

MANUAL ON CLASSIFICATION
FOR
CORRECTIONAL STAFF
CLASSIFICATION AND TREATMENT

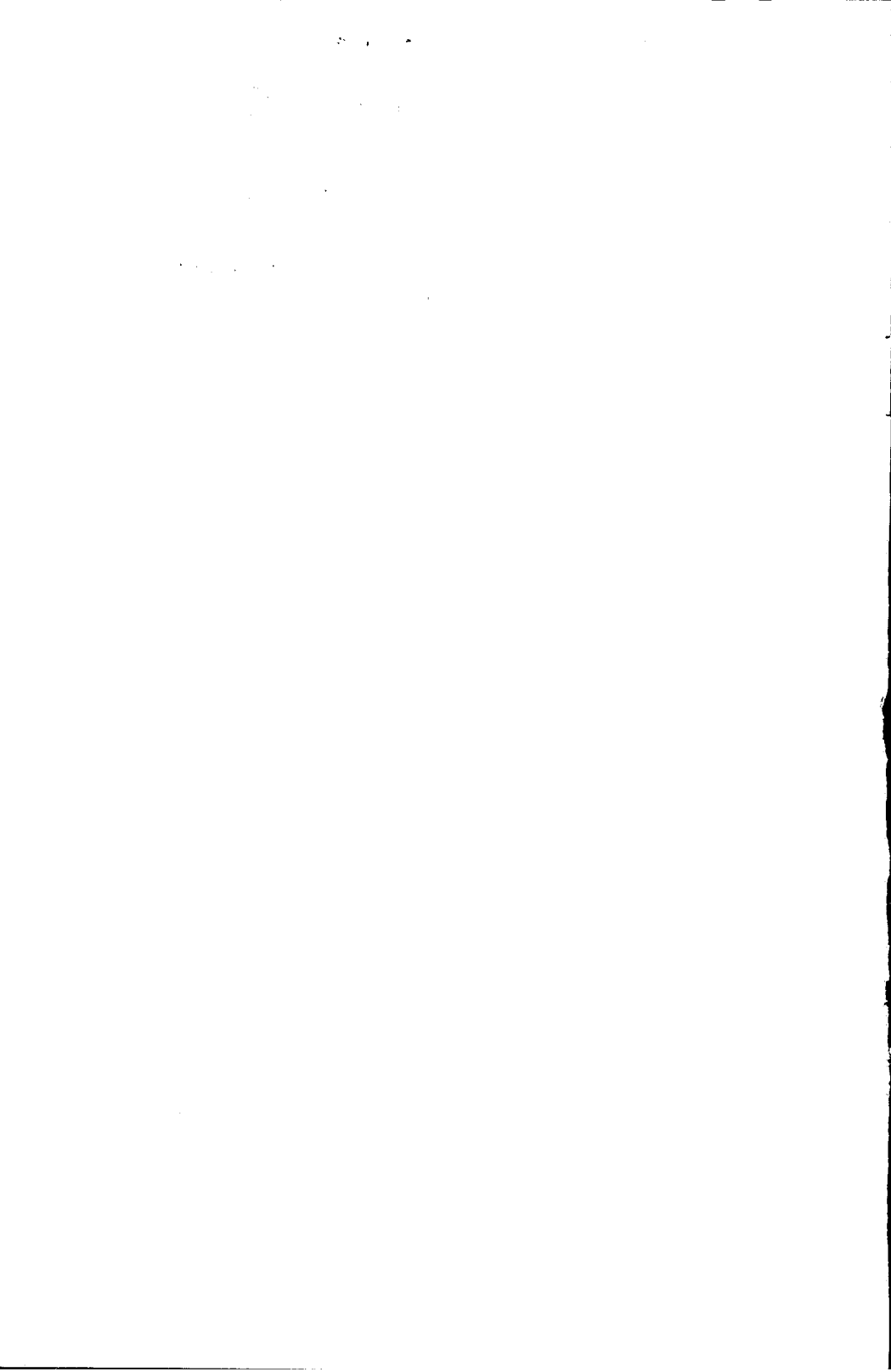


COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS
DIVISION OF ADULT SERVICES

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Rudy F. Guillen, Jr.
Assistant Director for
Classification and Treatment

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ACQUISITIONS

P R E F A C E

Classification is a term that has been used with increasing frequency in the field of correctional administration during the past two decades. Nevertheless, what is meant by classification has varied widely among criminologists and prison administrators alike.

The purposes of this handbook are to describe in some detail the operation and advantages of classification procedures. Until now, there has been no complete published statement concerning the meaning, the organization, and the methods of a classification program.

This handbook is not presented as the final word or as a permanent classification guide. Since classification methods and techniques are in their formative stages, it is expected that this handbook will be revised from time to time to bring it up-to-date.

This document merely represents a beginning.

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BASIC PRINCIPLES OF CLASSIFICATION

The Background of Classification

The past few decades have witnessed decided changes in the philosophy and practices in correctional institutions. Although reformation, rehabilitation and individualized treatment are words and phrases which have been much discussed, it has been only during the past twenty or thirty years that these ideas have been tried.

Emphasis is now being given to the concept that the fundamental purpose of prisons is the protection of the public. This means not only effective custody of inmates, but that the public can only be given long-range protection by correcting those behavior problems that mandated the custody. The necessity for a program which will have a constructive effect upon prisoners is based upon the inescapable fact that over ninety-five per cent of all prisoners committed to prison are sooner or later returned to the community.

What is Classification?

Classification first implies an analysis of the individual's strengths and weaknesses to identify and provide programs through which each man/woman may correct adjustment problems. Also, classification utilizes this information as the basis for a well-rounded, integrated program toward improving him/her as a social being, and safely reintegrating him/her into the community.

The purpose of classification is accomplished first by analyzing the problems presented by the individual through the use of every available technique, such as through social investigation, medical, psychiatric, psychological examinations, educational and vocational, religious and recreational studies. Secondly, by deciding in staff conference upon a program of treatment and training based upon these analyses. Thirdly, by assuring that the program decided upon is placed into operation. Finally, by observing the progress of the inmate under this program and by changing the program when indicated by each individual's progress.

Classification is conceived of as a method for the pooling of all relevant knowledge about the offender, and by which all important decisions and activities affecting him/her are coordinated.

Classification does not present the "answers" to all problems. All that a classification program can assure is that available "tools" will be utilized as efficiently as possible and that the need for additional "tools" will be identified.

It should be remembered - there are no specific cures for criminality as there are in the medical field for some diseases.

How Classification Operates

Since most of this handbook will be devoted to a detailed description of how classification operates, we shall limit the following to a brief summary of operational methods and organization.

The key to the successful operation of a classification program is the quality of the support and leadership given by the institution. The most important instrument to aid in this is an Institutional Classification Committee composed of the personnel having important functions relating to administration, training and treatment. The Committee's main responsibility is to devise a program aimed at assisting each inmate to correct deficiencies and develop those behaviors and abilities needed to function in free society. The adopted program becomes the official instrument for that individual, and no major changes can be made in it without referral back to the committee. The inmate's case should be referred back to the committee periodically for reclassification so that the program may be kept consistent with the inmate's changing needs. This process must continue throughout the inmate's full term of incarceration. Records of all significant developments in the case are maintained by the various institution departments and are consolidated into progress reports which furnish the basis for reclassification. Besides institutional use, the Parole Board and the parole officer who is to supervise the man in the community utilizes classification reports in making their decisions and plans. Thus, continuity in planning and treatment from institution to community are found in an effective classification system.

Advantages of Classification

1. Proper segregation of different types of offenders
2. Adequate custodial supervision and control
3. Better discipline
4. Increased productivity of inmates
5. Effective utilization of all training and treatment facilities
6. Continuity in the training and treatment program
7. Higher personnel morale
8. Improved inmate attitudes
9. Reduced failures of men released

Proper Separation of Different Types of Offenders

All kinds of individuals are received in prison. Hardened criminals, and first offenders; serious escape risks, and persons who would leave the institution only by legal process; the youthful and the aged; the diseased and healthy; the intelligent and the retarded; homosexuals, and heterosexuals; psychopathic and normal; dangerous and mild-mannered persons - all share the same environment. The difficulty in providing a program that will adequately meet the needs and requirements of all these types in one institution is obvious. Even if only one institution is available, recognition of the need for segregation of different groups can be worked out, to some degree of success, within that institution.

Classification aids in the separation program by the full information it develops on each offender. Accurate identification of problems is necessary for good custody, discipline and rehabilitation.

Adequate Custodial Supervision and Control

Through the knowledge acquired about the individual, the Institutional Classification Committee is in a better position than any one official to determine and recommend to the Central Classification Board the security risks presented by an individual offender. Classification can

make a contribution to custodial control and has been demonstrated in prison systems where it is in operation.

Better Protection and Control

Classification addresses the problem of protection and control through prevention. The initial reception program gives men a sound introduction to the life of the institution. Every member of the institution's personnel by directing his thinking toward the individual prisoner learns the typical method of behavior of the inmate under his supervision. Officers learn the importance of reporting immediately any change observed in the inmate. This is a vital factor in initiating a preventive program.

Increased Productivity of Inmates

The amount of work production, per man, in the majority of Virginia Penal institutions has been low. The inmates have acquired sloppy work habits. There has existed an almost complete absence of planning in work assignments and this has been one of the major factors in reducing the efficiency of work programs. When employment assignments are made by the Institutional Classification Committees, based on objective data, the maximum abilities of the inmates can be utilized when assignments are suitable and realistic for the prisoner, and his work habits generally improve.

Effective Utilization of All Training and Treatment Facilities

Classification provides the machinery by which the work of each component of the criminal justice system is coordinated. It assures a program realistically directed at the individual's problems, eliminates waste of personnel effort, and facilitates, and avoids lack of coordination regarding management decisions.

Continuity in the Training and Treatment Program

Periodic re-evaluation and reclassification guarantees that there shall be no "forgotten men" in prison. Classification does not stop after acquiring a thorough knowledge of the offender or the development of a program at the time he is committed. Instead, it follows each case from commitment to release, and keeps in mind the objective of adequately preparing the individual for return to the community. If the proper relationships are achieved between the institution and the parole system, the influence of the classification program will continue to contribute material of value to the day of his discharge from parole.

Higher Personnel Morale

Classification also improves the staff and personnel's morale. It must be admitted that in some institutions, misunderstandings have occurred between the administrative and custodial staff. Through the coordination element of classification, all personnel groups meet on common ground and each gains respect for the abilities and the contributions of the others. A person is inclined to be suspicious of and to oppose what he does not understand; classification operations avoid this.

Improved Inmate Attitudes

An equally important result of the classification program is its con-

structive effort upon the prisoner's morale. Inmate hostility to the staff is ordinarily short-lived as the results of the treatment program begin to take effect. Most prisoners appreciate realistic opportunities for self-improvement, and the knowledge that the institution personnel has an interest in their problems and their future. Although they may resent decisions made by a single official, prisoners are less likely to resent decisions made by a committee of staff members who have thoroughly considered all the facts. Then too, there is the obvious point that those decisions are more likely to be just and accurate.

Reduced Failures of Men Released

All studies of parole failures have shown that the highest percentage of violations occur within the first six months after release. Many of these failures result from the absence of preparation of the inmate for adjustment in normal society. The classification procedure has as one of its major aims the utilization of the total facilities of the institution and correctional system in preparing inmates for their return to the community.

STATE ORGANIZATION OF CLASSIFICATION

Although classification functions primarily within the institutions, neither effective classification nor its goal of efficient correctional operations can be achieved unless it becomes a state-wide program. It requires central office support, leadership, guidance, and a variety of institutional facilities consistent with the size and nature of the inmate population.

Classification By Institution

The desirability of separating different groups of offenders has been already recognized. Groups separated are males from females, juveniles from adults, and misdemeanants from felons. Adult offenders are assigned to different institutions on the basis of their needs for rehabilitation and security risks they presented.

Advantages of Classified Institutions:

Some of the advantages to the classification of prisoners in different institutions are (1) the institution may be functionally designed and facilities and personnel provided in terms of the requirements of the special groups to be handled, with resulting greater efficiency in the program; (2) persons relatively inexperienced in criminal activity can be separated from experienced criminals, thereby reducing the spread of criminality by association and example, and (3) classification on the basis of security risk permits economy in construction, with less expensive and more open facilities for some offenders, and more expensive, secure institutions reserved for those who require close supervision.

Functions of Central Classification

Leadership

Nothing is more important to the success of a state-wide classification program than the support and leadership by the Central Classification Board and the Assistant Director for Classification and Treatment Services. Many times staff members are unable to understand all the ramifications of classification without some assistance. Failure to understand often results in submissive compliance by the inmate rather than the development of a realistic program. It is here that the Central Classification Board can be of the utmost assistance in interpreting and directing the establishment of procedures, guidelines, and techniques which will insure a well-integrated classification program in all of the institutions in the system.

Uniformity Among Institutions

Centralized control is required so that there may be uniformity in quality of work, in records, in procedures, in personnel standards and in transfers.

Since inmates are transferred from one institution to another, it is essential that there be continuity in the work and records of the various institutions. If different types of records are used in

different institutions, time will be wasted by one institution in becoming familiar with the records of other institutions.

Transfers Between Institutions

Whatever commitment procedure is used, there will always be inmates sent to one institution who belong in another institution either at the time of commitment or some time during the term of confinement. The transfer of inmates from one institution to another is handled properly by the central office. The recommendation for transfer is within the province of the inmate's Institutional Classification Committee, but the authority to review the recommendation and to make the final decision rests with the Central Classification Board.

Centralized Inmate Records

Complete individual files are maintained in the central office on all inmates confined. Not only are they required for the consideration of transfers, but for numerous other administrative decisions.

Then too, the paroling authority requires full records at its disposal, for the hearing of parole cases. Ordinarily, the paroling authority uses the same files as the Department of Corrections, thereby reducing duplication of effort.

Relationships Between the Institutions and the Central Classification Board

Close and effective relationships between the Central Classification Board and the various institutions are particularly important to the success of the classification program.

Knowledge and understanding are essential for an effective correctional system. The Central Classification Board personnel must be familiar with the problems of each institution. The personnel of each institution should be familiar with the facilities, the personnel, the program and the problems of all other institutions in the system and have a knowledge of the objectives, methods and problems of the Central Classification Board. The understanding which results from knowing the system as a whole guarantees a coordinated effort in the attainment of the objectives of the system. It is particularly important that the Assistant Director for Classification and Treatment recognize the Warden or Superintendent as the responsible head of his institution and administrator in charge of the classification program of that institutions.

INITIAL CLASSIFICATION MEETING

Compilation of the Admission Summary

Following the study of the offender by the various disciplines during the reception process, the reports are combined into an admission summary for presentation to the Initial Classification Committee.

Basic Data Contained in the Summary

The admission summary contains a listing of basic data readily available for immediate reference. Such data includes the inmate's full name and aliases, birth date, and legal residence; information concerning present sentence (type of offense, date of sentence, the sentencing court, parole eligibility and termination of sentence), pending charges and codefendants. A full description of the present offense, criminal history, and social history follows. This is usually a narrative story of the prisoner's life prepared by the (sociologist). Following the social history are the reports from the other departments including the educational department, the medical services, the psychologist and the parole officer. These special reports include the results of any tests given, the interpretation of these tests, results of interviews, and usually recommendations relating to the activities of the respective departments in the case.

Distribution of the Summary

The admission summary is then ready for transmittal to members of the Initial Classification Committee. This is done one or two days prior to the meeting in order that the members have an opportunity to review the complete report before the meeting.

Members of the Initial Classification Committee

The committee representatives are the department heads of the various groups represented although they may occasionally be represented by other members of their department. Personnel who may be included on the Initial Classification Committee are the following:

Supervisor of Central Classification - Chairman

Counselor

Supervisor of Education

Treatment Supervisor or Counselor

Psychologist

Chaplains

Institutional Parole Officer

Officer in Charge - Reception Unit

(Field Unit) Staff

Initial (Admission) Classification Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

The Initial Classification meeting is to permit the staff to become acquainted with all of the information about the individual that has been developed during the reception period, and to plan a program. There is furnished the basic knowledge of the individual required for working out a program directed at strengthening his abilities and eliminating his weaknesses, and at the same time giving the institution authorities the information required for his proper control and supervision.

Meetings of the committee are scheduled at a set hour, and day of each week.

Procedures of Presentation in the Meeting

A report is given briefly by the supervisor of the reception and classification program who is the most familiar with the case. The case presentation stresses the important findings, rather than attempting to give all known information whether relevant or not.

The committee discusses the case fully in all of its aspects before the prisoner is brought into the room. Discussion takes into account the entire nature of the case, and is not confined to the specific institution assignments and work, education, and custody which are the committee's immediate concern.

Prisoner's Participation in the Meeting

The inmate has the opportunity to share in the committee's planning for him. After the program for the inmate is tentatively planned, he is called before the committee. Discussion with the inmate is centered around an interpretation of the program as decided upon by the committee, the reasons for the particular assignments given, and any future plans that the committee may wish to indicate to the prisoner.

It is important for the inmate to know at first hand that the classification committee is taking an interest in planning for his future and that the decisions were not made by one member. Furthermore, it gives an opportunity for the staff members to observe the inmate's reaction to the program and to clear up conflicts which may have appeared in the material presented.

Committee Recommendations

Many of the recommendations developed during the initial classification will, of necessity, be tentative and dependent upon further study. However - the prisoner's immediate program has been determined. Recommendations, therefore, cover all important aspects of his institutional life always keeping in mind that the fundamental purpose of the program is to prepare him for his release to the community.

The first decision ordinarily made by the Initial Classification Committee relates to custody consideration and the type of supervision required. Logically, this matter should be considered first since the remainder of the program may be influenced by custodial requirements. Factors taken into consideration in determining the custodial classification include the length of sentence, record of previous escapes, institutional adjustment on previous commitments, adjustment during the reception period, strength of family ties, residential mobility, and degree of emotional stability. Although an inmate may not be an escape risk, he may present problems, such as homosexuality or aggressiveness requiring close custodial supervision.

Medical

Although there may be differences of opinion regarding other phases of treatment, the medical recommendations included in the medical report are ordinarily adopted by the committee without question. The recommendation for psychiatric observation or treatment are considered in conjunction with other aspects of the program.

Social Service

Recommendations in the area of social services includes the development of additional information on certain phases of the case, or arrangements to be worked out with community social service agencies to provide assistance and services to the family during the inmate's period of confinement.

Work Assignments and Vocational Training

Work assignments are based upon physical condition, intellectual capacity, aptitudes of the individual, past work experience, occupational interests, needs and opportunities upon release, and available jobs within the institution. The committee is faced sometimes by the conflicting needs of the institution and the inmate. If the work assignments can be placed on a training basis, this conflict is minimized.

Education

Recommendations in regard to the academic program depend upon the policies and facilities of the institution together with the inmate's mental ability, educational record and his interests.

Religion

Recommendations regarding religion programs are based upon the reports from the Chaplains. Such recommendations are made compatible with the inmate's religious faith and the facilities of the institution.

Recreation

The recreational program is arranged through the educational department and specific recommendations by the classification committee are not required.

Local Jail Classification

The Local Jail Classification Program is geared to alleviate the bottleneck which is created in moving men through the Receiving Units which can only process a maximum of 50 inmates per week. The current release rate for all State Correctional Units is higher than this. Through the Jail Program, inmates can be interviewed, tested, and diagnosed while they are housed in the jails and be classified directly to a prison facility without being processed through a Receiving Unit.

Attention is generally given to shorter-term inmates who are of a non-violent temperament. This alleviates the pressure at the Receiving Units allowing them to concentrate on the more serious offender who needs an extensive evaluation. It further enables the reception rate to keep pace with the release rate and even gain on it somewhat. It allows for the prompt reception of those inmates who are nearing or are already eligible for parole consideration. It offers a pressure release valve for those jails which are overcrowded.

Committee Summary

A summary statement of each case is part of the admission classification. Such a statement includes a brief, concise description of the case, the factors believed to have been important in contributing to the inmate's criminal behavior, his weaknesses, and potentialities; the important aspects of the plan of treatment with the reasons therefor, and an estimate of the probable outcome or prognosis.

THE OPERATION OF THE CLASSIFICATION PROGRAM SUBSEQUENT
TO INITIAL CLASSIFICATION

Reclassification

Classification does not end with diagnosis and program planning at the time of admission. If a program of individualized treatment is to be effective, the study of the inmate must be a continuous process. There must be assurance that the program is placed into operation and the program must be changed when the need arises.

Functions of Reclassification

A program devised during the first month or two an inmate is in the institution cannot be fixed or final. Modification of the original program may be obtained either from outside sources or from observation of and contact with the individual. The human organism and human behavior are constantly changing; institutional treatment must make provision for changes in the program as the need arises due to growth or regression of the individual.

Reclassification guarantees that there will be neither forgotten men in prison nor "dead end" placements.

Scheduling Cases for Reclassification

The fundamental principle of reclassification is that the case should be brought to the attention of the Institutional Classification Committee whenever any significant change needs to be made in the inmate's program. To do this requires that the entire personnel of the institution be "classification minded", and that procedures be developed to assure that these needs will be brought to the attention of the Institutional Classification Committee.

Cases need to be routinely reviewed at set intervals in the absence of significant change. Unless such a regulation is in force, there is always the possibility that some inmates, who need to have their cases reviewed, will be overlooked. These are usually the men who try to abide by the regulations and make no requests, but who may become "institutionalized" unless encouraged and directed to work for positive change.

A date for first institutional classification and development of the basic treatment plan will be set within two weeks of arriving at a new institution. A review of the initial assignment will be made within 90 days. Reclassification will occur at least once a year, or at some other interval. No set interval is applicable to all institutions because of variations in ages, length of sentences and other factors. Youthful offenders with relatively short sentences, for example, should have their cases reviewed more frequently than older offenders serving longer terms. A complete case summary and progress report should be prepared just prior to any institutional transfer and prior to parole hearing in order that the new institution or parole authority may have a complete history of the inmate's institutional activities and progress.

The Progress Reports

When an inmate is to be reclassified, members of the Institutional

Classification Committee are notified of the purpose of the review and the date the case will be considered. A progress report should be prepared which shall include any significant new information and a statement of the inmate's progress in his treatment program since the last classification report.

It is essential that the information submitted be specific and be understandable to persons other than staff members. For example, in reporting on an inmate's work, it is not enough to state that "he is doing good work on Detail Number 5". Rather, the report should state the nature of the work he is performing, how long he has been so employed, any new skills he has acquired, his degree of proficiency and any special information the work supervisor can provide.

It is of extreme importance that the work and quarters' officers who are in close contact with the inmate from day to day contribute their knowledge of him to the progress reports. Classification reports which fail to use this source of information cannot be complete and accurate.

The Reclassification Meeting

The methods of presenting cases to be reclassified are similar to those used at Initial Classification. However, it is a more usual practice in reclassification for one person, frequently the Institutional Classification Committee Chairman, to present the entire report. Committee decision and action then follow. The inmate is called before the committee. The committee action, together with any special reasons for the action, are noted on the progress report after the meeting.

Classification and Release Planning

Coordination with Paroling Authority

Parole cannot possibly be considered separate from the institutional program. Both are a part of the correctional process which begins in the institution and extends into the community.

Lack of wholehearted cooperation and coordination between institution and parole authorities is one of the most crucial problems in correctional administration. The problem is crucial, first, because it affects the interests of society. Secondly, the parole decision generally determines the offender's entire future conduct and outlook. Thirdly, mistakes in the selection of parolees reflect adversely upon the institution and the paroling authorities; those who do succeed are very rarely given the publicity accorded to those who fail on parole.

Adequate Release Planning

Whatever the parole organization and the parole procedures, a carefully planned classification program is the best guarantee that men will be prepared adequately for release, that the parole authority will have the information it needs to make intelligent decisions and that the supervising officer will have the information required to formulate a realistic plan of

supervision and to monitor the parolee's activities intelligently.

Summary

In general, then, classification contributes to an efficiently-operated correctional program by the pooling of all relevant information concerning the individual offender, by devising a program for the individual based upon that information, and by keeping that program realistically in line with the individual's requirements. It furnishes an orderly method to the institution administrator by which the varied needs and requirements of each inmate may be followed from commitment to discharge. Through its diagnostic and coordinating functions, classification not only contributes to the objective of rehabilitation, but also to custody, discipline, work assignments, officer and inmate morale and the effective use of training opportunities. From the data developed, the classification staff can assist in long-range planning and development, both in the correctional system as a whole and in the individual institution.

CLASSIFICATION AND TREATMENT SERVICES' STAFF

Mr. Rudy F. Guillen, Jr.	Assistant Director for Classification and Treatment
Mr. Thomas L. Parlett	Executive Officer
Mr. A. W. Rice	Corrections' Planner B
Ms. Janet Corson	Administrative Assistant
Mr. C. Daniel Larsen	Supervisor of State Institutional Classification
Dr. Louis B. Cei	Coordinator of State Institutional Services
Mr. William H. Doub	Coordinator of Treatment Services
Mr. Malcolm L. Woodson	Supervisor of Local Jail Classification
Mr. J. B. Ruark	Work Release Program Supervisor
Mr. L. G. Wright	Supervisor of Offender Records
Mr. L. A. Hicks	Coordinator of Inmate Transportation
Mr. Ned S. Skinner	Chief Extradition Officer - Transportation

Mr. W. A. Crenshaw	Treatment Program Supervisor Receiving Unit (Powhatan Correctional Center)
Mr. J. Kelley Vaughan	Treatment Program Supervisor Receiving Unit (Southampton Correctional Center)
Mr. Albert Shank, II	Treatment Program Supervisor Powhatan Correctional Center Annex 1

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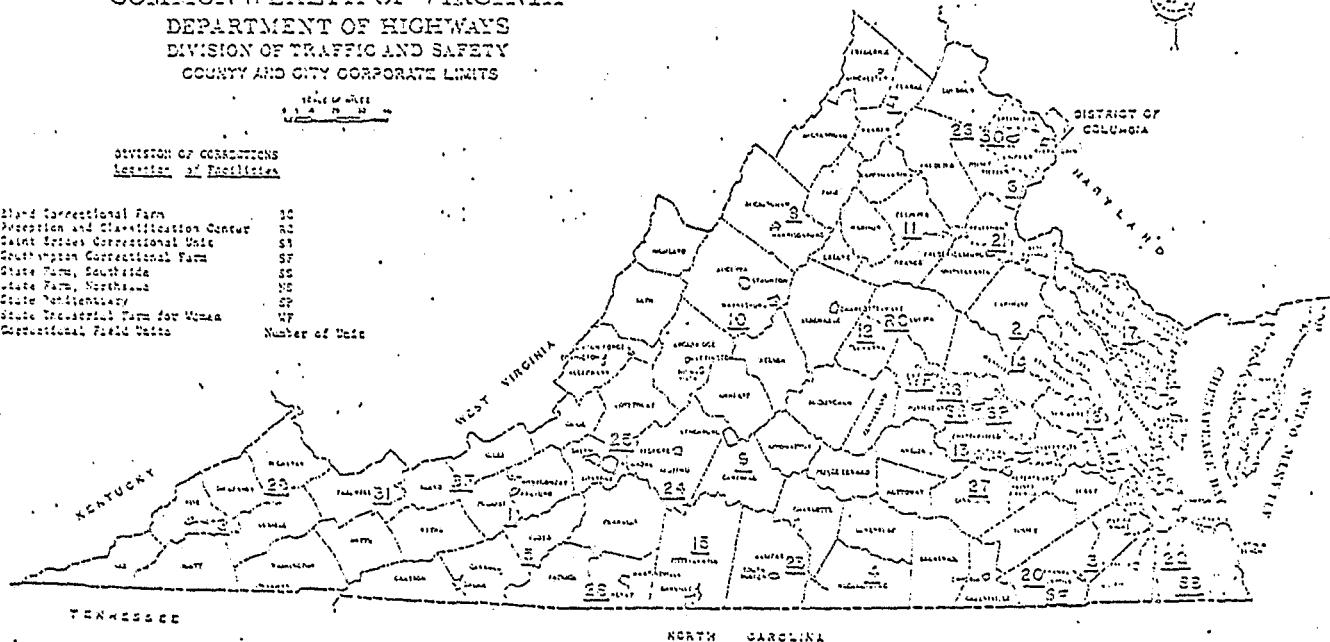
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10 Miles or More
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DIVISION OF CORRECTIONS
 Location of Facilities

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| Board Correctional Farm | BC |
| Reception and Classification Center | RC |
| Saint Ignace Correctional Unit | SI |
| Southwestern Correctional Farm | SW |
| State Farm, Southside | SS |
| State Farm, Northside | NS |
| State Penitentiary | SP |
| State Industrial Farm for Women | WI |
| Correctional Field Units | Number of Units |





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