ASSOCIATION OF STATE CORRECTIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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Restrictive Status Housing Policy Guidelines

Purpose

The Association of State Correctional Administrators [ASCA] recognizes the importance and challenges associated with managing inmates who pose a serious threat to staff, other inmates or to the safe and orderly operation of correctional facilities. The use of restrictive housing is a necessary tool for correctional systems to utilize to ensure a safe environment for staff and inmates. ASCA is committed to the universal classification principle of managing inmates in the least restrictive way necessary to carry out its mission.

As a result, ASCA established a sub-committee for the purpose of creating guiding principles that might be used by member agencies for the purpose of developing policies related to restrictive status housing. ASCA recognizes that individual jurisdictions have specific issues, unique legislation, judicial orders, and varying physical plant configurations that must be considered locally and addressed by policies specific to those individual jurisdictions. Based on the complexity of managing this population, some universal principles provide this general framework for agencies in the development of their policies. We hope this document is helpful to jurisdictions in designing policies to safely manage this population in a manner that promotes their positive transition to less restrictive settings while supporting an environment where other inmates may safely and actively participate in pro-social programs and activities.

Defining Restrictive Housing

Restrictive status housing is a term used by correctional professionals to encompass a larger number of agency specific nomenclatures. In general terms, restrictive status housing is a form of housing for inmates whose continued presence in the general population would pose a serious threat to life, property, self, staff or other inmates, or to the security or orderly operation of a correctional facility. This definition does not include protective custody. Restrictive status housing is designed to support a safe and productive environment for facility staff and inmates assigned to general population as well as to create a path for those inmates in this status to successfully transition to a less restrictive setting.

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Guiding Principles for Restrictive Status Housing

The following guiding principles for the operation of restrictive status housing are recommended for consideration by correctional agencies for inclusion in agency policy. They are to:

1. Provide a process, a separate review for decisions to place an offender in restrictive status housing;
2. Provide periodic classification reviews of offenders in restrictive status housing every 180 days or less;
3. Provide in-person mental health assessments, by trained personnel within 72 hours of an offender being placed in restrictive status housing and periodic mental health assessments thereafter including an appropriate mental health treatment plan;
4. Provide structured and progressive levels that include increased privileges as an incentive for positive behavior and/or program participation;
5. Determine an offender's length of stay in restrictive status housing on the nature and level of threat to the safe and orderly operation of general population as well as program participation, rule compliance and the recommendation of the person[s] assigned to conduct the classification review as opposed to strictly held time periods;
6. Provide appropriate access to medical and mental health staff and services;
7. Provide access to visiting opportunities;
8. Provide appropriate exercise opportunities;
9. Provide the ability to maintain proper hygiene;
10. Provide program opportunities appropriate to support transition back to a general population setting or to the community;
11. Collect sufficient data to assess the effectiveness of implementation of these guiding principles;
12. Conduct an objective review of all offenders in restrictive status housing by persons independent of the placement authority to determine the offenders' need for continued placement in restrictive status housing; and
13. Require all staff assigned to work in restrictive status housing units receive appropriate training in managing offenders on restrictive status housing status.