
Special Issues			
Health care needs	98%	2%	---
Physical stature	77%	23%	---
Physical handicaps	98%	2%	---
Mental illness	100%	---	---
Mental retardation	98%	2%	---
Notoriety of inmate or offense	95%	3%	2%
Protective custody needs	100%	---	---
Suicide risk	100%	---	---
Prior alcohol use	82%	18%	---
Prior drug use	82%	18%	---

(N = 60)

Fifty-four of the responding jails (90%) reported that they have a reclassification system in place within their facility. This reclassification process includes the activities outlined in Table

24 to the degree indicated. Eighty-seven percent of the jails reported that housing and classification issues were part of reclassification, with release consideration, program changes, job changes and need for services being less prevalent.

TABLE 24

Reclassification Activities

Activity	Yes	No	Unknown
Release consideration	48%	40%	12%
Custody level change	87%	3%	10%
Housing assignment change	87%	3%	10%
Program change	62%	28%	10%
Job assignment change	58%	30%	12%
Need for services	57%	28%	15%
Other	--	--	100%
(N = 60)			

Table 25 lists the factors routinely included in the reclassification process. Disciplinary violations of various types, protective custody needs, and psychological instability all were considered by more than 80 percent of the jails.

TABLE 25

Factors Routinely Included in Reclassification

Reclassification Factor	Yes	No	Unknown
Program involvement	67%	23%	10%
Major disciplinary violations	90%	10%	--
Time spent in disciplinary segregation	83%	5%	12%
Minor disciplinary violations	83%	7%	10%
Addition/removal of good time	65%	25%	10%
Meritorious conduct	70%	20%	10%
Successful participation in work release activities	60%	28%	12%
Time left to serve	70%	20%	10%
Protective custody needs	87%	3%	10%
Membership in subversive organization	48%	42%	10%
Escape or attempted escape	88%	--	12%
Trafficking of contraband	88%	2%	10%
Psychological instability	85%	2%	13%
Other	3%	--	97%
(N = 60)			

Forty-one of the sixty jails reported that evaluation of program and service needs was a component of their classification system. The needs assessed are presented in Table 26. Medical, substance abuse, psychological and mental health needs were considered most frequently.

TABLE 26

Program and Service Needs Routinely Assessed

Need	Yes	No	Unknown
Intellectual/adaptive	38%	27%	35%
Educational	53%	13%	33%
Vocational	33%	33%	33%
Work Skills	37%	30%	33%
Medical	65%	2%	33%
Substance abuse	63%	3%	33%
Psychological	62%	5%	33%
Mental health care	63%	3%	33%
Family/community ties	45%	22%	33%
Special needs (e.g., protective custody, aged/infirm, etc.)	62%	---	38%

(N = 60)

Fifty-one jails (85%) described classification systems with provisions for overriding classification recommendations. Of these jails, 36 (71%) said overrides require written justification, and 44 (86%) said overrides require supervisory approval. When asked to estimate the extent to which overrides occurred, 80 percent of the jails indicated their classification decisions were overridden one to five percent of the time and another eight percent indicated an override rate of six to ten percent. Five jails reported an override in excess of 11 percent, with one jail indicating the rate of override was unknown.

When asked to indicate the single, most often used reason for overrides, one third of the jails reported insufficient bed space at the appropriate security/custody level, 28 percent indicated inmate attitude, 8 percent indicated adjustment during previous periods of confinement and 6 percent indicated notoriety of the offense or inmate. Twenty-five percent of the fifty-one jails with override provisions indicated some other factor or did not respond to the question.

Table 27 indicates the degree of inmate involvement in key areas of the classification process. Seventy-seven percent of the jails reported inmate involvement in requesting a classification level change and seventy-three percent reported inmate appeal of the classification decision. Sixty-seven percent of the jails stated the inmate was provided an explanation of the classification process, with less than fifty percent of the jails indicating any inmate involvement in the remaining areas.

TABLE 27

Inmate Involvement in Classification Areas

Area	Yes	No
Explanation of classification process	67%	33%
Written notice of classification hearing	38%	62%
Request of classification level change	77%	23%
Participation in classification hearing	45%	55%
Written notice of classification decision	48%	52%
Appeal of classification decision	73%	27%

(N = 60)

Training, Management and Assessment

Forty-three jails (72%) reported that they have a written

classification manual and 45 jails (75%) said that staff responsible for classification decisions were formally trained in the system. The number of pre-service and annual in-service hours of classification training are presented in Table 28. About one fourth to one third of the jails afford less than eight hours of pre-service training. Forty-one percent of the large jails and twenty-seven percent of the medium jails reported that they provide less than eight hours of annual classification training. Large jails conducted about 50 percent of their training with agency personnel, while medium and small jails conducted about one third of their training without consultants. Agency staff in conjunction with outside consultants were responsible for the remaining training.

TABLE 28

Classification Training Hours

Number of Hours	Large	Medium	Small
Pre-service			
Less than 8	26%	27%	33%
8 to 40	41%	40%	33%
More than 40	22%	7%	---
Unknown	11%	27%	33%
In-service			
Less than 8	41%	27%	---
8 to 40	41%	20%	33%
More than 40	11%	---	---
Unknown	7%	53%	67%

(N=60)

Access to accurate information in a timely manner is critical to a successful classification system. As indicated by Table 29, the likelihood that a jail's management information system (MIS)

will be computer assisted increases as the size of the jail increases. Eighty percent of the small jails reported that their MIS was manual, while this was the case in only nineteen percent of the large jails.

TABLE 29

Type of Management Information System

MIS Type	Large	Medium	Small
Manual (hard-copy records/files)	19%	39%	80%
Computer-assisted	69%	61%	20%
Fully automated	12%	---	---
(N=60)			

Table 30 reports the percentage of jails indicating that they collect designated types of information and the degree to which each type of information is automated. Current offense, warrants and demographic data are most likely to be entirely automated.

TABLE 30

Data Collected by Jail MIS

Data Type	Jails Collecting Data	Degree of Automation Entirely Automated	Partly Automated	Unknown
Current offense	98%	59%	12%	29%
Prior arrests	82%	39%	35%	27%
Prior convictions	80%	38%	33%	29%
Prior incarcerations	87%	35%	35%	31%
Outstanding warrants	90%	57%	20%	22%
Custody level assignment	83%	28%	30%	42%
Demographics	95%	46%	21%	33%
Employment status	83%	32%	22%	46%
Medical history	92%	9%	35%	57%
Mental health history	90%	6%	43%	52%
(N = 60)				

Table 31 indicates the proportion of jails that reported that data from the classification system supported key jail planning functions. Eighty-five percent of the jails stated that classification data were employed in security planning; however,

only slightly more than one half to two thirds of the jails indicated use of classification information for other planning functions.

TABLE 31

Functions Supported by the Current Classification System

Function	Yes	No/Unknown
Security planning	85%	15%
Staff planning	57%	43%
Inmate program/service planning	67%	33%
Facility planning	68%	32%
Budget planning	55%	45%
(N = 60)		

When asked to rate general reaction to the current classification system, 42 (70%) of the jails responded that agency staff were satisfied or very satisfied with their system. Sixteen jails (27%) said that staff were dissatisfied and two (3%) indicated that staff felt very dissatisfied.

Thirty-three of the fifty-nine jails responding to a question on system evaluation said that their current classification system had been assessed. Of these jails, 23 (39%) said they had formal evaluations, with written reports prepared. The remaining ten jails reported informal evaluations. Thirty percent said agency personnel conducted the evaluations, with 48% having outside consultants do the study and 22% employing a combination of agency staff and consultants. Not surprisingly, of the ten sites reporting informal evaluations, 90% were performed by agency personnel.

Respondents also ranked the success of their current

classification system in meeting the goals of the jail. As shown
in Table 32, over 80 percent of the jails ranked their
classification systems as highly or somewhat successful in all
areas except rehabilitation/reintegration of inmates and
determining inmate program needs, neither of which were very
important goals in most jails (Table 17)

TABLE 32

Success in Meeting Goals

	Level of Success			
Goal	High	Somewhat	None	Don't Know /Unknown
Facilitates rehabilitation /regeneration of inmates	10%	30%	20%	40%
Place inmates in least restrictive custody level consistent with their security needs	53%	35%	8%	3%
Meet state-promulgated standards	63%	20%	2%	15%
Ensure safety of general public	82%	7%	2%	10%
Determine inmate program and service needs	27%	38%	17%	18%
Ensure safety of staff and inmates	87%	12%	---	2%
Provide basis for consistent classification decision-making	58%	32%	8%	2%
Enhance utilization of agency resources	27%	50%	10%	13%
Determine when inmates' custody level should be changed	47%	40%	7%	7%
Other	5%	---	---	95%

(N = 60)

Table 33 outlines the degree of impact that respondents'
classification systems appeared to have on selected areas of jail
operation. Overall, jail staff assessed their classification
systems as having more positive than negative effect.

TABLE 33
Impact of Classification System

| | Degree of Impact | | | |
Area of Impact	Positive	None	Negative	Don't Know/ Unknown
Inmate disciplinary violations	82%	13%	---	5%
Escapes/escape attempts	92%	3%	---	5%
Inmate grievances	60%	25%	5%	10%
Serious/violent incidents	87%	8%	---	5%
Inmate programs and services	58%	18%	5%	18%
Proportion of inmates at each custody level	52%	27%	5%	17%
Operational costs	27%	15%	8%	50%
Paperwork	33%	25%	20%	22%
Staff morale	62%	20%	3%	15%
Inmate morale	67%	15%	2%	17%

Assuming funds were available to improve their jail classification system, respondents were asked to indicate the areas in which their system could most use technical assistance. Forty-one jails listed technical assistance regarding staff training as one of their top three choices. Approximately one third of the jails also indicated that integrating their classification and management information systems and evaluating their existing classifications were areas in which they needed assistance. Respondents' top three needs are summarized in Table 34.

TABLE 34

Ranking of Technical Assistance Needs

Technical Assistance Needs	Number Ranking			
	First	Second	Third	Total
Staff training	25	9	7	41
Integration of classification with management information system	9	6	8	23
Evaluation/validation	5	12	6	23
Development of classification system for planning purposes	4	7	7	18
Development/revision of classification manual	7	3	8	18
Refinement of system for special management population	1	4	9	14
Development of classification information system	3	5	5	13
Development of program needs assessment component	2	5	3	10
Missing	--	--	1	1
Other/Unknown	4	9	7	20
(N = 60)				